DIAGHILEV

-THE BOOK- ©

Original typed
Complete Manuscript

DIAGHALI✗

4.12.1975

DIAGHILEV

Dear Miss Morgan Griffiths,

I suppose there is no reason why this matter should wait until after your decision on the dog-book, or be in any way connected with it. So here goes.

About two years ago I signed up with Thames and Hudson to write a 60,000 word book on Diaghilev. I became so fascinated by my subject, especially as I work quite a lot in the theatre, that I wrote something over 120,000 words. The time alotted to me, and the money, were really for a 'quickie' type of book, with plenty of pictures, and this my MS was clearly not. Thames and Hudson suggested that the most profitable course be taken---to put the book into their World of Art series, which does very well on both sides of the Atlantic. But this series allows only for 40,000 words, and for Diaghilev the ideal was about 33,000. I knew that I had to re-write my first draft, and give it more time than the original contract had allowed for, but I saw too many difficulties in reducing it to about a quarter of its size.

My agent Robin Dalton (at that time IFA) called up David Haitley who showed interest. Money was discussed (I was to buy myself out of the T andH contract) but the thing petered out---I returned to Italy, got involved in dogs, Robin went through the IFA crisis and David Haitley left W.H.Allen.

Today I had lunch with Eva Neurath who owns T and H and I put the matter to her. They see the virtual impossibility of turning a long book into a virtual essay, and they have begun to feel uneasy about their luck with ballet books, due to a failure or two in that direction.

Now would you be interested to see my MS---more as a first draft thrown together against problems of time and finance---with a view to perhaps making an English world rights deal? I imagine the subject couldn't be more right for your list, and I only hope you haven't already commissioned a book on it.

Yours sincerely,

Maurice Rowdon

N O T E

Writing a book on Diaghilev imposes a great responsibility because so many people have said so many different things about him. They have said belittling things. They have been insulting. Some have credited him with almost nothing. In this book I prefer to credit him with almost everything, because in this I have the support of two of his closest collaborators---two dancers and choreographers remarkably different from each other, and remarkably different in their relations with Diaghilev too. They testify to a man greater than any one collaborator could have had an opportunity of understanding. These two are Leonide Massine and Serge Lifar. I derived few facts from my conversations with either of them. Those can be derived from books and papers, their own included. Also they contradict each other on a number of important points. But even--- perhaps especially---the contradictions establish a figure who has not yet been recognised in his greatness, or rather in the nature of his greatness.

I wish to thank Mrs Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Haskell, the Russian painter Marevna, as well as Massine and Lifar, for their help in conversations.

DIAGHILEV - Notes

ILLUSTRATIONS CONTINUED

1) J.S. Sargent made a drawing of Nijinsky as Armide's Slave. For the 1911 & 1912 performances in London.

2) Research COMOEDIA ILLUSTRÉ a lavish periodical edited by MAURICE DE BRUNOFF — for reproductions of costumes etc. 1911 - 1914. Also the Souvenir Programme 1912.

3) June 1913 Fine Arts Society prod. Studies from the Russian Ballet (photos of Karsavina, Nijinsky etc) & The Art of Léon Bakst (still the best)

4) Vingt Dessins sur Vaslav Nijinsky a coll. of drawings by George BARBIER.

published by La Belle Edition Paris 1913.

5) Watercolor sketches by W. by Valentine Gross.

6) Sketches & a statuette by W. by UNA TROUBRIDGE.

7) 3 oil portraits by W. by J. E. BLANCHE

8) 1 painting in oils by W. by GLYN PHILPOT.

Illustrations

Is Diaghilev's antique furniture Le Sylphe in 1909 = 1894 still = the Hermitage Museum = St Petersburg, Rue Benois Ltd in Paris placed!

M^r Roland, M Roland, Browse and Delbanco, London, the 12 bronzes for RODIN's class frieze? Nijinsky, and invites you to contact him on my behalf if you wish to take new photographs.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Cyril Beaumont in 1918 published separate
Stories of the Russian Ballet — "Impressions
of the Russian Ballet" — coloured illustrations
of Karsavina, Pavlova, Good Humoured Ladies,
Carnaval, Schéhérazade. ADRIAN ALLINSON
did the drawings.

Cecchetti's rehearsal rooms 160 Shaftesbury
Avenue. His flat was at 21 Wardour Street
above a tobacconist's shop on the first floor.

Sir Peter Daubeny will let us photograph
the rejected model set for Good Humoured
Ladies.

ILLUSTRATIONS DIAGHILEV (born 1872, died 1929)

LOCATIONS:

RUSSIA: St Petersburg---

MARYNSKY THEATRE
PALAIS TAURIDE
THEATRE STREET

Any pictures of the OCTOBER REVOLUTION 1905 in St Petersburg.

FRANCE: Paris---

GRAND HOTEL (1908)
Hotel de Hollande (1910)
BOIS DE BOULOGNE, AVENUE DU BOIS DE BOULOGNE (1908)

Salon d'Automne (1906)

OPÉRA 1907, CHATELET 1908.
HOTEL MEURICE, RUE DE RIVIOLI 1918.
GARE DE L'EST 1908.

Montecarlo---

Hotel de Paris, Café de Paris.
Théatre de l'Opera, and THE BASEMENT where rehearsals took place.

LONDON:

COLISEUM THEATRE (1909)
COVENT GARDEN DURING CORONATION OF 1911.
THE SAVOY GRILL AT THE SAME PERIOD.
DRURY LANE THEATRE (1913)
GENNARO'S RESTAURANT in GOWER STREET (CONSULT GENNARO'S 44 Dean Street) 1909-1914

NEW YORK:

PLAZA HOTEL (1916)
METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE (1914)

ITALY:

Venice

HOTEL DES BAINS, LIDO ('20s)
CAFE ON THE PIAZZA SAME PERIOD.

ROME

TEATRO METASTASIO (1914)
TEATRO COSTANZI (1921)
CAFE ARIANA ON THE CORSO (1916)

ANY VIEW OF VIAREGGIO IN 1914.

GENERAL PICTURES

THE PARIS RAILWAY STRIKE OF 1920.
REVOLUTION IN PORTUGAL IN 1918.

ADDENDA

TEATRO SAN CARLO IN NAPLES 1916
GALERIE DES GLACES VERSAILLES 1923
GAITE LYRIQUE (THEATRE) PARIS 1921
STREET LIFE IN PARIS IN FIRST TEN YEARS OF THIS CENTURY
THE SAME STREET LIFE IN THE TWENTIES

PEOPLE AND THINGS

1) ALBERTO CAVOS, Alexandre Benois' great uncle, who built the MARYNSKY THEATRE in St Petersburg. He was of Venetian origin and had a PALAZZO IN VENICE. He also built the St Petersburg BOLSHOI. This was demolished in the early 1890s. We might show the WELCOMING AUDITORIUM of the Marynsky theatre.

2) CARICATURES IN THE RUSSIAN PRESS. There is a lady in London, known as The Pest, who had collected all the Russian press of the period. I am interested in a) The cartoon of PRINCESS TENISCHEVA as a cow being milked by the Diaghilev group during his WORLD OF ART (magazine) days, 1899-1905: she was the patron of the magazine. b) Dancers dancing in sacks at the Marynsky when Prince Wolkonsky ordered longer ballet skirts, 1900.

3) DIAGHILEV's third exhibition of Russian art at the huge ACADEMIE DES BEAUX ARTS in Paris, 1900.

4) THE DISCOVERIES AT KNOSSOS IN GREECE which inspired DIAGHILEV and BAKST in conceiving L'APRES MIDI D'UN FAUNE.

5) THE FIRST COVER OF THE IMPERIAL THEATRES YEAR BOOK by Leon Bakst, 1900.

6) VILLA BELLERIVE, at OUCHY in Switzerland, where Diaghilev settled in 1915 for a time.

7) The Bakst design for LES FEMMES DE BON HUMEUR 1917. (see 11)

8) Picasso's 'amusing' design for CUADRO FLAMENCO 1921.

9) A PHOTOGRAPH of DIAGHILEV with NOUVEL and SERGE LIFAR at the Venice lido 1927 shpwing him exhausted (see HASKELL, DIAGHILEV, published by Gollancz).

10) The LARIONOV costume for MASSINE as the Midnight Sun in SOLEIL DE NUIT 1915.

11) The costumes and THE PIAZZA (VENICE) SETTING for LES FEMMES DE BONNE HUMEUR by Bakst. (see 7)

12) LARIONOV's setting and designs for CONTES RUSSES, Massine's ballet, 1917.

13) Picasso's sketches in Rome 1916/17 for PARADE, the circus ballet.

14) PICASSO's front curtain for PARADE, which was his debut in the theatre, 1917.

15) The Piazza Venezia studio used by Diaghilev's company and by Picasso 1916/17.

16) GIACOMO BALLA, the leader of Italian futurism, painted a cubist curtain for the orchestral performance of THE FIREBIRD, at Rome's Teatro Costanzi, 1917.

17) PICASSO's sketches of dancers rehearsing in Barcelona where he was to do the decor for TRICORNE, 1918. I have seen excellent PICASSO sketches at the Petit Palais, GENEVA, and their owner MONSIEUR GHEZ has promised me access to these.

18) DERAIN's colour design for FANTASQUE, 1919, at the London Coliseum.

19) The DELAUNAY designs for CLEOPATRE which dazzled London at the Coliseum 1918.

20) MATISSE'S settings for LE CHANT DU ROSSIGNOL 1920: this was his stage debut.

21) DETHOMAS sketched Nijinsky in every attitude of practice, after the first ballet season in 1908.

22) See THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF THEATRE ARTS for illustrations.

their final school examinations that summer, before going to St Petersburg.

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In Diaghilev's family and forbears there were

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'DIAGHILEV' - Notes

PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

DIAGHILEV by Serge Lifar (Putnam 1940)

✱✓ THEATRE STREET by Tamara Karsavina (Constable 1948)

CHRONICLE OF MY LIFE by Igor Stravinsky (Victor Gollancz 1936)

✱ DIAGHILEV by ARNOLD HASKELL (Victor Gollancz 1935)

The First of Ballets - Russes (Allen and Unwin 1936) by Prince Peter Lieven

Ballet Russe - Arnold L Haskell (Weidenfeld 1968)

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Ma Vie - Serge Lifar (Hutchinson 1970) (Paris 1965)

FOKINE - Memoirs of a Ballet Master (Constable 1961)

~~Serge Diaghilev — Serge Lifar~~ ~~(Putnam 1940)~~

B
* A. Benois — Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet (London 1947) 8/9/60/64

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~~A.L. Haskell, Serge Diaghilev (London 1935)~~

~~A. Lifar The Birth of the Ballets Russes (London 1936)~~

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✓ A. Benois — Memoirs 2 vols, London 1960

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Anton Dolin — Ballet Go Round (London 1938)
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~~Serge GRIGORIEV~~

A.E. JOHNSON — The Russian Ballet (London 1913)

André Levinson — Les Bakst (Paris 1924)

M
* Paul MAGRIEL — Nijinsky (New York 1946)

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Robert Craft — Igor Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring (London 1969)

Neal Oxenhandler — Scandal and Parade (London 1957) (Theatre of Jean Cocteau)

Lenide Massine — Memoirs (London 1968)

Vaslav Nijinsky — ~~Triumph~~ Diary (New York 1936) 1966 London 1963

Romola Nijinsky — Nijinsky (Victor Gollancz 1933)

Jacques Rivières — Nouvelles Etudes (Paris 1947)

Roger SHATTUCK — The Banquet Years 1880-1918 (London 1959)

Lydia Sokolova — Dancing for Diaghilev (London 1960)

Douglas Cooper — Picasso Theatre (London 1968)

Arnold L. Haskell — The Russian genius in Ballet (1962)

TWO ARTICLES FOR ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS, ONE IN 1926, ONE IN 1929.

W. A. PROPERT — The Russian Ballet 1921-1929.

Nijinsky — Richard Buckle (Weidenfeld 1971)

*Diaghilev — Boris Kochno

~~PRAKHARAN~~

Diaghilev's backers:

1] World of Art. the first ~~exhibition~~ appearance of the magazine: Princess Tenischeva

2] Thrup 3rd exhibition, GRAND DUKE VLADAMIR (helped first Ballet season Paris)

3] The Emperor, who gave subsidy for exhibition. the World of Art towards its end (1904)

4] As director of imperial theatres. PRINCE SERGEE VOLKONSKY, for a time.

5] Comtesse de GREFFULHE.

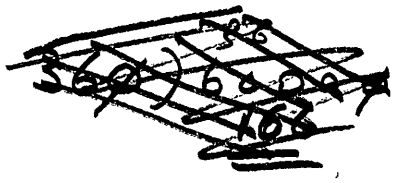
6) GABRIEL ASTRUC

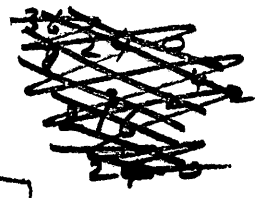
7) Princesse de Polignac

8) Misia Sert.

9) Otto Kahn (first American Tour)

10) Sir Joseph Beecham (first London season).





DIAGHILEV. [TYPING]

170 pages at 6 copies.

£70.48 + ordinary cover.

£71.20 + plastic cover.

ODANTI

"Diaghilev

Thilo von Waltydorf of Sotheby's + ~~[illegible]~~ allowing me to work through the photographic archives and make a selection for this.

and Julian Barr

Acknowledgements

~~My thanks are due to~~ I wish to thank Arnold Haskell, Serge Lifar, Mrs Igor Stravinsky, ~~[illegible]~~ for ~~[illegible]~~ helpful conversations ~~[illegible]~~ and ~~[illegible]~~ in ~~[illegible]~~ Diaghilev's ~~[illegible]~~.

ILLUSTRATIONS DIAGHILEV.

FROM BOOKS

1] Benois – Memoirs I – opp. P. 225 nice photograph of D.

2] " – Memoirs II. Benois' Winter Palace – St Petersburg (watercolour). opp. P. 225 →

3] Massine – My Life in Ballet (Macmillan 1968): a) Picasso's drawing of him opposite P. 185.

~~Massine in La Boutique~~

b) Rehearsing Liturgie 1915 – + Lydia Sokolova opp. in batch of photographs after P. 156.

c) + Manuel de Falla at the Alhambra, 1918 after P. 88.

d) D. abt 1917 ('the last but one publicity photograph') opp. P. 88.

e) D's company leaving Chicago 1916, opp. P. 41.

f) M + Picasso Pompeii 1917 after P. 40.

→ The Bolshoi theatre in Petersburg seen
from Bensa's flat, (watercolour by B.)
Typ. P. 64.

2.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM BOOKS

4] Haskell - Diaghilev (Gollancz 1935) —
D + Life 1927. opp. P. 344.

Lopukhov, D. working on score, 1929,
Grand Hotel Paris.
opp. P. 326.

N', Faune. opp. P 268

~~the original poster of~~

Fokine directing Karsavina in
rehearsal, opp. P. 200
(Paris 1909).

Isadora Duncan by Bakst
1908
opp. P. 186.

D. at London premiere 1911 opp P. 150

5] KARSAVINA — Theatre Street:
N, wedding at Buenos Aires, opp. P. 282.

[Include Trefilova, Kshessinskaya and
Preobrazenskaya].

Sargent' drawing
of Karsavina 1914. frontispiece.

recitals and performances of Glinka operas. The house had a lodge, stables and a splendid garden. Diaghilev's wealthy grandfather, Pavel Dmitrievitch, had inherited the estate on his retirement from the ministry of finance in 1850, when he was forty-two

Illustrations

Karsavina as Thamar
by Olga Philipp —
a must!

Check if Korovin's design of
the Russian Pavilion at
the Paris Exhibition (1906? 7?)

Peter V.

1

The Will to Dominate

Serge Pavlovitch Diaghilev was the greatest impresario of modern times. He was born in his father's barracks near Novgorod in Russia on March 19 1872 and he died, world famous as the originator and director of the Russian Ballet, in Venice on August 19 1929. He brought first Russian painting (1906), then Russian music and opera (1907-8), and finally Russian ballet (1909-29) to Paris, then the most promising city in Europe for any artist seeking a patron and an audience capable of serious judgement. During the twenty years of the Ballets Russes Diaghilev not only captured patrons and audiences from Prague to New York but did much to form the artistic taste of the western world for the first half of this century. A 'Diaghilev epoch' came about---in theatre, music, painting, design and (mainly through Léon Bakst) fashion. He collected great dancers, composers, artists, choreographers and rich backers with unfailing magnetism. They complained about him and often walked out on him, but they never forgot him and invariably they came back. He travelled his company everywhere in Europe, the United States and South America. His New York season of 1916 was one of the most successful of his career. In the Twenties his name on a programme was a mark not only of value but surprise. He nearly always did something new and often shocking. He looked on himself as a well-born revolutionary. His powerful will (which hated to be crossed)

was behind every detail of the company's life, and the word 'impresario' describes only faintly the sum-total of his contribution to ballet and theatre, and to the artistic formation of the western world in matters of taste.

There are many ways of writing about Diaghilev. The usual one is to describe him as a man of unfailing success. He was ~~after all~~ born in princely circumstances, ~~in a Russia where the few relatively rich and noble families could still live feudally.~~ He grew up adored and groomed. The houses of both his father and his aunt Anna Pavlovna Filosofova were virtually open salons, the envy of both his schoolmates and his teachers. He sauntered through St Petersburg university, and the fact that he did not take law seriously meant nothing deleterious for his future. The right introductions would soon get him into the service of the Tsar. An uncle of his was Minister of the Interior. Diaghilev had an easy charm that turned quickly into hurt arrogance. He expected the world to fulfil his will for him. It was this expectation far more than favourable circumstances that carried him through his life.

His whole personality spelled success. It was felt the moment he entered a room. There was something about his gaze that simultaneously melted and excited one. There was hauteur in it, and a certain contempt, and some snobbishness---and (the list is that given by his ~~most~~ implacably loyal friend Serge Lifar) tenderness too — with a degree of kindness hard to reconcile with the hauteur, ~~and~~ a sadness verging perilously on sentimentality. He was tall, or rather he seemed tall because of his compelling presence. He had an enormous head which no known hat would fit (it always perched on top of his head with a hint of deliberate burlesque). He had a way of talking persuasively, gesturing with one hand and snapping the fingers of the other. And that unforgettable look never quite left his eye---warm, appreciative, appraising, delving sympathetically into the other person, in search of surprising motive. gifts, and always concealing any ~~motive~~ but the most casual

He had a tendency to flabbiness, with the bored air of the powerful and well-born man, which could turn with remarkable speed to tears or rage. He had thick and passionate lips, and sparkling teeth. His forehead was unusually high, his hair a silky chestnut, with its white streak. He spoke with equal nonchalance to a grand duke or an artist, and there was no mistaking the fact that though a snob he felt more at home with the artist. He was always most courteous in public, and this touching quality of considerate attention to others increased as he grew older. Yet he seemed quite indifferent as to what people thought of him: this hauteur provoked many enemies, especially on home-ground in St Petersburg. The enemies continued to invite him to their houses. He was too important---not ~~even~~ only socially but, so to speak, in the very pores of his skin---to snub. His manner was too 'grand' for St Petersburg. A real grand duke could hardly take that seriously, and to many it looked like provincial striving. Nor was his nonchalance recognised as a mark of the grand seigneur: in Russia the top people simply did not behave like that. But in Paris and London they did. Among people like Robert de Montesquieu and Comtesse de Greffuhle the nonchalance was a mark of guarantee. Prince Lieven called it acting. The fact was that it derived from self-assurance. And this was not a social self-assruance, as it would have been in a grand duke. It came from an utter certainty as to his role in life.

~~Arnold Haskell describes Diaghilev as the strongest personality he ever met.~~ When Diaghilev walked into a theatre everyone from the stagehands to the prima ballerina was aware of the fact. He at once became the centre towards all performance was directed. Igor Stravinsky's widow describes finding him in a Paris theatre at six o'clock in the morning still putting the last touches to the lighting. No details escaped him. When one of the company was his lover he kept a steady eye on all his movements, and especially on his flirtations. Only in this did he ever reveal himself. In professional matters he was closed, a council to himself, communicating to his dancers only confidence or censure, never his own worries. They seldom realised that each production was a certainty only after curtainrise: until that moment he was in a fever of activity, telephoning, holding lawsuits at bay, preventing last-minute strikes, ordering costumea and props and banquets he could not afford, under a mask of imperturbability. His face, according to Lifar, was 'monumental': at first only the mask penetrated---an impression of health and power that reminded Russians of Peter the Great (and indeed Diaghilev's grandmother was a Rumianzov). His lips curled slightly---with a touch of brutality. There was a wave of grey in his hair, the famous 'chinchilla' that nature had given him as a distinguishing mark of its own. Yet the mask was mobile. In fact, if you really looked into each part, the lips and eyes and the slightly ironical eyebrows too, and the moustached upper lip under the discerning nose, his tall brow and the rather long chin had separate lives of their own, so that the real face (really that of a dreamer) melted in with the mask, lazily and humourously, and your first impression of the forbidding Russian aristocrat was gone. It was perhaps in his sudden laughter, with its hint of boyishness, health and straight character that people felt his indomitability---rather than in his rages when chairs were smashed and his stick pounded on the floor (terrified rats ran from the wainscoting of the Montecarlo practice studio during one of these fits).

The accounts of Diaghilev by two of his greatest dancers, Karsavina and Njinsky, as well as those by Igor Stravinsky and Jean Cocteau and Michel Fokine ~~his first ballet-master~~, and Leonide Massine are all stories of collaboration with him, where his advice and his censures were heard, and ~~nothing~~ few of his own preoccupations emerged. A dancer, like an actor, has far too much to think about to realise that his producer also has work to do. It all seems so simple: an audience comes to see dancing or acting---and to the performer the ~~other~~ preparatory work involved, except perhaps that of the stagehands, is peripheral. Even for the musicians and artists and choreographers who worked closely with Diaghilev it was difficult to see how deeply and untiringly he was involved. They only knew his spell, and reacted to it. One by one they gave him their best: and when he was no longer interested in ~~him~~ them ~~most independent of them seemed~~ often ~~to~~ wilted for a time.

~~The fact is that~~ Diaghilev's ~~life~~ career was an anguished day-to-day struggle. To an extent that makes the success-story look the least interesting version of him, he spent his life on a tightrope, often without a penny in his pocket or even a company of dancers. And the chief marvel of his character was that few people ever knew this. Without the smallest effort at persuasion he managed to convince everyone round him that he was looking after them, and he alone, and that only their problems were the real ones. Such was his self-reliance in matters of taste that even in private---even when tumbling on the floor with Serge Lifar or imitating a pas de deux in his bedroom to screams of laughter---he never lost his aurora of authority. His favourites showed him occasional resentment---he excited lifelong hatred in others---only because he was always felt to be ~~the~~ master. He was more than any of the names he has been given---'impresario', 'collector of geniuses', 'showman', 'innovator'. He was certainly a great impresario: he defined the word, almost. But in Italian 'impresario' means little more than a

business-man, ~~and need not imply the artistic.~~ In fact he financed neither his World of Art exhibitions of Russian painting between 1899 and 1905, nor his Paris concerts in 1907, nor the later Russian ballet seasons. Yet he did n.p. much more than find the money from other people. He followed every ballet from the first idea to the fitting of the costumes. Hecwould put up his eyeglass and quizz every prop closely, not only for its decorative value but its practicability for the dancers. He once sat at a dress rehearsal and ordered the gold braid to be stripped off a fabulous costume belonging to the premier danseur, because it impeded his elevation. The tailor almost wept. The stagehands grumbled and almost went on strike during his endless lighting rehearsals. But his quiet 'Continuez, s'il vous plait' always brought them back. Once when Michel Fokine, standing among the dancers during a reherasal, clutched his left side in a reference to the liver, Diaghilev's voice came clearly from the dark stalls, 'The right-hand side, Michel, the liver's on the right-hand side'. The argument as to what ballets he conceived n.p. and what he developed from the suggestions of others will go on as long as contemporaries of his remain alive. Hardly a dancer, a designer, a composer, a choreographer wants to give him credit for anything except a strong will and a dominant personality. He let other people's ideas flow over him, then suddenly he was launching into a project as if it were all his own. He took a vague first idea and swept it into the area of the practical. Without him, would that first idea have come to anything? The idea of taking Russian ballet to Paris was not his. Pavlova and ~~a number of other dancers had played to foreign audiences~~ were the pioneers in that respect. ~~tour before~~. He was even rather indifferent towards ballet in the early days. Without him the western world would have continued to see individual Russian ballet performances, but it would not have been galvanised by a ~~whole~~ wholly new artistic concept. Nothing in the arts in Paris was the same the morning after that première on May 19 1909.

Adolf Bolm

Far from ~~being one who~~ simply stimulated other people to new ideas, encouraged them in their work, urged them through periods of doubt, aroused them when they were flagging, launched them from obscurity into a world of publicity, ~~Diaghilev~~ he took an integral and essential part in every production, without which--- no matter whether the setting was by Benois or Bakst or Picasso, the music by Satie or Stravinsky or Prokoviev, the dancer Nijinsky or Karsavina or Anna Pavlova--- that production could not have existed in <u>any</u> respect. His part was not simply that of an overseer either. It consisted of directing the lighting rehearsals (at a time when few thought lighting sufficiently important to put into the hands of a specialist), the important costume rehearsals, ~~and~~ the cutting of boring or trifling choreography and music, the interpolation of new scenes, and the personal management of armies of carpenters, electricians, prop men and tabs-operators backstage who learned---after the first stormy Russian 'invasion' of the west in 1908---to love him.

From childhood Diaghilev felt the need to dominate.

According to Serge Lifar it was his 'infidelity' that stirred his collaborators to hatred. He took from them what he needed, and only when he needed it. Ravel, Stravinsky, Pavolva, Fokine, Massine all experienced a cooling of his interest in them. Ravel even wrote to the Times about it, and Diaghilev's shrewdly kind and forbearing reply was published too. It is astonishing to hear the Russian overtones of Ravel's Daphnis and Cloe---the last thing to be expected of a Parisian 'impressionist' composer. But such was the magic of Diaghilev's sway. It entered unnoticed, and was taken invariably for self-inspiration. When the youthful Massine mounted the staircase of a gaudy Moscow hotel in 1913 meaning to refuse Diaghilev's offer to take him into his company he could hardly have foreseen that he would in fact say yes. Once he had done so he put it down not to the spell Diaghilev had cast on him but to his own presentiment of future good fortune. That was precisely how Diaghilev's spell worked. You thought it was your own.

Nijinsky, Stravinsky, Karsavina, Picasso, Dérain, Debussy, Prokofiev---great names illuminated his whole career; he had a flair for seeming to bring them into being rather than simply attracting them to him. Vaslav Nijinsky was a dull young man before he joined Diaghilev's company at his dancing School. Anyone said could have foretold that he would one day make a superb dancer, but few could have foreseen his uncanny leap through the window in Le Spectre de la Rose in 1911 which made him famous overnight. Lifar too (he came to Paris with Nijinsky's sister, at that time teaching ballet in St Petersburg) was unpromising when Diaghilev first auditioned him. In his case it was difficult even to foresee a superb dancer! But Diaghilev disregarded Nijinska's doubts and fell in love with cette petite panthère noire as he called him. He turned him into Massine's successor, not simply by sending him along to Enrico Cechetti for rigorous dancing lessons but by taking him on his little grand tour of Italy---an education he gave all his favourites, even when they were female.

He once threw a man of a dressing room against the wall for having put his own wife's name higher than Karsavina's on the company's billing. He flitted in and out of rehearsals with his entourage. He was almost never satisfied with what he saw. Nijinsky's widow describes him simultaneously giving orders to the chief electrician, conferring with the conductor, answering questions from three reporters and discussing business with his administrative secretary. To the outsider (rather than to his collaborator) he seemed to be planning every detail of what finally emerged on opening night. And his career did show a remarkably straight line, as if he had based his projects squarely on the thoughts he outlined as a youth during his editorship in St Petersburg of the World of Art magazine. When the curtain went down on the first Diaghilev ballet in Paris in 1909 the old dimly-lit and rather frowzy productions that Paris was accustomed to see were rendered historical. Paris talked about him for a year. His season started 'oriental' fashions. Paris saw in his ballets a Russia it had never so much as guessed at, fierce and in brilliant primary colours, so vigorous that it seemed 'barbaric', but splendidly and exhilaratingly so. After 1912, his year of unquestioned triumph in that city, his support for a new artist meant his acclaim. Without him Stravinsky's music might have been thought simply ugly, or might not have taken place. Picasso might have needed decades more before achieving an audience. One of his last choreographers, Balanchine, found work with the Russian Ballet extremely difficult for the simple reason that by this time the great master had begun to lose his interest in ballet as an art form.

Diaghilev's first patroness in Paris, the Comtesse de Greffülhe, inclined to think him just another young adventurer when he walked into her drawing room for the first time. Then he began talking about the paintings on her wall, and played her piano. Within a few days she had introduced him to Gabriel Astruc, Paris's most active impresario, and the first Russian concerts and operas

were arranged. For the first ballet venture Astruc obtained backing from six of the richest men in France, including Henri de Rothschild.

n.p. Diaghilev's backers make an extraordinary list---the Princess Tenischeva when he was a young editor in St Petersburg, the Prince Wolkonsky whose assistant he became at the imperial theatres in Moscow from 1899 to 1900, the Grand Duke Vladimir who helped him with his first season in Paris, the Tsar himself (subsidising his exhibition of Russian art in Moscow in 1904), the Princess de Polignac and Madame Misia Sert (his dearest friend), Coco Chanel and Sir Joseph Beecham, who supported his first London season in 1910 for King George's coronation, Lord Rothermere who helped to keep Diaghilev's company together in the lean years of the war, and the king of Spain, and in the United States Otto Kahn, director of the Metropolitan opera House. Diaghilev cajoled, pleaded, argued, browbeat. He worked endlessly at an idea and only let it go when it had been fulfilled and (rarely) when he was bored with it. He discarded his old productions as things of the past. He laughed so much at a revival of his own Schéhérazade that he broke two aisle-seats. Breakaway companies were formed by his ex-dancers and ex-collaborators---Pavlova, Ida Rubinstein, Nijinsky, Massine---but they seldom achieved his standards of production or his originality. He knew his epoch. He seemed to divine its coming needs. ~~This became obsessive with him towards the end of his life, in an effort to keep up with youth, and it brought about some of the worst ballets of his life. But at the beginning~~ even his public scandals helped him (~~It~~ That was long before the succés de scandal became a recognised commercial objective in the arts). In 1912 Paris divided between the Faunistes and the anti-Faunistes after Nijinsky's erotic movements in L'Après Midi d'un Faune, but ~~the~~ Le Figaro's campaign against Diaghilev capsized, just as the furore over Stravinsky's Sacre du Printemps died a year later. It was clear that Diaghilev meant to be revolutionary and to drag his most conservative friends with him, not a difficult thing for him to achieve since

he was, as they said, un homme du monde jusqu'au bout des ongles. Even when he planted a red flag on the stage for a performance of The Firebird in 1917, soon after the Russian revolution (of which he had high hopes), there was no great outcry in either Paris or Rome, only polite warnings from friends. A Diaghilev production meant something new but also authentic. He found it necessary to put his name on the programmes only after imitators had sprung up. And after that the name was looked for as a guarantee of value.

N.P. ~~Hitherto~~ Diaghilev's homosexuality ~~has either been treated gingerly ('he could find nonsatisfaction in the physical love of a woman'---Arnold Haskell) or by doubles entendres ('and so the reminiscences of a wife...may differ not at all from those of a housekeeper'---Serge Lifar, on the difficulty of writing about a close friend objectively). In fact it~~ had a great deal to do with ~~Diaghilev's~~ his remaining ~~staying~~ out side ~~of his native~~ Russia, both before and after the Revolution, and it was perhaps ~~the chief~~ a major cause of the company's continual distresses in the twenty years of its existence. No one in the company could help noticing his affairs with Nijinsky and Lifar, and his love for Massine, if only because he took no trouble to hide it. His jealousies were loud and spectacular. He would sweep into Lifar's bedroom if he heard a faintly suspicious noise. Once he pushed open ~~Lifar's~~ his hotel door, shouting, 'Now what's going on? I'm sure someone's been here---I can smell the perfume!', just after ~~the young dancer~~ Lifar had got rid of a German girl who wanted to sleep with him. When Lifar danced with Karsavina as an equal for the first time in 1926 Diaghilev, though enchanted with them both as his special protegés, became suddenly jealous and threw Karsavina's huge bunch of roses which she had presented to Lifar out of his hotel window into the courtyard. Lifar tried to get them back by tying his sheets together and lowering himself out of his window but Diaghilev stopped him and a stupendous row ensued, one of many that shook hotel walls from Rome to London.

with this strong dose of melodrama

~~It was not difficult for a young male dancer to succumb to Diaghilev's interest in him.~~

It was by no means easy for a young male dancer to resist Diaghilev's charm, particularly as it went with authority. He was in everything the aristocrat. His hands were surprisingly small, pale, plump but delicate, and he walked rather slowly and deliberately, even in youth, as if his feet too were small compared with his heavy, broad-shouldered frame. He dressed immaculately, and even in his worst periods of destitution, when he could not afford new dress clothes, his linen gleamed spotlessly white. According to Cyril Beaumont, whose ballet-shop Diaghilev sometimes visited when in London (christening it the Boutique Fantasque after one of his most successful ballets), he spoke softly and suavely on the whole, with a caressing tone, ~~and~~ His manner of laying a gentle hand on one's wrist for a moment while saying 'Mon cher ami' was irresistible. Behind his mask of indifference he watched and listened carefully, a quality young people are invariably quick to notice in adults. One talked in his presence. ~~Above all, association with him promised more than a place in his ballet company (and then only if you were a born dancer and worked relentlessly), more than luxury in hotels and the company of other great men.~~ You stood the chance of being turned into an artist. For Diaghilev, sex was never a casual matter. He never liked 'boys' as such, though two or three well-dressed young men always accompanied him. He barred effeminate youths from his company. No trace of effeminacy was allowed to slip past his own mask. He loved the 'wild animal' in Nijinsky, the 'black panther' in Lifar. Above all he loved transforming them into thinking artists, by a process of education as suave and gently persuasive as his own manner of speech. An unfledged boy was soon intoxicated. There was no one like Diaghilev. You could even smell him---that subtle almond perfume ~~that came~~ from the hair lotion he used (available only in Paris). And then you could never quite predict when something would anger him---and he would turn on you with a quick snarl and say something cutting. Like all homosexuals of the dominant type he liked his young men to be available all

the time, even when there was no question of sex between them. The young Sacheverell Sitwell was serving in the Grenadier Guards when he joined Diaghilev's little circle in London in 1918, and always had to hurry back to Aldershot before midnight. Diaghilev could not understand this at all and one evening burst out in French, 'Who is this Aldershot who insists on you always being back by midnight? Is she your mistress?' It was his fierce attachments, so ready to burst into jealousy, that caused professional upheaval. Nijinsky's famous marriage to Romola plunged him into the most desperate grief, not only because he felt he had been abandoned by a lover: his ballet company had been abandoned by a great artist, and his own protégé. The two things were one for him. An artistic association was a personal association which overrode family and even business. He was quite as possessive towards Tamara Karsavina. ~~Only when~~ But sex entered into it there was a demoniac element as well. ~~which threatened everyone round them.~~ When his later favourite Massine fell in love with Vera Savina Diaghilev urged her to sign a contract renouncing him, after which she would be offered leading roles. She did not sign, and the result was the loss to the company of another great dancer. ~~She and Massine, like Nijinsky and Romola before them, formed a breakaway company.~~ Diaghilev's favourites never managed to ~~compromise his position of authority,~~ dominate him (even Boris Kochno towards the end of his life). He never let them feel that they could lord it over other dancers or, least of all, be his voice in company affairs. But professional resentment was often the result. Michel Fokine left the company when Nijinsky was encouraged to choreograph new ballets — and screamed abuse about homosexuality.

In his diary, written when his mind was breaking down, Nijinsky wrote about his first meeting with Diaghilev: 'Lvov' (Prince Lvov) 'introduced me to Diaghilev, who asked me to come to the Europa hotel where he lived. I disliked him for his too self-assured voice, but went to seek my luck. I found my luck. At once I allowed him to make love to me. I trembled like a leaf. I hated him, but pretended, because I knew that my mother and I would die of hunger otherwise'. ~~Massine also described his meeting with Diagh-~~

n.p. ~~Since then~~ Diaghilev ~~had become famous in western Europe, as much for putting the male dancer on an equal footing with the female as for displaying the most rigorous and brilliant school of classical ballet in the world. He~~ could never resist ~~any form of~~ human beauty, especially in men. ~~or women. He was like an ancient Greek in this.~~ When he was at ease his eyes were invariably half-closed---like 'one of those seated figures of Buddha', as Cyril Beaumont put it---and this was the way he watched creatures of particular beauty, in movement and expression, like Karsavina and Anna Pavlova. But the male ~~body~~ was more 'aesthetic' for him. According to Nijinsky's widow ~~Romola~~ he ~~would sometimes often~~ poured scorn ~~of~~ on the female body in conversation, and it was difficult for anyone listening to him not to share the contempt, he was so vehement. To Gabriel Astruc in Paris, before bringing over a ballet company for the first time, he said, 'You French have fine ballerinas but no idea of what the male dancer can be!' He talked about 'our Vaslav'. His homosexuality was ~~thus~~ in some ways the hub of his interest in the ballet. n.p. As a young man he ~~had been~~ was far more interested in opera, and had to be persuaded by Pavlova ~~(with her husband Baudré at a St Petersburg lunch in 1908), and~~ by Gabriel Astruc, ~~and~~ by Nijinsky, not to mention Alexandre Benois, ~~before~~ in forming ~~his~~ Ballet company of Nijinsky. All these people got the impression that they alone ~~had been~~ were responsible for his decision, but in fact he ~~had~~ talked to Robert Brussel about the possibility of showing Russian ballet in Paris as early as 1906, in Moscow. ~~But~~ The importance for him of living in an entourage of young men, and being responsible for the education of particularly gifted ones, cannot be exaggerated. The ballet world made ~~it possible. Towards the end of his life he tired of ballet altogether and became a bibliophile. But the ballet world~~ made encounters like ~~those~~ described by Nijinsky ~~and Massine~~ possible throughout his life. ~~He loved to delve into people as he gazed at them lazily.~~ n.p. ~~According to Alexandre Benois, who knew him from his student days, he had an astonishing insight into~~

He may well have 'assaulted' the young Nijinsky, having seen the 'wild animal' in him. Yet many years later Nijinsky told his wife, 'No, I don't regret my relations with Serge Pavlovitch, even if ethics condemn it'. Diaghilev saw those relations as a quest for truth, and in that 'uplifting'. ~~Like~~ many homosexuals, ~~he saw~~ he saw the natural sex-act ~~as~~ as in some way degrading, a routine preliminary of conception. Speaking of delights he himself had never experienced, he said that marriage ~~was~~ positively dangerous. ~~Women were rather awful.~~ He had numberless arguments about it all with Léon Bakst, ~~who was~~ a defiantly passionate lady-killer. Diaghilev maintained that to be a real artist you had to ~~be~~ have a mixture of the male and female in him. When he heard of the death of a married man he would say, 'There you are!---it's the most harmful thing in the world---one might have expected it!' All 'great men' were homosexual too---then he said quoted the names of the surprisingly few who were, and even these ~~were~~ not ~~clear cases~~ certain (Frederick the Great, Julius Caesar, Wagner, Tchaikowsky). Yet A. P. Prince Lieven---who knew them both---felt that ~~Diaghilev~~ Bakst was ~~much~~ the ~~less~~ depraved man of the two, not Diaghilev. He took his affairs with the devoted seriousness other men give to marriage: that his marriages were harmful, in the nervous alarm they threw him into, there is no doubt. And perhaps that was why he attacked marriage as such. Unlike so many homosexuals, he did not see women simply as effeminate men, and find what he saw distasteful for that reason. But certainly he could not accept them, much less see the 'divine mother' in them. Like all men, he needed them. The deepest relation he ever had was probably with Misia Sert, as much for its lack of compromising sensual attachments as anything else. He was never quite free of the prude in him, from his youthful days. It became transformed into a more serious, and more truthful, fear of the engulfments of the flesh.

The male affair was essentially not its voluptuous part for him but an experience vibrant with dreams and new ideas, an exhilarating dialogue of the kind that could not take place, he supposed, between a man and a woman. He had great powers of persuasion. Little wonder that it took a boat trip to South America, far from Diaghilev for the first time, to show Nijinsky that he was no homosexual after all.

'He enlarged the scope of my artistic emotions; he educated and formed me, not by ostentatious methods, not by preaching or philosophising. A few casual words fetched a lucid conception, an image to be, out of the dark'. That is Karsavina speaking, in her Theatre Street. Diaghilev's finest dancers were simply his 'children'. They were all the home he ever had. For twenty years he went from one hotel to another in every part of Europe. (~~usually~~ invariably leaving his underwear behind at the last one). Nijinsky tried to persuade him ~~before the First World War~~ to buy a house in Montecarlo, where the company had its headquarters. But Diaghilev, ~~could never bring himself to do it. He~~ hated any too precise ~~and~~ or articulate self-definition. He ~~would~~ undertook the most uncomfortable journeys to avoid writing a letter. He preferred cities to the countryside, and was ~~never~~ rarely at the picnic parties ~~of his youth~~ friends engaged. If he did turn up he looked incongruously urban. It was the marvellous homelessness of the imagination that he enjoyed. He once said that the most he

ever derived from ballet was his 'keep in the best hotels, and the great privilege of a seat at the Russian Ballet'. Arnold Haskell's claim that ~~his~~ Diaghilev's top-rank artists ended up with far more money than he ever had is probably true. He paid them well, and often deposited sums of money in their accounts simply as a gesture. Money, like a home, was really of little interest to him, compared with the imaginative excitement it made possible---in the theatre, at the dinner table. He was an enormous eater, and ~~even~~ once had an arrangement with a London restaurant whereby ~~that~~ he ~~should always~~ received a double portion of every dish ~~what he ordered~~ for the price of one. He had his table at the Savoy Grill, at the Hotel de Paris in Montecarlo, at the Grand Hotel in Paris, at the Hotel des Bains ~~on~~ at the Lido. In every city---Viareggio, Florence, Rome, Madrid---he made his little corner where the great dialogue ~~could go~~ went on ~~to the accompaniment of food and a little wine. He~~ amid the clatter of dishes. (Though he ~~got~~ drank and rarely got drunk). never smoked. ~~He really thrived in a luxurious hotel atmosphere: it struck the eighteen-year-old Massine when he joined the company in St Petersburg and was given 'a large lush bedroom' which made him feel rather guilty after the simple life he had led.~~ ~~But~~ Diaghilev ~~was completely~~ felt most at home, conferring in his suite with his artists and musicians, ~~and~~ making endless long-distance phone-calls and enjoying his lobster dinners. He hated keeping accounts, and for this reason the company was never ~~made~~ put on a limited footing. 'I like dishonest people', he once said, 'You don't have to be particular in your dealings with them'. But he was impeccably honest himself.

One physical home he might be said to have had--- Venice, for him the loveliest city in the world, perhaps because ~~the~~ its tides, ~~that~~ flowing through its veins each day ~~washed~~ seemed (and he liked walking) to wash away its definitions, rendering even a walk ~~along one of its calle~~ an act of imagination. Within a few hours of his arrival ~~here~~ in this enthralling contradiction of a city he looked ten years younger, and became the gay and easy man he essentially was. He knew every church in Venice, and there his 'little thinks' as he called them, about the future of his ballet company, were the most

fruitful in new ideas. It was in the Piazza, sitting at one of the café tables, that the revolutionary Faune was conceived, and that Nijinsky took his first strange angular steps in the 'new' choreography.

Diaghilev was a drug-addict. Most of his life he was dominated by the 'little powder'. It accounted perhaps for the sleepy gaze and the pallor (contrasting with the red-cheeked health of his youth), and his sudden exhilarations and furies. As he suffered shock after shock, of a kind that would have ended the careers of many of the brilliant people round him, he nedded the 'little powder' more and more. Not even his most successful years in Paris were smooth. The shock of opening Le Figaro on the morning of May 20th 1912 and finding, instedd of the usual review, a note from the editor explaining why he had refused to allow a review of the scandalous Faune to be printed, must have been one of the greatest of his career, since it seemed to threaten the ruin of his company. ~~At that time Figaro spoke for those relatively few distinguished people who decided matters of taste. There were many fevered conferences in Diaghilev's room. The Russian ambassador called in to say that the newspaper had simply seized on the Faune as a pretext for attacking the proposed Franco-Russian entente (not unlikely, since Fiagro was bitterly opposed to the entente).~~ No one could have foreseen that the famous Rodin would publish an article in another newspaper a few days later defending Njinsky's 'erotic' movements, and the Russian Ballet in general. It swung opninion against the Figaro, and even that newspaper's subsequent campaign against Rodin failed.

But of ~~all~~ the shocks Diaghilev ~~had to~~ faced--and hardly a month between 1909 and the year of his death was without one---artistic scandals were the least. The worst were those lightning strikes inside the company just before curtainrise, the sudden defection of a major dancer and above all the debts involved by his wantonly lavish productions. The First World War dispersed his company and cut him off for a time not only from the new talent in

Russia but from the glittering and essentially aristocratic audience he had built up in London and Paris since 1909 (they never took their seats again). In the lean years after that war, when he was forced to recruit non-Russian dancers and give them Russian names, it was chiefly Lord Rothermere the newspaper-chief who kept the company going, but negotiating with his lordship was a crucifixion all on its own. Diaghilev would return from ~~the~~ a long-distance call to him looking haggard and frightened. In the tradition of the Paris Opéra Lord Rothermere was the 'protector' of one of the company's dancers, and major roles had to be found for her—just the kind of thing Diaghilev detested and would otherwise have refused vehemently.

That he was superstitious in such a monstrously changeable world, which rewarded success with destitution (and vice versa), is perhaps no surprise. He was horrified if he saw a cat cross his path, even a black one, and would walk a whole block to avoid it happening. If a visitor put his hat on the table it meant a big financial loss, if he put it on the bed it meant sickness. He would yell, 'For God's sake take it off at once!' Salt must never be spilled. Number 13 was bad news. Passing under a ladder was simply suicidal. In fact all ~~the~~ our little superstitions ~~that operate in us all~~ were in him matters of obsession. During the 1907 cholera epidemic in St Petersburg he would constantly pause in front of mirrors and put out his tongue to see if it was turning black. His horror of infection was so great that, speaking with Benois over the telephone once in Paris, he actually asked him to speak away from the mouthpiece because one of ~~Benois'~~ his children had the measles! He travelled about in closed carriages in the most sweltering weather, a muffler round his mouth, for fear of catching glanders from the horses.

He was always well wrapped up against draughts, especially in England where he told everyone, 'The mania for fresh air and open windows here is positively dangerous'. As for sea voyages, they were the worst single ordeal he could think of. In his one Atlantic crossing he wore two lifebelts night and day, and spent most of his time pacing up and down his cabin, when not exhorting his valet to pray for their safety. A fortune-teller had once predicted that he would die on water. And indeed he did die in Venice.

He emerged from each crisis a little more tired but looking remarkably the same, only a shade heavier and slower to those who knew him well. He told Karsavina after the

first War that keeping the company going through those years had proved almost beyond his strength. 'Believe me, I knew not how I should meet the morrow. The day over, I went to bed with a sense of temporary respite from the inevitable. I used to make up my bed in the morning--- There, little mother! I may not own you tonight!' Then a ~~the~~ New York offer came out of the blue and he was saved again. It was always like that. But during the crises ~~he rarely confided his distresses to others.~~ He controlled his mask with remarkable steadiness. During a strike in the company just before a gala performance in Montecarlo he addressed the assembled dancers, apparently as warmly suave and calm as always, neither begging nor commanding. Only ~~the~~ one or two ~~people present~~ of those who knew him intimately were aware of the unusual slight pallor on his cheek. He got his way and the evening's performance was a triumph. On another occasion Lifar refused to dance the title role of Le Fils Prodigue and lay in bed instead of going to the theatre. Diaghilev sat at his side to all intents and purposes absorbed in reading a newspaper. The time for the first ballet of the evening came but Lifar ~~still did not move.~~ stayed in bed. At the last moment he leapt ~~out of bed~~ up and began changing. ~~And~~ That evening his dancing ~~had touched a possibly great dancer for the first time.~~ was superb. A crowd pressed into his dressing room. Diaghilev was at the very back, ~~the~~ tears pouring down his face, no doubt partly from relief after his arduous self-control. ~~He~~ He ~~almost~~ never lost his presence of mind. It was an almost mystical quality in him, proof against rebellious stagehands and threatening managers. ~~It helped him at other times too.~~ Once he strode into Karsavina's dressing room when she was naked and sitting in her bath. He simply looked at her with a smile and said, 'Tata, que vous êtes jolie!' and then, 'Rehearsal tomorrow at ten'.

2

The Provincial 'Barin'

At 'Bikbarda', the Diaghilev country house surrounded by forty thousand acres of estate, there was usually a great deal going on. But the moment the piano began to play or someone started singing the shouting and laughter and the children's games stopped and everyone took a seat to listen. 'Even the children' (it is Diaghilev's step-mother's description) 'arrive on tiptoe and sit quietly, and there is a silence which a moment before seemed inconceivable. This family of musicians, in which even the smallest boys whistle a Schumann quintet or Beethoven symphony as they stroll about, is starting its ritual'. Among those 'ritualists' the greediest and most passionate was perhaps the boy Seriozha Diaghilev. And his particular passion was Tchaikowsky. He ~~had~~ heard many Tchaikowsky songs sung by his step-aunt Anna Panaev. She understood them so well that Tchaikowsky himself loved to listen to her, and his Den li tsarit was said to have been written for her. As a child Diaghilev was taken to see the composer; at that time—in the late Eighties—Tchaikovsky was well-known but not at all popular. He always remembered that visit to 'Uncle Petia' in Klin, and only for a brief period in his life, in the Twenties, cooled towards him, attacking him (together with Donizetti and Gounod) for too much melody and 'simplification'. This was no doubt under ~~the~~ French influence. But on his deathbed the thought of Tchaikowsky's music brought tears to his eyes, and he told Lifar that in all music, except for Meistersinger and Tristan, nothing could approach the Sixth Symphony.

'Bikbarda' had been in the family for at least half a century. It lay partly in the Perm province, partly in the Ufa province, with two large houses, two distilleries and a thirty-room mansion in Perm itself, capital of the province. It was here that the women and children of the family spent the best six months of the year, devising

recitals and performances of Glinka operas. The house had terraces and a lodge, stables and a splendid garden. Diaghilev's grandfather, Pavel Dmitrivitch Diaghilev, had inherited it in 1850 when he was forty-two and turned the estate into a highly profitable concern. The freedom had suited him. He had found both the army and the Ministry of State Domains too restrictive, and enjoyed running his own business while his family of eight children divided its time between Birkbarda and an apartment on two floors on Furstadskaya Street in St Petersburg. It was not an easy life for Anna Pavlovna, his wife, especially when, five years later, he came under the influence of local monks and began lavishly endowing monasteries. The more money he made the less he seemed to like it. According to his wife it all started at Peterhof, where they had rented a large villa belonging to the Rubinstein family for the summer. It was a cheerful place with balconies, and sometimes fifty people sat down to table. After an opera performance in the evening there would be late tea on the balcony ~~before~~ in front of the dining room. Apart from the now nine Diaghilev children there were five Buikoff children (adopted by Pavel Dmitrivitch after their mother, Anna Pavlovna's sister, died), and two of Anna Pavlovna's first cousins, the sons of Count Feodor Petrovitch Litke. And there was a little army of nurses, governesses and tutors to look after them all. One day Pavel Dmitrivitch disappeared for a couple of weeks after saying that he was going to St Petersburg to draw a large sum of money from the Treasury. His wife went in search of him and discovered from the porter of their town-house that he had gone off in the company of a 'lame, red-headed monk'. He returned to the house ~~eventually,~~ some days later, thin and pale, without a rouble in his pocket. That was the first crisis in a life of increasing self-mortification. His wife began to hate monks with a venom which only served to divide her from him further. He would have ecstasies in his room and lie motionless on the floor, his arms stretched out in the form of the crucifixion. He would crush Jerusalem crosses of mother-of-pearl and try to swallow them. The crisis itself was brief, and he

in a different way now.

became quieter, but ~~never~~ the old Pavel who had enjoyed banquets and music and masked balls and plays never appeared again. He ~~had always~~ adored life. ~~He still did, in a continual state of exaltation. But~~ He was distant from his family, so much so that for long periods he would keep to his room and see only his wife. One Sunday he put five thousand rubles into the plate at the cathedral of St Sergius, and his wife promptly fished it out again, asking him if he thought it right to deprive his own children in this way. The little Diaghilev was eleven when his grandfather died in 1883, leaving a less valuable estate than in its heyday twenty ~~and thirty~~ years before but nonetheless still substantial enough to ~~make~~ inheritance for ~~both~~ his son Pavel Pavlovitch, a jovial and charming army officer, ~~and~~ Diaghilev's ~~himself after him.~~ father.

Diaghilev ~~had been~~ was born in his father's quarters at the Selistchev barracks on the banks of the Volkhov. Although he was safely delivered, the labour was a terrible one because of the unusual size of his head, and his mother Jenia died a few days later. His father was twenty-five at the time, gay and very musical (he had studied under the famous Czech teacher Rotkowsky) and had a fine tenor voice. Unlike his father he found army life congenial. The loss of ~~his~~ his wife was a fearful blow for him, and he was transferred to the barracks of the Horse Guards in Shpalernaya Street, St Petersburg, so that he could be with his own family. ~~again.~~ After two years he married again, and a remarkable thing happened. The entire family began not only to adore the newcomer, Elena Panaev, but to regard her as its brains and spiritual centre. She too was musical, indeed her family out-sang and out-played the Diaghilevs, and her sister Anna already was a famous ~~St Petersburg~~ as a singer, the mistress of Count Alexandre Adlerberg, Alexander 11's minister to the imperial court and the owner of a fabulous musical library. ~~Her~~ Their father was such an ardent lover of Italian opera that he built his own private theatre where Caruso, Battistini, Zembrich and

apart from being

Tamagna performed. Elena Valerianovna and her debonair husband ('Polushka') did not keep a salon so much as an open house for their numerous intimate friends. At Bikbarda the family alone was large enough. She herself described ~~the house in her memoirs:~~ it: 'Never and nowhere did I see a verandah like ours at Bikbarda...just a plain Russian wooden verandah, with pillars and a roof, that stretched along the whole southern wing of the one-storied house, ending in a loggia. Here, on this loggia, we would generally ait to take tea, as we watched the sun slowly setting... In summer, part of the loggia would be used for meals, and could easily accomodate some fifty people. On the balcony itself numbers of sofas and old shiny chintz-covered stools were arranged... The descendants of the owners of Bikbarda consisted of four sons and four daughters; and these, with their wives, husbands and children, altogether totalled fifty souls... There comes a drone of voices and peals of merry laughter, which goes on increasing until the bewildered guest suddenly finds himself in the midst of a noisy, irrepressibly gay crowd. Fashionably dressed women, children, officers, students, schoolboys, hurry to and fro, or bustle hither and thither, to the sound of loud kisses on every side.'

Social climbers tended to stay away, name-droppers found the house rather boring. You dropped in---and stayed,

for a recital, an opera, some rambling talk, a dinner party. ~~She~~ Elena had ~~perhaps the finest of the feminine~~ that marvellous feminine gift ~~that~~ of making a home feel warm and ~~embracing~~ enclosed yet free. She was certainly the greatest single influence on the young Diaghilev, and during his Russian years he did almost nothing important without opening his heart to her. She taught him never to say 'I cannot'. 'You must forget that ~~phrase~~ phrase,' she told him, 'When you want to you always can'. More than that, she helped form his later ~~gift for~~ unswerving artistic judgement ~~in art~~ especially in music, by demonstrating how the least intellectuality was foreign to appreciation. He learned to respond to music 'with his entrails', as D.V.Filosofov said, and to find the form precisely there, in his own feelings. And it was perhaps in his stepmother's easy and unpretentious ~~powers of appreciation, backed by sound knowledge,~~ catholicity that ~~Diaghilev~~ he found the inner model for his ~~future self~~ later career. When Karsavina talked about the 'uncanny intuition' with which he 'set in motion hidden springs' in the artist, it was this completeness of taste, altogether without ~~gift, requiring no~~ intellectuality ('discussions' and books rather bored him), that she was referring to. ~~When she was~~ Once, during her rehearsals for the part of Echo in Narcisse, he wandered from the stalls and said very casually, passing on quickly (as he always seemed to ~~be~~ in those early days of the company), 'Don't trip lightly---I see rather a monumental figure, a tragic mask---Niobe'. And it was this last word that changed everything for her and set her on 'the mournful tread of sleepless Echo', one of her finest roles. In Thamar, just when she was despairing, he murmured two things, 'Omission is the essence of art' and 'Livid face---eyebrows in a single line', and she ~~was at once~~ became that 'dangerous, feline creature', as Cyril Beaumont called her in her greatest ~~tragic~~ tragic role of all.

At school Diaghilev was always barin or 'young master' for both pupils and teachers. He stood higher than most of the other boys, or seemed to. He had the habit of snapping his fingers when he talked to emphasise a point, as he did all his life. Teachers were flattered to be invited to his house, and often gave him tips about the next day's tests. His friends at school were happy to do his homework for him. His real education, in singing and musical composition (he hopd to be a composer), went on at the 'big house'. ~~It is said that~~ When he was seventeen his father sent him, as any father would at that time, to find out what sex was all about. He got a venereal disease instead---and no pleasure. All his life he was incapable of the act of manhood, and went in for the usual rationalisation that his first experience with a woman was ~~had been~~ too dreadful for him to think of repeating it, ~~ever sleeping with a woman again, as if it had been the woman's (and nature's) fault.~~ The fact may well be that he had more of his grandfather's ~~later nature~~ mystical side than seemed apparent from his worldly tastes. He always kept ikons in his hotel rooms, with candles lit before them, though he never uttered a word to his friends that might have been taken as mystical. The whole biological process seemed to offend him, and perhaps explains his dislike of a settled home. It accounted for the 'lofty' element he looked for in his affairs, and for the violent tumbles on the floor that he needed as a respite from his own natural squeamishness in sensual matters. Yet he had the Diaghilev 'lower lip' that was so sensual. It made the struggle harder, his attachments the source of burning jealousy and possessiveness which frequently nearly toppled his health. ~~each time.~~ He almost fainted when he read the telegram announcing Nijinsky's marriage. ~~He allowed himself a flashing self-betrayal---his control was back again a moment after.~~

In the summer of 1890, when he was eighteen, he met his cousin Dmitri Filosofov, the son of his father's sister Anna. It was just after their final examinations at school, and the meeting brought about the biggest ~~change~~

Is an acquaintance,

All through his life he crossed himself unostentatiously at the chest, in a tiny gesture.

change in his life so far. Dmitri had completed his gymnastium with Walter Nouvel and Alexandre Benois, both of them to be Diaghilev's life-long associates. Nouvel (or 'Valetchka') became his closest friend in the World of Art circle later on. He knew every artist and musician of reputation in the city, yet he himself was neither a painter nor a composer. He simply could not live apart from them, and Diaghilev ~~always~~ listened carefully to everything he said. He was a restless creature, and had a cheerful effect on everyone, ~~He had~~ with the gift, (which no doubt gave his ideas their weight ~~as far as~~ for Diaghilev was concerned) of ~~having~~ feeling no great ambition for himself. He was an attaché extraordinary at the Ministry of the Court, and seemed to want nothing better. ~~And~~ His tendency to see the drawbacks in any scheme (the sound ones as well as the flamboyant ones) was another attraction for Diaghilev, who like a Renaissance prince preferred to balance opposing opinions against each other and then to keep his own counsel.

Not for Benois or Nouvel was he the barin. In fact he struck them as ~~rather~~ uncouthly provincial. For Benois he was 'fresh and healthy' in appearance, with 'rich cheeks and dazzling white teeth', given to laughing like a child on any pretext. He was a 'good fellow', a 'lusty provincial', not very intelligent, a little too down-to-earth, primitive even. Their little group rather disapproved, and could not see him as one of them. Yet there was something about him...

Dmitri Filosofov on the other hand was slight and pale, with fine hands, the image of a quite different sort of aristocracy. He was fervently interested in politics, philosophy and literature. Nouvel favoured music and belles lettres and history. As for Benois, he was one of those naturally cultivated individuals in whom the history and principles of art seemed to exist like an ~~inherited~~ integral part of the nervous system. That he took the position of master and Diaghilev that of pupil seemed natural enough: Benois was two years older. They used to meet at the Filosofov villa, Bogdanouskoïe,

near Pskov, and sometimes walked together in the fields. The gardens were especially lovely, with their ponds and avenues of tall trees and footpaths that led into dusky hollows. It was a countryside we all know from Pushkin's work, mellow yet northern, a landscape that always surprised the eye with its slopes and magnificent lime-trees and spouting streams and wheatfields that turned a rich golden colour in the summer months. Pushkin's poems and plays were very dear to Diaghilev, though he read little and lazily. Pushkin had been exiled to the Caucasus by Nicolas 1 for his liberal ideas. In a paradoxical way he had proved the importance of art by achieving an extraordinary influence on the liberalism of people like Anna Filosfov, Dmitri's mother, with her doctrine of social service. In the second half of the century an astonishing new culture came into being of which Pushkin was the father---Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Glinka, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Tchaikowsky: it was an achievement that was clearly bound not simply to influence but in time radically change the western world.

One very hot day---it was at Pargolovo---Benois decided to cross-examine Diaghilev for admittance to the group. He approved of his worship of Glinka, Borodin and Mussorgsky but not his taste for 'Italianate' music, much less his absence of all admiration for Wagner. A discussion started and they lay down on the grass. Suddenly the young Diaghilev threw himself on Benois with a laugh and began pummelling him with his fists. Benois had never known anything like it — in his group, after all, the body was barely recognised to exist! It hurt too, and he only managed to free himself by feigning a broken arm. Diaghilev released him--- with a glint of triumph in his eye which Benois remembered all his life.

There were at least five quarrels between them after that. Sometimes, far from fighting, Diaghilev would shed tears. It was clear he took arguments much

more to heart than his friends did. Really all these discussions bored him, and he would doze through them quite unashamedly. At the Filosofov house it was Dmitri's

mother, who interested him most. ~~largely because she came from such a different world from the present one.~~ She was still a beautiful woman, ~~liberal and intellectual like her son. She had played a part in the progressive move=ment under Alexander II. She was~~ and had been exiled with her children for a period for having given refuge to a famous social revolutionary called Vera Zassulitch, who had shot at General Trepov, ~~the~~ head of the St Petersburg police. ~~Anna was forced to live abroad with her children for a time.~~ Her husband was twenty years older, adoring and easily swayed. When Diaghilev saw him first he had become ~~was~~ rather grey and austere. Alexander ~~II had~~ loved him but detested Anna. He ~~was~~ had been Alexander II's Councillor of State, and almost became his Minister of Justice. Unlike the Diaghilevs, ~~his family~~ the Filosofovs had treated their serfs with brutality, ~~but~~ and under Alexander he made amends for this, no doubt influenced by Anna too, by administering ~~Alexander's reforms, especially~~ the emancipation of the serfs. The assassination of Alexander and the succession of his son, Alexander III, ~~who was by no means not at all~~ a liberal, was a great shock to them, indeed to all the aristocracy, which now began to regret its liberal attitudes. Anna's husband lost his job, and she modified her zeal. And now she listened with ~~a~~ faint incomprehension to the young men round her, trying to keep up, and bursting into tears if they outwitted her. Hers was the Russia of the Sixties, which had counted politics more important than art---and young men from distinguished families had gone round in peasants' blouses looking as dishevelled as possible. According to Benois, Diaghilev at ~~that~~ this time was a 'dandy'. For him Anna's world was historical. ~~And a new world could only be made by new tastes, not legislation.~~

Every Wednesday and Sunday the Diaghilev and Filosofov families dined together, and there were long discussions. A close attachment grew up between Dmitri or 'Dima', as he was called, and Diaghilev. Dima was tall and blond, reserved, sometimes malicious but always ardent in ideas. Later in the same year the friends all met as students of St Petersburg university. They felt that Diaghilev

was definitely the inferior one. He could never become a connoisseur like Benois. They ~~all~~ laughed at his top hat and his monocle and fancy waistcoats. Benois and the young Jewish painter Léon Bakst thought him a snob, but rather preferred his hauteur to the slovenliness of their other friends. ~~It gave a foretaste of the style that would surround his name. Not that they foresee his future.~~ Their superiority irritated him and ~~there~~ he would ~~be~~ have outbursts of hurt pride. He ~~never~~ rarely accepted their picnic invitations. At the theatre (they would go to a play or an opera almost every evening) he would suddenly go off alone. They put it down to 'provincial immaturity'. He became steadily less modest as he got to know more important people. By the third year of their friendship he was walking down the ~~gangway~~ of the stalls at the Marynsky with his great head thrown back ~~in an arrogant way~~ and barely throwing a glance in their direction, while 'distributing the most charming smiles and the warmest of greetings to those who occupied important positions in society or in the civil service' (this was how Benois remembered it over half a century later). ~~He~~ was ~~now~~ Diaghilev beginning to tell ~~ing~~ people what to think instead of enquiring. And the most haughty people were beginning to give way to him.

He ~~had~~ learned much from his friends. He ~~had~~ passed through a 'superman' phase, after reading Nietsche. It was the strength, the 'temperament' that he admired in Verdi and Puccini and now, because of his friends, in the great Wagner. He was literally haunted by music. He went round the music shops by day, the concert halls or the opera house in the evening. He saw Tchaikowsky's Sleeping Beauty, which had been presented first in 1889. Unlike Benois and Nouvel he rarely went to the ballet. ~~He saw~~ Borodin's Prince Igor, Rimsky-Korsakov's Glazunov and Tchaikowsky's Dame de Pique. ~~In 1891 he took a small flat after his first journey abroad with Dima. In a strange way Dima knew more about art than any of his friends while being an Serge Lifar says, less sensitive~~

In 1891 he took his first journey abroad, with Dima.

~~to it.~~ They saw Venice, Rome, Florence, Vienna, Paris and Berlin. In Venice Diaghilev saw his first performance of Lohengrin, and from that time he became perhaps more fanatically devoted to Wagner than anyone in the group. ~~And Dima's function was always to point out landmarks without determining his judgement in any way. That seemed to be growing on its own.~~ As for Venice, itself, he never stopped talking about it. ~~from the time of his first visit.~~ He and Dima were photographed in a gondola. But it was in Florence that, like so many, he learned judgement in art, simply from seeing for the first time what he later called 'maximum creative genius'. He always claimed that only in the work of the great artist was there an 'objective norm', not in any principles. Thus until he saw Florence he was necessarily provincial and unformed in his taste. He visited that city, Baedeker in hand and a young favourite in tow, again and again throughout his life.

In St Petersburg he stayed at the Filosofov apartment, devoting as little time to lectures as he could. Even his friends' private lectures bored him. Benois ~~talked~~ gave a lecture on ~~about~~ 'Some Characteristics of the great masters of painting', dealing with Dürer, Holbein and Cranach. Another subject was 'French painting in the nineteenth century', but without any awareness of the impressionists. N.V.Skalon read a paper on 'The belief in future life among various peoples', ~~which~~ advanced a materialist doctrine. G.F.Kalin gave a witty talk called 'Tugenev and his time', and Walter Nouvel spoke on the history of opera, illustrating his lecture with sung excerpts (he had a fine baritone voice). 'Dima' talked about Alexander I but, according to Benois, got no further than 1806. Hardly any of it interested Diaghilev, even the painting. But he had a curious way of absorbing knowledge ~~lazily and~~ without ~~much apparent mental~~ effort. Only long afterwards would people notice that he had ~~ab-~~ digested ~~sorbed~~ an idea, to which he had originally responded with a flat mask of indifference. More than the lectures he preferred their informal evenings, when, together with Nouvel ('Valetchka'), he would ~~play~~ play pieces for four hands or sing.

After his first year he took an apartment of his own in Galernaya Street and installed his nurse Dunia, a large, red-haired woman whose chief function it was to reign over the samovar in the dining room ~~where~~ (there were ~~anything up to~~ sometimes forty guests at a time). She did it lovingly, ~~and faithfully.~~ She ~~had come~~ came into the Diaghilev family as part of his mother's dowry, having nursed her and other members of the Yevreinov family. Diaghilev was so attached to her that if he left the apartment abruptly, without saying good-bye, or was in the least way curt, ~~it would sit on his conscience all~~ he would feel unhappy for the rest of the day. She was against the emancipation of the serfs, and warned everyone that it would bring great trouble on Holy Russia. She had looked after his two half-brothers, Yuri and Valentine. And now she stayed with him for twenty-one years, until 1912, when he left Russia for good. His friends adored her, and she is to be seen in the background of Bakst's portrait of Diaghilev, painted in his second apartment at 45 Liteiny Prospect. He began to give lavish dinners, with plenty of wine (though he was never a great drinker himself), and ~~was~~ seemed far happier at the head of ~~the~~ a table ~~dreaming up projects for the future, among them a new magazine that was going to change Russian tastes by de-provincialising them,~~ than listening to his friends read papers. He had a lover at this time, a young and handsome writer. Both ~~he and the writer vehemently~~ paradoxically attacked 'unnatural love', ~~and~~ so that no one suspected that they were practising it.

He still spent his summers at Bogdanovskoie. Anna Filosofova was still deeply perplexed by them all, with their 'small talk' as she called it, about art and theatre and music. ~~When there were serious things to think about in life such as how to serve the community.~~ 'I remember how passionately we used to argue about how best we could serve people;' she said. 'Where is that feeling now, and that activity, that yearning to help the weak? Why, one's head used to swim sometimes with it all, everyone was so alive, so eager! But the young men of today are prematurely aged'. ~~The answer may have been that there~~ Times had certainly changed.

In my day,

~~were fewer 'weak' people in need of help in the Russia of the Nineties than there had been thirty years before, and~~ The question now was ~~more~~ whether the coming revolution (of which Diaghilev and ~~no doubt~~ Dima were perfectly conscious) would destroy ~~every vestige of~~ the class they all belonged to. Yet, being a Diaghilev, Anna found herself accepting the new ideas more easily than she had thought possible, though she did call them 'decadent'. 'The Russian decadent movement', she said, 'was born here, in our Bogdanovskoie, because the pioneers were my son Dmitri and my nephew S.P.Diaghilev. Here it was that The World of Art was conceived. To me, a woman of the Sixties, the whole thing seemed so mad that it was all I could do to restrain my indignation. They merely laughed at me... Nevertheless, when the edge had worn off my initial antagonism, I began to take a certain interest in their ideas, and frankly, to sympathise with much in them. The tense, false atmosphere began to clear, a number of things were bundled away, till at last one great idea remained outstanding, namely, the seeking and creation of beauty. Even if Sergei had not founded The World of Art, this would have been a sufficient claim to fame'.

In 1892 he moved to his second apartment, a much larger one, with his friend Andreiev and also his two half-brothers Yuri and Valentine, who were pupils in the Alexandrovsky cadet corps. St Petersburg, then the capital of Russia, was a pleasant city with its wide streets and many rivers, the chief among them the Nevsky. ~~In the hot months everyone went to the 'islands', the city's resort, usually in boats of their own.~~ Diaghilev began taking lessons with Cotogni, the baritone at the Italian opera. He heard de Reszkes sing, and Melba, and Litvinne. He went on teasing his nynya, Dunia, and shocking her with some remark that sounded revolutionary. He ~~also~~ had a valet de chambre, Vassily, who ~~looked after~~ guarded him from dawn to dusk, leaving to Dunia only the sacred duty of the samovar and its necessary accompaniment in Russia, jam. In 1893 Diaghilev came of age and inherited 60,000 rubles from

Zoukov

his mother, which coincided well with the fact that he now had a decided judgement in art, as it meant he could buy pictures and encourage artists. ~~with a Maecenas touch.~~ ~~These days~~ Nowadays his friends did not mock him. His uncouthness had disappeared, and he was now inseparable from a very tall top hat. He had visiting cards printed with 'Serge de Diaghilev' on them. His friendship with Benois deepened and he started to attend all the 'society' meetings. He gave recitals at home, though he was beginning to lose confidence in his own powers as a composer. He took another ~~two more~~ trips abroad, ~~the first of them~~ with Dima, ~~again.~~ again. Another grandson of Pavel Dmitri Diaghilev met them during ~~in~~ the Nice carnival, or rather they suddenly exploded on him in masks, hustling and pushing him, then ~~until they~~ tore their masks off, screaming with laughter. Dima, who had been seriously ill that winter, went to ~~was~~ convalescing at the Château Valrose, which belonged to a friend of his brother's. As for n.p. Diaghilev, he ~~had been buying~~ bought pictures in Berlin and Munich. He ~~had~~ met Lenbach, and acquired a Libermann. To the young Pavel Koribut-Kubitovitch, or "Uncle" as he was always later known in the Russian Ballet, the hustled ~~friend,~~ cousin, Seriozha seemed greatly proud of his finds. From Lenbach he ~~had~~ bought a study of Bismarck in the uniform of the Cuirassiers. Koribut-Kubiovitch and Diaghilev continued their journey together, into Italy, where Serge bought fifteenth- and sixteenth-century furniture, ~~in Venice and Florence,~~ including 'low Savonarola stools, a magnificent long table and several chairs'. In Naples and Rome they found bronze vases and statuettes. ~~These things eventually reached St Petersburg and were admired by the rest of the group. Apparently they were not destroyed in the Revolution. Benois happened to see them in a depot for confiscated antique furniture, years later, and had them placed in the Hermitage museum.~~ n.p. He confided to Benois after this trip that he still made frightful mistakes of judgement in art, and they decided to throw away all his previous 'ugly furniture', together ~~apart from the newly-acquired antiques.~~ But He had ~~already~~ begun to feel that his future lay in western Europe. His next trip, in 1895, was alone. This time

he gave way to what most of his friends called his snobbery, ~~but~~ what was in fact a ~~passionate desire~~ real to make contact with great minds. He met Zola, Gounod, Massenet, Saint-Saëns, Puvis de Chavannes, Menzel and--- perhaps most important of all for him, since his group associated the name with Wagner---A. Böcklin. He now had a real collection of works, which he coaxed out of artists ~~The people he met~~ at fairly low prices. He ~~had~~ stayed in the best hotels and ~~ridden~~ rode everywhere in a closed carriage. He ~~was~~ now dressed in the most elegant clothes, and the eyeglass he did not need was as inseparable from him as his top hat. He had a new, fashionable perfume. He was now the equal of anyone in St Petersburg, and behaved ~~in~~ that way, especially in the presence of his closest friends, who found his stories of the trip incoherent and too lavishly peppered with famous names. He was now taking lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov. His collection provoked indignation and mockery among his relatives, harmless as it was. Yet neither he nor his friends seemed aware at this time of the Impressionists, whose work was ~~going~~ relatively cheap. Canvases by Cezanne, Sisley, Picasso, Degas, Renoir could be acquired without difficulty. As for Vuillard, Bonnard, Roussel, their work was going for a song.

He became a familiar sight in the St Petersburg drawing rooms, and caused the same flutter as a celebrity.

Diaghilev had also met Verdi, whose latest opera Otello he admired so much. He had been to Bayreuth. Benois' friend Hans von Bartels had shown him round Munich. And on his return to Russia he had met Tolstoy at Yasnaya Poliana, though there is no record of what happened between them, which seems to show that there was no undue sympathy.

From that time, Benois once wrote, 'Seriozha was on an equal footing with us all, and his 'receptions', in a certain degree, began to rival my own'. But Diaghilev's understanding was even then a good deal ~~much~~ greater than this implies. He could already ~~had a gift for being able to~~ name the author and subject of the most obscure Russian paintings. During 1895 he wrote two articles for The News. He had begun to dream of setting up a museum of art, based on his own collection, and from Antwerp, on his last trip, he had written to Benois,

'I shall put myself in your hands, and solemnly declare you curator of the Diaghilev museum. I mean this seriously: who knows, a few years hence we may really have something worthwhile... It now seems clear to me that...with three or four thousand rubles a year it would be possible to create something quite decent'. He wanted 'to peel Russian art of its trimmings, give it a thorough clean-up, and serve it up to the West in all its glory'. So the idea of presenting Russia in Paris, in some form or another, had begun to grip his mind before he left university. Incorporated in this idea was the desire to make contact with what he felt to be, especially in painting, the greater culture of the west. If, finally, he adopted ballet as his staple export it was perhaps because ~~it was quite~~ Russian dancing could not be unapproachable anywhere else in the world, and in France had fallen into decadence.

Compared with all this, the study of law seemed outrageously unimportant. But a degree was regarded in St. Petersburg as essential for any ~~kind of~~ public career, and he crammed his way through 1896, that is six years after his university entrance. He got his degree. He and Walter Nouvel were at Tchaikowsky's last concert, when he conducted his own Pathétique and played the piano in Mozart's Danses d'Idoménée. A few days later the composer died of cholera, at the age of only fifty-three, and Diaghilev was the first to arrive at his house with a wreath. Alexander 111 ordered the funeral to be at the expense of the state, and great crowds followed the coffin from the cathedral of the Virgin of Kazan.

He still nursed the idea of becoming a composer. Nouvel had gone along to Rimsky-Korsakov and asked him for some sort of testimony as to his own musical abilities, and rather mildly the composer had encouraged him to go on with his studies. Diaghilev thought he would ~~decided to~~ do the same. But the reception he got was by no means mild. Rimsky-Korsakov told him roughly to give up ~~the~~ all thought of making music his career. It is said that Diaghilev left his room slamming the door and shouting, 'The future will prove which of us two is considered the greater in history!'

~~And~~ To the discomfort of his friends he went on composing and, a little worse, singing. He decided to perform his duo for soprano and baritone to the words of Pushkin's Boris Godunov. He sang Dmitri and his famous aunt Panaev sang Marina. His 'society' thought it awful, and from this time, according to Benois, Diaghilev 'decided not to strain our ears with his singing'. His later relations with Rimsky-Korsakov, whose work he produced in Paris, were pleasant, and some say he regretted his remark all his life. He certainly never composed again. He turned more completely to painting now, and his friendship with Benois and Bakst became something of an ardent collaboration. Bakst was a relative newcomer to the group, and the only Jew. He lived near St Petersburg's market, in the narrow and bustling Sadovia Street, a rebel from the academy (this was a time when anti-semitiism was rather fashionable in Russia). ~~But~~ He was an excellent portraitist and might have been content to go on painting St Petersburg's loveliest women had it not been for Benois' scathing reminders of his wasted powers. As it turned out, Diaghilev's ambition to influence the West was realised more completely in Bakst than anyone else. Paris talked of him quite as much as Nijinsky. No one had seen décors and costumes like it.

Benois was impressed by the polemical articles Diaghilev had begun to write. And he introduced him to his first backer, Princess Tenischeva, who had been living in St Petersburg since 1890. She was then a handsome woman in her thirties, with a great interest in art exhibtions. She had plenty of money, with a house in Paris (she financed Alexandre Benois' trips there, with a monthly income, as her picture-buying agent), ~~and a villa at Talashkino.~~ By this time Diaghilev had visited Moscow, where the prevailing taste was less European and yet also more interested in the French contemporaries, and had met Sava Mamontov, a caviare magnate who had already backed opera productions. Mamontov established Chaliapine, with Rimsky-Korsakov's Ivan the Terrible (which Diaghilev later took to Paris). The décors were the work

TALASHKINO

villa at Talashkino and a

he commissioned

of the Moscow artist M.A.Vroubel, whom Diaghilev also befriended. He began visiting art exhibitions as greedily as he had formerly gone to concerts and operas. That year he wrote to his stepmother, 'I am first a great charlatan, though with brio; secondly, a great charmant; thirdly, I have any amount of cheek; fourthly I am a man with a great quantity of logic, but with very few principles; fifthly, I think I have no real gifts. All the same, I think I have just found my true vocation---being a Maecenas. I have all that is necessary save the money---mais ça viendra.'

At the age of twenty-five, in 1897, he put on his first exhibition at the Stieglitz Museum, with the help of the princess. It was no revolution in itself. The exhibits were British and German watercolours (Lavery, Guthrie, Brangwyn, Liebermann, Bartels, Austen-Brown, Paterson), and Benois called it a manifestation élégante rather than a manifesto ~~of any kind.~~ But this was precisely its point. The fact that it was a social occasion, and the watercolours really said very little, was in itself an attack on the famous movement that dominated Russia at this time, the ~~so-called~~ 'ambulant' or 'peripetetic' school of purpose-pictures ~~that~~ which were remarkably similar in style to what later became Soviet art, with peasants and workers ~~figuring~~ as the heroes. That same year Diaghilev had written in an article, 'It is about time we stopped admiring these inartistic canvases, with policemen, rural guards, students in red shirts, and young women with cropped hair'. By contrast he found the 'boys of Glasgow', as they were called, captiavting with their hazy richness of texture. The lack of real content seemed not to matter. The exhibition was a great success, and all St Petersburg argued for or against it.

(So called—peredvizhnichestvo—for its travelling exhibitions)

Mamontov and his artists, chief among them Korovin and Serov, arrived from Moscow to confer with Diaghilev about a second exhibition devoted to the Scandinavian painters, and he organised this for the Society for the

PEREDVIZHNICHESTVO

Encouragement of Fine Arts.

Benois was now in Paris, living on the princess's allowance of one hundred roubles a month, with 10,000 roubles available for buying pictures wherever he found them. His father provided another hundred roubles a month, so that Benois could devote himself to studies that would later benefit the World of Art magazine which Dima and Diaghilev were hatching up at Princess Tenischeva's studio, where they met frequently. ~~She promised her support.~~ Diaghilev was to be editor in chief, she and Mamontov the publishers. The magazine lasted from 1899 until 1905, and had an extraordinary influence among the intelligentsia while never achieving a circulation of more than four thousand. Alfred Nurok became one of the chief contributors, ~~and~~ fitting the 'decadent' bill perfectly with his Mephistophelian appearance and interest in the duc de Sade. He introduced the circle to the work of Aubrey Beardsley, and it had been through him that ~~in 1897~~ Diaghilev had met Oscar Wilde in Dieppe, together with Beardsley and Condet, in 1897.

Dima took charge of the philosophical side of Mir Isskustva, as the magazine was called in Russian, while Diaghilev managed the artistic. Its whole effort was towards converting Russia ~~once more~~ to look west. Peter the Great had encouraged western artists to settle in Russia, and had sent Russian artists to France and Italy. Since his time the process had been steadily reversed, and the 'ambulant' movement was precisely ~~perhaps~~ the climax of this reversal in its emphasis on the struggle for liberty and its definition of the artist as a 'leader' ~~in this struggle~~ honour-bound to show life in a naturalistic way, without the smallest artificiality or 'art for art's sake', under which heading was included all interest in foreign art. The World of Art was, in comparison, a ~~the~~ world of the leisured. Art was to be 'free'.

This might have appealed to other leisured people. It did not. Both the public and the press were perplexed by what they could only dimly understand as)decadent'

arguments. Visitors ~~had~~ laughed at Diaghilev's exhibition of Russian and Finnish painters. An army general came along simply to stand before each picture and roar with laughter. Diaghilev began to feel the sting of public contempt. His use of hothouse plants at his exhibitions made people think him altogether too 'smart'. The entire imperial family had turned up at the opening too, ~~with~~ while an ~~whole~~ orchestra play~~ing~~ed in the gallery, which made ~~it~~ Diaghilev seem retrograde in the eys of the city's intelligent, or rather the 'intelligentsia', those sons and daughters of business-men and engineers and army officers who really laid the ~~ground~~ basis ~~for~~ of the later ~~bolshevik~~ revolutions.

Now that he was actually working among them, Diaghilev began to strike his friends as a very remarkable man indeed. He had a flair for creating a working atmosphere that infected everyone. He made it all seem 'a fantastic adventure'. Above all, he was a natural publicity man. He knew how to influence the rich and the important with a few soft words. He involved them in the adventure too.

~~Diaghilev's~~ His apartment in Liteiny Prospect was an impressive place for the headquarters of a magazine, its walls covered with pictures, its Italian furntiure glowing with a mellow richness in ~~the~~ dim corners. A good copy of Donatello's painted bust of Nicolo Uzzano stood on a small Renaissance cabinet. The dining room, where the committee meetings were held, had superb ~~Jacobean~~ baroque chairs. Business callers were received in ~~the~~ his study, ~~which was also his~~ ~~and Diaghilev's workroom~~ bedroom. At the end of the dark passage there were two rooms overlooking a courtyard--- the technical department, where Bakst looked after the 'tahnkless' graphic work, and Diaghilev's bedroom. The graphic work consisted largely of retouching photographs of paintings, which were then sent to Germany for the blocks to be made, since this art---like printing--- had declined in Russia since the days of Peter the Great. Bakst also drew vignettes, and the titles and elegant signatures. Everyone was paid, though not highly (except perhaps Dima and Diaghulev), whose income from the project

was a secret). There were boisterous moments, not always pleasant in their outcome. Once the two editors seized hold of Bakst and dragged him to the front door, then threw him outside on to the landing, pitching his overcoat and galoshes after him. They had ~~some~~ good reason. Bakst's brother, Isaika Rosenberg, contributed to a tabloid of the time called Petersburgskaia Gazeta. When Prince Wolkonsky, who was sympathetic to the World of Art circle, became director of the Imperial Theatres in 1899, some gossip about his policies reached Bakst through Diaghilev and Dima. Now his familial weakness was that he could not withhold anything he knew from his brother. There were a few leaks, and the two editors scolded him. When the leaks persisted they ~~took action~~ threw him out. It happened late one evening, and perhaps there was more to the incident than we know, for ~~the~~ the artist Kostia Somov withdrew from the circle ~~after this.~~ Diaghilev was almost in tears about Somov's ~~the~~ letter of ~~withdrawal~~ resignation, and Benois ~~went straight to~~ saw Somov at Nouvel's apartment to reason with him. He was adamant. Even Benois was puzzled. Bakst himself was back in the Diaghilev apartment inside a week. Somov was a quiet and considerate man, ~~from one of the most ancient families in Russia,~~ descended from Tartar princes and registered in the Sixth Velvet Book. Benois managed to arrange a meeting between Him and Diaghilev ~~and Somov~~ but Somov ~~the latter~~ left almost at once, hardly touching his hand. And he never returned.

The daily meetings lasted from four in the afternoon until seven. Diaghilev's habit was to consult with the others, listen closely to their advice, then make up his

own mind and from that point disregard all further discussion. On January 18 1899 his most ambitious international exhibition opened at the Stieglitz Museum with the kind of fanfare he loved. Rusian artists---Bakst, Benois, Paul Vasnetzov, Vrubel, Levitan, Repin, Serov, Botkin, Golovin---figured among Degas, Besnard, Whistler, Brangwyn, ~~Boldini,~~ Liebermann, Bartels, Lembach, Conder, Carrière, with two Americans, Alexander and Tiffany, one Swiss, Böcklin, and Boldini from Italy. The emperor and other members of the royal family were there. The Grand Duke Vladimir, to become an important sponsor of Diaghilev for his first Paris productions, and at that time president of the Academy of Fine Arts, returned to the exhibition several times.

Meanwhile the press was accusing The World of Art of 'corrupting youth, breeding ugliness, morbidity, and depraved tastes'. Diaghilev's homosexuality was now known. Among his friends it was a joke, ~~as when he talked about women with disgust.~~ But at court ~~it did not help with authority.~~ made enemies. In 1900 he was busy with his monograph on the eighteenth-century portraitist Levitsky. The attention he was creating put him in a buoyant mood. The more anger he aroused, the harder he worked. Benois and Nouvel shared his optimism. Dima was not so sure. The artist Répine, at first a supporter, came out against Diaghilev and started something of a press campaing against him. The second number of The World of Art featured Levitsky's portraits of the pupils of the Smolny institute, and a further number was dedicated to Pushkin, on his centenary. The exhibitions continued, one of them in the vast Académie des Beaux Arts, where Diaghilev cleverly constructed a room inside the hall to hide the bad copies of old masters on the walls. That year he went to the Paris Exhibition and reaped some of the benefit of his own work vicariously in the award of a medal of honour to Serov, and gold medals to Korovin and Maliutine. Vroubel also got a prize for applied art. Each one of the honoured artists was from his 'stable'.

There were several more exhibitions in the next three years. They were of great importance to the World of Art in that they focussed attention on its artists and attracted new ones, though the press maintained a fiercely hostile attitude---quite distinct from that of the Court. The first exhibition opened on January 28 1900 at the Stieglitz again, this time devoted to World of Art painters ~~only~~ alone. Another, organised by Diaghilev, Benois and Serov, opened on January 5 1901 at the Academy of Arts, after much difficult negotiation, and consisted of three categories of artists---the 'permanent members' of the World of Art circle (who had the right to send in what paintings they liked), 'guest artists' (whose work was chosen), and 'Invited artists'. Members of the Academy threatened to set fire to it. The newspapers mocked. The new artists in the exhibition were Vinegradov, Pasternak, Rilov and Riabushkin. The idea was to make the shows a permanent feature of St Petersburg life. Another opened on March 9 1902 at the Arcade gallery, with the participation of a Moscow group called 'The 36', and this was perhaps the most succesfful to date. But the following year the Moscow group decided against exhibiting with Diaghilev ~~and this was~~ (the chief reason why the exhibitions stopped after 1903). ~~That~~ A third exhibition ~~year one~~ was held at the Society for the Protection of Art ~~and~~ according to Benois ~~was~~ 'unsatisfactory both as to the pictures exhibited and the general effect'. The selection committee (which meant Diaghilev) was under criticism. Most of the World of Art painters assembled in St Petersburg to discuss the matter, and the 'Muscovites' came in force. Diaghilev opened the meeting. He talked about the 'grievances' which were being voiced against the selection committee, and ~~He~~ now felt it his 'duty' to ask if the exhibitions should not be held 'on a new basis', especially as some of the Moscow painters had criticised him personally. To everyone's surprise several of the St Petersburg artists (Braz and Bilibin, for example) sided with the 'Muscovites', and it was

decided to elect a larger selection committee with (an obvious blow at Diaghilev) less 'dictatorial' powers. The biggest surprise of all, however, was Benois' sudden declaration that he too wanted a 'new society'. Diaghilev and Filosofov looked at each other. According to one of the artists present (Igor Grabar) Diaghilev seemed very disturbed, while Dima looked calm, with a sarcastic smile hovering on his lips. 'Everyone got up, and Filosofov, in a voice audible to everyone, said, "Thank God, this is the end!"'

The World of Art now began to falter, as small and expensive magazines will. Mamontov was finding it difficult to keep up his subsidy, as his business affairs were in a bad state, during that period of what the Marxists called the 'last gasp of Russian capitalism' before the Revolution. The Princess also withdrew her money, but more probably because of the sex-stigma against Diaghilev. Also, with a couple of young tyrants running the magazine, she saw little role for herself except that of what modern show business calls 'moneybags'. The press mocked her. There was a cartoon of her as a cow being milked by Diaghilev and his staff. For an attractive young woman who entertained the most brilliant society in Paris and St Petersburg it was an expensive way of losing face.

The previous summer, in 1899, Benois had returned from his first long stay in Paris and his first visit to London. Diaghilev and Dima came out to his villa at Chernaia Rechka with the news that the director of the Imperial Theatres, I.A.Vsevolozhsky had retired and the young Prince Serge Wolkonsky ~~taken~~ been put in his place. The Prince had turned to the World of Art group for help. He had new ideas. Dima was to be on the committee responsible for the repertoire of the Alexandrinsky Theatre, where drama only was performed. Diaghilev was to be Chinovnik Osobykh Porucheniy or 'Civil Servant with Special Duties'. He felt he had arrived. Or so it seemed from the arrogant way he started behaving towards his friends. Twice ~~the painter~~ Serov and Benois had to put him in his place.

Wolkonsky, unlike his predecessor, took an active interest in the ballet, and had a thorough musical education. That year Tamara Karsavina, then a pupil at the ballet school, saw him for the first time as he passed through one of the practice studios. She and another pupil were practising on the piano. He walked in, tall and slim and somehow impetuous-looking, his head bent to one side. They curtseyed to him and he made a bow. Then he came over to the piano, having recognised the ~~sound of~~ bars from Cimarosa. He tapped the piano with his finger and told them that when they had learned it they should play it faster. They were stunned at this, coming from a director. He was only thirty-nine at that time and seemed to promise some vigorous reforms. Current ballet positively irritated him. There were ballerinas but no real ballets, the miming was of an appalling quality, dancers grinned their way through everything, including the Tannhäuser ballet, on their points. This ballet was staged by the great Petipa. According to Karsavina's father, a dancer at the imperial theatre and a teacher, Petipa had been a much finer producer than ~~he had been a~~ dancer, and his acting had often been 'ridiculous', ~~It was~~ all 'false melodrama and pathos'. Little wonder, then, that Wolkonsky found in the World of Art group a refreshing stamina, which if applied to ballet might produce some very interesting results. The audiences of the time were as

much to blame as anyone. They accepted steps that were out of time to the music, ~~and the lack of meaning~~, as they accepted the affectations of the soloists. Wolkonsky once described it all to Arnold Haskell as ~~having been~~ 'illogical, absurd, unnecessary', all the more so in comparison with what the Italian dancer Virginia Zucchi achieved when she visited St Petersburg. She actually moved her audiences, despite ~~unfavourable stories.~~ the triteness of the ballet-stories. ~~In this sense her role in determining the future Diaghilev ballet was crucial.~~ She gave Diaghilev's generation, with her peculiarly Italian fusion of humanity in full bloom ~~and perfectly~~ with exquisitely resolved form, a view of dancing as serious art, not simply a divertissement-type entertainment alleviated by grace on one side and tours de force on the other. It was not a matter of wanting to depart from classicism so much as to bring it back to life. Diaghilev once said to Massine, 'Art must have perpetual youth; it must change and renew itself', but, on the other hand, 'Classicism is the university of the modern choreographer. The dancer and ballet-master of today must matriculate in it, just as Picasso must know his anatomy and Stravinsky his scales'. It was after Zucchi's visit that he began to see the possibilities of the ballet as a mans of fusing all his various interests---music, the drama, painting.

Paradoxically the Italians had done much to produce the 'acrobatic' style of dancing in St Petersburg, which by earlier tradition prided itself, unlike the ruder Moscow school, on grace and style. A series of Italian guest-dancers in the Eighties and Nineties was responsible for this. It was unashamed virtuosity. Pierina Legnani had dazzled everyone with her thirty-two fouettés (the dancer spins round, rising and falling, on one point), in a breathlessly exciting tour de force. It led to the appointment of 'maestro' Enrico Cecchetti to the Marynsky school in 1898. A special 'Italian' class under him was to accompany the traditional 'French' classes. The 'Italian' style had evolved out of the work of the

eighteenth-century ballet-master Carlo Blasis, and laid great emphasis on rigorous practuce. Cecchetti had already made an international reputation as premier danseur in the Eighties, especially in Luigi Manzotti's ballets Amor and Excelsior. He had been a pupil of Giovanni Lepri, who in turn had studied under Blasis. Petipa, ballet-master at the Marynski, did not resist this Italian 'invasion' but, with his natural balance and imagination, incorporated it into the 'St Petersburg' style. Christian Johannson, who taught the 'class of perfection' at the imperial school, was dead against it. He saw acrobatics and nothing more. He had been a pupil of the Danish ballet-master Auguste Bournonville, whose father Antoine had trained under the great French teachers Jean Georges Noverre and Auguste Vestris. They, together with Maximilien Gardel, were the fathers of classical ballet. And Petipa and Johannson were the guardians of their tradition in Russia.

It was Blasis, ballet-master at La Scala, Milan, in the early nineteenth century, who established the barre and centre practice, and outlined detailed theories on the way the arms should be held. This was the basis of the Cecchetti method. Above all, Blasis' doctrine foreshadowed many of Diaghilev's ideas on the perfect fusion of music with the steps, and both with the story and the décor. It was why Cecchetti became the teacher of the Diaghilev ballet. He laid great emphasis on the movements of the upper part of the body, especially the port de bras, and the coordination of arms and head to develop épaulement or perfect carriage in the shoulders. His classes began at nine o'clock in the morning with allegro movements which the maestro altered each day, for lossening up and strengthening. Work at the barre was followed by centre practice. Each day different steps were practiced---assemblés on Mondays, ballonnés and sauts de basque en tournant, temps de cuisse and bourrés of all kinds on Tuesdays, ronds de jambe on Wednesdays, grands jetés of all kinds on Thursdays, batterie and cabrioles on Fridays, and coupés on Satur-

days. He presided over the class with a ~~his gold-topped~~ stick, and tapped a dancer's feet with it lightly but firmly if a step was wrong. His eye was unerring. He worked his dancers until the sweat poured out of them, but allowed them to kiss him each morning at the beginning of class, ~~as they came in.~~ Before Blasis, the basis of dance-teaching had been intuitive rather than systematic. It was he who ~~had~~ based it on the laws of equilibrium and arrived at a precise formula in which the different parts of the body were seen as parts of a geometric design, of curves and right angles. The dancer lined himself up with the four corners of the studio, and the middle of each wall. It was a long and trying discipline for a child, and lasted seven or eight years. Karsavina's first teacher kept her at the barre for two months until her feet turned out and she was ready for exercises in the centre. That was the orthodox way in Russia. Her father, Platon Karsavin, always told her that sweat must trickle down the face in practice. He forbade drinking during practice as it 'ruined respiration'. A dancer could not sit down immediately after ~~his~~ her exertions but had to walk up and down like a horse, so as not to weaken the knees. When a child was offered as a potential pupil at the ballet school there was always a doctor's examination to see if there were any deviations of the spine. The heels had to be held together for the knees to be looked at. You had to sing before the judges in order to prove an ear for music. And if you were accepted you sweated every day for many years---until your retirement. There were also notation lessons, which pupils at ~~the~~ St Petersburg's Imperial School called 'abracadabra and cabalistics', a system of describing dances on paper which had been devised by Stepanov. In the Nineties the female dancer still wore the rather cumbersome costumes of the traditional ballet, which tended to hamper movements---tight corsets, stiff boned bodices and packets of tarlatan which came well below the knee.

n.p.

There were 180 dancers at the imperial ballet company of St Petersburg, most of them women, in three ranks--- the first solo dancers and ballerinas, the second solo dancers and ballerinas and the coryphées, then the corps de ballet. In the last years of the nineteenth century it was customary for a fine dancer to go down to Milan to submit herself to even less merciful rigours than those under Cecchetti, Signora Beretta taught at La Scala, and was shaped like a pyramid, very tiny, with a small head and (this was how Karsavina saw her) 'a meagre blob of hair on top'. She had once been a great star at La Scala, She banged her stick on the floor, and allowed not a second of rest in barre-practice. Karsavins was present when ~~Signora Beretta~~ she screamed at her own neice, who had burst into tears because of the difficulty of certain steps, Piangi, piangi, m~~a~~aledetta! ('cry, cry, wretched creature!'). The Italian school made you or broke you. Trefilova, Pavlova and Karsavina all showed astonishing progress after they had been to her.

which fact seemed quite impossible to her pupils.

Diaghilev's appointment meant that he was to be a kind of junior assistant to the Prince. He was now twenty-seven years old, and the most fashionable member of his circle. The great Mathilde Kschesinskaya, one of the most influential of the star dancers at the Marynsky, adored him, and everyone else in the company knew that she did. According to Serge Lifar, she had a little ryhme which went, 'I've just discovered Chinchilla' (Diaghilev's nickname, now that the white streak of hair over his right temple was so pronounced) 'in his box, and I'm horribly afraid I may make a wrong step in my dancing!' She would come to the footlights and bow to him. Tsar Nicolas 11, an enthusiastic theatre-goer, still worshipped her. She was ~~also~~ close to the Grand Duke Vladimir, second of Alexander 11's five sons and uncle of the present Tsar, with fourth place in the imperial hierarchy. He was also the father of Grand Duke André who was to become Kshesinskaya's husband.

and at one time the Tsar's mistress,

It seemed that Diaghilev was established in his future path.

Bakst was given a French play to design, Benois a Tanaev opera, while Somov was to design the Imperial Theatre programmes. For Diaghilev, among other things, there was the editorship of the Annual of the Imperial

theatres. It seemed the right thing for the editor of The World of Art. A lot of people, especially the editor he replaced, Moltchanov, hoped that this 'decadent' would overstretch himself on the first number, and bring Wolkonsky's little régime crashing down. It did not happen that way--- not at once. The first number of the Annual under Diaghilev's editorship was a triumph of good taste which the Tsar fully approved. It made its predecessors look shabby, with its bright illustrations and articles on the eighteenth-century designer Gonzago and the architecture of St Petersburg's Alexandrinsky theatre.

From the beginning the Prince had a rather difficult time. The press was against him. When, with the empress's approval, he lengthened the ballet skirt, there were caricatures showing the coryphées with sacks up to their necks. St Petersburg loved its dancers, after all, much more than they did those who administered them, and it was possible for a prima ballerina to wield more influence at court than the director) himself. The Prince began to earn the reputation of being 'against' ballet. His appointment of Diaghilev was resented largely because (as Wolkonsky knew) Diaghilev gave himself ~~airs~~ airs. There were press attacks on Diaghilev, ~~him~~, and---according to the Prince---'every kind of disgusting innuendo', meaning no doubt references to his homosexuality. The first Annual was a triumph of book production in a country where that craft had faded monstrously in the previous century. But that did not stay the criticism. First of all it cost 30,000 roubles, which was 10,000 in excess of the usual sum. It also looked too much like another edition of the World of Art. (Bakst did the cover, Benois ~~was responsible for~~ the article on the Alexandrinsky theatre). There was an outcry. The Annual was also too bulky, the bureaucrats said, and its format had been altered, with the result that postal regulations would be infringed! Diaghilev was kept waiting when he went to see high officials. He fumed with indignation, mostly to Wolkonsky. And when Wolkonsky was, himself, too busy to see him Diaghilev let ~~loose~~ fly at him as well. Early he required the full attention of everyone round him---as and when he

) the Imperial Theatres

needed it, not a moment before or after.

Nor did St Petersburg want its ballet interfered with. At that time Kshesinskaya's dancing was 'brilliant to audacity', in Karsavina's words. The beautiful Maria Petipa was dancing, and Egorova. Siedova was 'covering the stage in a few leaps'. The corps de ballet was 'famous for accuracy and discipline'. That year, 1900, there were fifty-five ballet performances at the Marynsky theatre (Wednesdays and Sundays, the latter being the more fashionable), and twenty-six different ballets. Four new works were performed. Pierina Legnani gave a benefit performance. Almost all the repertoire was choreographed by ~~the marvellous~~ Marius Petipa. Pavlova 11 or Anna Pavlova was beginning to make a great name. There were also Trefilova and Preobrajenska. Caterina In Moscow Gheltzer was the star. Michael Fokine was beginning to emerge, after his debut in 1898 as the coming star of the Marynsky, with his remarkable leap and 'virile execution' and ~~that~~ the Byronic head that made Karsavina, among other pupils at the imperial school, fall in love with him. In her first year she had seen another dancer pass out of school into a star-career---that great 'Puck' of ballet, impish and tiny and intelligent, altogether out of the ordinary, Olga Preobrajinskaya. The brothers Nicolas and Sergei Legat were coming up as also dancers. What more could anyone want? Who were these people who wanted to upset everything with a few vague 'decadent' notions?

The two friends planned a new production of Delibes' Sylvia. Benois would design the first act, Korovine the second and a nephew of Benois' called Eugene Lanceray the third. One costume was to be designed by Serov, the rest by Bakst. The principal dancers were to be Preobrajenskaya and the Legat brothers. The Prince's production of the opera Sadkho by Rimsky-Korsakov had, with Diaghilev's help, been a success. The designer had been Apollinaire Vasnetzov. It had delighted the composer, who ~~hitherto had~~ tended to be ~~been~~ disappointed by the Marynsky performances of his work. A second success seemed natural.

But there was already ~~some~~ trouble between the two men. The cause was, once more, Diaghilev's homosexuality. The Prince had received letters, Diaghilev himself an anonymous powder puff. The Prince called ~~Diaghilev~~ him to his ~~office~~ apartment for

'a heart-to-heart talk.' He told Diaghilev that he liked him for his ideas and his energy, and especially for the fact that he did things on his own initiative without having to be urged on. 'And so what I am going to say is very difficult for me. We are speaking man to man---en ami---I hope'. It was not perhaps the most tactful opening address to a man of Diaghilev's honesty and flair. The Prince went on to tell him that he offended people by his whole manner, and that this brought all his constructive ~~work~~ ideas down in ruin, and might end by ruining him. 'I know and can sympathise with all your difficulties, because so many of them are my own. But there is a little matter which is exceedingly awkward for me to mention, and it is this. I don't have the slightest desire to act as a censor of morals. Your private life is no concern of mine, unless it obtrudes itself in such a way that the prestige of the theatre is involved and the work suffers, and then as an official I must intervene'. Apparently people were talking about Diaghilev in a way that suggested less discreet behaviour on his part than was wise. Clearly he was making no secret of his affairs. According to the Prince, Diaghilev showed great annoyance at this and suggested that the people who were telling the worst stories about him were themselves homosexual---and he warned the Prince against them.

What really stung Diaghilev more than anything was the Prince's opening remark about his 'initiative'. It was probably the only time in his life he was patronised, and it is said that years later when he and the Prince ~~were~~ worked together briefly he ~~returned~~ gave back the remark to him, repeating it now that their positions had precisely reversed. On his side the Prince was hurt by his indignation. 'I greatly believed in the man', he told Arnold Haskell much later. He remembered the night of their encounter. It was bitterly cold, and after Diaghilev had left his apartment Wolkonsky put the lights out and went to the window, and saw Diaghilev stagger wildly down the street like a drunkard. The talk had separated them for good. (Heart-to-heart)

Years later when they met at the Ristorante Umberto in Rome, Diaghilev had still not forgiven him.

the Prince's

But however Diaghilev felt about the Prince, it was certainly not ~~his~~ doing that the Sylvia project collapsed. The company simply refused to accept what they felt to be the interference, on the producer-level, of a petty official whose only claim to fame lay in the airs he gave himself and the friendship of Kshesingskaya and the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch. There is also a certain amount of evidence that Diaghilev was intriguing against Prince Wolkonsky with the help of the Grand Duke, who wanted to be made honorary director of the Imperial Theatres, with Diaghilev as his artistic director. According to Benois, Diaghilev had begun to call at the ducal palace or at Madam Kshesinskaya's every day, 'in a state of intoxicated vanity'. Also his conditions in accepting the production of Sylvia had been that he and he alone would have control. That was meant as a springboard to the directorship. The Legat brothers agreed to dance but Preobrajenskaya did not. He now approached Pavlova. Again according to Benois, Diaghilev began to behave too 'masterfully', and it was this that brought the project tumbling down. Wolkonsky told him that he had great doubts as to whether the management committee of the theatre would agree to submitting to him in everything. But Diaghilev presented him with an ultimatum: either he was allowed a free hand or he would refuse to produce another Annual. Wolkonsky, as his senior, insisted that producing the Annual was his job, and that if he did not want to do his job he should resign. Diaghilev refused to resign. At which Wolkonsky said, 'I shall make you'. All the World of Art people now withdrew from the production---while, on the other side, there was a general strike of the ballet-company against Diaghilev's presence in the theatre. ~~The Prince was between the two sides.~~

A demand for Diaghilev's resignation was published officially. At once the Grand Duke took a train out to see the Tsar at Tsarskoie Selo. The Tsar gave him the ambiguous answer that in a similar situation he himself would have refused to resign. It seemed like a triumph

for Diaghilev. But later that day the usual Saturday report was presented to the Tsar not by the Minister of the Imperial Court, Baron Fredericks, who happened to be ill, but by his assistant General Rydzevsky who disliked Diaghilev and was indeed his worst ehemy at court. The following Monday the Government Gazette published this short sentence: 'S.P.Diaghilev is dismissed without pension according to Point 3'. Point 3 involved penalties for corruption and theft, and its application usually meant public disgrace and debarment from all further government service. Clearly the Tsar had been told some of those stories about his private life. Diaghilev was in bed when he read the news, and almost fainted.

The effect on him was, for his friends, strange and unexpected. But it was entirely characteristic. He did not ask for their sympathy or curse his own fate. He simply hid his feelings and asked that the matter should never be mentioned again. ~~Confronted by a failure and an impasse he at once switched his energies to new projects. Indeed, there was something uplifting about a scandal for him. It produced that atmosphere of struggle and war on which (at least until the terrible years of the real war) he thrived.~~ When outsiders called at his apartment he would ~~now~~ walk out to meet them like a genial Russian magnate. He could act ~~that perfectly~~ it so well. Then, ~~when he was~~ alone with his friends again, he would collapse into a sofa and ~~stay sitting~~ remain there apathetically 'for hours on end', answering questions 'in a hopeless, absent-minded way'. And when he was alone with Dima he wept. And he had fits of anger. But that was in his bedroom at the end of the corridor.

Prince Wolkonsky only kept the directorship a few more months ~~more~~. There was another crisis, this time over Mathilda Kschesinskaya. One evening she danced in a costume of her own design instead of the usual one, and Wolkonsky had her fined, which was his right. She gave vent to her resentment of ~~Wolkonsky~~ him and managed to persuade the Minister of the Court to have the fine cancelled. It ~~could~~ might have been expected. The Prince knew of her important conn-

ections. He could hardly underestimate them. Almost certainly he had used Kschesinskaya's misdemeanour as a pretext. He offered his resignation at once. ~~Kschesinskaya she was not admired for her action, and the young Karsavina, still at the Imperial School, felt she would pay dearly for her 'brief triumph'. Kschesinskaya left off her practice for whole periods to live socially---a disastrous temptation for her body to develop the dancer's swelling ailment, now called cellulitis. But she had a quite staggering will-power. About a month before any appearance she would stop receiving people, went to bed at ten, and followed a careful diet. All that time she practiced. The day before the pefformance she spent entirely in bed, with one light meal at noon, and was at the theatre two hours before curtainrise to make up and loosen her limbs. Karsavina had reason to admire this dazzling, considerate laughing creature. Not long after her debut Karsavina found that, despite an admiring public, she was getting fewer and fewer important roles. She found out that another ballerina had gone to the director and advised him to 'spare' Karsavina as she was consumptive. It was Kshesskaya who persuaded him that this was not true. For Karsavina this was not the action of a 'wrecker of careers', as many people saw Kshesinskaya.~~ It is possibly that she was caught up in the Grand Duke's (and Diaghilev's) intrigue against Wolkonsky, and thought to repair the damage done to Diaghilev at court. As it was, his face was saved by a so-called prikaz or special declaration which accepted his 'voluntary resignation' and reinstated him in another branch of the civil service that was purely nominal. ~~He and Wolkonsky met years later at the Ristorante Umberto in Rome, and they talked, but Diaghilev did not seem to have forgiven the other man.~~

The World of Art ~~had~~ survived by the skin of its teeth. Another rich Moscow business man, Ilya Ostroukhov, ~~and~~ a professor of the medical academy called Serge Botkine, ~~had~~ come forward and ~~done~~ aided a last-minute rescue operation. The appearance of the magazine ~~had~~ improved.

The deep mutual respect between Serov and Diaghilev---perhaps Russia's greatest painter---was a mainstay of the enterprise. Also he and Korovin came more frequently from Moscow than they had previously done. Serov arbitrated between the frequent scorching rows between Diaghilev and Bakst (who years later went mad). They all adored Bakst for his marvellous changeability, ~~from the~~ delightful comedy to ~~the~~ distraught tragedy as the victim of Diaghilev's neglect. Serov was commissioned to do a portrait of the former Tsar Alexander 111 from photographs and his own vivid memory of the man. ~~His~~ The present Tsar ~~son~~ Nicholas 11 wanted the portrait as a present for the Danish regiment of which his father had been colonel. After that Serov painted several members of the royal family, including the Tsar himself. Diaghilev persuaded him to ask the Tsar during a sitting to subsidise The World of Art, which he did with ~~the~~ 10,000 roubles a year for five years. But it was doubtful if the World of Art circle would survive its inner storms. In the autumn of 1901 several of its members, led by Walter Nouvel and A.P. Nurok, founded Les Spirées de Musique Contemporaine, a series of chamber recitals devoted to Debussy, Ravel, Schönberg, Reger, D'Indy, Franck. Prokofiev and Stravinsky were given auditions. Diaghilev was furious at not having been consulted. Yet it was a hidden tribute to his powers. They were simply frightened of his domination! About the same time Dima and his friend Merezhkovsky (who later published essays on Tolstoy and Dostoevsky) inaugurated Les Assemblées Religieuses et Philosophiques, their theme the creation of a new Christianity. Diaghilev kept his nose out of this. His religion was unashamedly worldly. At no time in his life was he interested in mystical experience unless it could be conveyed in artistic terms. He once said, 'There is all eternity to rest in'. Yet he was aware, spasmodically and fearfully, of those silences 'outside'. He always blessed his favourites before a performance, and sat them down for two minutes' silence. And his later attachment to Russia, that of an exile, had a mystical touch which he himself

would have recognised with difficulty. It was a quality he ~~recognised~~ saw in Nijinsky, ~~and later in Lifar.~~ He wanted it to reside in other people. For himself, he was happy ~~enough~~ to keep the oil lamps burning under his ikons, as a gesture of approval to what he could not be bothered with. It was like his need for a home. Someone else ought to do it for him. Towards the end of his life he wanted Lifar to start a family, and he would be the godfather of his children. ~~The ballet company was a family, but what a turbulent one!~~ So he and Dima now began to go different ways.

Dima ~~also~~ formed his own magazine, called The New Path. ~~and began to lose interest in The World of Art. Diaghilev now shared the editorship with Benois.~~ In 1903 the Neva burst its banks and St Petersburg was flooded. The ~~following~~ year after the Russo-Japanese war broke out. Everyone thought it would be a small affair, with a quick victory. Instead it was the first ~~clear sign of~~ slide in a long ~~the~~ social collapse ~~of a regime~~. ~~There were~~ Clearly great upheavals ~~troubles~~ lay ahead. From January 1 ~~of that year~~ The World of Art appeared under the joint signatures of Diaghilev and Benois. It was the magazine's last year. The emperor withdrew his subsidy, due to the expenses of the Franco-Prussian war. The editors approached Princess Tenischeva again but she insisted on too many conditions. Bakst had pneumonia, and almost went mad. ~~In order to marry the daughter of Paul Tretiakov, a prince and a great patron of art, he had been required to convert to the Orthodox church, which had cost him many heart searchings. He and the girl, Lubov Pavlovna Gritzenko (she was actually a young widow), had met constantly in his studio at the Marynsky theatre, on the pretext of his doing her portrait. Actually he did a likeness of her as one of the dolls for a ballet called The Fairy Doll, in a black Paris dress and a huge hat, and she was later seen dangling among other dolls on the stage. Everyone noticed the likeness, including the Tsar and his family. Their infatuation was well known, and the objections of the Moscow end of the Tretiakov family were overcome. Not long after Bakst~~ Bakst had married.

Soon after Dima and Diaghilev had a violent quarrel--- and were never friends again.

The autumn of 1905 was a nightmare for St Petersburg. There were strikes everywhere, and hostile pickets. The trams ~~were not~~ stopped running. Dancers ~~as well~~ too were involved in this 'October' Revolution. Karsavina and other fledgelings of the Marynsky gathered at Michel Fokine's apartment to discuss ~~of~~ forming an 'autonomous' group which would do away with the imperial bureaucracy and raise salaries. Anna Pavlova was in the group. Secretly Karsavina felt a 'blackmailer', since she knew with what care and concern the State had ~~turned~~ moulded her into a dancer over the previous eight years, and ~~provided~~ given her ~~with~~ major roles immediately after her debut. Most of the other dancers refused to cancel performances, however, and the little revolutionary group found itself out on a limb. The Minister of the Court ~~then~~ invited the Imperial Ballet dancers to sign a declaration of loyalty, and most of them ~~imperial dancers~~ did. Sergei Legat cut his throat soon after signing this declaration, feeling a traitor to Fokine's group. ~~Karsavina calls him 'a laughing angel'.~~ On 16 October a Republic was declared at a mass meeting. ~~The~~ A day ~~after~~ later the Duma was declared, and an amnesty for the workers in revolt. As for the Fokine group, it was admonished by Teliakowsky, the new director after Wolkonsky, and then forgiven.

1905 was a really a rehearsal for the revolution of 1917. Plehve, the Minister of the Interior, was assassinated, and news from the Russo-Japanese front ~~had~~ got worse. The need for reforms was admitted by everyone.

A popular priest called Gapon led a huge crowd of workers to the Winter Palace to hand in a petition on January 9. They were fired at point-blank. This was 'Red Sunday'. The number of victims was not great but it flung St Petersburg into an uproar. For days afterwards there were excited people talking together in the street, watching for another incident. It came. Another column of workers was fired on during a march towards the Nikolaievsky Bridge. In spite of the emperor's orders the officer of a Finnish regiment had given the order to fire. It was much worse than the first incident. Onlooking women and children were killed. The royal family were still at Tsarskoie Selo while their presence in the city might have cooled tempers. Troops were picketed all along the banks of the Nevsky. Everyone was talking of the 'Revolution' as something almost accomplished. The Prime Minister, Witte, got the Tsar to ratify a new constitution, The Duma would be called, and it began to look as if the needed reforms would be passed. Dima and Merezkhowsky published a pamphlet attacking Nicholas 11 from Paris. There Merezhkowsky and his wife (Z. Hippius) ran a kind of revolutionary headquarters at their apartment in the Rue Théophile Gautier, and were in contact with Kerensky. Dima's interest in the 'Revolution' was a fervently mystical one. Gradually the uproar died down, but not the discontent. Diaghilev wrote to Benois (once more in Paris) that he had proposed to the Secretary of State that he himself should found a Ministry of Fine Arts independent of the court. Like Benois, he was tried of the World of Art and was not sorry to see it disappear. They had turned down Princess Tenischeva's suggestion that a painter called N.L.Rorich should join them on the editorial staff apparently because they did not believe in Rorich's good will towards them, but in fact because they were looking towards more glorious expressions than an art magazine. In his letter Diaghilev warned him of the great social struggle ahead for Russia, and the loss of comforts and civilisation that

this would involve. He was well aware at this time that these two words were not interchangeable.

He hated Teliakowsky, Wolkonsky's successor in the directorship of the Imperial Theatres. ~~He~~ Teliakovsky was a ~~quite different man from the Prince, being~~ a guards officer, and even Wolkonsky's enemies thought that a director should have a certain refinement. But Teliakowsky could play politics. Having a military buddy in almost every department of state, he knew how to stay in a saddle once he had got there. ~~And~~ In fact this brought the Imperial Theatres a lot of benefit, ~~in that~~ since his policy was ~~not only sound~~ at least persistent. He brought the rather obsessive vogue of Italian opera to an end, and in Karsavina's words 'almost forced Rimsky-Korsakov on St Petersburg audiences'. Sets became bolder in design. Ballet costumes were given a softer line, with less muslin round the hips. And although Benois severely criticised the 1902 production of Don Quixote its Moscow ballet-master Alexander Gorsky did give the corps de ballet a role (they usually trooped off after their number).

Teliakovsky himself, like so many administrators who succeed, had no judgement, but his wife, who painted and designed, did. He characteristically was afraid of Diaghilev's powers while aware of the weight of fashion ~~that was~~ now behind the World of Art circle. So he gave work to Bakst and Benois quite as if Diaghilev did not exist. In the second number of The World of Art (1902) Benois attacked the new production of Don Quixote with its 'feeble' music by Minkus. To him and Diaghilev it seemed only a matter of time before Teliakowsky followed Wolkonsky. They thought he would be replaced by Count Jean Tolstoy, ~~who was~~ a friend of the prime minister's and an admirer of Diaghilev and his group. Fokine's 'revolutionary' group also tried to bring Teliakowsky down. None of it worked.

But there were compensations. Diaghilev's book on the portraitist Levitsky was a success. The Académie des Beaux Arts subscribed for a hundred copies, and

private buyers bought four hundred. And then the Académie awarded Diaghilev the Ouvarov prize. He now began travelling all over Russia to collect pictures for a new exhibition at the Palais Tauride (the palace built by Catherine the Great for her favourite Potemkin), and drew up a catalogue of over three thousand pictures. ~~himself.~~ He borrowed porcelain and furniture to fit the period of the pictures, astonishing even those who had lived with the pictures ~~most of~~ all their lives by his deft placing. Many who had thought him a crank when he

had appeared at their palaces (too big and important for them, in these days of social collapse) looking for old Russian pictures allowed, with the Tauride exhibition before them, that he was a man of judgement after all. A short scholarly book and a well-designed exhibition---it was remarkable how easily externals worked on the ordinary mind, rather than ideas as such. His ideas were called his 'extravagances', bizarre like himself.

There was even a banquet to celebrate his success, while the revolution was going on in the streets outside. In his reply to the toast he said, 'Every exhibition is a symbol, because when we honour a person we at the same time do honour to his ideas... There is no doubt that every tribute is a summing-up, and every summing-up is an ending... I think you will agree with me that thoughts of summing-up and ending come to one's mind more and more in these days... Don't you feel that this long gallery of portraits of big and small people that I have collected to live in the lovely halls of the Palais Tauride is only a grandiose summing-up of a brilliant but alas! dead period of our history?... With the last breath of the summer breezes I ended my long travels across the immensity of Russia... It was just after these acquisitive expeditions that I became convinced that the time to sum up was before us. I saw that not only in the brilliant portraits of those ancestors, so far removed from us, but more vividly in their descendants, who were ending their lives. The end of a period is revealed here, in those gloomy dark palaces, frightening in their dead splendour, and inhabited today by charming mediocre people who could no longer stand the strain of bygone parades... That is what completely convinced me that we live in a period of transition. We are doomed to die to pave the way for the resurrection of a new culture, which will take from us what remains of our weary wisdowm... We are witnesses of the greatest moment of summing-up in history, in the name of a new and unknown culture, which will be created by us, and which will also sweep us away. That is why, with fear or misgiving, I raise my glass to the ruined walls of the beautiful palaces, as well as to

the new commandments of a new aesthetic. The only wish that I, an incorrigible sensualist, can express, is that the forthcoming struggle should not damage the amenities of life, and that the death should be as beautiful and as illuminating as the resurrection'.

When peasants later began pillaging the country palaces, at least the three thousand pictures of his collection were safe.

3

Paris, Patrons and Penury

In 1904 Isadora Duncan ~~had~~ appeared in St Petersburg for the first time and danced barefoot before audiences that had only seen dancers in skirts and on points. Diaghilev, Michel Fokine, Benois and most of the other World of Art circle saw her. For Benois she had no sex appeal and could not approach Virginia Zucchi or Pavlova or Karsavina as a dancer. Sometimes, he said, her dancing 'exhibited thoroughly English airs and graces and a sugary affectation'. But her performance was a liberation in itself. Her leaps and runs, and above all her pauses, were 'full of a genuine awareness of beauty'. Unlike many of the Russian dancers she also had an 'inner sense of music', which dictated the smallest movements of her hands. Michel Fokine raved about her afterwards, and certainly for his later choreography her performances were the chief liberating influence. According to Diaghilev 'classical ballet in imperial Russia never recovered from the impact of her dancing'. The World of Art circle befriended her. One night at a banquet given in her honour at the Cubat restaurant (Benois was sitting next to her) she got very drunk and insisted on dancing. The tables were pushed back and a space cleared for her, with everyone sitting round in a wide circle. She took off her gown and in a short chemise did a wild dance which she introduced as 'a bacchic dance' and then crashed on to the carpet, without harming herself. A member of the group took her back to her hotel afterwards,

where she danced again, rolled on the floor, tried to embrace him and get him into bed, and apparently would not calm down.

Fokine described her as 'the greatest American gift to the dance'. She proved that all the 'primitive, plain, natural movements---a simple step, run, turn on both feet, small jump on one foot---are far better than all the richness of the ballet technique, if to this technique must be sacrifieed grace, expressiveness and beauty'. When she was asked once with whom she had studied dancing she replied, 'With Terpsichore'. The Russians recognised the refreshing freedom but saw the dangers of indiscipline. Duncan herself did too---she ~~showed~~ demonstrated this when ~~she~~ years later she asked Fokine to run a class in dance technique at her school. What her influence did do was to liberate the marvellously rich Russian technique into new ballets that were moving and had meaning, and seemed to be the living expression of the music accompanying them. Diaghilev himself said little about her, though he came to know her closely. It was like him to absorb an influence silently and then act on it years later. There was no doubt that ballet had lost all of its stigma as the Cinderella of the arts in Russia by the end of the nineteenth century. People fought for seats now, though most of them were subscribed. The subscribers of the first stalls excluded outsiders jealously, and there was seldom a new face that did not come chaperoned by a familiar one. The audiences had become expert, and followed every movement on the stage with a merciless eye. There was all-night queuing for 'paradise' or the gods. While showing relative indifference towards the ballet, Diaghilev was becoming more and more aware of its growing significance.

For the moment there was no mention of it. ~~But he was turning clearly towards the West.~~ He had hoped to be made Master of Ceremonies at court, with the Grand Duke Nicolas Michaelovitch's support. But this failed. He still ~~clearly had~~ found vehement enemies on all sides when he tried

for an official post. He went to Greece with his secretary Alexis Mavrin, but not before he had organised one last exhibition, in the winter of 1906, just to show---in Benois's words--- what 'virtue lay in dictatorship, and to prove that, where he was concerned, the wish was father to the deed'. It was a triumph---an effective parthian shot.

(with whom he was having an affair)

From Greece he went to Italy again, then Germany and on to Paris, where he heard from Alexandre Benois that since the Universal Exhibition there, with its successful Russian pavilion designed by Korovin, interest in Russia had been growing. It seemed s sign for him. He decided to bring Russian art to Paris, as a first step, and he approached the directors of the new Salon d'Automne. His aunt, Anna Filosofova, was also staying in Paris at the time (he met Dima at her house but they were cold towards each other). The idea of the Paris exhibition was to show two centuries of Russian painting and sculpture, together with a collection of ikons. The World of Art painters were to get a good showing--- Rohrich, Somov, Serov, Sudeikine, Prince Trubetzkoy, Vrubel, Korovin, Paul Kuzenetzov, Dobuzhinsky, and of course Bakst and Benois. Diaghilev found his way into the best French society, no difficult job for him as he was so manifestly out of the top drawer himself. Mme Guy de Pourtalès introduced him to Comtesse de Greffülhe, who was to become one of his most important patronesses. Her cousin was Count Robert de Montesquieu, who had a superb white villa in Neuilly. If any single man decided what it was elegant for a Parisian to like ~~or dislike~~ in matters of art it was the count ('Robert de Charlus', in Proust's novel, was based on him). The countess was not at first impressed by Diaghilev when he asked to call on her 'about a certain scheme'. She told Serge Lifar that ~~(a snob's exaggeration perhaps) indeed~~ at first she had had 'no impression at all', as he sat staring at a statue in her room. She inclined to think him 'a sort of young snob or shady adventurer, with a remarkable conversational gift'. But then he started talking about the pictures on her walls, and it became evident to her that he knew

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what he was talking about.
~~a great deal.~~ And she really began to understand him when he sat at the piano and began playing unfamiliar Russian music that was 'so fresh, so altogether wonderful and lovely'. When he explained to her that he wanted to organise a festival of Russian music ~~in~~ the following year she promised 'without the slightest doubts or misgivings' to help him any way she could.

It was a propitious time, too, to begin his activities in Paris. The politicians were talking of a Franco-Russian entente. He himself had come to the end of his possibilities in Russia. Above all, Paris was considered the centre of the world for the artist---and there is a lot in such a consideration if you are going to mount an annual festival of the arts, which is really what Diaghilev did even in his ballet years. But, ~~even~~ more than this, Paris was ~~more~~ actually a congenial place for the artist, ~~in~~ with its ~~moving~~ beguiling combination of intelligence ~~with~~ and sensuality, ~~than anywhere else in Europe.~~ Compared with Berlin's railway station the Gare de L'Est looked ramshackle and old-fashioned. As a newcomer to the city you were flung ~~suddenly~~ into a world that seemed familiar only for the briefest moment. ~~Then~~ You soon realised that you had never known anything like it. You heard, smelled, saw ~~that it was a great centre!~~ its ~~other~~ marvellous eccentricity! It impinged on your ~~senses~~ so forcefully with the noise of its carriages and the bright exteriors of its boulevard cafés and the market cries and ~~the~~ women in shawls and clogs and the endless bustle on the pavements, that you had no time for detached comparisons. You only knew that here, for better or for worse, a frenzied and exhilarating activity was going on. It was a dirty and noisy city. You had difficulty crossing the ~~roads.~~ streets. Its gloomy and undistinguished outskirts, seen from the train, gave no promise of what you would find when the station had disgorged you---into the arms of hotel touts who offered to take your bags. It had a bad reputation. You could get robbed, swindled, so the stories said. It was virtually a southern city, a Naples of the north, with that bustling and insistently

attentive warmth of a world in full flower. There were carts and carriages and cabs, and endless shouting and clattering and shutter-banging. The smaller hotels were pokey and ~~often~~ lice-ridden, with torn carpets and faded curtains and the stink of lavatories and kitchens ~~every~~ lovering in the foyer where. And on the other hand there were clean pensione run by courteous people, the windows giving out on to quite courtyards. A lot of money was concentrated in the higher classes. There was plenty for lavishing on the arts. At the auction of the Goncourt brothers in 1897 the whole of Paris society had turned up, and (to the accompaniment of booing from the 'proletariat' present) tiny drawings had fetched 28,000 francs. Even the air of Paris was ~~delightfully~~ exhilarating. ~~It seemed to boost the ecstatic activity.~~ And there were already a good many Russians. Prince Tenishev, among others, came to Paris for the annual season and kept some of the most elegant carriages in the city, despite his being the pioneer aumtomobile-manufacturer of St Petersburg. You heard singing everywhere---washerwomen, bricklayers, even ~~the~~ beggars. You saw flocks of goats in the streets--- Parisians loved their goat-milk. There were the carnivals of Mardi Gras and Mi-Carême, so boisterous that no one could avoid being caught up in them. In Montmartre there was Le Cabaret du Néant where beer was sold by torch-bearers and called choléra and peste, and served on a black coffin.

Diaghilev and the organisers of the Salon d'Automne agreed on an Exposition de l'Art Russe à Paris, to be seen in the Grand Palais. He returned to St Petersburg and together with Bakst began to search out exhibits. The Grand Duke Vladimir agreed to become president of the exhibition, and the presidents of honour were to be the Russian ambassador in Paris, M. Nelidov, the Comtesse de Greffühle, and Dujardin-Beaumetz, ~~who was~~ Under Secretary of State to the Minister of Fine Arts. A patron's committee was formed under Count Jean Tolstoy. It looked as if all the social artillery would be sited in Diaghilev's support.

(the second of Alexander II's five sons, and the present Tsar's uncle)

Above all, he was to be in sole artistic control. He went back to Paris with the artists Soudeikine and Paul Kouznetzov, and Walter Nouvel. Bakst was to be in charge of the general décor of the exhibition, and 750 items were to be displayed in twelve rooms. Altogether the exhibition occupied four ~~huge~~ enormous halls and some smaller ones. The works, apart from those of the World of Art members, were drawn from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. By now the Tsar had conceived a real dislike for Diaghilev, but the Grand Duke and his wife Maria Pavlovna ('the small court' as they were called) still spoke in his favour. ~~of him.~~ And it could not be denied, even at court, that he was at least a successful ~~a great~~ organiser. On this occasion it is probable that Diaghilev put his hand in his own pocket to meet some of the expenses, for instance that of transporting the exhibits. ~~pieces.~~ Some criticised his hanging of the ikons; their ~~those~~ brilliance was somewhat shaded by the sparkling brocade on which they ~~he~~ hung. ~~them.~~ ~~But~~ This brocade covered the hall from top to bottom, ~~and~~ achieving a quite remarkable ~~unbelievable~~ coup d'oeil. ~~the moment the spectator walked in. But this was at a time when ikons were not greatly valued, even in Russia.~~ As for Bakst's contribution he repeated his motif of the Taurid palace exhibition in St Petersburg by building trellises and bowers for the busts by Shubin and Shchedrin, with a portrait of the mad Tsar Paul 1 by Borovikovsky in the centre. Diaghilev said in his foreword to the catalogue that the exhibition was 'a faithful image of artistic Russia today, in its sternuous seeking, its respectful admiration for the past, and its ardent faith in the future'. ~~It was a remarkable success, beyond even what he had expected.~~ The 'ambulant' school was kept out---it was his way of destroying them for the rest of the world, and perhaps for the rest of time too. Levitsky's 'girls of the Smolny institute' drew a lot of attention. There was a vast mural from Vrubel, a group of landscapes by Levitan, and some of Serov's portraits. Benois gave a lecture on the last two

centuries of Russian art. There were several concerts devoted to Russian music, ~~in the exhibition hall.~~ Diaghilev gave an intimate recital in his rooms at the Hotel Mirabeau, with Scriabin playing the piano and Chaliapine singing (sometimes to Diaghilev's accompaniment). The weather throughout was 'abominably hot'. ~~One day Chaliapine appeared naked in Diaghilev's quarters---a servants' staircase led to the room from his own. He was drunk and wanted to sing. He was having an affair with his future wife which plunged him into a state of excitement.~~ At the end of the exhibition Diaghilev was offered the Legion of Honour but turned it down in favour of Bakst — and ~~actually~~ really because it was 'not uncommon or picturesque enough'. His return to St Petersburg was in a glow of success, for he had done more than any government could have to make Russia understand ~~able~~ to ~~to~~ in France.

But France needed to understand more, especially about Russian music. He had already spoken to the Comtesse de Greffühle about a series of concerts to be held in the spring of 1907 at the Opéra. In St Petersburg he spoke to the Chamberlain of the Imperial court, Alexandre Taneyev, who was also a composer. Taneyev agreed to preside over a special committee consisting of Rachmaninov, Glazunov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikisch and, with a number of others, Diaghilev. In return Diaghilev ~~He~~ promised ~~Taneyev~~ that he would perform one of ~~perform a~~ Tanaev's symphony, ~~he had written~~, though he disliked ~~it.~~ the work ~~Robert Brussel, the Parisian art critic (who had praised the Russian exhibition in the Figaro), happened to hear it (Diaghilev had invited him to St Petersburg to handle the publicity for the forthcoming concerts) and say he admired it, which made it easier for Diaghilev to include it.~~ The conductors were to be Nikisch, Rimsky-Korsakov, Felix Blumenfeld, Chevillard, Glazunov and Rachmaninov. The solo pianist was to be Felix Litvin, and among the singers were Chaliapine, Smirnov, Kastorsky and Cherkasskaya. For the music there was to be Rimsky Korsakov's symphonic poem Christmas Eve, ~~Glinka's~~ the overture and first act of Glinka's Russlan and Ludmila, as well as various songs and scenes

NIKISCH (Chef d'orchestre at the Imperial Opera of St Petersburg)

(But Robert Brussel, ~~Figaro~~ critic of le Figaro, liked it — and he was to handle Diaghilev's publicity in Paris).

from Rimsky-Korsakov's ~~various~~ operas and ballets, including the submarine scene from Sadko. Tchaikowsky's second and fourth symphonies were to be performed, and also excerpts from Borodin's Prince Igor. Mussgorsky was to be represented by Trepak, Song of the Flea and the second act of Boris Godunov. Alexandre Taneyev's second symphony was to be heard ('worthless' as Diaghilev found it), Liadov's Eight Folk Songs and Baba Yaga, and Scriabin's piano concerto and second symphony. There was to be Rachmaninov's second piano concerto and his cantata Spring, with Balakirev's Thamar, Glazunov's second symphony, Liapunov's piano concerto and a piece from Caesar Cui's opera called William Ratcliff. In the programme there were biographical notes for each composer, and some analytical notes on the music, with a general introduction to Russian music. Diaghilev chose the Liapunov piece as a reluctant tribute to the tastes of his Parisian audience, who thought that composer a characteristic 'Russian'. Strangely, ~~as it turned out,~~ they would not admit that Tchaikowsky was precisely this. Not even Nikitsch, though at the height of his fame, and the star of the series, could convert them to him with masterly conducting. Nor did the Parisians have much time for Rachmaninov, though they had the excuse that he was not yet famous. It was Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin and Mussorgsky ~~that~~ whom the audiences went for. And of these Mussorgsky created the most delight. More than any other Russian composer, too, he influenced the French composers of the time, notably ~~like~~ Debussy and Ravel. Diaghilev was not altogether happy with the way things went. For a start Nikitsch took Glinka's overture to Russlan and Ludmilla much too slowly for his taste, so that its effect was lost---and this at the opening of the series. Diaghilev's flair for publicity had worked quite well, especially with the help of Michael Calvocoressi, one of the prominent music critics in Paris, who was also Russian.

As to whether the series was a success, opinions differ. The concerts were certainly attended. They ~~certainly~~ attracted press attention. And they kept Diaghilev on the map for future seasons. But the triumphs were Chalipaine's singing of ~~Mussorgsky's song for~~ Galitzsky's song in Prince Igor, and Mussorgsky. Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov were praised, but there was clearly little sympathy between them and the French composers, ~~from~~ whether Debussy ~~or~~ d'Indy. The late-night arguments at the Café de la Paix, where the Russians and their friends gathered, were very hot. Scriabine came off rather badly. He arrived in ~~some thing of~~ a hysterical nervous ~~state~~ condition from New York and found no complimentary tickets waiting for him for the performance of his own symphony (the second concert of the series). They ~~arrived at~~ reached his apartment just before he was leaving. During the interval he went up to Diaghilev and began ~~scolding him, to which~~ complaining. Diaghilev ~~replied that~~ said, 'If ~~he left~~ you feel complimentary tickets ~~to be~~ are so important ~~to~~ you should look after them ~~himself~~ yourself in future!' Scriabin ~~said~~ shouted, 'I am a representative of Art, while you only gallivant about on the fringe!', which so astonished Diaghilev ~~with its injustice~~ that he ~~could not answer. Everyone in the~~ simply stared at the composer with his mouth open. Everyone in the World of Art circle was dissatisfied. Their field was the plastic arts, ~~and~~ they regarded music simply as the 'integrating element' in a stage spectacle. It was natural that they ~~could~~ should not see a role for themselves in the concert hall. This, and the success Of Chaliapine and Mussorgsky, seemed to lead naturally to the idea that the following season should be devoted to opera. Such a thing had now become Diaghilev's dream---an imposing theatrical enterprise that would give ~~for the first time~~ the Parisians an overall picture of Russian work, now that had had, so to speak, some training in things Russian. ~~It was~~ He decided to bring Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov ~~to~~ over, ~~Paris,~~ with Feodor Chaliapine singing the title role, ~~for~~ in the spring of 1908.

Back in Russia Diaghilev began a search ~~everywhere~~

for old costumes to fit Mussorgsky's sixteenth-century setting. He insisted on as much authenticity as possible, and together with Benois he scoured the Jewish and Tartar shops of St Petersburg to buy up silks, brocades, gold- and spangle-embroidered kerchiefs and head-dresses to dazzle Paris. ~~The scenery was painted at the Hermitage theatre---a great concession from the court.~~ He even sent Bilibine, an expert in ikons, to northern Russia to go from one village to another collecting hand-woven sarafans which had been in the possession of peasants for centuries. The scenery was painted at the Hermitage theatre---a great concession from the court. The influence of the Grand Duke Vladimir had worked. The chorus came from the Bolshoi theatre in Moscow. And the technicians came from Moscow too, under the dynamic K.F.Valz. And Diaghilev was given access to Russia's finest singers.

But there were hitches. Golovin failed to deliver his costume designs on time, due to the fact that he was a protégé of Teliakowsky's. But even ~~the~~ opposition from this quarter (supported by the assistant director Alexander Dmitrivitch Krupensky) faded as it was realised what an exciting venture the presentation of Mussorgsky to the western world was going to be. The Grand Duke Vladimir went on opening doors, and involving the wealthy. Diaghilev, according to Benois, was 'obsessed, overcome, maniacal' as never before. The difficulties that cropped up only seemed to attract and fascinate him. The work of preparation was tough and long. The sarafans and seed-pearl embroideries continued to arrive at his apartment. ~~come in.~~ He ~~Diaghilev~~ wanted many cuts in the opera, terrified of boring his audience. He found the work like most Russian operas too long and untidy, and wanted a straight dramatic line. He asked Rimsky-Korsakov to amplify the coronation scene, which he liked above all the others. ~~Benois hit on~~

Rimsky-Korsakov also restored certain numbers absent in the first (1874) staging of Boris. He wanted to restore the famous peel of bells, rather against the judgement of Diaghilev and his friends---but he got his way and it caused a sensation in Paris. He had endless discussions with the 'committee'. Diaghilev was afraid of 'dragging out the opera---which anyway most people said the French would never understand.' There was also the question of having a live horse on the stage--- Diaghilev hated the idea, remembering that at Bayreuth Brunhilde's horse invariably dunged ~~the boards~~ in full view of the audience. 'Besides', he said, 'they never look like real horses'. And of course he was terrified of glanders (there was a slight outbreak in St Petersburg at the time and he was going about muffled up to ~~his~~ the eyes). Dmitri was therefore to be brought on standing on a sleigh drawn by adoring peasants---a simply brilliant stroke. This was the real Diaghilev touch.

In his casting too he showed to what extent he was a man of theatre. Chaliapine as the sinister Tsar Boris was perfect, but his choice of the inexperienced Smirnov as Dmitri for his superb voice showed real flair. Shuisky was to be played by Alchevsky with his rather nasal voice, fitting a sly character. The conductor was to be Blumenfeld, the stage director A. Sanin (who directed at the Alexandrinsky theatre and was to give Michel Fokine one of his first breaks as choreographer) despite Krupensky's opposition. Alexandre Benois was the unofficial ~~director~~ liaison officer who had to explain the French to the Russians and vice versa — ~~It was no easy~~ a nightmarish task. The Opéra staff---or rather the stagehands and minor officials---were as obstructive as they could be towards this 'horde of Asiatics'. Their hours of work ~~there~~ were fanatically rigid, ~~and~~ Nothing would drag a stagehand back to work during lunch or after official time. Lunch was so sacred that if it ~~happened in~~ stopped the ~~middle of a~~ most crucial rehearsal, ~~it was the latter that had to stop.~~ Even during official time stagehands ~~they also~~ kept running out for a coup de

blanc or 'shot of white wine'. Everything the Russians asked for was 'impossible'. First of all, an opera as complicated as Boris could not be mounted in such a short time---even the top officials agreed here. It was 'impossible' for singers to rehearse on stage. No scenery like that visualised for Boris could be set up, since the stage was needed during rehearsal-time and immediately after the Russian production for the Opéra's already very full repertory. Yet the bargain Diaghilev had ~~come to~~ made with the ~~Opera~~ directorate was that after the production the Boris sets and costumes should be given to the Opéra so that the ~~opera~~ work could join its repertoire and later be sung in French. As matters turned out the Opéra sold this property to the Met in New York, where the second production of Boris took place but independently of the Russians.

The walk-on parts were played by people off the streets, who stank horribly. Monsieur Petroman, the chief mechanic, was the chief saboteur too. He was determined that the enterprise should be a failure, and devoted all his time to ~~trying to secure it.~~ He ~~also~~ wanted to make sure that these ~~Russians~~ 'Barbarians'---of whom only Benois and Diaghilev spoke French---should never come ~~back and~~ disturb the cosy Opéra club again. The scenery, transported from St Petersburg by train, gave him the chance he was waiting for. ~~to prevent the first night.~~ The canvas flats had to be fixed to the wings, and the hanging parts adapted to the stage's existing cables and rings. The windows and doors were found not to fit, and had to be cut; new stairs and platforms were built. And the canvases only arrived five days before the dress rehearsal. 'What tension there was, what nerves, what exhaustion and despair!' says Benois. Meanwhile Diaghilev was rushing about Paris wining and

dining the Press and the rich and influential. When at last the company could rehearse with the orchestra (only two or three rehearsals were allowed) the stage-hands made such a noise hammering and shouting that Diaghilev had to be ready with a twenty-franc gold piece to 'sweeten' them when Chaliapine or another principal came on to sing.

Then Petroman acted. On the day of the semi-dress rehearsal, forty-eight hours before the public one, he announced that a delay of three or four days would be necessary since the décor did not reach the boards and there was much repair work to be done. Diaghilev calmly replied that he would under no circumstances postpone the show and was prepared if necessary to do it without any décor at all. Petroman was so frightened by this promise of a scandal that he put his men to work at once and the seven scenes all reached the floor by the time of the dress rehearsal. Everyone was in a state of desperate tension just the same. On the night of the semi-official dress rehearsal, Chaliapine refused to make up, or to change after the coronation scene. He said he had forgotten the Pushkin text which had to be recited at the striking of the clock, and to be on the safe side Benois put the actual Pushkin book on the table before ~~which Chaliapine was to stand,~~ him lit by a hidden lamp. Getting the great singer on to the stage was a job all its own. 'Never have I experienced such terror and gooseflesh as on that night', Benois wrote afterwards. There was still much to be done before the first night. The choir-singing had to be re-hearsed again. At midnight there was 'an uncontrollable orgy' as a mass of 'filthy, stinking people' with false beards and hastily pushed-on boyar fur coats and caps unloosed themselves on to the vast stage of the Opéra, which was illuminated by only one candle, and began to sing and dance on their own, screaming with laughter, while the Russians shouted for order helplessly. Even

the fearless Diaghilev looked green. Chaliapine prevailed on the rest of the cast to ask for a postponement, and Diaghilev---democratic for the first and last time in his life---called a meeting of the entire company, including the Russian props, to decide what was to be done. Fear of failure increased with the fatigue. An announcement to the Press was worded. Diaghilev remembered afterwards that the most vociferous speaker was R.F.Valz, backed up by his staff and the wig-maker Feodor Grigorievitch Zaika, who always reminded him of Hoffmann's Drosselmeyer. They all 'worked themselves into a frenzy', and urged that postponement would mean ruin for the company. He ~~Diaghilev~~ decided th take the risk and let the show go on.

But there was still a surprise waiting for ~~Diaghilev~~ him when he got back to his hotel. Chaliapaine was there to tell him that he could not go on after all. 'I'm in a funk, absolutely terrified'. He was trembling, ~~and~~ the sweat was pouring out of him. He refused to go to his own bed, or to leave Diaghilev, so he slept on a sofa in Diaghilev's room that was far too small for him. The next day the coronation, the polonaise and the revolt scenes were rehearsed three times under Diaghilev's supervision. Thirty seamstresses were sewing like mad. Painters were giving banners and ikons last touches. Simultaneously Diaghilev was reading the proofs of the magnificent programme. The stage director Sanin was dressed up as a policeman so that he could be among the crowd, and was pulling them here and there in groups with marvellous ubiquity.

The production was ready only a few minutes before curtain-up. Benois was still at the top of a ladder, in top hat and tails, overpainting a damp stain on the monastery wall when the overture began. Diaghilev hardly had time to change. By the end of the first scene he noticed that the audience was beginning to enjoy itself. During the coronation scene he realised that the evening was going to be a triumph, though at the time he was supervising the entrance of the procession from the wings. During the second interval the French stagehands, who now realised that the opera was a success, ran forward to help him as, in tails and white gloves, he pushed hedges and benches on to the set for the Polish garden scene. The audience 'went wild' during Chaliapine's mad scene. The only setback was the length of the second interval, because the chief mechanic Valz insisted on hanging huge chandeliers for the scene in the Great Hall of the Kremlin, and the audience began to stamp. But Chaliapine's triumph at the end made up for that.

As to Benois, he had dashed round to the director's box at curtainrise to explain the opera to the critic Bellègue (he and Debussy had been the first to announce their appreciation of Russian music). The coronation scene, Diaghilev's joy!, went off beautifully with its row of superbly dressed boyars 'like a wall' behind the procession. Diaghilev, with his insinct for contrasts, lighted the scene showing the Kremlin and Moscow's cathedrals as a brilliant sun-lit one (contrary to stage directions), to give it sharp relief after the dark monastery cell. It was a good theatrical stroke but meant that Pimen, the monk, threatened the Tsar Boris before he had become Tsar. But no one noticed. Diaghilev ended the opera at Boris's death (a real coup de théâtre for Chaliapine) and not with Mussorgsky's song of the simpleton which the composer had written to denote that Russia was about to enter an age of troubles. Bellègue, Debussy, Calvocoressi and a number of others

were against Diaghilev's cutting of the inn scene (he disliked its 'messiness and coarseness'). But the evening was a great success, if still not the kind of immediate triumph they all hoped for. There were no protests from the Press. After the performance Diaghilev and the company, together with his cousin Pavel Koribut-Kubitovitch, had a little celebration among themselves and a lot of champagne was drunk. They returned to their hotels at dawn arm-in-arm, reluctant to part. Benois and Diaghilev with 'Paffka' reached the Place Vendôme and looked up challengingly at 'that other conqueror', Napoleon. ~~Even back in their rooms~~ Chalipaine kept saying as they walked along the deserted boulevards, 'We've done something tonight. I don't know what, but we've really done something!' Back in their rooms they continued calling to each other, ~~to each other~~ Benois from the Hotel de L'Orient to Diaghilve across the yard at the Hotel Mirabeau. The sun was already high in the sky when 'Paffka', still drunk, came to Benois' room and began calling across to Diaghilev loudly from the window. The shutters all round began to open, and indignant faces looked out. The porter knocked on their door. Benois had to drag him from the window and put him to sleep on the sofa for what remained of the morning.

According to Benois, Mme Misia Edwardes and Mme Bernardaki (wife of the Russian expatriate Nicolai Bernardaki, who was to be a patron of the Russian Ballet) were at that Café de la Paix celebration. But Misia Sert (as Mme Edwardes became later, when she married the painter José Sert) maintains in her book Two or Three Muses that she saw Diaghilev for the first time at Prunier's a few nights later, when she was dining there with her future husband. Her maiden name was Godenska, and she was born of Polish and Belgian parents. At this time, still married to the

rich proprietor of Le Matin and able to be a most useful friend, she was still in her twenties, a lively and intelligent woman who appealed to Diaghilev ~~at once~~. This is what she wrote in her book about ~~the first night of~~ Boris: 'For the first night I had invited a few friends into the big box between the pillars. But in the middle of the first act I was so moved by the music that I made my way to the gallery and remained sitting there on a step till the end... Chaliapine's voice rose powerful and magnificent above Mussorgsky's overwhelming music... I left the

the moment he clapped eyes on her.

theatre stirred to the point of realising that something had been changed in my life. The music was with me always... I made incessant propaganda for this work and dragged to it all the people I loved.... Not satisfied with attending every performance, I ordered that all the unsold seats should be brought to me, so that no place remained unsold and Diaghilev had the encouraging illusion of financial success'.

n.p. That was the kind of role she was to play throughout Diaghilev's ~~life~~ career, comforting him and sharing every problem, at least when he turned up in Paris. She was always the first person he ~~called~~ telephoned ~~when he~~ on arrived at, ~~there,~~ and their ~~last~~ latest quarrel---they had many---~~was~~ would be ~~always~~ forgotten. She was the best friend he ever had. ~~So he declared towards the end of his life.~~ Indeed, they were so close that his ~~friends~~ collaborators ~~often~~ thought ~~that~~ she had destroyed the woman-hater in him and ~~he~~ they might marry ~~her.~~ But she was his 'sister' ~~for him.~~ During one of their quarrels he wrote to her, 'Please remember that not so very long ago we came to the conclusion, in all seriousness, that you were the one woman on earth that we loved. That is why it is so unworthy of a sister to make such a to-do about not having had any letters for some time'. And, ~~earlier~~ in the same letter, 'You say it isn't me that you love, but my work. Well, I can say the opposite, that I love you with all your faults, and the feelings I have for you are those I should have had for my sister, if I had ever had one. Unfortunately, I never had, so all these feelings crystallise round you'.

As with all his close friends, he ~~rushed there all the time,~~ demanded their presence at ~~his~~ dinner parties, ~~during one of his~~ rehearsals and performamnces, and no excuses, such as that ~~she~~ one had a husband, were acceptable. ~~to him.~~ ~~But~~ Yet, of the two of them (at least according to Serge Lifar), Diaghilev always proved the weaker, because in the end he was ~~always more~~ conciliatory and even 'passive'. He met her for the first time ~~together with Princess Polignac, who was to~~ another patron of his ballet seasons, ~~It was~~ it was at a party given by the Princess on ~~June 4 of that year~~ 1908 that Gabriel Astruc, who had produced the concerts of Russian music, approached the Grand Duchess Pvalovna, who

Princess de Polignac.

with those he loved.

was also present, with the idea of a ballet season. Throughout his career Mme Sert and Princess Polignac were Diaghilev's 'two muses'.

Maria Pavolvna's support was certainly an important factor in launching the ballet idea. Before marrying the Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovitch she had been the Duchess of Mecklenburg, and ~~she~~ had managed to make of her 'little court' at Tsarskoe Selo, in the ducal palace, a more radiant centre of intelligent people than ~~the~~ Tsar Nicolas II and his empress (whom both the Grand Duke and Maria Pavolvna hated for her dullness) could achieve, apart from the fact that Nicolas, being the Grand Duke's nephew, probably felt inferior to Vladimir, ~~who was as him (and to some of the other~~ as most of the domineering Grand Dukes -- other grand dukes -- there were twenty-seven of them. Maria Pavolvna had a quick mind and a vivacious ~~presence~~ manner, while her husband hid a fervent interest in ikons and dancing and painting under a loud voice and a rough ~~manner~~ delivery. Karsavina ~~has~~ described how he shouted 'in the most good-natured way' even in the theatre during a performance. He was 'exceedingly handsome and of a commanding presence', and about sixty at this time. He once caused a little fever of excitement at ~~her~~ dancing school by asking another pupil for ~~her~~ (Karsavina's) photograph, after he had seen her dance, shouting 'She will beat them all in time!' The photograph ~~had been~~ was provided by the school, out of fear, ~~of the Grand Duke,~~ but to make up for the breach of the rule against any form of favouritism the whole class was photographed as well. ~~which Karsavina only learned much later.~~

The Grand Duke had become very fond of Diaghilev, and part of his joy in being his patron was to make the other grand dukes feel fools, not to mention the Tsar himself. He ~~had not~~ did not believed in Boris, grand enterprise though it was on paper! In fact, he was mortally afraid for Diaghilev, and neither he nor his wife went to Paris for the first performance. on this occasion, Then the telegrams started coming in describing ~~the Paris~~ the opera's success. He and his duchess took the Nord-Express to Paris. ~~and went to the Opera.~~ 'The Grand Duke,' Diaghilev said, 'was genuinely happy and proud that this project which he had been almost the

only one to encourage...should have met with so outstanding a success'. The Grand Duke was amazed at the high quality of the production, and gave a party for Diaghilev and the company at the Hotel Continental where he was staying. rather surprisingly, In his speech he said, 'It isn't thanks to me or Diaghilev that Boris is such a success---it's all your doing. We only planned it; you made it come true'. Nothing could have been wider of the truth---and naturally most of those who heard him thought that he was displeased with Diaghilev, ~~for some reason.~~ The fact was that only they ~~really~~ knew how essential Diaghilev had been to every aspect of the production. Only a Grand Duke could have taken such dynamic powers of leadership for granted.

Before he returned to St Petersburg the Grand Duke Vladimir asked him, 'Is it true you're 20,000 roubles down?' Diaghilev said, 'No'. The Grand Duke smiled disbelievingly and said, 'Perhaps you'd rather notify me in writing?' ~~He promised~~ And he would ~~to~~ ask the emperor to 'make it up' if Diaghilev told him the truth. Again Diaghilev said, 'No, it isn't true'. The Grand Duke realised he had heard a false report ~~got up and came over to him,~~ and then made the sign of the cross over Diaghilev: ~~him and said,~~ 'May this blessing preserve you from all evil intrigue!' It was obvious that there had been quite a lot of it recently in St. Petersburg.

The truth was however that there had been quite a few gaps in the theatre on some nights. And it was really only at the last two of the eight performances that the opera had been fully appreciated. The triumph was a social one, and there was now the question of what to follow it up with. In a letter written in 1928 Diaghilev looked back on those years: 'From opera to ballet is but a step. At that time there were more than four hundred ballet dancers on the roster of the Imperial Theatres. They had all had a remarkably good training and they danced the traditional classical ballets... I could not help observing, however, that among the younger members of the St Petersburg ballet, a sort of reaction to the classical tradition, which Petipa so

jealously preserved, was beginning to make itself felt. From that moment I began wondering whether it would not be possible to create a number of short new ballets, which besides being of artistic value, would link the three main factors, music, decorative design, and choreography far more closely then before. The more I thought about it, the clearer it seemed that a real ballet could only be created by the perfect combination of all these factors. That is why when I am producing a ballet, I never for a moment lose sight of one of these factors'.

The 'younger members' he referred to were Michel Fokine and Karsavina, Anna Pavlova, Nijinsky, together with Kshesinskaya, Adolf Bolm and Monakhov. He foresaw that a ballet of the kind he had in mind---a departure from Petipa's mimed and danced stories (sometimes in three and four acts) like La Fille du Pharaon ~~and four acts like~~ Le Roi Candaule---needed far more than the tireless organiser ~~as~~ the Grand Duke saw him as. It needed ~~an overseeing~~ a master-mind. 'Thus', the letter goes on, 'I often visit the scene-painting studios, the sewing-room, attend orchestral rehearsals, and every day visit the production studio to watch my artistes at work, from the stars to the boys in the corps de ballet, completing their training.'

Many ~~other~~ people have claimed that they ~~started~~ conceived Diaghilev's ~~ballet~~ idea. ~~and alone suggested it to him.~~ Victor [illegible] In his biography of his wife Anna Pavlova Dandré ~~says~~ maintained that Diaghilev was impressed by Pavlova's success abroad. A group under the artistic directorship of Adolf Bolm had left St Petersburg to tour Heslsingfors, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Prague in May 1908 with Pavlova as the prima ballerina and Nicolas Legat as premier danseur. Bolm was thus the pioneer. After he had finished school in 1904, winning the first prize of his year, he made it a habit to travel during the summer months in Germany, France and Italy, and from these travels came the idea of forming a company out of imperial theatre dancers and touring them abroad. The first 1908 tour

was so successful that he repeated it the following year, again with Pavlova, this time adding Berlin to ~~the~~ his itinerary. Before he joined Diaghilev he also performed in London at the Empire theatre with Lydia Kyasht, and was offered a three-year contract there as choreographer, which he rejected when he got the offer ~~from~~ Diaghilev. It was thus no new thing ~~at all~~ for Russian dancers to appear in the west.

Dandré and Pavlova, at a lunch in St Petersburg some time in 1908 ~~that year~~, tried to persuade Diaghilev to take a company abroad. Gabriel Astruc, the Paris impresario, also claimed that he ~~also~~ persuaded Diaghilev to try ballet in Paris, in the summer of ~~that~~ the same year. ~~over dinner one evening.~~ Romola Nijinsky, in her book on her husband, writes that in the early winter of 1909 Vaslav Nijinsky,

who had just joined Diaghilev's circle, came to him with a proposition, 'Sergei Pavlovitch, why not form a troupe from the Ballet of the Marynsky theatre and take it to Paris? Don't you want to show the world what we dancers can do?' For a moment, she says, Diaghilev was taken aback, then he began to think. 'Vaslav was perfectly right. Western Europe had great music, great painters, great theatres. But Russia was the only country to possess in this century a great ballet and great dancers. Diaghilev was convinced, and so the Russian Ballet was born to Western Europe'. Diaghilev was rarely convinced in this way. His friends would come to him with an exciting new idea and he would listen to them with a lazy and indifferent expression, his eyes half closed, and usually (when the idea was a fruitful one) he showed no reaction at all. Then, it might be a few hours or a few days later, he would return to them ablaze with projects based on the idea, having transformed it in such a way that it seemed no longer to be their own. Diaghilev simply was not the one to show immediate enthusiasm, largely because, if the new idea did germinate, his mind was fully occupied absorbing it, behind his 'mask', and gave him no time to demonstrate feelings like a performer. He did see in Nijinsky a dancer with whom he could astonish Paris, and he said as much to Gabriel Astruc when they were planning his first ballet season. But (according to Astruc) Diaghilev had told the French critic Robert Brussel as long ago when they were in Moscow together as 1906, that he intended to take ballet to Paris one day. Alexandre Benois too claimed A.P. to have started the ballet-idea, and perhaps his way was the justest claim of all, for af all Diaghilev's intimates he had done most to stimulate his interest in the art. In 1907 Teliakowsky had entrusted the settings and libretto of the ballet Le Pavillon d'Armide to Benois, who had four years ago suggested the story, by Théophile Gautier, with Michel Fokine in charge of the choreography, and it had been produced in November of that year at the Marynsky theatre, to music by Nicholas Tcherepnine. It was a great success, and after the première Diaghilev pushed through the crowd

backstage towards Benois and said, 'We must take this to Europe!'

Diaghilev had another habit, which was to play down a new idea in order to hear what other people had to say in its favour. When he was talking to Gabriel Astruc in 1908 he first of all extolled Russian dancing, especially 'our Vaslav' or Nijinsky (whom he had not yet met), together with Maestro Cecchetti and Michel Fokine, then, when Astruc's enthusiasm was aroused, told him that Paris would never come to see 'whole evenings of ballet'. Behind this too was a certain canny reluctance to overburden his listener with ardour—the kind of restraint that every impresario must have if he wants to attract money. Quite rightly Astruc had the impression that it was he himself who persuaded Diaghulev.

But it is doubtful whether, even when he was planning to export ballet, Diaghilev was fully convinced that it would ever be more than an accompanying entertainment to the opera. Most likely he could not yet visualise running a ballet company full-time, or putting on an exclusively ballet season. As much as anything else, circumstances encouraged him that way. Ballet was simply not taken seriously at this time, despite the energies and fortunes spent on it in Russia. Even there it was not 'serious' like opera, and the music for it was not 'serious' like concert music, despite Glinka's dances in Russlan, which had inspired Tcahikowsky to write his scorned and unsuccessful ballet Le Lac des Cygnes in the Eighties. In Paris, certainly, there was no serious musical public available for ballet. In Russia there had been changes. Tchaikowsky's Sleeping Princess had been a triumph in its first performance before Tsar Alexander 111 at the Marie theatre in St Petersburg in December 1889. There was now the 'new' choreography of Fokine, and young dancers who seemed born to fit these new movements had come into being. But still ballet was definitely 'inferior' to opera.

In Paris the ballet tradition had degenerated completely, and while there were hordes of bad female dancers there ~~was~~ were hardly any male ones at all. Male dancing was, on the whole, regarded as rather shameful. It was customary for each of the girls to be the mistress of one of the rich permanent ticket-holders at the Opéra, whi liked their dancers plump. The result was more a floor-show than ballet. There was thus a chance for Diaghilev to show not only the finest dancers in the world but the possibilities of the male dancer for the first time. Even in Russia the premier danseur tended to be little more than an elegant porter for the ballerina, and stood back so that she could be seen in all her grace.

Clearly the whole concept of a 'ballet' had to be altered so that serious talents could be mobilised from every quarter. It was impossible to leave the story to the ballet-master any longer. The old ballets ~~were often~~ had been quite uncoordinated as between music, sets, costumes, plot and dancing. Painters, whose work brought them into contact with past epochs and styles, were clearly the best people to consult not only in the matter of costumes but the historical authenticity of a grouping or a step too. Yet in the old days no such consultation took place. A ballet had been condemned to be decorative---and even then insufficiently so---because writers, painters and musicians did not get together with the ballet-master before he worked out his choreographic approach. This collaboration was precisely what distinguished the Diaghilev Ballet from that which went before, ~~It was this collaboration that~~ and endowed ballet with 'seriousness' for the first time.

Benois' Pavillon d'Armide might well have been mounted for the Opéra in 1908 had not Boris already been under way. Behind its first production in St Petersburg in 1907 there had been quite a story. The composer Tcherepnine (Benois' nephew by marriage) went to Paris that year to produce Rimsky-Korsakov's Snow Maiden at the Opéra Comique, and told Benois when they met that his Pavillon was at last going to be performed in St Petersburg. For four years Benois had been hoping to see it on the stage, but Teliakowsky had always stood in the way, for Benois had reviewed some of his productions rather badly, finding them 'amateurish and flippant'.

He ~~felt that~~ thought Teliakowsky ~~was~~ a dilletante, ~~and~~ his wife a precious aesthete. True, ~~he~~ Teliakowsky had sponsored the artists Korovin and Golovin but 'had neither the taste nor the intelligence' to draw the best out of them. Now Fokine at Tcherepnin's suggestion had chosen the ballet for the Maryksky repertoire. Benois returned to Russia and found that he was required to reduce the three acts to one. Also, towards the end of their preparations Fokine asked him to write in a new part for the young Nijinsky, at that time 'a modest, shy, timid youth', small and sturdy and totally unaristocratic in appearance, 'more like a factory-worker than a demi-god'. Acoording to Benois (who also called Diaghilev rather unimaginative and poor in ideas) Nijinsky was not then remarkable even as a dancer. His leap was unusually fine but more of an acrobatic feat than the kind of elevation that sent a shiver down your spine. On the other hand, Karsavina, ~~who was~~ still a pupil when she saw Nijinsky leap in class---it was some months before he passed out of school---~~She~~ was so struck ~~by him~~ that she asked his teacher Michael Obouchov why no one had yet heard of him. As for Nijinsky himself, he seemed utterly unconscious of what he had done. He was certainly 'ungainly', and Obouchov was always calling him 'fly-catcher' because he breathed through his mouth. Benois wrote in the part of Armida's 'favourite slave', which allowed Nijinsky to stay by the prima ballerina (to be Kshesinskaya) and support her when necessary. Meanwhile the winds of intrigue were blowing in high quarters. Kshessinskaya suddenly withdrew from her part, and ~~was replaced (at the latter's suggestion) by~~ offered her services. Anna Pavlova. Then, without any prior warning, the management brought the date of the first night forward, making a flop all but inevitable. It seemed that Kshesinskaya had jumped clear of a trap just in time. Benois decided on drastic action and called up Bakst's notorious journalist brother Isiah Rosenberg, to put a story in the local gazette. Rosenberg asked him to write it himself, which he did, and it appeared next day. The bad publicity worked. The first night was

out of class

obediently

seen a necessary act of survival, quite apart from its artistic desirability.

his assistant

put back a week and two dress rehearsals were allotted. Teliakowsky himself---not Krupensky, who had been pointedly rude to Benois---came down to rehearsals and was as pointedly polite. It was affairs like this made a Paris season

to Russia

On his return from the Boris production ~~to St Petersburg~~ Diaghilev set about preparing ~~for~~ a joint opera and ballet season on the lines that Astruc had suggested to the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna. There were daily meetings at his new apartment in Zamiatin Perelok near the Horse Guards Barracks. Its ground-floor rooms gave on to the street, ~~while at the back,~~ looking into a courtyard. ~~With~~ at the back the servants' quarters. The grand piano and the paintings he had bought abroad were still there, but the Italian ~~Jacobean~~ chairs in the dining room had gone. The intimates of the World of Art days joined him again---Bakst, Walter Nouvel and Benois. Prince V.N.Argutinsky-Dolgo~~rukov~~ toukov,

-Dolgorukov

a secretary at the Russian embassy in Paris, also came (~~and was to~~ he later helped Diaghilev at a crucial time ~~later in the matter of money~~). The ~~re~~ was the composer Tcherepnine, who also conducted ballet at the Maryinsky, and the ballet critic Valerien Svetlov, with St Petersburg's famous authority on ballet, also a state councillor and honorary general ~~called~~ Nicolas Mikhailovitch Bezobrazov, kindly, white-haired and at this stage a most necessary guardian angel. During ~~the~~ these n.p. preparations Diaghilev met Serge Grigoriev, at that time Fokine's regisseur. 'Egorushka', who was to remain with ~~him~~ him ~~throughout the years of the Russian Ballet,~~ until his death, was rather dour, ~~and~~ perhaps unimaginative but, ~~in all things to do with the management of the stage and company accounts,~~ punctilious and dependable in all things from the ~~down to~~ the style of ~~the~~ a last curtain-call ~~and~~ to the ~~last~~ rouble spent on a metre of ribbon. He had seen Diaghilev eight years before, and was now most excited to be invited into the ~~not~~ lion's den. ~~volcano.~~ When he called ~~at the apartment~~ he was ushered in by a man with 'a little beard' (possibly ~~General~~ "Uncle") ~~who~~ and said that Diaghilev would like him to wait. This gave ~~him~~ Grigoriev a chance to 'calm down'. Then Diaghilev came and they shook hands. ~~He~~ Asking Grigoriev to sit

down, he said that Fokine had recommended him as a regisseur. They agreed on a salary, and Diaghilev explained that his first duty would be to sign contracts with the artists. And he gave Grigoriev a curious smile, with his mouth alone, while the rest of his face remained serious. Grigoriev left the apartment feeling that his life had been changed, as indeed it had. And he felt happy. In all the twenty years he spent with Diaghilev he never really became his intimate friend, though he probably spent more time with him even than a 'favourite'. Cyril Beaumont, from what he saw of the Diaghilev productions backstage from 1911 onwards, felt that no man could have served Diaghilev better than Grigoriev did. He was tall, spare and dark, with a pale face and sad eyes. He seemed responsible for every detail of a production, short of actually composing the music and the steps. He watched each rehearsal and knew at once if the movement had been done badly or missed out. He looked at all the costumes, was present at the lighting rehearsals, and procured extra lighting if it was necessary. He knew the music cues for the rise and fall of the curtain, and the cues for each dancer's entrance. He could at once tell if a scene was set wrongly. He arranged for the transport of the company and the packing of its enormous equipment, and arranged for scenery to be stored if not required for the next tour. He drew up the programmes together with Diaghilev, and decided who the understudies were to be. He was responsible for notifying the company about times of rehearsals and cancellations. His word was the final one when it came to the question of whether a costume needed repair. He was backstage well in advance of a performance. And he was never without his little notebook, which listed all the tasks ahead. As they were dealt with they were neatly ticked off. He was usually in the prompt corner during a performance. Sometimes, unless confident that everything would go well, he slipped behind the backcloth and into the auditorium,

to watch from there. At the end of a performance he would call out the names of all those dancers who had muffed a step or forgot a pose, and one by one he reprimanded them or booked them for a fine. Among his 'unusual qualities for a Russian' Cyril Beaumont cites his punctuality, and his concern for the performance above everything personal. As if all this was not enough he sometimes took part in the performances himself. He played Shahriar in Schéhérazade (king of India and China), a merchant in Petrouchka and a father in La Boutique Fantasque (in the first production of this ballet at the Alhambra theatre in London, June 5 1919). Diaghilev, with his intuitive penetration of other people, had every reason to smile at their first meeting!

From that time Grigoriev attended the meetings in Diaghilev's apartment, where they all sat round the dining table with his valet Vasili passing round the room to fill the tea-glasses (now that Diaghilev's nurse was dead). There would be biscuits and jam on the table, and plates of Russian sweets. As in a ministerial conference-room while ~~there was a committee, person,~~ a sheet of paper and a pencil lay before each member of the ~~###~~ Diaghilev sat at the head of the table with a large exercise book. He and Gabriel Astruc had agreed n.p. on ballet and opera for alternate nights at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, the season to open in May 1909. Only Le Pavillon d'Armide was definitely fixed, among the ballets. Diaghilev had played with the idea of Sylvia, his production of which had fallen through during his battle with Prince Wolkonsky. Giselle too had been a possibility. Now the committee veered towards Chopiniana which Fokine had devised after finding a suite of that name, consisting of four Chopin pieces orchestrated by Glazunov. ~~He~~ Fokine had added to these pieces a Chopin waltz, which Glazunov also orchestrated. The ballet ~~piece~~ had been given ~~first~~ on March 8 1908, and was later danced in ~~a second~~ another version, a purely classical pas de deux based on the waltz, with the danseuse in a long dress à la Taglioni, in examination performances at the Imperial School in the same year. Diaghilev wanted to use this piece but rename it Les Sylphides. Fokine

was reluctant ~~to do this~~ about it but agreed in the end. Also Dighilev wanted someone other than Glazunov to do ~~a re-~~ the or chestration. ~~It~~ A week later Diaghilev began talking about the ballet Une Nuit d'Egypte, which had been produced by Fokine at the Marynsky theatre earlier that year, on March 8. The music was by Anton Arensky. ~~Diaghilev~~ He wanted to call it Cleopatra and to make certain alterations. On the musical side he wanted pieces by Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov and Taneev to replace the original. When he listed the excerpts from these composers' operas and concert pieces it sounded a hotchpotch indeed. The committee ~~Everyone~~ looked ~~astonished.~~ surprised. This made Diaghilev smile, and he went on, 'Then the end of the ballet is banal'. At the end of Une Nuit d'Egypte ~~This is where~~ the High Priest substituted a harmless sleeping potion for the poisoned cup, and Berenice (called Ta-hor in Diaghilev's version) was advised by him to take heart and instead of bewailing her lover awaken Amoun. 'It must be changed. The youth poisoned by Cleopatra, instead of coming to life again, must be killed for good, and his bride must sob over his lifeless body as the curtain falls. And since we have no music for such a dramatic scene, I will ask our dear Nicolai Nicolaievitch (Tcherepnine) to write this music for us'. Tcherepnine was sitting there, and looked as ~~astonished~~ surprised as everyone else. Fokine was the first to remonstrate, as well he might, since it meant an entirely new ballet. 'That doesn't matter', said Diaghilev, 'what I want to know is whether you like the idea'. Everyone said yes. 'As for you, Lyovushka,' he said to Bakst, 'you will have to paint us a lovely décor'.

Later ~~Diaghilev~~ he sat at the piano in the next room and with Nouvel began playing the new pieces. Grigoriv had no idea he could even play, ~~the piano~~, much less play ~~it~~ well. Diaghilev bit his tongue all the time, especially at the difficult parts (Tongue-~~biting~~ chewing was, ~~in fact,~~ his life-long habit, and denoted hard thought). ~~He would show it about.~~ Now and then he turned to Fokine and explained something. Nouvel laughed as usual, and called

the ballet 'a Russian salad'. But Diaghilev knew his theatre, and that calculatedly happy endings are also messy ones. In his version Cleopatra sleeps with the boy Amoun, to the despair of his lover Ta-hor, and watches his death-throes with fascination after she has given him the poisoned cup. The last moments of the ballet are when Amoun is looking for her lover and finds him lying dead before her.

The committee then discussed who the dancers ~~should~~ were to be. It was clearly necessary, not to say politic, to ask Kshesinskaya to join the company, but everyone---particularly Fokine---knew that her style belonged to the Petipa tradition rather than the one he himself was creating, with its greater ~~freedom of movement and~~ flexibility. He told Diaghilev that as ballet master he did not need her, but he was persuaded to take her for Le Pavillon d'Armide. That was because it was not a strikingly new ballet, which Les Sylphides was---~~hence~~ he declined to have her in that. He preferred Anna Pavlova, whose weaknesses as a dancer in the traditional sense, for she was by nature the opposite of the virtuosa, ~~much less the acrobat~~ became positive were advantages in what might be called post-Graham choreography. She would clearly be ideal for the part of Ta-hor, ~~while~~ Fokine himself was to dance the boy Amoun. ~~Now~~ For some time, since the 1907 production of Le Pavillon, Léon Bakst, the great womaniser, ~~and Fokine~~ had been rather loudly secretive about 'an unknown woman of society'. She was no dancer, but Fokine was giving her dancing lessons. She was a 'genius', and also 'unbelievably wealthy'. She was ~~as~~ unbelievably beautiful too, and loved to take her clothes off, especially in public, much to the horror of her family, who belonged to St Petersburg's Jewish élite. She was in love with the stage. Her name was Ida Rubinstein ~~(Bakst and Fokine all but fainted whenever it was her name was mentioned)~~ and now, for the production of Cleopatra, she was brought like a soft, black, purring cat out of the bag. Fokine suggested her for the title part. Only the purist General Bezobrazov thought it was disgraceful

that anyone not a fully trained dancer should be allowed in the company. The others saw the possibility of a sensation, if she moved as superbly as Fokine said she did. By this time Diaghilev had already seen her perform--- in a censored version of Oscar Wilde's Salomé---and, in Karsavina's words, he 'unhesitatingly defined the promise of her remarkable countenance'. It was still a gamble, but all theatrical sensations are before they prove themselves.

Benois maintained that he persuaded Diaghilev to adopt the Nuit d'Egypte idea. He and Fokine were very cloae after their work on Le Pavillon together. Fokine was fascinated by the ancient world, and had spent hours studying vases and sarcophagi at the Hermitage. ~~At this time he rarely did anything new without first talking to Benois about it.~~ Also Benois worked on the new Cleopatra story, and even suggested ideas for Bakst's mise-en-scène. And he was responsible for the brilliant stroke of keeping Cleopatra and Amoun onstage for their lovemaking, concealed by veils, ~~held up by priests~~ while a slave-boy and a slave-girl performed a 'ritual dance' to celebrate the love of their mistress, with movements of great abandon, ~~These movements~~ ~~It~~ suggested the hidden embraces ~~more than~~ most effectively. ~~nakedness they could have done.~~

(Nijinski and Karsavina) which

Like ~~so many~~ most of Diaghilev's collaborators, Benois was anxious to ~~point out his~~ minimise Diaghilev's part in any enterprise. The amalgamation of all their stories relegates ~~Diaghilev~~ him to a role almost impossible to define. Where did his imagination take charge then? Benois tries to answer the question by saying that while being creative in nothing particular, even the music he had been trained in, Diaghilev was at the same time a thoroughly creative individual. Benois was convinced (unlike some of the less generous witnesses) that ~~nothing from~~ the World of Art and ~~to~~ Les Spectacles Russes de Serge de Diaghilev would have taken place unless Diaghilev had seized charge of it. ~~them.~~ He had, indeed, what ~~so~~ many---perhaps most--- of his collaborators lacked, a 'creative will', as Benois

none of the projects that became

calls it. He 'would greedily snap up everything that developed in the minds of his friends, everything in which he sensed a germ of life, and he would rapturously embrak on putting these ideas, which were not his own, into effect'. ~~The artists and musicians and the choreographers round him needed a man of action. And on top of that~~ Diaghilev was also 'a great enchanter, a real charmeur. If he wanted something...it was almost impossible to resist the pressure he exerted, often very endearingly...The success of such pressures was based on his amazing intuition, on an extraordinary perception not only of people's external peculiarities and weaknesses but also of their concealed thoughts, tastes, desires and dreams, which he seemed to guess'.

~~In Paris~~ Gabriel Astruc had calculated that the opera-ballet season would cost about 265,000 francs, of which he himself would take 50,000, that is about twenty percent, apart from his slice of the box office (which Diaghilev persuaded him to reduce from his usual five percent to two-and-a-half). As a fee, that was not steep for a man who knew how to fill the stalls of ~~the~~ Parisian theatres with the best society and the loveliest women, and prepare for the approach of ~~the Russian~~ a foreign company with newspaper articles by the best critics. For his fee Astruc was ~~also~~ to administer the show, take charge of the box office and publicity, and sponsor Diaghilev generally. It is not clear whether Astruc's estimate of 265,000 francs referred to the running costs, namely rent of the theatre and payment of the front-of-house staff, together with the ~~cost~~ wages of the entire Russian company, or included the production costs as well (rehearsals, settings and costumes, transport). ~~For~~ Diaghilev was to take financial responsibility for the whole season, and pay himself back out of the box office, which was to be entirely his after Astruc's percentage ~~of the gross takings~~ had been deducted. Astruc estimated that each performance would bring ~~in~~ into the box office 20,000 francs, and there were to be sixteen performances in all.

while performing

Gross takings for the season would thus be in the region of 320,000 francs. The runnings costs together with Astruc's percentage of the box office would, when deducted, leave Diaghilev with about the same fee as Astruc was asking on his side, 50,000 francs. It was clear, at this stage, that all the backing would have to come from Russia, while in Paris there would be guarantors who saw to it that the Diaghilev company did not come out at a loss. It is usual for a theatre to guarantee an incoming company up to a certain percentage of the box office, say 65% or 70%, unless there is a straight renting deal and the sole impresario is the incoming company. The possible patrons Diaghilev named to Astruc at first were Princess Murat, a lady called de Ganay, the Comtesse de Chevigné, Comtesse de Pourtalès, Comtesse de Hohenfelsen, Princesse de Polignac, Grand Duc Cyrille, Comtesse Jean de Castellane, and Baron de Rothschild. The guarantors found by Astruc were Isaac de Camondo, André Benac, Henri Deutsche, Henri de Rothschild, Basil Zaharoff, Arthur Raffalovitch, and the Russian expatriate Nicolai de Bérnadaky.

This time it looked as if Diaghilev was to get the Tsar's blessing. A subsidy of 100,000 roubles ~~had been~~ was promised to the Grand Duke Vladimir. There was also a private sponsor, the chief of a rubber factory, who was anxious to get a patent nobility through the Grand Duke. Diaghilev was ~~also~~ to be given the Hermitage theatre, next door to the Winter Palace, for his rehearsals, and no doubt the payment of the artists and musicians would not be written into the company's production-costs, ~~or~~ there is reduce the promised subsidy in any way.

Diaghilev recruited fifty-five dancers in all, twenty-five women from St Petersburg and five women from Moscow (including Vera Karalli and the sisters Sophie and Olga Feodorova), seventeen men from St Petersburg and eight from Moscow (to include Mikhail Mordkine). Nijinsky, who was nineteen, and Karsavina, who was twenty-one, were to complement each other as the fledgling stars.

The orchestra too was to be from Moscow, under its conductor Emile Cooper. As for the singers, apart from the now firmly established Chaliapine, there were to be some of the best-known Russians of the time--- Lipkovskaya, Sharonov, Zaporozhetz, Damaev, Petrenko, Smirnov, Kastorsky, Davidov.

Diaghilev Before his departure for Moscow to sign up his dancers ~~he~~ met Stravinsky, ~~who was~~ still a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov. Two years before, the composer had finished a symphony and dedicated it to his teacher, who arranged with the Court orchestra to have ~~them~~ it had been performed at a private audition (1907). Rimsky-Korsakov ~~was~~ a dying man at that time. ~~In his last talk with him~~ Stravinsky, whom the composer liked and admired, told him about his newest piece, Feu d'Artifice, an 'orchestral fantasy'. Both this and the Scherzo Fantastique were performed at the Ziloti concerts (Alexander Ziloti ~~both~~ sponsored and conducted ~~these~~ them). That was on 6 February 1909, and Diaghilev was present. ~~The whole future of the young man~~ Stravinsky's musical career was determined by the fact that Diaghilev was ~~struck and dazzled~~ captivated by what he heard. They became friends (~~and remained so for the remaining twenty years of Diaghilev's life~~ next), and Diaghilev asked him to orchestrate two pieces by Chopin for Les Sylphides, the Nocturne and the Valse Brillante, ~~that is~~ namely the beginning and end of the ballet. Stravinsky found ~~this~~ working with this 'great personality' ~~was~~ different from anything ~~he~~ he had experienced. It was ~~quite~~ rather terrifying, in fact. When they disagreed it meant ~~Stravinsky found,~~ an 'arduous and exhausting' struggle: ~~because of~~ Diaghilev's passionate endurance and tenacity were unbelievable. Such a force of will ~~so overwhelming~~ emanated from ~~the man~~ him that it was difficult not to accede to everything he wanted. But it was reassuring ~~as well,~~ ~~because you~~ to know that something ~~was going to come out of~~ of possibly great importance would emerge from it, ~~since~~ the disagreement ~~was over.~~ The harder Diaghilev fought, the safer the end-product began to look.

~~At this time too~~ Diaghilev also met Nijinsky, though he had ~~certainly~~ already seen him dance at the Marynsky, ~~there had after all been a number of opportunities in the last two years,~~ at this time especially as ~~and~~ the boy's sponsor was the great Kshesinskaya. Nijinski's debut had been on 29 April 1907 at a graduation cremony, in a dance with Ludmilla Schollar, which the critics---including Svetlov---had praised. Kshesinskaya took him out to Krasnoe Selo for special performances, and his name was beginning to grow in ballet circles throughout Russia.

It seems clear that Nijinsky was introduced to Diaghilev through homosexual circles, probably at the fashionable St Petersburg restaurant Cubat. The previous year ~~the boy~~ he had been 'chaperoned' by Prince Pavel Dmitrievitch Lvov, ~~the man of~~ a good-looking thirty at that time, ~~and good-looking,~~ with blue eyes and a monocle. ~~Nijinsky's sister Bronia always~~ He ~~maintained that Diaghilev~~ bought ~~her brother~~ Nijinsky a piano, and helped his sister Bronia's dancing family financially, and even saved ~~her own~~ career when she had a poisoned foot, Both Bronia and Romola, Nijinsky's wife, held that ~~he~~ Nijinsky was not a homosexual but simply a rather helpless, ~~boy.~~ Walter Nouvel considered that in those early years sex meant nothing to ~~the boy,~~ him, and ~~that~~ he was quite 'undeveloped'. ~~sexually. He probably found the dinner dates exciting.~~ According to Nijinsky's 1918 diary Prince Lvov introduced him to Count Tishkievitch, implying that he too became a 'chaperone'. But here ~~too~~ Bronia diaagrees: the count had four children, and did not seem that type. ~~But clearly there was something in Nijinsky's account of how Diaghilev made love to him at their second meeting in h the latter's suite at the Hotel Europa.~~ Diaghilev was ~~now~~ thirty-seven, Nijinsky eighteen. Years later Nijinsky told his wife, 'Among all the people I have ever known, Diaghilev, of course, meant the most to me. He was a genius, the greatest organiser, discoverer, and developer of talents, with the soul of an artist and a grand seigneur, the only man with universal talent that I could compare to Leonardo da Vinci'. Diaghilev took him to ~~visit~~ the homes of painters, to the Hermitage ~~museum~~ gallery, ~~and~~ to private collections. He began that process of ardently ~~educating~~ with which his sexuality was bound up. His domination over a boy, once it had been broached sexually, was so alluring and intoxicating, ~~and~~ so mixed with dinner-dates in fabulous places and with art and ~~sound judgement and~~ ~~now~~ ideas and the most suavely authoritative social behaviour, that the matter of the boy's not sharing his homosexual tastes---of being unaware of the perverted fantasies which secretly darkened ~~his~~ Diaghilev's mind---seemed unimportant. Diaghilev was the great world. Only in mid-Atlantic, with Diaghilev safely land-locked in

h.p.

by paying for immediate treatment.

h.p.

(Though the language is suspiciously Romolesque),

humanistic indoctrination

(connected to the theatre by a Venetian bridge over the Winter Canal),

Italy, did Nijinsky recover his real sexual tastes. To Diaghilev his marriage was utterly incomprehensible---an outrageous betrayal simply because those sexual tastes were incomprehensible to him, and a betrayal of the 'higher' love they had shared.

When Stravinsky saw them together ~~during that first year~~ he was struck by Nijinsky's reticence, which seemed due to undeveloped intelligence, and by the tactful way Diaghilev managed to say something to gloss over the boy's lack of distinction compared with his performance on stage. Everyone recognised Nijinsky's gifts; few saw the future great dancer (for ~~the simple reason that~~ it was Diaghilev who ~~slowly and~~ carefully elicited the greatness). It seemed impossible, according to ~~even~~ his partner Karsavina, that Nijinsky could ever achieve 'the kind of male perfection, the poised conventionality, the comeliness combined with virility, that was the accepted ideal'. It took Diaghilev to show him to himself, with that 'uncanny clear conception' of his. The exotic, mysterious, feline Nijinsky was dormant behind this ungainly one, and Diaghilev tapped his personality continually until he found it. Even then he did not find it ready-made. He found possibilities---the only ones he could profitably exploit. And he developed these with concealed and patient technique. ~~towards the~~

He changed the lives of all his associates. He was an hour late for his 'ceremonial visit' to Tamara Karsavina at her St Petersburg apartment to sign her up, and during the hour she waited she began to consider how her provincial-looking rooms, and her immature person, would look to the great 'aesthete'. She was unaware then of his famous unpunctuality, 'amazing even from a Russian point of view'. Her maid caused her to blush ~~when she~~ by mispronouncing his name when finally he showed up. 'A meeting to discuss various artistic questions kept me late,' he explained. He had just come back from Moscow and told her with some satisfaction that the Grand Duke Vladmir was their patron, and a subsidy had been arranged for them. 'By the way', he said as he was going, 'I shall send you your contract signed tonight. Or is it Monday today?---unlucky day, I shall do it tomorrow.' ~~After~~ When he had ~~left~~ gone she felt both intimidated and fascinated: at any rate, more deeply involved than she had ever been before.

~~Another ballet chosen for the first season was the Polovtsian Dances from the opera Prince Igor, since it would not be possible to perform that opera in its entirety, as Diaghilev had wanted. These dances were the sensation of the first Russian season, with Adolf Bolm in the lead, and it was Diaghilev who insisted on inserting them in the programme.~~

Rehearsals started at the Hermitage theatre. Court flunkeys brought round cups of chocolate. The dancers were taken to the theatre in carriages as if the production was for one of the imperial theatres.

Then everything went wrong.

4

'Donnez-moi du Bleu Jambon'



The Grand Duke Vladimir died on February 22 1909, and with that the imperial subsidy disappeared. Alone his death might not have done more than diminish the promised 100,000 roubles, but Mathilde Kshesinskaya was disappointed in Diaghilev. Finding herself in a key position now---his chief sponsor at court---she let him down precisely as she felt he had let her down by not giving her sufficient roles in Paris. It was tit for tat. She even said so in her book, Dancing in St Petersburg, which she published in 1960. Some time before, she had learned that her only part was to that of Armida, and began threatening to ~~leave the~~ desert Diaghilev's company. Now she felt she could no longer intercede on ~~Diaghilev's~~ his behalf! She asked at court that her requests for a subsidy should not be followed up, and 'all Diaghilev's efforts to obtain that subsidy by other means failed'. Pavel Gerdt, principal male dancer at the Marynsky, also pulled out. Fokine went into a rage, while Diaghilev kept his head, though he did bang his fist on the table when he read out the Imperial Secretary's letter cancelling the subsidy to his committee. And he returned to Paris at once.

He told Astruc that the Russian season could only take place if it was backed at the Paris end, though he himself could lay his hands on 50,000 roubles (the rubber magnate?). At this stage he did not know ~~on be~~ on whom the cost of the settings and scenery would fall, but it seemed likely

that the imperial court would withdraw ~~their~~ its earlier offer to pay for both. The Countess Greffuhle and Misia Edwardes, to whom ~~he~~ Diaghilev poured out everything on his arrival in Paris, worked hard for him, and Astruc was able to muster up another 50,000 roubles from his sponsors in the form of a guarantee to be picked up by Diaghilev only if box office receipts averaged less than 25,000 francs a performance as against the earlier expected 20,000 francs. The sums guaranteed by each sponsor were a 'full share' of 10,000 francs (promised by Basil Zaharov) or a 'half-share' of 5000 francs (Henri de Rothschild, Nicolai de Bérnardaky and Max Lyon). At the same time Diaghilev's bank account in St Petersburg was guaranteed to a certain sum by ~~a friend~~ Prince Argutinsky-Dolgorookov. He returned to Russia in excellent spirits, worried though he must have been (for the Tsar had every power to withhold singers and dancers from him) and he arrived back in his committee room looking 'very spry and animated', according to Grigoriev. In view of the reduced budget only one opera could now be given in its entirety, and that was Rimsky-Korsakov's Pskovitianka (renamed Ivan the Terrible). One act from Prince Igor was to be given, and one act from Russlan and Ludmilla. ~~Diaghilev was chiefly worry to lose Prince Igor and insisted on keeping the Polovetzian Dances from it, with Adolf Bolm in the leading part (it turned out to be the greatest sensation of the Paris season).~~ Each of the two opera-acts was to be given on alternate nights, followed by two ballets. There was a little row between Diaghilev and Walter Nouvel, who was up to his usual game of pouring cold water---he said that since the operas could not be given, and since Paris would not be really interested in the ballet, the whole venture should be given up. Diaghilev told him angrily that he had signed too many contracts for this to be possible---in St Petersburg, Moscow and Paris. And if Nouvel was dissatisfied, perhaps he could raise the money himself and make a full opera season possible? The rest of the committee supported Diaghilev.

The imperial court did withdraw permission to use the

Marynsky costumes and settings. Diaghilev cabled Astruc to ask whether the Opéra would consider selling him back the Boris production, in which case he would have a full opera with most of the expenses already paid. Astruc replied that the Opéra would not. 'Try hiring', wired Diaghilev. But again the answer was no. So there was no alternative to making new costumes and new settings.

All of a sudden (in April) the court flunkeys who had formerly carried round tea and chocolate appeared in the theatre to order the dancers out. Fokine went into a rage. Diaghilev kept his head and occupied himself at once by tearing round the city looking for new premises. In less than an hour he had found the Salle Cathérine or the little 'Crooked Mirror' theatre on the Ekaterinsky Canal, and his secretary Mavrin laid on a whole convoy of carriages to take the company there in groups of three and four, with the wardrobe women and their huge baskets bringing up the rear. The dancers found a buffet meal from a nearby restaurant waiting for them in the first rest period. On the grand staircase there was a good portrait of Catherine II which both Diaghilev and Benois took to be of good omen, because of her 'benign smile'. After all, the Hermitage had been hers too, and here she was greeting them greeting them in their new place.

The rehearsals went on, and the Paris programme had now been fixed as much by neeessity as choice. The ballets were to be Le Pavillon d'Armide (with Anna Pavlova as Armida), the Polovtsian Dances, a series of divertissements consisting of Russian dances arranged by Petipa to music by Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikowsky, Mussorgsky, Glinka and Glazunov called Le Festin, Cleopatra, and Les Sylphides. The operas were to be Ivan the Terrible, and single acts from Glinka's Russlan and Ludmilla and Serov's Judith (with Chaliapine and Felia Litvin), with, once more, Boris Godunov. Benois was to do the costumes and setting for Le Pavillon and Les Sylphides, while Roerich was to do the Polovtsian Dances. The setting for Le Festin was to be

Korovin's décor for the second act of Russlan and Ludmilla, together with Golovin's designs for Ivan the Terrible. Golovin and Jouon were to design Boris once again. Fokine had the desperate task of producing four ballets with his own choreography (the fifth, Le Festin, being Petipa's work). By far the greatest headache for him were the Polovtsian Dances, the first ballet to be rehearsed in the new quarters. Diaghilev had persuaded him to undertake it, but Fokine felt he had made insufficient researches into the Polovtsi tribe whom he was supposed to represent choreographically. All he had was Borodin's music. And with this he created something so wild, so full of what Benois called an 'orgiastic madness' that careful research might easily have marred it.

Anna Pavlova had stepped into Kshesinskaya's place, and seemed destined to be the star of Diaghilev's company. At school she had seemed far too frail to become a prima ballerina of top quality, especially as she lacked compensating technique, musical sense and rhythm. Yet she had a certain 'divine' quality which everyone, including her teacher Gerdt, noticed in face of the general preoccupation at that time with virtuoso effects. According to Karsavina, she took quantities of cod liver oil at school to counteract her lack of stamina, and tried frantically to achieve acrobatic effects of which her body was simply incapable. It hurt Gerdt to watch her. 'Leave the acrobatic effects to others,' he told her. 'It positively hurts me to see the pressure such steps put on your delicate instep.' As late as 1929 Serge Lifar found that she was going through 'monstrous, hardly believable exercises'. She would lean on the barre with one arm and on him with the other while trying to get her balance, then, on her points, she would let both go until she over-balanced. Neither rhythm nor music meant anything to her, said Lifar. In fact, she simply ignored both, and would ~~simply~~ nod to the conductor when she got to the end of a figure. To the spectator it often looked as if the music heard was different from the music going on inside her own brain. She seemed to Lifar a quite unreceptive

person, though as a dancer adorable. She passed early into legend, and the fees she could command in America later on made Diaghilev's pay look absurd. In Giselle or The Dying Swan she achieved something quite incomparable, as if about to float into air and lose substance entirely. Her act of dying made even ~~other~~ fellow-dancers backstage feel that she was dancing for the last time, and ~~she was~~ saying goodbye. ~~Yet~~ Diaghilev, ~~was perhaps~~ her most astringent critic, ~~He~~ disliked certain of her cheap effects, which he called her cabotinage. And he preferred in the end, despite everything, Spessiva. In an interview once he said of these two dancers that they were 'two halves of an apple'---'but only the Spessiva half has been in the sun'. He ~~also~~ said on another occasion that Pavlova had never really been interested in art as such, only virtuosity.

The repertoire for Paris had been more or less established but Diaghilev kept changing his mind, mostly without telling anyone else in the company. He even wired Astruc that he had decided to do no opera after all, but would put on three ballets per programme. He ~~had~~ tried to get the Grand Duke Boris's patronage but this ~~had~~ failed, though Boris listened to him sympathetically. The other grand dukes were dead against him, and back in March one of them had written ~~wrote~~ to the Tsar, 'Boris means to request you not to restore your patronage, for that Diaghilev no longer desires, but to allow him to continue to use the Hermitage for rehearsals, and to borrow the décor and costumes used in the Marynsky theatre for the season in Paris. We very much hope that you will not take the bait, which, let me warn you, will be cast very cleverly...' He thought it was all 'an unsavoury business'. Diaghilev was so aware of having enemies in St Petersburg that he feared Astruc might give him too much personal publicity in Paris, as part of his pre-production campaign, and warned him that this might so incense authorities at home that the whole enterprise would be brought down at the last minute.

The day after he wired Astruc that there would be no opera he sent another wire asking him if Geraldine Farrar

would sing Marguerite in Boito's Mefistofele, as this would give a role to Chaliapine. Nothing came of this, and the repertoire remained as planned. Meanwhile the spirit of the company in its new quarters was even better than before, and Benois felt that its 'happy atmosphere' had much to do with the later success in Paris. A long table was carried into the auditorium and placed at the left of the orchestra stalls for the dancers' meals, and Diaghilev would join them. 'We felt something was maturing that would amaze the world', Benois said.

Their theatre in Paris was to be not the Sarah Bernhardt but the Châtelet, and Diaghilev had arranged with Astruc on his last Paris trip that all the seats should be re-upholstered, the stage ~~refloored~~, the proscenium arch redecorated and a new carpet laid throughout the auditorium. The Châtelet at this time was an old barracks of a theatre, accustomed to melodrama, and it had to be put on the map again. All this was financed by Diaghilev, who sent an advance of 5000 roubles to the Paris firm in charge of the redecoration. The telegrams went to and fro. He decided to add two acts to Judith. He expressed concern about Astruc's publicity in the press and possible 'hostile' overtones. Cables dealt with insurance, authors' rights, the hiring of a workshop for painting scenery, the question of whether Litvin should sing for a rival management (he said no), and indeed every aspect of the production except the fact that he was running out of money and had nowhere to go for any more.

The company, including Nijinsky, and under the command of General Bezobrazov, left for Paris on May 2, the season at the Maryinsky theatre having ended the previous day. Both Pavlova and Karsavina had other foreign tours to complete before going to Paris. Diaghilev left St Petersburg the day after the others. For most of them Paris was an entirely new experience. Unlike St Petersburg it was enjoying at this moment a warm spring. The trees were in leaf. Karsavina was all nerves, on

Extended over the present orchestra pit, as it was so small, and refloored with pine,

'Crooked Mirror'

Nijinsky, when he was shown the auditorium, said it looked like a lake without water.

her journey from Prague. She was young enough to believe ~~that~~ that Paris was a centre of 'dissipation and sin'. She feared its elegance, as a centre of fashion too. 'I expected the streets to be like ballroom floors and to be peopled exclusively with smart ladies, walking along with a frou-frou of silk petticoats'. When she was actually walking through Paris ~~later~~ a group of children called after her---to say how beautiful she was! Paris was a happy city: that was how it struck the ~~foreigner.~~ visitor. And its elation, especially in the spring, caught up everyone in the company---except perhaps Diaghilev, who arrived at the Gare du Nord (so he told Astruc who met him) without a sou in his pocket. An argument started. He said that Astruc would have to pay the company, as his money had run out in pre-production costs. Astruc said that this was impossible since he could not draw on the subscriptions of his backers, or on the advanced bookings. In this case, Diaghilev said, 'there will be no Russian season'.

Comtesse Greffuhle and Misia Edwardes gave a dinner for the company at the Hôtel Crillon a few days after their arrival. Misia told Serge Lifar years later that her heart had sunk when she saw all these 'drably provincial and uncultivated' people. She began to regret having fallen for all of Diaghilev's stories, under the sway of his 'aristocratic' charm, ~~which was just like that of a western aristocrat.~~ so like and she could foresee the ~~greatest~~ biggest disaster of all time. Not until a fortnight later, at the dress rehearsal, did she change her ~~ideas.~~ tune.

A melodrama called Les Aventures de Gavroche, which had a shipwreck in it, had just closed at the Châtelet, and ~~the~~ alterations were now going on noisily. Thia time Diaghilev had made sure to bring a large enough technical staff with him ~~so as~~ to avoid backstage trouble of the kind he had had at the Opéra. He ~~had~~ also brought along K.F. Waltz, ~~who was~~ general manager at the Imperial Theatres and a Don Juan long past his sixties with a black wig and dyed moustaches and a painted face and a way with the

girls which a man of thirty might have envied. He was always laughing and ~~He~~ had limitless energy. He devised two fountains onstage with water-jets the height of trees for Le Pavillon, also an intricate arrangement of trap doors for the quick changes in the ballet, when the tapestry depicting the lovely Marquise Madeleine as Armida, surrounded by her court, comes to life before the Vicomte de Beaugency. ~~and then, when dawn comes through, returns with her retinue to the tapestry, leaving her scarf behind to show the frightened Vicomte that it had indeed been reality.~~ With his Moscow carpenter ~~from Moscow Waltz~~ he modernised the Châtelet equipment (the theatre dated back to Napoleon III). He also spent half the night in expensive restaurants with his girls, and one of his unofficial jobs was to cheer Chalipine up during his fits of stagefright just before curtain-rise. The Châtelet was well-placed for the delights of life---the restaurant Zimmer was actually part of the same building, and there were ~~was~~ a host of cafés and smaller eating places all round. Benois was there to welcome the company, so happy to see them all again--- and to feel the excitement among them---that he spent most of his time at the theatre instead of at Weber's in the Rue Royale where he usually sat. Among other things he noticed that Diaghilev's secretary and lover, Mavrin, had fallen ~~in love with~~ for the attractive Olga Feodorova, and remembered Diaghilev saying ~~told him~~ one day that Olga was 'the only woman I could ever fall in love with'. Diaghilev was probably too busy supervising the laying of the ruby-red carpet at the Châtelet to keep his eye on them couple. ~~Astruc must have been~~

Astruc must have been alarmed at the money, or rather the credit, being spent. He was if anything more excitable than Diaghilev, ~~and~~ not at all the dour business man his function in the Russian seasons might lead us to expect. He dreamed and planned, and talked about great artistic revolutions, and he was a key-figure in the enterprise, quite as essential as any meber of the Diaghilev 'committee', and quite as much the victim of Diaghilev's charm and restless, unflagging pressure.

Some money came from Russia, and Astruc's friends guaranteed the fest. Diaghilev disliked the pit of the theatre, and filled it with boxes. He removed the five front rows of the stalls to make room for the orchestra, now that he had built a forestage over the old orchestra pit. Armida's canopied couch required quite a large trap-door. During rests the restaurant Viel would send in roast fowls, pâtés, salads for picnic

(meals. The) dancers sat on empty packing cases. The company's 'figurehead', Bezobrazov , fussed and consoled. Diaghilev would float into rehearsals in---the words are Karsavina's---'an areopagus of satellites'. He gave no hint to anyone that box office receipts, even with one-hundred-percent capacity houses throughout the season, would not be enough even to pay the two companies (opera and ballet). n.p. There was incredible chaos during rehearsals. The trap-door jammed. Fokine was frantic when the supers failed to walk in time with the music. And the stage was virtually being built around them. There was the sound of hammering and sawing all day, and Fokine was almost hoarse. With only two weeks to go, ~~for the last stages,~~ the lunch-break was cancelled. Everyone had to eat in the theatre. Painters, musicians, critics and journalists and curious visitors were all after Diaghilev. He rushed everywhere, while ~~and some of~~ his French entourage---Jean Cocteau, Reynaldo Hahn, Robert Brussel, J.L.Vaudoyer---supplied the Press with titbits about the company's doings. Cocteau ~~had~~ prepared an illustrated brochure. The first poster to go up on the walls of Paris was for Les Sylphides, showing Pavlova in a ~~the~~ costume designed by Benois in the long-skirted Taglioni style, though Pavlova was not to appear for a fortnight after the opening. n.p. The gorgeous weather continued. Open-air stalls and handcarts were heaped with flowers. The advance booking was so good that on May 10 it was announced in the Press that there would be extra performances. Astruc ~~had~~ offered seats in the front rows of the stalls to fifty-two of the most beautiful actresses in Paris, and all fifty-two of them ~~had~~ accepted. The Russian season was clearly becoming the thing to know about. Diaghilev was ~~already~~ hard at work ~~in the evenings~~ on his 'whispering' publicity, at dinners and receptions, for the Paris season was now on. Fokine had to direct his dancers ~~work~~ not only in an endless din from ~~both the~~ stage and the auditorium but in full view of Diaghilev's friends, which he disliked intensely, though Diaghilev did detail

And he found time to light every ballet. His quiet 'Donnez-moi du bleue jambon' was repeated so often that it became attached to his name.

As Karsavina said, against the chaos of rehearsals Diaghilev's 'imperturbable good nature' stood out in sharp contrast.

Grigoriev to stop them ~~interfering with~~ bothering the ~~dancers'~~ girls' ~~work.~~ In one case at least Grigoriev failed. There was a furious row between Fokine and Robert Brussel, who ~~was no doubt making his feelings for~~ had fallen in love with Karsavina ~~ob~~ (as Fokine had once done too). ~~vious.~~ Fokine ordered him out of the theatre, and Brussel went straight to Diaghilev and complained about it. Diaghilev answered in his suavely ironical way, ~~that always made quarrellers feel a little immature,~~ 'Evidently those in charge of the rehearsal didn't realise that Monsieur Brussel has special permission to distract the dancers'. Fokine was thin with his exertions, and Brussel was not the only one fussing round the girls---Calvocoressi was at it too. Three days before the dress rehearsal the Moscow orchestra arrived, and orchestral rehearsals began. At that time a dress rehearsal was equivalent to an opening, in that the critics were present, and evening dress was de rigueur. The theatre column of Le Figaro warned its readers that no one would be admitted to the theatre after curtain-rise. Astruc and Diaghilev had invited the first-line theatre, art and music critics, various impresarios and managers of opera houses (with an eye to future bookings), diplomats and ministers of the French cabinet, playwrights and painters, dancers and musicians, not to say the wealthy and the noble. The curtain was to rise at eight-thirty sharp. Great excitement had been generated. In such cases, when there is to be a triumph, the excitement is a strangely shared state, ~~felt~~ on both side of the proscenium arch, as if performers and audience were simply complementary to each other. And this seemed to be happening.

When the Comtesse de Noailles arrived in her box on that night, slightly late, she felt that the excitement generated in her by ~~others~~ her friends might not be satisfied. But then she too was aware that a miracle was about to happen! What ~~happened~~ transpired on the stage was like the action of ~~an extraordinary~~ luxuriant plant responding to a perfect climate. The red curtain rose on an entirely new experience which all the exciting promises of the previous weeks had failed

even to suggest. Rodin was there. So was Isadora Duncan (appearing at ~~this~~ that time at the Théâtre Gaieté Lyrique). There were masses of flowers in the auditorium, brilliant against the fresh ruby-red ~~cloth~~ of the seats and the floor. On that first night, or rather dress rehearsal, Le Pavillon, the Polovtsian Dances and Le Festin were given. Astruc had arranged his beauties of the dress circle so that brunette alternated with blonde, and their necks were ablaze with jewellery. Tcherepnine was to conduct his own music for the opening ballet, Le Pavillon.

The ~~opening~~ first chords were mysterious and soft ~~and as the curtain rose on~~ the interior of Armida's pavilion, was revealed with the magic tapestry and a great clock, and columns of marble. A special atmosphere was ~~already~~ created. Before the first steps had been danced. Here was Versailles of the ~~seventeenth and~~ eighteenth centuries---at first sight a strange ~~thing to~~ offering to a Parisian audience ~~as an export~~ from Russia. Yet perhaps, despite the criticism it came in for, there was something exquisitely tactful about the choice. The tact lay most in the delay given to the shock of seeing Russian dancing for the first time. In this way the eye was gradually accustomed to the kind of ~~dancing~~ spectacle no one in Paris had seen before, where a solo did not finish in a set way, where the corps de ballet did not always have smiling faces turned towards the audience but melted into with the action, where a ballerina could stop suddenly on her points, or run off, where there were no virtuoso steps for their own sake, where the music was so followed as to seem a constituent part of the figures. At the beginning of Le Pavillon there is no dancing, but even the miming here, in ~~under~~ Fokine's arrangements, was a departure from the set signs of Petipa miming, and closer to real acting. And the audience was bewildered almost by the sight of classical dancing that could be a marvellous gesture towards music on the one hand and an evocation of real meaning on the other, executed with a flawless vigour that seemed barely credible to the eye.

When the pavilion clock strikes midnight the twelve hours step down, girls dressed as boys, and begin the first dance. ~~of the ballet.~~ After Armida (Karalli) and her court come to life from the tapestry there is a bright sunlit scene, and the Vicomte de Beaugency is transformed into Armida's Rinaldo (Mordkin), and exchanges his night-clothes for a costume from the time of Louis X1V. ~~Armida was danced by Karalli, Rinaldo (or Réné) by Mordkin.~~ Courtiers in green and pink appear, and Nubians with feather fans. Armida leads her man to a dais from which they will watch the divertissement of dances--- valse noble, a bacchanale and a humourous dance by six monsters! But it is the pas de trois danced by Armida's two 'Friends' (Karsavina and Baldina) and her 'favourite slave' (Nijinsky) that first stirs the audience to ~~its first real~~ an awareness of the Russian power to translating movement into something ~~ecstatic and irresistible that is~~ quite beyond the physical, ~~and~~ dazzling the eyes into disbelief of ~~themselves.~~ itself.

There was a first murmur ~~across~~ among the audience as the three dancers rose and fell and spinned together. To Karsavina it seemed that the 'quietly admiring' mood ~~of~~ in the ~~audience~~ theatre 'burst into enthusiasm' half-way through their dance. Whispers 'ran'. The two girls were in yellow and gold, Nijinsky in an eighteenth-century ballet costume with lace ruffles and knee breeches, coloured yellow and silver. Then, instead of simply walking off to reappear in his solo, Nijinsky decided to leap off, landing in the wings unseen by the audience, so that he seemed---the miracle of ~~the~~ a miraculous evening---to 'float up and vanish'.as if his one hundred and thirty pounds were nothing (he lifted his partners with such ease that they ~~seemed light as~~ were like straw dolls in his hands). There was a storm of appaluse which stopped the orchestra. From that point the evening worked up to a frenzy of enthusiasm. In Nijinsky's variation that followed he took great soft leaps across the stage, rising and falling with an ecstatic ease. During his bounds he

turned in the air, performing rapid entrechats. He did double pirouettes in the air, landing on one foot, moving diagonally, and finished with a triple pirouette. Karsavina had seen her father do this in Pharoah's Daughter at his farewell performance at the imperial ballet; he had explained to her that this was 'a most difficult bit of dancing, and a touchstone for the male dancer'.

Besides this almost fearful strength in Nijinsky, that

(made him 'shoot')
upwards on long limbs of steel', there was an aloofness ~~that seemed~~ at the centre of his dancing personality that gave ~~and changed the whole atmosphere of~~ Le Pavillon ~~from one simply of pure grace to one of~~ a secrecy, a mysterious apartness that ~~was in the music too.~~ Karsavina's allegro followed, nimble and swift-footed, her characteristically reserved and yet slyly enticing smile in a moving combination with the carriage of her shoulders, that épaulement which was half the beauty of her dancing. Again there was a burst of applause, and again the orchestra was stopped. Then Nijinski and Baldina joined her to finish the pas de trois. The last dance of the divertissement, the buffoons' dance, was the most difficult dance Fokine ever composed, intricate and taken at a dizzy speed, and Rosai, the dance-leader ~~of the dance~~ and about the same age as Nijinsky, got the most frenzied acclamation of the ~~whole~~ evening. The fact that, in spite of this, Nijinsky later got most of the publicity was neither an accident nor the calculated work of Diaghilev, but the recognition among ~~the~~ Parisians of a curiously removed personality, which seemed to deliberate on its movements like the originator of movement itself, without other connections to life. Nijinski's ~~His~~ leap was not simply prowess. It was done with a certain modest concentration that cancelled ~~made it seem to come without the smallest~~ all sense of effort. Fokine always held afterwards that it was Rosay whom the audience appreciated most ~~But more likely few~~ The truth was that no one in the audience could tell precisely which of the dancers had excelled, in such an unbelievable amalgam. Henri Ghéon wrote, 'To be just to the Russian troupe one should avoid all personalities. It possesses that supreme quality of being one with the work it represents to the point of seeming born of the music and melting into the colours of the décor'. The individual triumphs were, according to Fokine, the bacchanale from Cleopatra with his own wife Olga Fokina and Fedorova, in a Le Pavillon, the dance of the buffoons with Rosai and ~~lastly~~ Adolf Bolm in the Polovtsian dances. ~~And it is most probable that~~ Nijinsky's (most of all,)

(Seemed to have lain waiting in the music for him to awaken it.)

(By that time he felt Nijinsky to be an enemy).

Certainly

development in the public eye was a ~~relatively~~ slower one, especially as Diaghilev was still nurturing him. ~~Then there was the fact that~~ In a matter of days after the opening ~~excitement~~ of the Russian season Diaghilev had become the lion of Parisian homosexual circles, and the boy Nijinsky was always close to him. And there was the fact that Rosai died soon after. ~~Above all,~~ The Nijinsky legend was pre-dated by his widow, Romola, so that we now read in that first Paris season the kind of personal acclamation that ~~did not take~~ took place later. When the audience crowded across the stage in the interval after the Polovtsian Dances they stared at Karsavina quite as much as Nijinsky as they practised, just as later, when she joined the troupe, Pavlova became a great favourite with the audience too.

Many people in the audience had reserves about Le Pavillon. ~~But these can be exaggerated too.~~ They felt that a transformed Théophile Gautier story was the last thing they ought to expect of a first Russian season. They were no doubt looking for ~~that~~ the 'barbaric' splendour. ~~they associated with the Russians.~~ As Marcel Prévost wrote, 'The art of the dance has fallen into complete decadence in our country, a sort of tradition of "anything goes" having set itself up between artists and public'. Now Le Pavillon was not, in spite of dancing that simply blinded the critical eye, sufficiently far removed from this tradition as subject-matter. In this case, Diaghilev's choice of the Polovtsian Dances was masterly. The curtain now rose on Golovin's setting that seemed to glow gold in the embers of the fires behind the ~~Polovtsi~~ dome-shaped tents of the Polovtsi tribe, with the great sky beyond tipped with pink clouds, and low, rather bleakly grey hills stretching away by a broad, flat river, the whole canvas curving round instead of edging into wings on either side. Here was 'the heart of Russia', ~~This was~~ half-opera, half-ballet. The girl attendants of Khontchakovna, (the Pilovtsi Khan's daughter), sing to the ~~low~~ soft opening music while others, led by Sophie Fedorova, dance. ~~It is dawn, and the warriors are still asleep on the ground.~~

That helped, more than anything, to build the legend.

Together for the next ballet,

(Omphale)

However that was,

hide

Though Fokine has suggested that Diaghilev had doubted his way of staging it, as too 'wild', and had — through Benois — tried to influence him to alter it.

'Now the daylight dies' is sung by the Khan's daughter (played by Petrenko) as some prisoners file past on their way back to camp from a day's labour. She orders her attendants to give them a drink, which they do, and the prisoners sing their thanks. Night falls. Prince Igor's son, sung by Smirnov, enters, and he sings his love-aria, and the duet with the Khan's daughter. When they separate Prince Igor himself enters (Cahronov) and grives over his captivity among these Tartars. The Khan himself (Zaparojetz) enters and offers to do anything for him that will make his imprisonment more comfortable. The Russian replies that he needs liberty alone. The Tartar offers to give him this ~~freedom~~ if he promises never to make war on him again, but this Prince Igor cannot promise. The Khan then orders on his tribesmen to dance for the prince. They appear at once, fierce, their faces dark with mud, their clothes mottled in bright colours, ~~together once more with~~ while the women attendants dancing as before with slow, swaying movements, their arms rippling, their hips rolling ~~moving~~ voluptuously, their veils writhing, as the men begin their wild dance. But now the drums begin pounding and the Khan's warriors leap on to the stage, brandishing their spears to a giddy crescendo in the music. They ~~before~~ leaving as suddenly as they came, and ~~again, while~~ boys take over with wooden clappers on their hands which they strike together as they dance, the music rising all the time, until the warriors enter a second time for a dance that for shere wildness, accompanied by the chorus now, sends the audience into a frenzy. ~~Adolf Bolm provided a climax to the evening's lesson in what male dancing could be, as the corps de ballet showed what an integral and moving part it could play in the action.~~ The ballet had the curtain rising and falling again to deafening applause. The audience almost tore up the orchestra rails. Emile Cooper, the conductor, seemed about to leap over the footlights while the audience jumped and shouted for joy.

In the second interval that followed crowds poured on to

Sophie Fedorova, as the chief of the young girls, seemed 'possessed by the music's frenetic rhythm', according to Benois. Adolf Bolm danced with fearful abandon, whipping his fellow-dancers up into an excitement so wild that they broke their spears on each other as they passed.

the stage from every side-door and pass-door so that it was almost impossible for Karsavina and Nijinsky to find room to practice their lifts for the next ballet. 'C'est elle!' people said as she tried to pass, 'He's a prodigy!' when they recognised Nijinsky. Theirs was to be the third suite in the divertissement, Le Festin, a pas de deux called Firebird which had originally been intended for Kshesinskaya. This had nothing to do with the later Firebird by Stravinsky. Its real title was 'The Blue Bird and the Enchanted Princess', and it was from Tchaikowsky's Sleeping ~~Beauty~~ Princess, choreographed by Petipa. It is now called 'The Golden Bird', and was repeated by Karsavina and Nijinsky in Vienna in 1913 under this title.

Diaghilev came to wish everyone godspeed for the last item, and the audience drifted back. Happily, after the earlier frenzies---the divertissement required no great concentration on the part of the audience, and it came as a sort of light dessert. It was taken without pauses ~~at the end of individual dances~~---Fokine had forbidden curtain calls until the end. The scene was Korovin's mediaeval banquetting hall which he had designed for the first act of Russlan, and the costumes were by Bakst, Benois, Korovin and Bilibine (who had scoured the northern provinces of Russia for the Boris costumes of the previous year). Whether it was the mood of the audience or the excitement of the dancers, Fokine's orders were forgotten and bows were taken after each dance. Fokine left the theatre in a rage and walked alone along the Rue de Rivoli 'Feeling terribly hurt about the degradation of art' while the success went on. On such a night bows were a small crime indeed. It was when, later in the season, ~~the~~ his dancers tried to snatch bows in the middle of Cleopatra that he had cause for rage (though the audience did refuse to stop clapping).

The little Firebird suite was another triumph. Michael, the company's courier, described it afterwards:

'When these two came on, good Lord! I have never seen such a public! You would have thought their seats were on fire!' Bakst had reversed the roles of the Petipa arrangement and made Karsavina the Bird with bright ostrich feathers and Nijinsky a Prince, in a tunic of gold and pearls and topaz. Sophie Fedorova and Mordkine danced a Czardas choreographed by Alexander Gorsky to music by Glazunov, and Sophie's sister Olga, with Kremnev, led a Mussorgsky piece called 'The Fair at Sorochinsk', while Rosai had his second triumph of the evening with a solo to the music of the jesters' dance from Tchaikowsky's Casse Noisette. Another Tchaikowsky piece, the March from his second symphony, was the music for the finale.

'All was happy confusion' now, as Karsavina ~~saw as she~~ tried to staunch a wound in her arm caused by Nijinsky's jewelled tunic. Crowds streamed on to the stage again, with Diaghilev pushing his way through and calling, 'Where is she? I must embrace her!' as he came nearer. From that day, Karsavina said, he always called her and Nijinski ~~his dancers~~ 'my children'. In the excitement she heard someone asking Nijinsky if it was difficult to stay in the air as he did, to which he replied, 'No, no, not difficult! You just have to go up and stay there a little bit'. This must have been said in Russian, as he spoke no French at the time---anything he needed to say in that language was usually translated for him by Nouvel, if Diaghilev happened not to be around. Vassily guarded the door of his dressing room that evening, and he drove back to the hotel alone, having asked to be excused Diaghilev's supper party.

The next day was a hot, marvellously clear day. Diaghilev rose late, and breakfasted in bed, with the blinds still drawn and the lights on, 'like', Romola Nijinsky says, 'am old Marquise afraid of the daylight'. He would ~~often~~ conduct his business from bed, speaking on several telephones at once, and reading all the telegrams

of congratulation. As for Nijinsky ~~that morning~~ he was up and ready to ~~sat~~ practising again, finding himself named by Paris 'the god of the dance'. He posed before ~~the~~ Press cameras in his room---but had to be persuaded to do so by Bakst and Diaghilev. ~~During the next weeks the principal dancers were recognised wherever they went in Paris, and remarks were whispered after them.~~

A routine set in. First the principal dancers would have a lesson with Cecchetti at the Châtelet, followed by rehearsals with Fokine. A late lunch---at about four o'clock. For Diaghilev and the 'inner cabinet' this was usually at Larue's. There would be Bakst, Benois, perhaps Grigoriev and a Parisian friend or two---Brussel, Calvocoressi, Cocteau. Then there might be a drive in the Bois de Boulogne, followed by a little sleep or some relaxation, before the exddus to the theatre around half-past six.

Throughout the Russian season there was hardly a cloud in the ~~Parisian~~ sky. 'June worked its gay witchcraft over Paris', Karsavina says. On that first morning she ~~had~~ woke up to find herself 'La Karsavina' from now on. It was 'like suddenly perceiving my double'. There were no reviews to read the next day. They would be coming out of Ascension Thursday, that is the day after the first public performance (May 19), though Le Fiagro carried an article about the new splendours of the Châtelet theatre, comparing the dress rehearsal to a fête at Versailles. That night the audience was even more expectant than the ~~last~~ first, having been primed by talk. The triumph was repeated, though there was one slight accident---Rosia hurt his leg in the dance of the buffoons from Le Pavillon and had to miss his solo. Luckily the critics

had seen him the evening before.

It was clear when the reviews came out that Paris was most captivated by the 'barbaric splendour', the 'ornateness' and 'spontaneity' of ~~the Russian east, seen in~~ the Polovtsian Dances. Le Pavillon was praised too, only with a suggestion that the Russians had trespassed on a national preserve (Versailles ~~which the nationals~~ was invariably handled ~~wrongly and~~ insipidly as Benois ~~saw~~ noticed in the current production of Manon at the Opéra Comique). But Robert de Montesquieu and Henri de Regnier the poet, ~~who was~~ considered to have the last word on Versailles, approved. In Le Figaro Robert Brussel praised the girl he loved ~~Karsavina, as follows~~: - 'Her beauty is perfect, incomparable: substance itself seems bewildered at being the adorable veil of so much grace.' ~~Strangely,~~ The actual choreography was rather glanced over. There was a lot of talk about Nijinsky in the following days but relatively none at all about Fokine, whose inventions had been the heart and soul of the ~~whole~~ enterprise, ~~as his ruthless and tireless stage direction was the company's discipline itself.~~ But critics, like audiences, have to ~~have a~~ be trained, ~~and this lies in what they see most of the time.~~ As the critic A. Warnod said, the Parisian public had become used to 'a dinginess, a half light, a vagueness, and the malaise of twilight, as the stage's highest achievement, and Pelléas and Mélisande its pinnacle; mustiness, melancholy, listlessness and dim colour, delighted the most exacting... It is easy enough to imagine, then, the impact on all this flabby sweetness, these papier-mâché stage-props, of the sets brought by the Russians!' It was the décors that struck spectators most, and the lighting. Whenever the curtain rose something dazzling or deceptively immense or flaming with primary colours or enchanting like an Aubusson carpet met the eye. Visually Paris was educated enough. At this time Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Seurat were being talked about, and their 'children', the neo-impressionists, Maurice Denis, Vuillard, Bonnard, Roussel, Cross, and

pointillistes like Signac. But in the matter of choreography there was little background. That belonged to the effete, so much so that a year later Abel Bonnard wrote, 'Really, we no longer know what dancing is. We are not savage enough. As a community, we are too civilised, too polished, too prone to self-effacement. We have lost the knowledge of how to express feeling with the whole of our bodies; why, we are almost afraid to let it transpire in our features, or in the words we utter, so that all that remains is for it to seek refuge in our eyes...' And Marcel Prévost said, 'I see indeed that the 'Russian Season' in Paris is enjoying a brilliant success. But to collect such a company in Paris would be impossible. It could not be put together in any democratic country... A courtly pleasure, a royal entertainment, let us reserve for the dance the welcome Paris reserves for queens'. The two contradict each other flatly. For the one, the Russians are visiting barbarians, for the other a visiting court. Neither hits on the idea (people in great metropolitan centres seldom do) that they have been witnessing a different type of civilisation, and even perhaps a superior one to their own, and that it was precisely this Russian civilisation (which they knew ~~nothing~~ little about) that had produced the astonishing imaginative brilliance of the ballets, the discipline and flawlessness of the dancing, and that remarkable spontaneity which is always the result, on the stage, of ruthless and highly deliberate and non-spontaneous training. ~~which for long self-doubting periods makes spontaneity seem impossible to attain ever again.~~ ~~Thus~~ Paris also missed the heart of the Russian enterprise, namely that it had achieved something quite new for Russia ~~itself~~ as well. The 'brilliant success' was quite as much of a surprise for Diaghilev, perhaps much more so. It was this that persuaded him, almost certainly against his tastes, to go into ballet-production as a permament thing. It was the ballet-part of the season that made money, rather than the opera-part, despite Chaliapine

(who was paid almost as much as ~~more than~~ the rest of the opera company put together). Box office receipts are very eloquent for managers. And plans for ~~another~~ a purely ballet season in 1910 were being discussed within days of the première. But even now Diaghilev was not aware, as his audiences were not either, that he had created modern ballet---what we today know as ballet, even to the point of its association with homosexuality (for in earlier times the male dancer invariably offended the eye with an excessive, over-muscular virility). It took time for him ~~both he~~ and his critics to achieve that inter-communication which makes a theatre company's new work understood almost before it takes place. ~~and takes the edge off the unfamiliarity of its new work.~~ In the later 1910 season the critics even began to notice the choreography. Their eyes were being trained to it, and they could more readily see the distinction between technique and perfection, ~~and~~ between a considered move and a cheap trick. Their praise for Les Sylphides in that season was qualified with detailed criticism, though mostly because they were still hankering after the 'exotic' element they associated with the Russians and which they had seen ~~best~~ characterised in the Prince Igor dances. Partly too the young Fokine had not yet shown fully the revolution in his work, though he did feel that the Polovtsian Dances was one of ~~the~~ his most important pieces ~~of his works~~ for the exciting role it gave to the corps de ballet, which hitherto had not been ~~meant~~ allowed to evoke feelings or 'temperament' like the soloists, only ~~but~~ to supply ~~a~~ background. The newness of the Diaghilev ballet would take time to dawn on both sides of the proscenium arch. For the moment it seemed to be obscured by a Petipa-type ballet like Le Pavillon and a 'romantic' ballet like Les Sylphides.

They were recognised everywhere — and whispers followed them.

The company now began to enjoy itself. The dancers looked at Paris for the first time, strolling through the streets of the Latin Quarter or taking carriages through the Bois de Boulogne. A few led social lives---Karsavina escorted by Robert Brussel, who covered his carriage-seats with cushions from his apartment whenever she rode with him, Ida Rubinstein by Montesquieu, while Nijinsky continued under the vigilant eye (soon to become tyrannically possessive) of Diaghilev. A government party was given for the company at the Quai d'Orsay, and dances from Le Festin were performed. There were parties at Misia Edwarde's house and at Princess Polignac's, and Diaghilev gave his own supper parties at Larue or Viel.

Chaliapine appeared for the first time on May 25 in Ivan the Terrible, and on June 2 there was the dress rehearsal of the second mixed opera-ballet programme, with the first act of Russlan and Ludmilla, and Les Sylphides and Cleopatra. Anna Pavlova had arrived by this time, to dance in the mazurka and the waltz

of Les Sylphides, and as Ta-hor in Cleopatra. Of all the ballets conceived, Les Sylphides is perhaps the most easy to mar with ~~the smallest~~ faults in timing, just as the slightest misuse of the arms may turn what should be a flowing and harmonious movement into an ungainly kind of signalling motion. The curtain rises on a night-scene, with patches of moonlight on a tombstone, the ruins of a monastery and some leafless trees, while the corps de ballet is grouped in a white and quivering semi-circle, their wings silver, their long skirts delicately frilled, with flowers in their heair and at their breasts. We have all seen so many bad performances of Les Sylphides, treated as a kind of overture in front of a more 'demanding' ballet, that it is difficult for us to realise that this is in fact among the most demanding ballets ~~in existence~~ ever conceived. It is here that the dancer---and it applies equally to the corps de ballet as to the four soloists---must achieve that movingly contradictory effect of unphysicality which is perhaps the ultimate reason for watching dancing at all. There are no tricks to fall back, no tours de force, no comic interludes. It should all pass like the most ecstatically reposeful dream, yet so tense as to hold the attention with hypnotic ~~compulsion~~ steadiness. There are few ballet-companies in the world today capable of such concentrated self-sacrifice. ~~Among the ones that are is Maurice Bejart's company at Brussels, so much the child of Diaghilev's life-work.~~

Benois

upstage

Pavlova was called 'muse of Parnassus' and 'divine' for her part in Les Sylphides. She invariably seemed to glow when she danced, totally absorbed into her part, with a nervous rapture that lifted her and made her quiver with a strangely contained and even muscular frailty. She was twenty-seven at this time, and already an acknowledged prima ballerina even in the West, so that Benois' feeling that she kept away from the Russian Season for the first two weeks in order to see if it would ~~be successful~~ succeed may well be true. But the usual story that she only stayed to dance in two performances is wrong. She honoured her

contract with Diaghilev and even danced at the gala performance he arranged at the end of the Châtelet season. It is possible she disliked Karsavina's triumph, and Nijinsky's even more (some say he eclipsed her in Les Sylphides with his superior powers of aloof gravity), ~~particularly as his solo was so lovely.~~ The fact that Paris raved about Ida Rubinstein in the other ballet of the evening, Cleopatra, did not help. But there were at least two more important reasons why ~~she~~ Pavlova left the company---first, ~~that~~ she enjoyed working with a company of her own (she made her London debut the following year at the Palace theatre with Mordkine and a company of eight), and second, ~~that~~ she was aware of Diaghilev's slight reserve towards her as a dancer. He was much more under Karsavina's spell---and he realised how much that had to do with the spell ~~atmosphere~~ that Le Pavillon d'Armide ~~had~~ cast over the whole Russian Season. 'Tata' was his dancer. One morning he wandered into the dark Châtelet and found her practising alone on the stage, ~~with a dazzling sun; it day outside,~~ and he murmured to her, 'We're all living in the witchery of Armida's groves. The very air round the Russian Season is intoxicated'. In those days, Karsavina said, he would suddenly appear in the stalls or backstage and 'vanish in the middle of a sentence'. It was part of his 'brave attempt at omnipresence'. And somehow Pavlova ~~had~~ arrived too late to share in the fever, because she had missed the sacrifices of the first days.

from the dazzling sun-lit street

Les Sylphides, the 'ballet blanc', called by Svetlov 'a memory of Taglioni', got much the same enchanted but mixed reception as Le Pavillon, while Cleopatra caused the same excited stir as the dances from Prince Igor. ~~had done.~~ Le Pavillon was later forgotten as a ballet, after it was given in London at George V's coronation in 1911. One of its décors, Armida's garden, figured later in another Diaghilev ballet, Le Mariage d'Aurore. There were too many 'scenic appliances' in Le Pavillon for it

to last, according to Benois: it was a work of nostalgia for the grand spectacle. As an introduction to the Russian Ballet, over which the unfamiliar eye could wander, it was useful. But Cleopatra, like the Polovtsian Dances, actually invaded contemporary taste. Robert de Montesquieu went to every performance of Cleopatra so as not to miss Ida Rubinstein. He invited her out to Neuilly. 'How she walked,' Benois said of her, 'with what a regal bearing, with what beauty of movement!'

~~movement---I consider this one of the most successful accomplishments among my ideas of the new ballet. He himself was playing Amoun.~~ [Bakst's setting showed the outside of a temple cut from huge rocks, with the blue Nile in the distance. Some young Egyptian girls pass with pitchers on their heads, and Ta-hor (Pavlova) then enters looking for Amoun, her lover (Fokine). He leaps onstage and they dance a pas de deux which is interrupted by the arrival of the High Priest, to whom they make reverence. Cleopatra is on her way. There is a great burst of music and a procession enters with a sarcophagus at the rear. Jean Cocteau described this point in the ballet four years later: 'There were musicians who plucked long, oval-shaped citharas, their tones richly resonant and yet as soft as the breathing of serpents. Flutists, their arms raised in angular poses, blew from their pipes spirals of sound so piercing, so sharp, that one's nerves could hardly bear them... Finally, borne on the shoulders of six colossi there appeared a kind of ebony and gold casket... The bearers set the casket down in the middle of the temple, opened its double lid, and from within lifted a kind of mummy, a bundle of veils, which they placed upright on its ivory pattens. Then four slaves began an astonishing manœuvre. They unwound the first veil, which was red, with silver lotuses and crocodiles; then the ~~second~~ second veil, which was green with the history of the dynasties in gold filigree; then the third, which was orange with prismatic stripes; and so on until the twelfth veil, a dark blue, which, one divined, enclosed the body of a woman... Mme Rubinstein released herself, letting it fall with a sweeping, circular gesture. She stood leaning forward, her shoulders slightly humped like the wings of the ibis; overcome by her long wait, having submitted in her dark coffin, as had we, to the intolerable and sublime music of her cortège, she wavered on her high pattens. She

was wearing a small blue wig, from which a short golden braid hung down on either side of her face... There she stood, unswathed, eyes vacant, cheeks pale, lips parted, shoulders hunched, and as she confronted the stunned audience, she was too beautiful, like a too potent fragrance.'

~~by other slaves.~~ Amoun, half hidden, gazes at her. Ta-hor must dance for her. Amoun is driven wild by desire for Cleopatra and takes it into his head to shoot an arrow towards her. It falls close to her, and he is arrested by guards. The arrow contains a message to the queen on papyrus, which she reads. She is expected to sentence the youth to death, but he interests her. She offers him a night of love which he must pay for by dying. He agrees, kisses her feet. This throws Ta-hor into a frenzy and she pleads with Amoun not to abandon her. She pleads with the queen, who is equally indifferent. ~~Pavlova's dramatic powers were here developed towards a high point of fury - she~~ She all but forces Amoun away from the queen. But he dashes back, ~~to the queen,~~ and ~~she~~ Cleopatra draws him towards her softly, while veils begin to conceal them from the audience. While they make love ~~behind the veils~~ the slave-boy and the slave-girl (Nijinsky and Karsavina) dance with great wildness to suggest the erotic climax, ~~culminating in the dance of the~~ before Greek girls ~~who~~ pour on to the stage for the bacchanale, until they too collapse, and the act of love is over. The High Priest enters with the cup of poison for Amoun. Cleopatra rises and takes the cup, ~~and~~ offers it to the boy. He drinks, and falls even before he has finished it. But

(music from Glazunov's Les Saisons)

just before he dies she manages to raise him to a standing position, ~~again,~~ her hands under his chin, and gazes into his eyes ~~deeply~~ during his death throes. ~~Then~~ He falls. She stands there quite still, gazing before her ecstatically, then leaves again with her retinue. The High Priest says a prayer over Amoun's body and throws a dark cloth over it. The stage is empty for a moment. Ta-hor re-enters searching for her lover. She sees the dark form on the ground, raises the cloth and discovers Amoun. She kisses him on the lips, ~~and then~~ begins rending her hair with grief, and the ballet is over.

n.p. Here was the stark and sombre power that Paris wanted to associate with the Russians, after the 'pure and aerial classicism' ~~(Svetlov)~~ of Les Sylphides. ~~The scene at the Gaîté was~~ as overwhelming as ~~for~~ that of the Polovtsian Dances, and once more the orchestra rails were nearly uprooted. The ~~company~~ dancers was called again and again. No one could stop talking about La Rubinstein! And Cleopatra was new, too! It swept ballet out of the context of the graceful fairy tale into the terrible, and not the safely mimed terrible either. The classical technique was turned upside down. This was the most recognisably post-Graham ballet of them all. Again, it was the décor that made the first impact, laid the first impression almost of a new art-form. No one had seen a setting of such threatening ~~and sombre~~ presence, with Bakst's vast figures cut out of the rock on either side, downstage from the temple. Little wonder that many Parisians felt that their lives were now divided into two epochs, the one before the first Russian Season, and the one after, when their 'eyes were opened' and ~~all~~ their taste ~~ideas began~~ underwent a change. People simply did not expect to come to the ballet for, among other things, an authentic view of the post. Bakst showed Egypt as it had not been seen on the stage before, like an archaeological discovery on its own. Diaghilev told Boris Kochno that after Kaiser Wilhelm 11 saw the opening night of Cleopatra in Berlin he called together the Society of Egyptologists and urged them to study Bakst's setting.

The reception of Cleopatra was

afterwards

Judith, Serov's opera, was seen on June 6, with Chaliapine and Litvinne, followed by Le Pavillon d'Armide.

Glinka's Russlan and Ludmilla was taken off, and replaced with ~~by~~ Judith, perhaps to cool Chaliapine (there was no part for him in Russlan) after Cleopatra had been ~~added~~ tacked on to Ivan the Terrible, ~~which must have made it seem~~ thus making it clear that ballet was ~~now~~ more in favour ~~at the expense of~~ than opera. Undeniably, Cleopatra was a hit, and extra performances were needed. ~~given.~~

as the second part of the programme,

The season ended on June 18 ~~and~~ with a special gala performance ~~was given~~ at the Opéra ~~the following evening~~ (Diaghilev hoped to be performing there the following year). Pavlova danced in Les Sylphides, and Le Festin was given again, while Chaliapine sang in two acts from Boris Godunov. Afterwards there was a party at which Palmes Académiques were given to Pavlova, Karsavina, Nijinsky, Fokine and Grigoriev. Nijinsky was suffering from a sore throat, which made it impossible for him to dance the ~~following~~ next evening at an open-air fête given by Maurice Ephrussy and his wife in the large garden at the back of their house in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. A stage was set up, close to the garden's fountain, and spots were fixed at the upper windows of the house, ~~to light the performance.~~ A mirror was hidden among the lichen of the fountain to twinkle and flash. The night was warm and dark. It was a marvellous setting for Les Sylphides. ~~It was not Pavlova that~~ Mme Ephrussy admired ~~most but~~ Karsavina with her ~~strange~~ moving combination of almost prim uprightness ~~bordering on the prim~~ and ~~wildness~~ fervour---what Diaghilev lovingly called her vertu farouche. He had secured a fee of one thousand francs for Nijinsky, an enormous sum for one performance, and Astruc told Karsavina (who was getting five hundred) that Mme Ephrussy wished her to have the same. ~~As it happened Nijinsky was too ill with typhoid fever to appear. Apart from Les Sylphides, dances from Le Festin were given, and~~ Smirnov sang a Tosca aria and some Russian pieces. At supper afterwards Diaghilev had a distant, overburdened look. He murmured a few words to Karsavina in a tired way. As to the fact that he had already approached the managers of the Opéra for

(it turned out to be typhoid fever)

an option on ~~the Opéra~~ their theatre for the following year Diaghilev gave no hint (even to Astruc). Karsavina therefore felt at liberty to sign up with the Coliseum theatre in London for a limited season and soon discovered that unlike Anna Pavlova (who also took up another engagement, in a gala performance at the Opéra with Kshesinskaya) she was now considered to belong to Diaghilev. And other members of his 'family' disappeared, some with a little prod from him. The elopement of his lover and secretary Mavrine with Olga Fedorova was no blow, ~~to him~~ since he now had Nijinsky. Anyway, he and Mavrine had had a number of quarrels, Diaghilev ~~with Mavrine~~ and even given him the money to go away with. He warned Astruc, on the day of Mavrine's departure, not to hand over any money to 'any single one of my secretaries'. Another elopement from the company had taken place a few days before Pavlova's arrival: Karalli ~~had gone~~ went off with the tenor Sobinov, some say because she was jealous of Karsavina's triumph. Karsavina was given her role of Armida, and her place in the pas de trois was taken by Alexandra Fedorova Fokine (who had married Fokine's brother).

Diaghilev found an apartment (after his hotel had complained of the danger of infection) and began nursing Nijinsky as he had once nursed his half-brother, with a loving care that overcame his own terror of infection. Nijinsky, used to ~~the clean tap-water of~~ St Petersburg's clean water, had drunk straight from the tap in his hotel bedroom, and this was doubtless the cause of his typhoid. Luckily Dr Botkine, the Tsar's personal physician, happened to be in Paris and looked after him, since Diaghilev had no faith in French doctors. He decided to take the boy to Karlsbad for a cure ~~later~~, then to Venice. When the season was over,

According to Grigoriev, the Russian Season was a triumph artistically and financially. That was not the case. Diaghilev ended in debt---and quarrelling with Astruc, who then set out to do him as much damage in St Petersburg as he could manage. Astruc felt that it was Diaghilev's 'mania for beauty and perfection', as he put ~~called~~ it, that turned a resounding theatrical success into penury. There ~~was~~ were 86,000 francs owing at the close of the season, despite the fact that houses had been up to capacity, and each performance had pulled in more than the estimated 25,000 francs. Astruc, pursued by Diaghilev's creditors, laid hands on his costumes and settings, and got a loan of 20,000 francs by using them as a guarant-

(which had upholstered the Châtelet)

ee, while the firm of Belsacq put the bailiffs on to Diaghilev's personal possessions at the Hôtel de Hollande, in the Avenue de l'Opéra, his headquarters. Apart from this, Diaghilev owed the hotel several thousand francs on his own account. Astruc also tried to get him declared bankrupt, and Diaghilev signed him an IOU for 15,000 francs to be paid on October 7. Meanwhile the scenery was packed up at the Châtelet under Calvocoressi's supervision. He wandered about the stage looking sad while Grigoriev paid off the last of the salaries. Diaghilev and Calvocoressi made a lightning trip to London in response to an offer from a music hall. But when they saw the performances there they ~~were reluctant~~ decided ~~to~~ against put the Russian Ballet among performing bears and trick cyclists. Instead, they took an option on Drury Lane theatre for £500. But when they ~~got back~~ returned to Paris they found only writs, so the ~~thing~~ deal fell through. Somehow Diaghilev managed to get away to Germany, though according to Astruc he was 'caught' at the Gare du Nord and served with more writs. He asked Astruc, 'Why on earth have they taken my trunks, my waistcoats, and even my underpants?' It was a wonder that his faithful Vassily, a real moujik with his beard and cropped head, had let them do it. ~~He~~ Vassily almost never let his master out of his sight, unless he was consigned to watch over Nijinsky. This ~~Vassily~~ he did with meticulous devotion, and even looked after his dancing shoes for him. He stood in the wings ready with dozens of pairs, specially made by Nicolini of Milan, for Nijinsky would wear out two or three pairs in each ballet.

~~With Bakst~~, Diaghilev, ~~and~~ Nijinsky and Bakst reached Karlsbad and ~~s~~ettled down for a couple of weeks, walking in the pine woods and visiting the Russian church. ~~there.~~ Their rooms were pleasant, with balconies looking down the slppe of a hill. Nijinsky did no practising ~~here~~, and even seemed fit enough not to need the cure, though he did have massages, and exercised in his room. Diaghilev was---without saying a word to his associates---closely involved at this moment in preparing not only a new season but new ballets. With no money in his pocket he had discussed

projects with Cocteau and Reynaldo Hahn (the result was the ballet Le Dieu Bleu) and commissioned Daphnis and Cloe from Ravel. At the end of their holiday he returned to Paris, for further aruguments with Gabriel Astruc and discussions with Debussy about a new ballet which (perhaps because Debussy distrusted Diaghilev) came to nothing. Bakst and Nijinsky went on to Venice, where Diaghilev was to join them after a few days. He managed to get the company's musical scores out of Astruc, and asked for Serov's original drawing for the Anna Pavlova poster, which was to be a present for Dr Botkine, the Tsar's personal physician.

His real holiday ~~was~~ began in Venice---it always ~~was~~ did. His ~~tiredness disappeared~~ expression changed within hours of his arrival at the Hotel des Bains on the Lido, a strange place to stay for a man ~~who was~~ so terrified of the sea ~~to the point where~~ that he ~~would~~ drew his curtains in order not to see it. Bakst shared the fear, and Benois (who had joined them) had great fun with Nijinsky dragging him into the Adriatic. ~~Both Benois and Nijinsky were excellent swimmers.~~ D'Annunzio, who already knew Diaghilev, joined their party when he could, and already they were the centre of much social attention. They spent their days sightseeing or sitting outside Florian's, though the heat tended to drive them to the Lido, to await the pleasures of the evening. Isadora Duncan was there too and met Nijinsky for the first time at a party given by ~~the~~ a famous Roman beauty, the Marchesa Casati, who had once entered a ballroom ~~in Rome~~ in a chariot drawn by lions, with a live snake round her neck. According to Romola Nijinsky, who may have got it from her husband, Isadora ~~Duncan~~ was anxious at this time to be included in Diaghilev's company and to take roles like that given to Ida Rubinstein. That would of course have been absurd for a dancer already soundly established everywhere in Europe, but it is true that she and Diaghilev had many conversations in Venice, and she may have wished to collaborate with him on certain ballets, an approach which he resisted. He wished very much to steer his own ship,

Isadora suggested to Diaghilev that she and Nijinsky should sleep together and produce another great dancer between them. Diaghilev translated this for Nijinsky, who simply smiled.

a reason why he felt ~~naturally~~ drawn to the young and unformed rather than to the great and established ~~like~~ Kshesinskaya, Pavlova, Karalli. Karsavina was aware of his need for her---for 'a clay unhardened.' ~~He had need of me, and I had implicit faith in him~~ Yet she found working with him hard, because he was 'an erratic organiser'. This was how it must often have appeared to ~~someone~~ those not engaged in his daily quest for subsidies and dates in the right theatres at the right time, with the right dancers in the right ballets, all of which factors invariably failed to coincide until what ~~always seemed~~ threatened to be too late. For the impresario, who seems to be holding back information on the future from his performers, can never committ himself to a definite plan until the miraculous has happened and all the necessary parts of a project ~~are suddenly there~~ have suddenly unified. The dancer's contract, which to the dancer seems the first step to a production, ~~was~~ is in fact the last.

5

An Itch for Independence

'For ballet you need the crème de la crème of dancing, music and painting,' Diaghilev once told a young impresario in Berlin. 'It is only when you have the best of these three arts that you can succeed, and it is a very expensive business.' And ~~later,~~ when Nouvel told him that the young ~~man~~ impresario's had not been paid for his part in launching the Berlin season, he added, 'This ballet business, it's very bad, very bad. Never become a ballet impresario, young man. It never pays'.

Gabriel Astruc thought that it not only should but could pay, and blamed Diaghilev for that perfection without which the Russian Season could not have succeeded, much less initiated a legend. When he discovered that Diaghilev had been negotiating with the Opéra he decided to make war on him---these were his words in a letter to Chaliapine dated October 9 1909, by which time the Marynsky season had been on over a month and Diaghilev's committee-meetings in his apartment were once more in full swing. 'As you know,' wrote Astruc, 'I possess certain weapons: but there are even more lethal ones which I shall resort to when the moment comes. War has been forced on me and I declare war today'. The weapons he referred to were his ability to discredit Diaghilev as a bankrupt in Paris, and the fact that he himself was trusted in St Petersburg, particularly by Diaghilev's enemies. He set out to ruin his former associate not because Diaghilev wanted another season in Paris, or because he had gone behind his back

to talk terms with Messager and Broussan of the Opéra but because he himself was organising a season for May and June of 1910 in which the company and corps de ballet of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York would appear at the Châtelet theatre. Since, in the letter to Chaliapine, Astruc reminds him that as long as five months before he had asked him 'a question' (clearly, whether Chaliapine would agree to appear with the Metropolitan company) ~~he must have been~~ it is clear that he was planning the Met season ~~while~~ during the height of the Russian Season ~~was~~ on back in May 1909. That may very well have been the reason why Diaghilev went to the Opéra managers, and said nothing about it to Astruc. They were after all independent producers.

As a show-business wag once said, 'It isn't enough that you succeed — your friends must fail!'

The trouble was that a Russian Season and an ~~American~~ Met Season would clash ~~hopelessly, and bring no good to either.~~ in the most literal way. Since the Opéra had its repertoire on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, it was logical that any other opera- or ballet-group of equal standing would have to perform on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. From his own point of view Astruc had no alternative to destroying Diaghilev. In his letter to Chaliapine he told him, more or less, that he must choose between himself and Diaghilev: 'You have been warned. Make up your mind'.

The wonder is that he did not succeed in ~~destroying~~ doing it, ~~Diaghilev~~, and that ~~the latter~~ Diaghilev was able once more to leave St Petersburg ~~once more~~ the following year with a troupe of dancers ~~who~~ belonging to the Tsar ~~and whom the Imperial Ballet could have held in Russia.~~ But the Russian system was autocratic and it is difficult for an authority that survives by balancing the interests of ~~the~~ top families to annul the career of one of their sons, even when there are scandalous stories about him. Astruc asked permission of Count Friedericks, Minister of the Court, to make a full report to the Tsar of the 'Diaghilev affair', and got it. The report was almost eleven pages ~~long~~ and referred to Diaghilev's 'very intimate friend' who had eloped with a ballet-dancer, his ex-secretary Mavrine. That was a reference en passant, but every Grand Duke knew what it meant.

distinguished

But no Grand Duke could be unaware of what Diaghilev had done for the Russian image in western Europe at a time when it ~~could~~ might be of maximum political advantage. With revolution threatening, the Tsar could hardly do without a foreign friend. ~~That~~ Diaghilev's private life ~~was 'scandalous'~~ did work against him. ~~more than the tolerance of homosexuality among professional people in St Petersburg might make it seem.~~ But Astruc's campaign failed, ~~did not work,~~ luckily for himself---since he and Diaghilev were soon collaborating again on the 1910 season. The Tsar even signed an order to give Diaghilev a subsidy, ~~later on,~~ though he did withdraw it, and the sum was paltry. But at no time did he threaten to withhold dancers from him. There were too many people close to the Court like Dr Serge Botkine, who were speaking hard for Diaghilev's integrity. On the other hand his attempts to lay his hands on some money to pay deposits on both the Opéra and the Drury Lane theatre in London failed. Even Maria Pavlovna, the Grand Duke Vladimir's widow, turned against him. He went to the prime minister, Stolypine, personally, but it did not help. There was over 24,000 francs still owing to Astruc alone.

At this stage he had no doubt that somehow or other there would be a 1910 season, and his committee went on preparing the repertoire. It was again to be a mixture of opera and ballet. Diaghilev wanted to present Rimsky-Korsakov's opera Sadko, and also his symphonic poem Schéhérazade, since the same composer's ~~because~~ Cleopatra and ~~the composer's part~~ his piece in Le Festin had gone down so well, ~~in Paris,~~ being as characetristically Russian! But there were difficulties about taking opera abroad once more. It was desperately expensive. And this time Chaliapine might not join them. On the other hand, the Opéra might not like an exclusively ballet season either. ~~He himself~~ Diaghilev was still not convinced that ballet was 'strong' enough to be presented alone. Both Benois and Fokine argued the other way. ~~But~~ If they did take ballet alone, would the dancers be available---Pavlova, Kshesinskaya (whom Diaghilev wanted, for her prestige, and Fokine did not), and Karsavina?

It had been in Diaghilev's mind since his Venetian holiday to present another vivid Russian ballet like The Polovtsian Dances, and Fokine came up with the idea of The Firebird. There were meetings at Benois' house to discuss some of Afanasiev's folk tales, with the idea of using one of them or joining several of them together. The painters Steletzsky and Golovine were present, with Tcherepnine, who was to compose the music, while the writer Remizov, a fountain of Russian legend and fairy tale, made exciting suggestions. Even Grigoriev helped. In the end Tcherepnine cooled (as the rest rather hoped he might), and Diaghilev called in Liadov, who was just about the slowest composer in Russia. After several weeks Liadov had only got as far as buying the music paper. So in December the job went to the ardently ambitious Stravinsky (now twenty-seven). When Diaghilev rang him up to tell him he replied that he had already started work! That was the kind of thing Diaghilev liked to hear, especially from one whom he later regarded as his 'first son' (the other two being Prokofiev and Dukelsky). Not that Stravinsky was sure of his own ability, much less desire, to write 'descriptive' music of the kind considered necessary for ballet. He wanted his own head rather than a commission to write 'imitation Rimsky-Korsakov' (against whom he was in revolt at the time). But a small committee of Diaghilev, Benois, Bakst, Fokine and Nijinsky called on him and assured him that all would be well. That was not quite the case, as matters turned out, since for Fokine the music was there to provide the dancers with rhythmic accompaniment, while for Stravinsky the dancing should be designed to express the music, even if this meant the minimum of steps. ~~The latter always~~ He felt that Fokine ~~(for whom he had the greatest respect)~~ so overloaded The Firebird with movement ~~as~~ that there was 'an unpleasant discordance between the movements of the dance and the imperative demands' of the music. For him the music was the essential shaping force of everything that went on on the stage. But for dancers and choreographers his work

Rimsky-Korsakov had once written 'How vexed I should be if I learned that Miss Duncan danced and mimed to my Schéh. ésagade'.

never really dance music, however richly and emphatically rhythmic in design. Serge Lifar even wrote, in one of his books on ballet, 'nothing is more opposed to dancing than M. Stravinsky's music', for 'not everything rhythmic is necessarily danceable'. And often enough lesser music makes better ballet. 'Stravinsky's music is so beautiful in itself that it is all sufficient', Lifar says, 'it has no need of a dancing addition'. It was not surprising therefore that the finest composers should be rather appalled by the kind of choreographic design put on their work. Debussy and Rimsky-Korsakov were among them. ~~Rimsky-Korsakov's~~ family ~~was~~ making trouble over the plan to ~~make~~ turn Schéhérazade into a ballet. ~~And when it was performed in Paris there was an outcry from the music critics.~~ Was it ~~fitting~~ right to regard as asacrilege the chaning of the purpose of a piece of music? ~~asked Henri Ghéon. He forgives Bakst and Fokine but does not advise others to try it.~~ ~~The same question might have been asked by~~ Digghilev ~~who~~ constantly rifled snippets and suites and motifs from concerti and symphonies and tone poems ~~composers~~ to provide ~~accompaniment in~~ his ballets. ~~The fact~~ But the fact that he put his faith in Stravinsky, knowing from the beginning that he would refuse to be regarded as a 'descriptive' musical servant of dance-steps, meant that he was aiming at the kind of ballet which surpassed even the dance, to attain a new theatrical wonder. It was this aim too that made him see in ~~each~~ his new dancer--in Nijinsky, Lifar, Massine, Dolin, Balanchine---the hope of a new choreography which would make his ~~make a ballet's constituent parts equal and perfectly~~ unity possible. ~~inter dependent.~~ ~~The aim~~ This was not achieved in the Stravinsky ballets, even Petrouchka, triumph though it was. ~~These~~ Stravinsky ballets were striking, scandalous. Anna Pavlova refused to dance in them, and regarded Diaghilev as an iconoclast for permitting them. He may well have agreed---because some new force was necessary to destroy the former subjection of ballet to the dancing ~~steps alone.~~ He educated his public away from the spectacular and romantic ballet, which may well have accounted for the financial failure of his superb Sleeping ~~Beauty~~ Princess years later in London, despite its excellent reception in the first weeks.

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with fuel.

where even the dancing could be an equal and not a dominant part.

paradoxical though that might seem.

Somehow the advance for the Opéra season was paid, perhaps by Walter Nouvel, who borrowed the sum from his mother for three months (it was repaid after a year), and whose cheque was countersigned by three men---Prince Argutinsky, Diaghilev and a newcomer to the group who made the 1910 season possible, Baron Dmitri Günsburg. He came from a rich and noble Jewish family. His two loves were antiques and ballet, and he was something of a dandy. His loans to Diaghilev were often as high as 100,000 roubles at a time, and often they were not paid back. He would buy expensive and unnecessary props which 'might come in useful one day' and seldom did. He had the habit of jotting down accounts on his shirt-cuff and then, when Diaghilev came to him with a 'financial' question, would yell, 'My shirt's gone to the wash---how can I tell you?', which Diaghilev always accepted, ~~absolutely,~~ as he never even used his shirt-cuff.

Günsburg paid up Diaghilev's debt to Astruc in full. Until the war he kept the Diaghilev company going by supporting its losses. The capital he laid out he never saw again, but he had great fun with the company and kept his humour unflinchingly. He was tall and sturdy. The company came to adore him, and he travelled everywhere with them. Diaghilev rather cooled towards him, at least for a time, when Nijinsky married Romola, as he (and not only he) thought that Günsburg had rather engineered it. But Diaghilev needed his money, and probably the warmth and gaiety of his friendship even more---and the hurt was swallowed.

Diaghilev went to Paris in the middle of December, since war with Astruc was clearly going to ruin either him or Astruc, and at present it looked like him. Misia Sert and Robert Brussel joined their meetings.

~~was reached.~~ Of course a lot of groundwork had been done in the previous weeks on a social level, ~~and~~ the Comtesse de Béarn, Mme de Ganay and Mme de Chévigné had been softening Astruc up. Two days before Christmay Astruc wrote Brussel a formal letter setting out the agreement he had reached with Diaghilev. The Opéra and the Châtelet seasons would be simultaneous, since 'M. de Diaghilev could not get out of his agreement with the Opéra and postpone his season until 1911' (as if he ever had any intention of doing so), nor could 'M. de Diaghilev put back his season by three weeks because of contracts signed with London for periods preceding and following his Paris season. The only solution of our problems was that suggested by M. de Diaghilev, namely that I should agree to upset my plans and change my per-

formances at the Châtelet from Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays to Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. In spite of the serious damage this change of days might do me, with the danger of entirely losing the abonnés of the Opéra and of having to subtract the takings of that theatre (22,000 francs a night in May) from my potential receipts, I am disposed to agree to the proposed change'. Diaghilev was to agree to give him Chaliapine between 19 May and 25 June while Astruc was to be given the administration of the Opéra season for a fee of 5% of the box office gross. Diaghilev was also to repay him the 24,711 francs he owed him, plus 'costs and interest'. This was the sum later paid by Gûnsburg (but not until an ultimatum from Astruc reached him through Brussel on 10 January of the following year). It looked as though Chaliapine would not agree to do a season for Astruc after all, but this condition was not an absolute one. On the other hand, the Opéra management had yet to be persuaded that a season without opera (and Chaliapine's refusal to sing ~~even for Diaghilev~~ meant this) was neither financially viable nor in keeping with that theatre's traditions. At the end of April he sent Nouvel and Gûnsburg to Paris to argue it out with Messager and Broussan.

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Now that the theatre and the season were available, everything else started coming unstuck. Back in St Petersburg, Diaghilev fell ill. It did not look as though he would get Kshesinskaya (whom Astruc was perhaps trying to engage simultaneously.) And all of a sudden Karsavina came out with the news that she had signed up with the Coliseum theatre in London for another season in 1910. And the Opéra was insisting on her appearance! Diaghilev was distraught. 'You should have kept yourself free!' he told her. 'You ought to have told me of your plans for another season long ago!' she replied. 'And now I'm bound by my signature!' He argued, pleaded. She sent frantic telegrams to her impresario. The answer was always the same---'no chance of altering dates'. Meanwhile

~~Meanwhile~~ Diaghilev went on ~~was~~ 'tormenting' her. She began to dread the telephone, knowing how difficult it was to resist ~~Diaghilev's~~ his pressure. Invariably ~~And~~ he ~~always~~ asked her to come over to his apartment in the evening 'to see the work of the artistic committee'. And there he would proceed to wear her ~~out~~ down, not by logic but by 'the sheer stress of his will, by tenacity incredible'. His apartment was, she said, 'a Chancery and a small Parnassus in two rooms' at that time. Benois 'topped the Areopagus'---wise, practical, inspired, clear, kindly, erudite. It was a difficult group for someone as radiantly intelligent as Karsavina to avoid. Diaghilev ~~He~~ knew well enough how intoxicated she would be by those evening visits. Roerich too was ~~usually~~ there---that 'prophet with impeded speech', also ~~and~~ the artist Mitislav Doboujinsky, a naive and simple man, the great romantic of stage-design. Stravinsky and Fokine would be in the next room arguing over a score and appealing to Diaghilev ~~if~~ whenever they disagreed on tempi. Diaghilev brought 'quick, unhesitating decision to every doubt. He had the sense of the theatre to an uncanny degree'. Tradesmen would burst in, ~~often~~ with bills. Someone would discover that Anisfeld needed more canvas to paint on. According to Benois, she became 'one of us' in those days. 'Tamara Platonovna was not only a beautiful woman and a first-class, highly individual artist, but had as well a most attractive personality...infinitely more cultured than most of her comrades'.

On the evening she was to leave ~~go~~ there was one last phone-call from Diaghilev. He asked her to come over at once 'to talk things over'. She had already promised him that she would beg Oswald Stoll, the London manager, for leave after her first fortnight, and Diaghilev reminded her of her promise. 'We cried a little.' The image-lamp was on, and Diaghilev looked weary, all of a sudden 'a mere human'.

These were tough months for him. The Rimsky-Korsakov family were still being adamant about Schéhérazade. Anna Pavlova told him that she too would be appearing in London, at the Palace theatre, and so could not dance his Firebird for him, or in Giselle (the third new ballet under preparation). Apart from the fact that she was going to get more money in London than she could expect from ~~Diaghilev~~ him, she disliked Stravinsky's music intensely, and felt that it left no room for the kind of grace she had, apart from being ugly and wilfully eccentric in itself. Thus Diaghilev could not supply Astruc with either Chaliapine or two of the great dancers he wanted. Instead of saying this, he cabled ~~Astruc~~ offering Astruc ~~him~~ three performances of Cleopatra at the Châtelet to augment his Italian opera, for the price of 50,000 francs. Astruc wired back offering 45,000 francs for three performances each of Cleopatra, Les Sylphides and Le Festin, on the condition that Pavlova, Karsavina, Nijinsky, Fokine, Ida Rubinstein and Kshesinskaya all appeared. In other words, he knew precisely what difficulties Diaghilev was having, and this was his way of telling him so. In fact three days later Astruc learned ~~contact in St Petersburg wired him~~ that Kshesinskaya had refused to appear in Diaghilev's company, and that the Paris season could not possibly take place. At once he ~~Astruc~~ cabled Diaghilev asking him to name the dates of his dress rehearsal and first night---no doubt to put him on a spot. He must have been surprised when he got the reply naming 22 and 24 May, neither of which date was kept.

Another blow was the death of Sergei Botkine, who had been so valuable at Court. It removed the last chance of money from the Tsar. Diaghilev went on negotiating for seasons in London and New York, not to mention Berlin and Brussels (the former for a date before the Paris opening, ~~and~~ the latter for immediately aftewards). He ~~again went~~ returned to Paris at Easter. The telegrams he sent to Benois in St Petersburg were so alarming that the latter feared he might committ suicide. By this time Misia Edwarde ~~and Diaghilev were close enough~~ for them to storm at each other. ~~for disloyalty and indifference.~~ He would go into a fury

he was close enough 15

if she had a dinner-date on an evening when he ~~wanted to be with her~~ needed her. Having a life of her own always looked to him like an excuse to cover a lack of feeling for him. 'I know very well that friendships don't last for centuries, but one thing I do beg of you, and that is never to tell me again that you've been 'urgently called away', because I know it already. I can predict these urgent 'calls' with the utmost certainty, though I only consider them 'calls' in the sense that they 'call' for the laughter of my friends to whom I prophesy them beforehand.' After his return from Paris King Edward died (7 May), and his London season was suddenly dead too. He had no money---only a theatre and a season to fill, for it had been decided in Paris that he should be his own manager for his season, and simply rent the Opéra. He would thus have to take the whole risk himself. How to get his dancers to Paris? He had enrolled Lydia Lopokova, who was to make such a hit nine years later with Massine in La Boutique Fantasque, Fokine with Alexander Volinin and Ekaterina Geltzer from Moscow. Count Kokovtsov, the finance minister (later prime minister after Stolypin's assassination), bent to the persuasions of his friends and advised the Tsar to grant him 10,000 roubles. The Tsar signed his approval and with this Diaghilev (knowing how volatile Nicholas could be) dashed to a banker ~~he knew~~ and borrowed that amount on the security of the Tsar's promise. Train tickets were bought---and when the Tsar counter-manded his own order Prince Argutinsky and another friend came forward with a guarantee for the banker: they were to be repaid from box office receipts in Paris. According to Prince Peter Lieven, the Tsar went so far as to circulate his embassies in the west with the warning that Diaghilev must not be helped in any way. That Diaghilev never seemed to regret the passing of White Russia and even

(perhaps because the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch went Khin with the story that the Diaghilev programme would be 'decadent' and 'discreditable to Russia')

considered returning to the Soviet Union after the war is not ~~to be wondered at.~~ really surprising.

The Berlin season opened in the middle of May. Of the new ballets on the Diaghilev repertoire only Carnaval was given, with Lopokova taking Karsavina's part of Columbine. The Berliners adored it. The music was Shumann's, and here and there, mingling with the Commedia dell'Arte element, the composer's own love-life was suggested. Back in March two students from the Technological Institute in St Petersburg had approached Fokine for a ballet to be performed at a charity ball in the Pavlov Hall, sponsored by the magazine Satyricon, of which one of the young men, Mikhail Germanovitch Kornfeld, later became the editor. The ball was to be called Carnaval, which at once put Fokine in mind of Schumann's early piano music of that name. With the help of Kornfeld, who spoke fluent German, he began studying Schumann's life, especially his love for Clara Wieck, and ~~found~~ felt that his personality could be expressed both in the fiery Florestan ~~on the one hand~~ and the romantic and sentimental Eusebius ~~on the other.~~ From the biographical hints and the titles on the score--- 'Harlequin', Columbine', 'Pantalon', 'Pierrot' and 'Papillon' he quickly pieced together a plot, and the result was an enchanting series of escapades, flirtations and romps, set in the Vienna of the Biedermeier period eighty years before. The ballet was ready for the ball after only three rehearsals, and the finale was composed only minutes before the ball was due to begin. Bakst had been approached to do the décor for half his usual fee: he devised a garden scene which he later changed for the intriguing curtain surround, deep blue for the Berlin and Paris performances, emerald green for others, with a broad dado or frieze running along the top in a red, black and gold ~~through which curtains,~~ and the dancers ~~could enter between them.~~ It was actually a series of made lightning entrances and exits. For that first performance at the ball the dancers had to be masked, since the Imperial Ballet forbade its dancers to appear outside the Marynsky theatre during the season. Karsavina danced Columbine, Ludmilla Schollar was Estrella, Bronislava Nijinsky (Nijinsky's sister) took the part of Papillon,

poppy-motif. On either side of the stage there was a small striped settee in the Biedermeier style. The curtain

while the famous director Vsevolod Meyerhold, also an excellent mime, took the part of Pierrot. As they were all masked no one seemed quite certain afterwards about who danced Florestan. Fokine said Vasily Kiselev, Fokine's son (in a letter to Richard Buckle) said Nijinsky.

It was Grigoriev who suggested the ballet for the Paris season: 'Diaghilev looked up from his exercise book and said that he did not particularly care for Schumann, and anyway the ballet would not do for a large stage. But at that moment Benois came in and gave the idea ~~he~~ his support, and Diaghilev wrote the name of the ballet down as part of their new repertoire. The music had already been orchestrated by Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov, Tcherepnine and Liadov for a concert back in 1902, so that there was no further work to be done. Bronislava did not continue in her part---Diaghilev refused to include her in his company, and according to Romola Nijinsky this was the cause of the first big quarrel between himself and Nijinsky. Bronislava had passed out of school with honours and had already taken important roles at the Marynsky. She was already getting the reputation of a brilliant actress as well as a flawless dancer who combined something of Pavlova's shimmering quality with the Kshesinskaya technique. But she was not pretty, and a pretty face was still regarded, even in the rugged World of Art circle, as an essential of the ballerina. Diaghilev admitted that she had the makings of a remarkable dancer but apparently he was not yet ready to defy the rule about prettiness (later ~~of course~~ he took her own not only as a dancer but choreographer).

(in the first days of June)

During the journey to Paris Nijinsky felt like a small child before an examination. And this time they were met at the station by hundreds of people. ~~The advance booking promised another success.~~ Friends bore down on the dancers with dates for parties and dinners, until Diaghilev had to say, 'Please, please let them alone. We came to work, not to amuse ourselves.' Lydia Lopokova fainted with the excitement. The staff of the Opéra was as un-

on 15 piles of luggage.

h.p.

cooperative as they had been two years before. Also the theatre was decidedly shabby after the refurbished Châtelet. The advance bookings promised another success--- but Pavolva would not be appearing, and Karsavina would not be there for the opening. There was the danger too that Paris might flock to see the Metropolitan Opera under Astruc's management. But there was Nijinsky. There was a dancer new to Paris, vivacious and capable of 'electrifying the audience with the sheer joy and seemingly boundless vitality of her movements', in Cyril Beaumont's words. There was the astonishing setting for Schérérazade, not to mention its costumes (which were to change fashions throughout the western world). There was a new composer to launch, Stravinsky. The first programme, ~~to~~ opening on 4 June, ~~was to~~ consist of Carnaval, with Lydia Lopokova in Karsavina's part, Schéhérazade, Le Festin once more and the Polovtsian Dances. The music for Schéhérazade was, despite the Rimsky-Korsakov family, the first, second and fourth of that composer's symphonic poem. The overture at once created an eastern atmosphere and the curtain rose on Bakst's extraordinary vision of a vast ~~emerald green~~ tent of ~~folded curtain enclosing~~ draped cloth the world of Shahryar's harem, with three glittering blue doors giving on to an inner apartment in the centre of the stage, and towering columns ~~of~~ orange on the right, to support the gold and blue ceiling. On the left there was a ~~raised~~ high platform ~~reached by steps with~~ crowned with a divan ~~covered~~ under ~~with~~ by cushions of every colour. It was fittingly extravagant, ~~since~~ this ~~was the~~ first big creation of the Diaghilev company. All the former ballets, with the exception of the Polovtsian Dances, ~~were~~ had been new versions of former works. Benois devised the story from the first of the Arabian Nights, ~~not~~ without following however Rimsky-Korsakov's notes on his score, and inventing Zobeida (the Sultana), represented by Rimsky-Korsakov's arabesque for solo violin and harp, as ~~while~~ the opening theme belonged to Shahryar. Bakst was given the credit of having done the book as well as the set, ~~and~~ but when Benois complained to Diaghilev about this the latter said, 'What do you expect? Bakst

Lopokova; (described for the moment as 'the son of a famous opera singer at the Maryinsky', which he was).

emerald-green and blue in a pink rose-motif, dagging to the eye in what seemed an almost forbidden combination. All this enclosed

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had to be given something. You have Le Pavillon d'Armide, he's got Schéhérazade!' Not that Benois could complain in Paris, since he was not there. Diaghilev had overlooked---deliberately or otherwise---to arrange his visa, ~~for Berlin and Paris,~~ and Benois had pushed his fist through a window at his ~~own~~ home in a fit of rage. He severed an artery and nearly lost his right hand, and had not to spend a month more in St Petersburg with his arm in plaster. This could have been simple pique. He and Diaghilev had at least five quarrels a year. ~~anyway.~~ Benois had played an essential part in the building of the Ballets Russes, probably the most important part in making it the embodiment of World of Art concepts, in which---again---his had been the principal voice. Diaghilev dropped people abruptly if he felt he no longer needed them---and he may have felt now that he could do without Benois until the next season. When Benois arrived in Paris and saw 'Ballet de L. Bakst' in the programme he could not believe his eyes, though he enjoyed the performance and embraced Bakst and Diaghilev afterwards. He had lost the credit for Schéhérazade as he had for Cleopatra, and it must have been rather clear to him that Diaghilev saw in Bakst rather than ~~in~~ himself the kind of startling inventiveness that he was looking for (and in music found in Stravinsky). Benois left Paris for Montagnola in Switzerland three days later, and from there wrote to Diaghilev that he would not think of collaborating with him again. The story that Benois was resentfully aware of being elbowed out of the Diaghilev enterprise is absurd. From Switzerland he published an article in Russian in which he said, 'To Bakst really belongs the credit of creating Schéhérazade as a spectacle.'

When the curtain went up on Bakst's setting there

was a ~~great~~ burst of applause. To that even more than to the dances, voluptuous as they were, or Ida Rubinstein's Zobeida, or the manhandled music, or Nijinsky's 'cat caressing, tiger devouring' dance as Zobeida's slave, the ballet's success was due. It seemed to summarise, to present with full impact a certain theme already hinted in Cleopatra and the Polovtsian Dances. Dazzling colour, a wild and clashing music, frenzied movement and marvellously deft grouping---all the fruits of a new collaboration that redefined not only ballet but theatre.

n.p. Pierre Lalo attacked Diaghilev for 'desecrating' the music but went on, 'And yet, ridiculous and shocking as this falsification of the meaning and expression of the music may be, one almost forgets it when seeing Schéhérazade, so overwhelming is the magnificence, the originality of the spectacle presented to our eyes. On the stage...a sort of enormous tent of the intensest, most dazzling green, extraordinary in its richness and impact. There is no other colour, to all intents and purposes, and only dimly does one perceive, on those huge green surfaces, a few vast outlines, Persian in origin, black or orange-red. The ground is covered by a similar orange-red carpet of a paler tone... The clothes worn by the men and women, for the most part, are in colours complementary to the décor, different shades of reds and a few greens. And against this background glitter and move the golds and silvers of the amorous negroes. Here and there, deeper touches of colour, like the Shah's robes, in which blues and sombre violets strike the domin-

ant note, and make one think of the loveliest Persian miniatures. The whole creates an ensemble miraculously harmonious and compelling; an enchantment that continually dazzles the eyes. M. Bakst, the Russian painter, who has composed this remarkable painting, linked up the colours of this décor and the costumes, is in truth a very great artist'.

The talk about Schéhérazade was so enraptured that Sarah Bernhardt, lame and old now, was persuaded to see it. She had herself carried into the theatre, but when the curtain rose she became very disturbed and began waving her stick about. 'Let's get out of here!' she cried. 'Quick! I'm frightened! They're all mutes!' For Fokine Ida Rubinstein's muteness was one of the most moving aspects of the ballet. 'She sits utterly still while slaughter takes place around her. Death approaches her, but not the horror nor the fear of it. She majestically awaits her fate in a pose without motion.' As for Nijinsky, he ~~fell again and again,~~ somersaulted three times after the executioner's sword had pierced him, 'beating on the boards like a fish at the bottom of a boat', Jean Cocteau said.

The ballet brought in brighter colours for women's clothes, proved the most popular of the Diaghilev ballets. Arnold Haskell tells us that in a London opinion poll of 1925 Schéhérazade headed a long list of ballets--- despite the fact that the questionnaire did not cite it. The 1910 season was not received with the astonished clamour of the previous season. Something more important had happened. The Diaghilev ballet had become established in Paris. People now knew what to expect. After this only a war could dislodge it, which was precisely what happened.

Karsavina managed to get her month's leave after dancing in London for two weeks, and rehearsals with Nijinsky began on June 6 for The Firebird and Giselle. These were rather stormy. Giselle was really Pavlova's part, and Karsavina was anxious to shine in ~~this~~ the famous French

French ballet first performed in Paris in 1841. ~~quite as much as~~ Nijinsky ~~was. He~~ did not cooperate, Diaghilev was buffered between them. She wept. Diaghilev told her consolingly, 'You don't know what volumes he has written on that part---on its interpretation'. But ~~on her side Karsavina probably felt that, since~~ she had been performing the second act of this ballet in London (where it ~~was~~ had been billed as Gisella or La Sylphide), 'I loved every bit of it,' ~~Karsavina~~ she said. 'I was sadly taken aback when I found that I danced, mimed, went off my head and died of a broken heart without any response from Nijinsky. He stood pensive and bit his nails. 'Now you have to come across towards me,' I suggested. 'I know myself what to do', he said moodily.' Nijinsky's problem was Fokine's too---how to make the miming look convincing in the new way (Fokine had only agreed to do the ballet at all after Diaghilev had threatened to employ a second ballet-master). Eventually the two dancers became attuned to each other, but the ballet proved only a ~~great~~ personal success for them as ~~theatre~~ dancers, nothing more. Paris now expected more, ~~And Diaghilev's first point to Benois when he had suggested the ballet had been that Paris would be rather bored by seeing an old ballet of their own.~~ Reynaldo Hahn called it 'celebrated and insipid'. Firebird, with Karsavina in the title role, was a triumph for her too. Fokine danced Ivan Tsarevitch. Benois thought it weak. It was not, he felt, a fairy-tale for grown-ups, and therefore not easy to believe in. Nor was Golovine's set helpful to the drama ~~of the piece, he thought.~~ Paris, on the whole, disagreed. 'Where find,' Le Fiagro asked, 'that dance of the Bird of Fire, in which Karsavina seems to defy the very laws of gravity, and is metamorphosed into a fairy?' ~~What theatre of ours has ever put on dancing equal to that of the bacchanale in Cleopatra...?~~ Robert Brussel and Bruneau the composer even preferred it to Schéhérazade. They saw in it newer forms of design and movement. Henri Ghéon wrote, 'The FIrebird, being the result of an intimate collabor-

for he wanted to shine too.

and felt she knew it perfectly.

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miracle every time the curtain went up — not simply the best dancing. Also the Parisians thought that the Benois sets were from old Opera stock.

Diaghilev had been proved right: he had told Benois that Paris would be bored.

'(in a theatre of ours),

ation between choreography, music and painting, presents us with the most exquisite miracle of harmony that can be imagined, a miracle of sound and form and movement. The old-gold vermiculation of the fantastic backcloth seems to have been invented to a formula identical with that of the shimmering web of the orchestra. And as one listens, there issues forth the very sound of the wizard shrieking, of swarming sorcerers and gnomes running amok. When the bird passes, it is truly the music that bears it aloft. Stravinsky, Fokine, Golovin, in my eyes, are but one name'.

(mostly among musicians)

n.p. It was such a suceess that Stravinsky rushed back to St Petersburg to bring his wife and children for the last performance on June 24. He had been called to the curtain again and again by the first-night audience. Diaghilev had walked on to the stage with Debussy, who ~~had~~ congratulated Stravinsky on his work and invited him to dinner. At that time the young Stravinsky still had to be talked of in Paris as 'the son of a famous opera singer at the Marykisky theatre'; ~~Prince Peter Lieven felt, like Benois,~~ that it was his music that saved Firebird. 'The music at least achieved immediate perfection,' Benois said. 'One cannot imagine music more poetical, more expressive in every movement, more beautiful, and with more of the spirit of fantasy'. During the rehearsals for Firebird Diaghilev had pointed out the ~~young~~ Stravinsky to Karsavina and said, 'Mark him well. He is a man on the eve of celebrity'. He saw that this was the kind of music that made new ballets. There was in Stravinsky a superb rhythmic originality, something so dynamic and brilliant that it could only cause a stir: He was difficult to dance to---which was why Firebird was not performed again for some time. 'People seemed to want to rise and peer into the orchestra-pit, enquiring, 'Who made those strange noises?'' Prince Lieven wrote. There was a certain weakness in Stravinsky's music too, behind the brilliance and dynamic rhythms, but that took time to become clear: for Diaghilev he was par excellence the composer of the theatre, and some will say that his finest work was done in that function.

Many felt

having no name of his own.

it was the stuff of new revolutionary ballets.

(which was why he was 'my first son' for Diaghilev)

Diaghilev was decidedly more relaxed this year than at the end of the 1909 season. One night he played a practical joke on Jean Cocteau, ~~who was at that time little more than a boy~~, by telling the cab-driver to take him on to the Hotel des Reservoirs at Versailles instead of his home, after he himself had ~~been~~ dropped off at the Hotel Mirabeau. The Ballets Russes (as strange and stunning in St Petersburg as they were in Paris) were now the thing. A process of influence had started which would gradually, through the war years, infiltrate to the middle classes and the shops. After the war there was not a middle-class home wihtout its green and orange cushions on a black carpet. Women dressed in the loudest colours, and the bibelots were all striped. Soon house-decorating, shops, brasseries and cafés followed suit,' wrote the critic André Varnod. Ida Rubinstein was again a triumph---a little more so than the previous year. She sat for Jacques Emile Blanche in her Schéhérazade costume, lying on a couch. And Serov painted her in the same position, only in the nude. There was a row between Diaghilev and Bakst over her, the first of many others. Ida had begun to see herself as a dancer. She was tired of miming and standing about on the stage in tragic poses while everyone leaped and sweated all round her. Diaghilev would not have it, and the next season she performed in spectacular productions of her own, with the help of d'Annunzio (now a confirmed Diaghilevite), Debussy and the faithful Bakst. Montesquiou was still her chaperone, and publicity followed her everywhere. She even got hold of a black panther, some say a black tiger cub.

financed partly by the English lover, Benjamin Guiness.

The season was, above all, a financial success. Astruc now knew his man, and how to control his 'mania' ~~as he called it~~ for spending. Extra performances were arranged with the Opéra, to take place after the Brussels engagement had been fulfilled. Karsavina had to return to London, and Fokine presuaded Diaghilev with some difficulty to let Lopokova dance the Bird of Fire. Diaghilev offered Karsavina a two-year contract giving him her services through May of each year to the end of August, while the

[According to Stravinsky it was this fiasco that had caused Diaghilev and Fokine to quarrel. Diaghilev told Stravinsky that all Fokine's doubts could be settled with money, and began to talk about using Gorsky as his choreographer.

Marynsky was closed, so as to avoid her falling into the hands of 'music halls', which he thought utterly degrading. She could not go on 'prostituting her art'! On her side she hesitated to give up all future holidays. 'I hate your family', he told her. 'It takes you away from me. Why couldn't you have married Fokine? You would both have belonged to me'. At the same time he criticised Fokine's work as 'old-fashioned'. It was clear that he was straining for ~~new and outrageous~~ even more liberated forms, like those of the Nijinsky ballets. And he did not like Fokine, who was opinionated and quick to lose his temper. Karsavina was astonished to hear all this. Then what was he going to do with the Fokine ballets? she asked him. 'Oh, I don't know', he said. 'I may sell it all lock, stock and barrel'. [~~She~~ Actor Karsavina signed his contract, and even managed to squeeze more leave from Oswald Stoll in London for a gala performance in Brussels. There Diaghilev was waiting for her like a father, full of joy. He asked her later not to mind if Geltzer (not a great dancer, and no hit in Paris) danced her role in Les Sylphides, at which Karsavina began raging, though she knew she would agree in the end. Later in her dressing room ~~(Karsavina once told Richard Buckle)~~ Diaghilev, in his inimitably soft, embarrassed way when he wanted to make up a quarrel, offered her his other cheek to slap and even implied that he was desperately in love with her.

n.p.

He had some more peace-making to do, at Montagnola in Switzerland, where Benois ~~still~~ was staying. But this time he failed. He went ~~there~~ with Nijinsky and Stravinsky. ~~He had a way of making people feel sorry for him, and even wept.~~ They ~~friends~~ stayed ~~together for~~ with Benois a week, friends as before, but Benois still refused to cooperate with him further. ~~It did not of course mean the end of his work with composers like Stravinsky and dancers like Nijinsky (he was soon working with both on Petrouhka). And in any case he did work with Diaghilev again, sporadically. For Diaghilev he was always 'the teacher'. And~~ his defection ~~from the group was perhaps the greatest loss~~

of 'the teacher', as Diaghilev always called him, would have been a fearful loss.

~~Diaghilev ever sustained.~~ Benois had a stability of taste and culture that Diaghilev lacked ~~and continually learned from.~~ Once Bakst, ~~talking to~~ in a conversation with Prince Argutinsky, said, 'I am probably one of the foremost painters of the day, but what will remain when I am gone? Drawings, sketches. But Benois, he will live in history'. He knew how far Benois was behind the revival of art in Russia, and the new interest in ikons and the past, and even Russia's ~~past~~ literature, as he knew how much the Ballets Russes were an ultimate expression of that revival. Benois ~~once told Prince Lieven that he hardly knew himself what profession he belonged to. 'Perhaps the propagation of art if this can be called a profession. But to what I am most inclined I do not know even now, after a lifetime. If I am occupied with the theatre, then at the same time I must be writing on the history of art or painting a picture which has nothing to do with the theatre'.~~ He was never ~~a great~~ an unqualified lover of ballet, yet he guided Diaghilev towards his destiny---he had been the first to say that the 1910 season must be devoted to ballet alone. He was a rather helpless man in practical matters, and he lost patience easily, dropping things over a trifling obstacle---in a word, the opposite of the fighting Diaghilev, who ~~thrived on obstacles and~~ loved to play the weak. They had been together now for over thirteen years, since they were boys, and Benois' ideas would have remained a personal influence confined to artistic circles in St Petersburg and Paris had it not been for Diaghilev's passion for turning dreams into living projects. Their quarrels had always been ~~very~~ fierce. Benois would shriek at the top of his voice and throw himself about the room, or smash things, or run out into the street, where one of Diaghilev's emissaries (often Prince Argutinsky) would follow him. They never lost their tenderness for each other. But it ~~was~~ is possible that Diaghilev, in the first flush of success, was beginning to tire of what he felt to be a certain encyclopedism in his friend, and to turn towards a certain scandalism, ~~that~~ which increasingly

marked the new productions of the Ballets Russes. It was partly demanded of him by his public, who ~~had~~ insisted on the 'exotic' and the 'revolutionary', away from ballets like Les Sylphides and Le Pavillon and Giselle. He would sometimes say to the witty Cocteau, '~~Amuse~~ surprise me with an idea', and Cocteau would nearly always find something ~~new and~~ paradoxical or fantastic to say. In the 'Diaghilev epoch' the idea became current that new art scandalises and baffles, and of course a striving for bold effects as an end in themselves was the result. ~~In the last years of his life Diaghilev often sponsored the young, but without the flair of his first years, because it had now become a matter of fashion and not strictly judgement. That was where the loss of Benois was felt.~~ 'Nowadays,' Benois said, 'innovation has become a profession. Diaghilev was inclined towards such things and we had to restrain him. If we did anything revolutionary it was done involuntarily, we issued no 'challenge'. Our 'originality' was due rather to the fact that our relations towards art were different from those of all our contemporaries. We felt this most strongly in Paris, where nobody in the theatrical world gave himself wholly to art'. ~~And his psychology was 'perhaps that of an English conservative, a believer in progress on the foundation of the value of the past'. It was here that Diaghilev may have felt a slight hindrance to his plans, for he was never interested to épater le bourgeois. But he loved to scandalise. Narynsky theatre in 1911 helped him on the path.~~ gave himself wholly to art'. But while Benois was something of a conservative Diaghilev loved to scandalise. An event at the Narynsky theatre in 1911 helped him on the path.

6

Shocked Dowagers and Two Scandals

No one thought in terms of a 'Diaghilev ballet' at this time. He was simply borrowing dancers from the Imperial theatre and bringing them to western Europe. Paris still saw him as an emissary from Russia, little realising that the style of his ballets was as new in St Petersburg as it was anywhere else. Even Baron Günsbourg probably saw him as the Grand Duke Vladimir had seen him---an amateur, a Maecenas without money of his own, a well-born organiser of ballet trips abroad, not the originator and mainstay of an entirely new enterprise. Diaghilev clearly meant to change that. He meant to sever his name once and for all from the Imperial theatre, now that he was powerful enough to do so. He was not after personal glory. He felt he had enough of that anyway, and was not the kind to be greatly impressed by publicity. His name did not even feature on the programmes. It was years before it became regarded as a guarantee of 'genuine' Russian ballet, on the hoardings. But step by step the Ballets Russes were becoming the Ballets Serge de Diaghilev. Gradually his seasons occupied more and more of the year, and a nucleus of loyal and permanent dancers began to gather round him. 1911 was the first year of a Monte-carlo season: it was there that he was to set up his headquarters. The Bolshevik regime in Russia after 1917 completed the transition by keeping out of his own country. Most of all, the ballets he put on won him

independence, especially Petrouchka, on which Benois and Stravinsky were soon collaborating.

He now wanted to perform all the year round. It was not so easy to entice dancers away from the security of the Imperial theatre, ~~whose~~ where contracts carried pension clauses as well. The principal dancers were the easiest to engage, since they saw the greater opportunities that Diaghilev offered, not simply because of the tours he planned but for ~~the~~ more demanding and satisfying roles. ~~in the Fokine ballets.~~ Bolm agreed, so did Sophie Fedorova, Karsavina was only obliged to perform a few times a year at the Marynsky, being now a prima ballerina. ~~Grigoriev felt that~~ it was the corps de ballet that presented the greatest difficulty, and Diaghilev sent Bezobrazov to Warsaw to recruit dancers. He also telegraphed Astruc to enquire about a troupe said to be in Paris under the management of the brothers Molodsov, though Fokine was doubtful of their value. As to Fokine himself, Diaghilev no longer wanted him as a dancer, and told him so---Nijinsky was to hold the field alone there. He needed all Fokine's energies for choreography and directing, since Nijinsky was by no means ready to become a choreographer, and an independent company would have to have more than one anyway, to achieve a sufficient repertoire. Fokine agreed on condition that he be billed as choreographic director of the company, and get a 'very large salary'. ~~(Benois' expression).~~ He broke with the Marynsky, where he was considered a 'revolutionary' not only in dancing matters but politics.

and Olga Preobrajenskaya PREOBRAJENSKAYA

There remained the problem of Nijinsky himself, since he still had two years to run out of his five-year contract with the Marynsky. This was where the scandal at the end of January 1911 came in. The Imperial Theatres dismissed him. There was a performance of Giselle at the Marynsky with Karsavina opposite him as before. Benois' costume for ~~him~~ Nijinsky ~~omitted~~ the now usual short trunks over the tights. He appeared simply in tights, though he certainly wore his jock-strap---no male dancer could afford to be that loose. No one had taken exception to it in Paris, but before the curtain went up an official pointed out to Nijinsky that he was not wearing

a proper costume. He refused to alter it, no doubt after consultation with Diaghilev, who may have seen here a chance ~~here~~ of severing Nijinsky's ties with the Marynsky. The Dowager Empress was in the audience and during the interval she invited Karsavina to her box but not Nijinsky. The following day he was asked by Krupensky (Teliakowsky was away) to apologise and he refused to do so. The dismissal was published on 26 January, after the theatre had given Nijinsky a chance to 'reconsdier', which he did not take. To a journalist Nijinsky said, 'I don't want to discuss the matter'. He felt he had been dismissed in the most ungrateful manner, and that his role could easily have been given to Legat or Andrianov, who had both danced the part, before the curtain rose. It looked as if the management had been looking for a pretext to force his resignation, and as it happened nothing could have ~~been better for~~ suited Diaghilev better. Now, two months after he had started recruiting a company of his own, ~~Diaghilev~~ he had his male star. He cabled Astruc a fortnight later to use the 'appalling scandal" as publicity in Paris.

and were on the stage at ~~the~~ the time

Astruc obliged, and had Paris 'seething' with the news within half-an-hour. ~~In fact~~ At first he ~~had~~ doubted Diaghilev's account and cabled Gunsbourg for confirmation. He had good reason here since Diaghilev (wanting as always to exploit Bakst's name for its publicity value) had described the costume as the work of Bakst and not Benois. It seemed clear that the Dowager Empress had not in fact been shocked by Nijinsky's performance---apparently she had told her family as the curtain went down that she had never seen ~~anything~~ dancing like it---but the 'worried directorate' of the Imperial Theatres had used her as an alibi.

Meanwhile Benois had returned to Diaghilev, now as his artistic director. After visiting him at Montagnola Diaghilev and Nijinsky had spent six weeks in Venice, then returned to Switzerland to visit Stravinsky at Lausanne. Before finishing his Firebird the previous year the young composer had had a 'vision' of a 'solemn pagan rite' in which elders, seated in a circle, watched a young girl dance herself to death---this being part

of a 'spring sacrifice'. He described it to Nicholas Roerich, a specialist in 'pagan subjects', who became his collaborator in this Sacre du Printemps. But before starting what would clearly be a long and difficult job Stravinsky had decided to compose a piece for piano and orchestra. It turned out to be rather bizarre. Walking by Lake Geneva one day he struggled to find a title for it. Then it came: Petrouchka, the 'immortal and unhappy hero of every fair in all countries'! Now Diaghilev ~~had~~ already knew ~~heard~~ about the Sacre du Printemps and was enthusiastic to hear the music. Instead Stravinsky played him Petrouchka. Diaghilev 'was so much pleased with it,' Stravinsky said, 'that he would not leave it alone and began persuading me to develop the theme of the puppet's sufferings and make it a whole ballet'. They settled the scene of action---the fair, the booths and the traditional puppet theatre, the magician with his tricks, and the crowds. There was no thought at this stage ~~for~~ of casting Nijinsky as the puppet itself--- he was ~~thought to be~~ considered more suitable for the magician, with Leontov as Petrouchka. Diaghilev wrote off to Benois about the idea (knowing that the subject would be irresistible for him) and told him to 'stop sulking' and get down to work. 'Petrouchka, the Russian Guignol or Punch, no less than Harlequin', Benois wrote later in his life, 'had been my friend since earliest childhood. Whenever I heard the loud, nasal cries of the travelling showman: 'Here's Petrouchka! Come, good people, and see the show!' I would get into a kind of frenzy to see the enchanting performance'. Stravinsky began composing the ballet at greater length while Diaghilev went to Paris and then London. In Paris ~~he~~ Diaghilev discussed with Reynaldo and Cocteau their idea for another new ballet, Le Dieu Bleu, on an oriental theme, since this seemed to go down so well in Paris. Cocteau incorporated some of the elements of Firebird into the ballet, and no doubt that ballet inspired him and his friends to find an equally powerful role for Nijinsky (who had once wanted to dance the Bird of Fire himself---on points). He, Reynaldo

h.p.

h.p.

Hahn, Diaghilev, Nijinsky and Bakst ate together at Le Grand Vatel and worked out the ballet in some detail. They seemed to be worried that Astruc would 'leak' news of the work (there were already rivals in the ballet field) and they all undersigned a letter to him asking him 'not to say a word to anyone' and 'especially about the possibility of including it in the Coronation celebrations'. For, sponsored by the Marchioness of Ripon, Diaghilev had negotiated a Covent Garden season, during which there would be a Coronztion Gala performance before a gathering of royal families from every part of Europe, not to say the crème de la crème of England. The marchioness looked after her friends. She knew that no artistic enterprise could succeed in London, however dazzling, without a sound social preparation. The newcomers had to be 'accepted', and this could only be done through the 'right people'. She once asked Karsavina to wear a bunch of roses on her shoulder for a performance on Queen Alexandra's Day, to gratify ~~her~~ the charity-minded audience. She was a serene and magnanimous creature---later one of Nijinsky's most loyal friends---and had her own private theatre at her home at Coombe. Both Nijinsky and Karsavina danced there before Queen Alexandra.

Another new ballet in preparation was L'Après-midi d'un Faune, the first-fruit of Nijinsky's new career as choreographer. He wanted steps that departed so radically from anything conceived by Petipa or even Fokine that there was a danger of leaving himself without dance-steps at all. The action was to take place in ancient Greece, a kind of ~~danced~~ tableau on the theme of ~~the~~ an adolescent youth waking for the first time to sexual experience, ~~which would~~ danced in such a way as to remind audiences of a Greek frieze. Nijinsky, helped by his sister Bronislava, devised only one jump in the whole ballet. The other steps resembled a heavy walk, two-dimensional in the sense that the body faced the audience while the head and the arms were in profile, moving in an angular way, rather

as if the frieze or bas relief ~~had been~~ was in its two-dimensional fixity related to the actual steps taken by ~~the Greek~~ dancers. Diaghilev must have been perplexed when the Nijinskys roughed out for him the elementary steps. According to Stravinsky it was ~~Diaghilev~~ he who had first suggested the idea of a faun pursuing amorous nymphs, and Bakst had elaborated on this with his idea of 'an animated bas-relief'. It seems likely that the Faune idea derived from Diaghilev's trip to Greece with Bakst. They discussed the recent discoveries at Knossos, where they had been. They agreed that Mallarmé's Eclogue would be suitable, with the music Debussy had written on it, a tone poem from twenty years before. Apparently Nijinsky only knew of the existence of the Mallarmé poem after Faune was completed. Also Diaghilev and Bakst supervised the choreography in the strictest way. Both Stravinsky and Haskell claimed that Bakst was even responsible for the nature of the steps. In fact he and Diaghilev had the greatest difficulty getting their meaning over to Nijinsky, as he himself had in explaining the simplest steps to his dancers (this twelve-minute ballet required 120 rehearsals). On the other hand Romola always claimed that Nijinsky had hit on the Faune idea in Karlsbad when he was staying there with Diaghilev, and that later he demonstrated a few steps in the square at Venice. The idea of combining such

a theme with such music must have seemed not simply outrageous at the time but nonsensical. Yet, by his use of the adoleseent theme, Nijinsky transposed the matter in such a way that even angular steps did not seem to make war on the haunting and tender melody. It was some time before the ballet would be performed. As Bronislava expected, the 'die-hards' of Diaghilev's committee ~~would be~~ were against it, led ~~most probably~~ by Bezobrazov. Diaghilev wired Astruc in February that n.b. Spectre de la Rose would be replacing 'the Debussy' for the 1911 season. The Spectre had been suggested to Diaghilev the previous year by the French poet J.L. Vaudoyer, and was adapted from a Gautier poem, the music to be Weber's Invitation to the Waltz. Here Nijinsky (as the spirit of the rose clutched by the young girl---Karsavina---on her return from a ball) made full use of his remarkable elevation, and it became one of the most famous of the Fokine ballets. Meanwhile Reynaldo Hahn was making headway with Le Dieu Bleu. ~~and~~ Diaghilev invited Hahn ~~him~~ to St Petersburg and ~~where~~ on March 28 ~~he~~ gave a big dinner for him at Cubat, with most of his committee, the Fokines, Glazunov, Tchnerepnine, Liadov, Baron Benckendorff, and Nijinsky and Karsavina. The music for Le Dieu Bleu was played in a four-hand form by Hahn and Baron Medem, who taught at the Conservatoire, and

everyone seemed delighted. But this ballet too was to be delayed.

Contracts with the dancers were all signed, and there was even a corps de ballet. Maestro Cecchetti agreed to join Diaghilev (perhaps the greatest coup of all). Dates for Montecarlo, Rome, Paris, London and (tentatively) America had been arranged. On March 15 Diaghilev cabled Astruc that he would be in Paris in a few days, on Sunday, and could they lunch together? Three days later he left St Petersburg with Nijinsky, and spent Saturday and Sunday in Paris. Tcherepnine was to conduct the Montecarlo season, and Diaghilev had signed up Emile Cooper again and Gabriel Pierné (who had conducted Firebird so well) for Paris. A week before Bakst had arrived to paint settings for Le Dieu Bleu and Le Spectre de la Rose. The Châtelet was once more to be the theatre. After several discussions with Astruc on last-minute details, Diaghilev left for Nice, where he arrived with Nijinsky on 21 March. They met the Stravinskys at Beaulieu and heard the latest Petrouchka music, and Diaghilev went to Montecarlo several times to see the manager of the opera house there and rent an old theatre for rehearsals. Then ~~he took~~ Nijinsky joined ~~there~~ him to await the arrival of the rest of the company.

n.p. From the day of their arrival Maestro Cecchetti began drilling the new dancers (not all of whom had the St Petersburg discipline) into an identifiable company which Fokine could rehearse more happily than otherwise, seeing that few of the newcomers were familiar with his ballets. Les Sylphides n.p. Le Pavillon d'Armide, Schéhérazade, Cleopatra, Carnaval, were the ballets and Fokine was asked to start rehearsing a new ballet called Narcisse immediately after the season had started, as well as prepare the choreography of Petrouchka, the music of which he did not believe it possible to dance to. Little wonder that, despite his incredible energy, he seemed about to go mad. Narcisse, as it turned out, did not go ~~very~~ well. It was another Greek subject: it ~~was not easy~~ proved difficult to make Narcissus, who liked to look at himself in the water, move about in a sufficiently int-

Both Benois and Fokine disliked the theme.

ersting way. Nijinsky was Narcissus, Karsavina Echo, and Bacchante was danced by Bronislava, now a member of the company. Bakst did marvellous costumes for this, ~~and~~ Karsavina's in particular---pleats of violet with silver leaves, her hair hanging down her back, ~~was successful.~~ Diaghilev was blamed for bad taste over the narcissus flower that wobbled into view on the end of the stick after Narcissus himself had disappeared. Also Nijinsky's leap onto the stage for his entrance created a bad impression, as he rather crashed on the centre of the stage, while his famous leap through the window in Le Spectre de la Rose was always on to a mattress.

In Rome Petrouchka would have to be rehearsed, and Le Dieu Bleu would have to be ready for Paris and London. Nerves became most tense, and once when Diaghilev failed to pay Fokine on time the latter threatened to jump out of his hotel window. There was to be trouble ~~too~~ between Benois and Bakst. Diaghilev was worried too that the quality of his company was not on the level of the previous Paris seasons. He watched the rehearsals carefully, and must have been grateful for the ~~dancing~~ running-in ~~in~~ that the Montecarlo season afforded---he always called Montecarlo from that time 'the dress rehearsal for Paris'. The company's debut there was on 9 April (1911), while Le Spectre de la Rose was to be given first on the 19th. The day before the first opening night Diaghilev went up to Paris to confer with Astruc and persuade Bakst (whom he temproarily regarded as a traitor) to leave the sets he was painting for Ida Rubinstein and spend two days at Montecarlo on Le Spectre de La Rose. The Montecarlo dress rehearsal went well, but Diaghilev took it as a bad omen ~~for his company the fact~~ that the ~~stage~~ ex-singer Muratori, ~~manager~~ in charge of the Théâtre de Montecarlo's publicity was killed when he fell through the trap-door set open for the entrance of the Nubians in Le Pavillon d'Armide. He could never get such things out of his mind, though the season could not have gone better as it turned out. Ida Rubinstein came from Paris to play in Schéhérazade and Cleopatra, and while she was

This time there were no quarrels between Karsavina and Nijinsky, and Diaghilev wandered about looking benign and fatherly on the first night. Only Bakst was causing trouble. He wanted a place to hang a birdcage for 'atmosphere' and was forbidden both the windows as Nijinsky had to appear through one and leap through the other.

there (for five days only) Fokine designed her St Sebastian ballet, despite the fact that he was in the middle of his worst difficulties over Narcisse. It was Nijinsky's leap through the window in Le Spectre that made the Comtesse de Noailles say that 'he seemed to be painted on the ceiling'. ~~(if indeed it was only her) In Paris later the applause was so loud that the orchestra could not finish.~~ The legend round Nijinsky's name was now such that he hardly needed to appear to justify it. When, during the Paris season, he hurt his leg and was replaced by Alexander Gravilov the usual crowd surrounded him in the wings afterwards to congratulate him, and someone even said that he had never danced better.

Diaghilev went ahead of the company to Rome on 5 May, ~~and~~ He had arranged to give a number of ballets and opera fragments as part of the International Exhibition there. ~~which was one.~~ The king and queen of Italy opened the Russian section, and Serov was particularly successful. Benois remembered that Roman period afterwards as 'radiant', and the most poetical years he remembered of his youth. Diaghilev and Nijinsky stayed at the Excelsior while Benois and Stravinsky, working closely on Petrochka, were at a hotel near the Quattro Fontane. They roamed about the city, and of course Diaghilev took Nijinsky round the museums and the ruins armed as usual with his Baedeker. ~~Years later Massine described him as always entering a gallery bent over the book and saying, 'Now let us see what Mr Baedeker has to say about these paintings'.~~ Rome put Benois ~~felt in~~ into a state of spiritual ecstasy and everything seemed fresh'. The Petrouchka rehearsals went on in the buffet of the Teatro Costanza (where the company was to perform). It was already terribly hot, and the ~~place~~ buffet and aisles was shabby, with a dirty

spotted red carpet. Everyone sweated, and Stravinsky laboured at the piano in his shirtsleeves. Diaghilev looked tired but still immaculate (unlike Stravinsky he kept his jacket on), as he watched from a hard-backed chair. The Costanzi staff was as uncooperative as that of the Paris Opéra, more especially as ~~it was~~ they were at loggerheads with the World Exhibition committee which had invited Diaghilev. Backstage chaos threatened, and Diaghilev had to take charge of the lighting cues for Le Pavillon, in the lack of a technician. Benois had never seen him so nervous as when he took his place below the stage with the switchboard in front of him. But he cued everything from curtainrise through to the opening of the trap-door, ~~and~~ all the intricate lighting changes, ~~impeccably~~.

During the day in Rome he would sometimes take his 'children', Nijinsky and Karsavina, for a drive round the city or along the Via Appia Antica, and then deliver them late for Cecchetti's class, with a word to the maestro not to scold them.

~~spotted red carpet.~~ Fokine and Stravinsky worked like mad, all the more so as Fokine found the music ~~quite~~ uncongenial, though Benois was always there to persuade him that it was only unfamiliar. Later that year on the Châtelet orchestra ~~were to~~ laughed openly when they read the score, and Monteux their conductor had great difficulty restraining them from leaving the pit. As it happened, the Paris audience absorbed ~~the~~ Stravinsky's music almost unawares, because ~~the ballet~~ Petrouchka was so packed with striking movement, quite apart from the vivid story of a puppet coming to life. This was Nijinsky's favourite, perhaps his greatest ~~parts~~ role. Really the funfairs of St Petsrburg were an imitation of those in western Europe, but they had something almost demonic about them which the ballet captured. ~~Benois saw a funfair in front of the Tsar's~~

~~moved to the so-called 'Tsar's meadow', where it remained until 1896.~~ ~~Its~~ the ballet's success in Paris was stupendous. Nijinsky and Karsavina actually seemed to become dolls, he ~~seeming=ly~~ tortured by having a human intelligence, a helpless victim, ~~while~~ she ~~was~~ utterly thoughtless and soulless. This was in bitter contrast to the gay scene with its nurses in full brightly coloured skirts and the stall-keepers and the coachmen, policemen, cossacks and nobility.

h.p. 'I have seen no one approach Nijinsky's rendering of Petrouchka', Cyril Beaumont said. 'He suggested a puppet that sometimes aped a human being, whereas all the others interpreters conveyed a dancer imitating a puppet. He seemed to have probed the very soul of the character with astonishing intuition. Did he, in one of his dark moods of introspection, feel conscious of a strange parallel between Petrouchka and himself, and the Showman and Diaghilev?' For in the ballet it is the Showman who gives the signal for the puppets to dance, and who kicks Petrouchka on to the stage through the cell-doors. Petrouchka totters forward as if in great pain. Nijinsky flung up his arms and threw back his head to express this pain. Again Cyril Beaumonet: 'How vividly he presented this despair, his unhappiness, his misery, as he fingered and plucked at his clothes, the symbol of his servitude. Then he sank on his knees, and, with his stiff arms, now bent at the elbow, struck his neck first on one side and then on the other in a state of utter dejection at his pitiful lot'. It was this ballet---not in spite h.p. of the strange discrepancy between the music and the steps, or the uncomfortable nature of the dancing, or the apparently non-balletic theme, but because of them--- that personified the newly formed Diaghilev Ballet rather than the previous visiting company from the Imperial Theatres. Here, again, the touch of Benois was felt in the vividly living application of sound historical ideas. Perfunctorily performed, the ballet is nothing. In its first production it captured all that the west meant by 'Russian', but now in the light of what Diaghilev had taught ~~it~~ the west,

not the 'exotic' any more but powerful animal spirits harnessed by sparkling intelligence, ~~a combination that all but defines effective theatre.~~ Compared with this, h.p. Sadko and Narcisse made little impression. Sadko was a somewhat messed-about excerpt from Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, the scene of the under-water kingdom. The music was rearranged, and the setting and costumes were by Boris Anisfeld. Schéhérazade was re-staged for these seasons, and Serov painted a special new curtain that was lowered during the overture, ~~which had previously not been there.~~ It showed a hunt across pink hills, and glittered like a Persian miniature. In all senses h.p. the Diaghilev ballet had now established itself, which was why, far more than even Lady Ripon's activities, it was invited to perform before the king and queen of England, at the Covent Garden on June 21 (with Polovtsian Dances, Le Pavillon and Carnaval.) That was an extraordinary affair, for both the audience and the ballet company. The dancers were astonished at the luxurious aspect of the auditorium, filled with maharajas in their glittering jewellery, and brightly uniformed officers, and men in evening dress with decorations and ribands, and women with their tiaras. No royal house in Europe could produce a spectacle of this kind at the time: it already had an old-world aspect. In fact London as a whole had an 'old world' aspect to those who visited it from the Continent. ~~at the time.~~ The massive social and industrial upheavals of the last decades of the previous century were not at first glance visible, especially in London. There was still, according to Benois, an atmosphere of 'wit and perfect taste'. London was the home of the best-dressed men in Europe. The ginger ale tasted 'divine', and if you were lucky you might find good food in a pub. There was a feeling of peace and repose---as always in England this mingled with a certain feckless insularity. Sunday was a dead day, but monstrously dead, and all you heard were organ grinders and mechanical pianos.

There were flowers everywhere. Over the royal box in the theatre there was the huge word INDIA in flowers, as a tribute to the loveliest flower of the British Empire. The performance itself was if anything outshone by the auditorium, since it consisted only of one scene from Le Pavillon (where the tapestry comes alive). Benois ~~had~~ designed special costumes for this performance, ~~alone~~, having been given carte blanche by Diaghilev to spend as much as he ~~needed~~ wanted. The audience responded in what was for the Russians an unprecedented way---hardly at all. ~~Everyone~~ They clapped mildly, mostly with gloved hands, and there were the usual exchanges in the royal box afterwards between the principal dancers and the king and queen.

The fact that, according to Diaghilev, at least a hundred dowagers sparkling with diamonds walked out of the Polovtsian Dances (the first ballet of the evening), complaining that it was just savagery not dancing, seemed to make no difference to the success or the newspaper acclaim next day.

London seemed an ideal place for Diaghilev. It was intimate, rather like Montecarlo, while presenting an impression of enormous power. Paris was feverish,

sensational, in comparison. The Times for June 24 described the Russian impact succinctly as a matter far beyond technique---perfect as their technique was. 'In Russia...the ballet has been essentially an autocratic institution, maintained...for the use of the cultivated classes. It has not depended for its existence on giving immediate pleasure (the bane of all democratic art) and therefore has not had to husband the imaginative energies of the spectators but, on the contrary, has been able to pursue the proper aim of all art---to trouble and exert their imagination.' Russian ballet-dancing never for a moment escaped from its 'subjection to ideas---and, moreover, to artistic ideas, ideas, that is, conceived at a high pitch of emotional intelligence.'

Diaghilev settled at the Wardorf, then moved to the Savoy, where the grill-room became his nightly meeting-place. Lady Ripon invited the entire company down to Coombe to rest. The English seemed not to prejudge the Russian psychology as the Parisians had: they even understood Tchaikowsky. ~~The English~~ They had by now seen Anna Pavlova and her company, not to mention Karsavina and Lydia Kyasht, and the resident Adeline Genée. 'You can trust those English friends,' Diaghilev once said. "With them absence makes no difference.' He found the stagehands respectful and hard-working---though the lighting equipment at Covent Garden was distinctly inadequate. He also began at this time to recruit English dancers into his company, as Pavlova did into hers, and he said that after the Russians they had the most aptitude for dancing, and would one day have a valid school of their own. The English dancer was fairly easy to handle too---little 'temperament'. Hilda Munnings, one of the English recruits, graduated from the corps de ballet to become one of the company's finest dancers. Alone of the foreigners in the company she 'became a Russian', learned the language quickly and continued with Diaghilev for years.

~~In~~ later ~~years~~ Diaghilev became rather irritated

with English conservatism, ~~a certain~~ their lack of what the Italians call 'salt', compared with the Continent: ~~he learned that~~ while ~~the~~ London audiences were loyal, they were also, compared with the Parisians, uncritical. He needed Paris. Nowhere else could the Russian Ballet have become established. The English were good, like all imperial peoples, at supporting what had already been given the accolade elsewhere. During his London season he received a shower of offers from every part of Europe for future dates. He signed up for 1912 dates in Germany, Austria and Hungary, apart from London, Paris and Montecarlo.

The Covent Garden management invited him for a second season in the autumn of 1911, a longer one, and his repertoire for this was Cleopàtra, Les Sylphides, Le Spectre de la Rose and Le Lac des Cygnes, for ~~Diaghilev~~ he was already aware of English conservatism and omitted his 'advanced' ballets. Le Lac des Cynges was his way of making amends to the beloved Tchaikowsky, still more or less barred in Paris. He reduced the ballet, first performed at the Marynsky theatre in 1895 (and still today on the Bolshoi repertoire), to two acts instead of four, beginning with the second act at the lake-side. He borrowed Anna Pavlova from the British impresario Alfred Butt for this season, while Karsavina returned to St Petersburg to fulfil her contract with the Marynsky, and Kshesinskaya came over to dance Odette in Le Lac des Cygnes. Here at last was this 'fighter of charm and intelligence', as he called her, dancing for him: Diaghilev once introduced her to Arnold Haskell with, 'Voilà un adversaire bien digne de moi'. That, too, was a sign of how successfully he had established himself. For Kshesinskaya never made a social error by supporting a cause that looked like losing. She was rather laughed-at in Diaghilev's circle, especially by Bakst, and made them feel the absence of Karsavina, as a dancer she

especially ~~when she danced~~ in her role of Zobeida in Schéhérazade, though she was wonderful as Columbine in Carnaval. She travelled like royalty, with her own doctor as well as the Grand Duke André Vladimirovitch, and brought all her jewellery, which ~~were~~ was placed in the custody of the jewellers Fabergé. Each evening she would ask for a certain number to wear from the two catalogues the jewellers specially had drawn up of her treasures. She too stayed at the Savoy. ~~Hotel.~~ One ~~the~~ evening when she dined with her diadem on the hotel manager arranged for two plainclothes policemen to guard her: they sat dining at a neighbouring ~~the next~~ table in tails. She danced in Le Lac des Cygnes in three performances. Diaghilev had (on a quick visit to St Petersburg back in October) purchased the Moscow production of the ballet, which included over one hundred costumes. At this time he was signing up future dates in order to provide himself with production-capital, ~~since~~ as he always asked a theatre for an immediate advance. Le Lac did not go down all that well, but then neither did Giselle. As in Paris, it was Schéhérazade that got the acclamations. After that an old-style Petipa ballet was bound to seem strangely unsuitable ~~in~~ for such an 'advanced' company. Diaghilev had definitely miscalculated in thinking that London audiences would go for the 'classical' repertoire. Like the Parisian audiences, they wanted something more than perfect dancing. And apparently London was not above sensationalism either.

n.p.

The scandal he seemed at this time to need came with the performance of Faune in Paris the following year. He revelled in it, except at the very beginning, when it looked as if Parisian taste might turn against him, with the national press behind it. From April on excitement about Faune had grown in Paris, starting among Bakst's artist friends. Diaghilev got hold of a newspaper report that Fokine was to handle Faune and at once sent an infuriated telegram to Astruc telling him that Nijinsky had refused to take any further part in the ballet (which may or may not have been true). By this time Fokine had decided to leave the

as a result of the false report.

company, realising that Nijinsky was being groomed as the future choreographic director, ~~and was~~ getting more and more of Diaghilev's attention. Tremendous rows went on about the number of rehearsals Nijinsky needed (with Diaghilev's support) for his ballet, and naturally Fokine insisted on similar partiality when it came to his own productions. But because of Faune he was obliged to prepare Ravel's Daphnis and Cloe ~~which Diaghilev had commissioned from Ravel~~ after he had finished Le Dieu Bleu and Thamar, so that ~~the ballet~~ it could only be given at the end of the Paris season for two performances. Fokine stormed at Grigoriev, who could not have been less partial to one side or the other. He began to suspect that Diaghilev's closest associates were in a conspiracy against him. Above all, he did not believe that Nijinsky had a major choreographer in him. This was corroborated later by Ansermet, who conducted Faune in Rio, when he said that Nijinsky never realised to what extent he was under the daily stimulus of 'the insatiable Diaghilev'. An 'illusion of culture' enveloped him while he was at Diaghilev's side, and 'gave birth to aspirations which his intellect was incapable of realising' once he was removed from that fountain of new ideas. ~~Like many unfertile people Nijinsky he ran to the irrational during his later independent days because it seemed a guarantee against being judged conventional, and because it masked a state of emptiness by uncertainty by necessary shock.~~ Fokine, with his vast experience, must have seen the early signs of this, and he was even less happy with the 'new steps' being devised by Nijinsky in collusion with Diaghilev to displace his own styles than he had been with Stravinsky's music. Nor did Diaghilev's homosexuality helped. It was probably much more the background of his quarrels with Bakst and Benois than we realise. And it produced ballets like Narcisse and Le Dieu Bleu. The latter might well have seemed to Fokine a homosexual conspiracy to glorify Nijinsky, and the failure of his choreography to evoke a convincing India may have been due to the resentment of Nijinsky which he was already feeling. And then there was Faune, the noise over which eclipsed

(May 20)

all the other ballets of the season except Thamar, the story of a Georgian Cleopatra, to music by Balakirev, which took its place at the side of Schéhérazade and the Prince Igor dances. Yet even here, in Thamar, Fokine's choreography did not shine out like Bakst's set or Karsavina's interpretation. There was nothing 'new' in it. Nothing could have been worse for an overworked choreographic director than a manager ~~who seemed to be~~ pressing for the new at all costs ~~of everything else.~~ Faune was certainly that. More than any other ballet it ~~divied~~ divided Diaghilev from his committee. In fact it broke the committtee up. The World of Art days came to an abrupt end. From this time Diaghilev changed collaborators rapidly.

L'Après-midi d'un Faune had its opening on May 29. It was a simple, even perfunctory story, about a faun who sees a number of nymphs dancing together and begins to chase them, inflamed with adolescent desire. He seizes one of their veils, and his last act is to take the veil on to a cliff and lie down on it. Nijinski made an erotic movement of his buttocks, seeming for a moment to make love to the veil, just before the curtain fell. The eurhythmics of Jacques Dalcroze, which Diaghilev and Nijinsky had seen at Hellerau, had left their mark on the dancing, which contained no classical steps or positions, dispensed with points altogether and with the traditional turned-out position of the feet. The dancers moved flat-footed, and Nijinsky made not so much as one leap. The audience watched with close attention, in silence. Lying down with his veil ~~When the curtain went down~~ When it came down there was an uproar. Diaghilev was visibly shaken, but there seemed to be some approving calls among the raspberries and he ordered the curtain to be rung up again for a repeat of the entire ballet. When the curtain fell on the second performance there was more applause than after the first. It looked as if he had done the right thing.

Stories differ about the nature of that erotic movement. Prince Argoutinsky told Prince Lieven that

one of the clusters of grapes on Nijinsky's costume, made of glass, broke during the performance and that his quick movement after he had laid himself down was to avoid being hurt. This may indeed have been the story put out by the management afterwards, but there is no evidence of Nijinsky wearing glass on his person that evening. According to Grigoriev, the movement was rehearsed, and Diaghilev ~~was~~ had been warned that it would cause trouble. ~~Most probably he did not invent the movement in order to cause trouble. He simply did not care.~~

n.p. ~~And~~ The episode would have passed off into gossip had not Calmette, the editor of Le Figaro, decided to lift it into prominence by an attack on the Diaghilev Company. ~~There was little original about the ballet. In itself it could hardly have caused a storm. Isadora Duncan (whose name the Diaghilev commit tee used to denote something in bad taste) had been the real pioneer here. But the box office benefited from the publicity of the next few days, and above all Nijinsky was launched as a choreographer. That Diaghilev was perfectly conscious of the publicity-value of the scandal was shown when he tried to work up a similar scandalous atmosphere in New York when the Faune was shown for the first time there.~~

The ~~Figaro~~ article ~~by Calmette himself~~ was under the heading Un Faux Pas: 'Our readers will not find, in its accustomed place under Theatre, the criticism of my worthy collaborator, Robert Brussel, upon the first performance of L'Après-midi d'un Faune, choreographic scene by Nijinsky, directed and danced by that astonishing artist. I have eliminated that review.... Those who speak to us of art and poetry apropos of this spectacle make fun of us. It is neither a gracious eclogue, nor a profound production. We saw a faun, incontinent, vile---his gestures of erotic bestiality and heavy shamelessness. That is all. And well-deserved boos greeted this too expressive pantomime of the body of an ill-made beast, hideous from the front, even more hideous in profile. These animal

realities the true public will never accept'. His was not the only paper to attack the ballet. In Le Temps Pierre Lalo wrote, 'The production of the Faune is a great error in itself: nothing can relieve the glaring contradiction between the slavish archaism and hardcast rigidity of the choreography and the flexible flow of Debussy's prelude or Mallarmé's poem---both so alien and distant in their attempt to interpret antiquity'. The articles threw Diaghilev's committee into disorder, and there were ardent discussions in his hotel suite as to what the repercussions would be. Someone from the Russian Embassy called to say that Calmette and the Figaro had used the Russian Ballet as a scapegoat for their disapproval of the impending Franco-Russian entente. Still, the embassy was worried that a ballet might conceivably interfere with the entente, and---especially after police intervention---Diaghilev struck out the erotic movement on subsequent nights. The situation was saved, or at least mitigated, by Rodin, who published an article defending Nijinsky in Le Matin. He wrote that in no role was Nijinsky 'so marvellous and admirable as in L'Après-midi d'un Faune. No jumps, no bounds, nothing but attitudes and gestures of a half-conscious animal-creature. He stretches himself, bends, stoops, crouches, straightens himself up, goes forward and retreats, with movements now slow, now jerky, nervous, angular; his eyes spy, his arms extend, his hands open and close, his head turns away and turns back. The harmony between his mimicry and his plasticity is perfect... He possesses the beauty of the antique frescoes and statues: he is the ideal model for whom every painter and sculptor has longed....Nothing could be more soul-stirring than his movement when, at the close of the act, he throws himself down and passionately kisses the discarded veil.' Gaston Calmette answered this with an attack on Rodin, but he did publish Diaghilev's letter with its enclosure from Odilon Redon, Mallarmés close friend, praising the

ballet. The argument petered out but left the Faune, not at all a major work, famous.

Rodin offered to do a portrait of Nijinsky, and it was arranged that the dancer should go to him after his morning classes. Usually Diaghilev took him along. Sitter and sculptor often had lunch together and rested afterwards (after a taste of Rodin's excellent Burgundy). Diaghilev became quite disturbed by the growing friendship between them---more perhaps than he would have if his own relationship with Nijinsky had been going well. One day he found them fast alseep together on the same couch. He woke Nijinsky and took him away at once, and the sittings werd curtailed, the sculpture never finished.

~~ballet. The argument petered out but left the Faune, not at all a major work, famous.~~

~~And~~ Fokine left, to return to the Marynsky. He claimed that Nijinsky had stolen from his own faun dance in the Venusberg scene of the opera Tannhäuser ~~which~~ (Nijinsky had once ~~performed~~ danced in this at the Marynsky). Not that he objected to this: but the Faune work was not original, as it claimed to be. On the other hand, Nijinsky's 'archaic, angular choreography' suited Debussy's music, he felt, and had none of the later 'rhythmic gymnastics' of Nijinsky's work. 'Loving the ballet,' Fokine said, 'striving always for new discoveries, I would have welcomed the work of Nijinsky had it contained more definite innovations and had its debut not been saddened by the scandalous filth.' Above all, he felt that his own Daphnis and Cloe was sacrificed to the Faune quite unnecessarily. Diaghilev had wanted to postpone the opening of Daphnis and curtail the rehearsals, and even asked Fokine's wife to use her influence ~~in the matter,~~ on her husband — for which Fokine gave her ~~she got~~ a wig in her ear. She argued that he only had three days left, and there were still twenty pages of music to choreograph. 'Leave me alone!' he told her, and promptly worked out the finale. When he showed it to Diaghilev, the latter said (according to Fokine 'with disappointment') 'Yes, you have managed it very quickly and well'. The fact that Diaghilev had scheduled the première of Daphnis as a curtain raiser and set the beginning of the pefformance thirty minutes earlier than usual seemed to Fokine proof that he wanted the auditorium to be empty. He blew up, began screaming abuse at Diaghilev after the last rehearsal. He told him what he thought of his relationship with Nijinsky. He said that the ballet company was turning from art to 'perverted degeneracy'. And he threatened to walk onstage before the curtain rose on Daphnis and explain everything to the first night audience. Diaghilev gave in and put Daphnis after Schéhérazade. As to the company, they seemed divided between the pro-Nijinsky faction and the pro-Fokine

faction. According to Fokine, Nijinsky forbade any of the dancers to present ~~Fokine~~ him with a farewell gift after he had announced his resignation. After that first performance of Daphnis Fokine left the theatre without saying goodbye to anyone. With his wife he went to a nearby restaurant but they were too distraught to eat. When they returned to the Hotel des Deux Mondes they ~~and~~ found a group of the company's dancers standin the foyer with flowers and a vase to present to him. Grigoriev was not there. Nor were 'the Poles' in the company (meaning above all Nijinsky and his sister). (Fokine was full of resentment afterwards. He once wrote that he) ~~He~~ had never had a disagreement with Diaghilev about ballet because, he said, Diaghilev had had no decided views on the subject! ~~He~~ had never once heard him (had he) support any theories or special trends during the five years they had worked ~~closely with him.~~ 'Good taste? Certainly. He spoke about it---but then again, not about his own taste in most cases, but about the taste of the audience which was about to be 'introduced to our presentation'. 'Paris will go crazy about Petrouchka'. 'The public will be dazzled by the Polovtsian Dances,' or 'Give Tchaikowsky in Paris? Impossible! Paris does not tolerate Tchaikowsky'---such categorical appraisals, always leaning on the taste of others, the likes and dislikes of the 'patrons', very often issued from the lips of Sergei Pavlovitch Diaghilev. On the subject of music he spoke for himself (always after consulting numerous musical authorities), but I never heard him venture an opinion on the subject of the dance'. That is a harsh appraisal, quite different from Karsavina's. ~~And all~~ The facts are against it. Diaghilev talked constantly about the dance with Nijinsky, Massine, Dolin, Lifar--- all his major dancers. He wrote to the papers about it. He let Fokine go because he had most decided views about the dance which Fokine no longer satisfied. And who

was it who attracted artists to his dinner table, his rehearsal studios, his hotel suites? Not, obviously, a man with nothing to say for himself. In fact those artists ~~in Paris whom~~ he did not invite to work with him (like Diego Rivera) were bitterly hurt and disappointed, such was the weight of his taste and ~~his~~ mind.

Fokine was a busy man, far more than a human being should be---devising choreography, rehearsing the company and finally performing himself. It left him no time for conversation, much less artistic disagreements on matters of the latest ballet trends. With Fokine, Diaghilev talked exclusively like a producer, since he had to see that the ballets being rehearsed attracted people to the box office. And like so many theatre-directors, those ~~the~~ feared dictators of a little world beyond the proscenium arch, too busy to know any other, Fokine identified disagreement with disobedience. The point was that the Fokine choreography was reaching the end of its road. It had released Russian dancing from conventions that had become absurd. In Nijinsky it had found its supreme executant, among the male dancers. And yet it was Nijinsky above all who, dancing the Fokine roles, had begun to feel that there was a certain lack of truth at the core of the movements. This was what caused him---together with, most probably under the stimulus of, Diaghilev---to announce a preference for less 'graceful' forms, not because grace was itself untruthful but because in Fokine's work requirements of pattern and symmetry (though convincing, unlike the former Petipa arrangements) still determined the movement, whereas the truth of the plot and above all the individual emotion should determine it. It was the character that counted. Nijinsky wanted to take into choreographic consideration the human predicament of ~~not only~~ each character and ~~but~~ each group---the predicament that

made movement essential to it as a release and an expression. Fokine never expressed feeling in this direct way. He mimed it often enough, and certainly evoked it. In his post-Faune work Nijinsky, far more than any choreographer before him, related movement to feeling with demoniac thoroughness, so that miming now ~~longer~~ appeared unnecessary, a crude device. This is why he needed so many reherasals. Diaghilev realised that Nijinsky was plotting, with much effort and pain, being neither a born choreographer nor even a good stage director, something that needed to be done in ballet, quite apart from whether it was going to be artistically successful or not. As so often in his life, Diaghilev expressed fidelity to one person by infidelity to another.

But it was Nijinsky who proved unfaithful. In

1912 ~~that Nijinsky~~ he met his future wife, Romola. ~~She was infatuated with him, followed him everywhere, and managed to get herself enrolled in the company.~~ She lived in Budapest, the daughter of the distinguished de Pulszky family, and was invited to the first peformance of the Diaghilev company in that city in the spring of 1912. ~~During January, February and March it toured Berlin and Dresden (where it failed to impress the Germans), then Vienna and Budapest.~~ 'The city', Romola wrote in her biography of her husband, 'was in a great state of excitement. Fantastic tales of the glamorous, exotic beauty, and of the attainment of great heights of artistic achievement, had preceded this unique company.' In Carnaval she saw Nijinsky for the first time: 'Suddenly a slim, lithe, cat-like Harlequin took the stage... An electric shock passed through the entire audience. Intoxicated, entranced, gasping for breath, we followed this superhuman being, the very spirit of Harlequin incarnate'. She gained access to the rehearsals, and here she saw Diaghilev for the first time. He stood in a group of other men, talking, in the dim light of the auditorium, 'his hat drawn down over his ears' (quite impossible for Diaghilev, given the size of his head ~~since his head was so enormous~~), and his coat collar turned up. 'This man seemed to be the real authority in every branch of the organisation. His mere presence made one feel that he was not only a versatile and gifted director, but also a grand seigneur. Everyone obeyed him blindly... He was the master magician of the Russian Ballet'. For Diaghilev, in so far as he noticed the lovely young creature at all, ~~she~~ Romola was

just one more of the infatuated creatures male dancers attracted round them. ~~He would never have admitted her to the company had he seen a possibility of Nijinsky responding to her sexually.~~ Even the principal dancers hardly noticed her existence, until of coure they were on the boat to Buenos Aires and Nijinsky became ~~engaged~~ engaged to her. All Karsavina knew of her was her 'charming voice' and 'the sweet name of Romola' at the wedding ceremony and the lunch (for the entire company) that followed. Diaghilev had overlooked the fact that 'theatre companies love to protect and nurture an incipient romance in their midst'. And he and Nijinsky were already falling apart.

In London Faune was not risked that year. Diaghilev and Nijinsky now had their English friends, among them Lady Duff and Lady Ottoline Morrell, that courageously bizarre creature with her great hats, beautiful, long, gracious 'like a giraffe', as Nijinsky once said---to her face. She and her husband were his favourites, together with the Bradley Martins, an American couple who played a large part in London's social life at the time. Lady Juliet Duff had difficulty talking to Nijinsky as he only knew two words of Eng-

lish, 'Piccadill', as he called it, and 'Littler', which meant the comedian ~~comic~~ Little Tich, whom he and Diaghilev ~~always saw if he happened to be~~ loved to see performing ~~during their London seasons.~~ The two of them visited Lady Morrell for tea at her house in Bedford Square, and she found Nijinsky 'nervous and highly strung'. His 'guardian and jailer', as she called Diaghilev, rarely let him out into society because it tired him so much. But Lady Morrell's place was 'all right' because it was quiet and you could meet other artists there. It was in London that the new ballet Les Jeux was conceived. ~~It~~ This was all Nijinsky's idea. He was dead set against the 'pretty' ballets, and even got annoyed if people praised his part in Le Spectre de la Rose. He wanted angular, virile, tense movements against the rounded forms of classical ballet. As he advanced his ideas for the new ballet at lunch-table in the Savoy Grill Diaghilev looked rather cross, biting his fingers, while Bakst ~~looked amazed~~ stared unbelievingly at the drawings Nijinsky made on the table to depict his ballet about a game of tennis (he had seen Duncan Grant playing

in the Bedford Square gardens, from Lady Morrell's window). And it was to be to the music of Debussy! It was to be 'cubist'. There was to be no corps de ballet, no ensembles, no variations, no pas de deux, only rhythmic movements, with boys and girls dressed in tennis clothes. He and Diaghilev were disagreeing a lot lately. Once, when Nijinsky refused to accompany him to the house of Juliet Duff's mother, Diaghilev sat in the garden with tears pouring down his face, 'and would not be comforted'. On another occasion, when they were all lunching together at the Savoy, Diaghilev told a long story, at the end of which Nijinsky simply looked up and said in French, 'Long story but poor'. Jacques Emile Blanche, to whom Diaghilev porposed the Jeux ballet (with seeming reluctance), contacted Debussy to write the music but he refused--- saying it was an idiotic and unmusical idea. Nijinsky threatened to stop dancing, and Diaghilev doubled Debussy's fee. Cyril Beaumont's recollection of the ballet when it was performed in London was hazy afterwards (and he saw it twice). He felt ~~that the ballet~~ it could have been about any sport, since there was no clear reference to tennis in any of the movements. In fact, there was little dancing at all. There were 'occasional leaps and bounds and turning movements borrowed or adapted from the classical ballet, but, for the most part, the ballet was concerned to express the theme of adolescence by a combination of plastic symbolism and taut, angular poses'. Jacques-Emile Blanche thought that the score was bad. And the dancers moved rather like automata. The ballet was withdrawn from the repertoire after five performances.

There were now constant scenes in the company: no doubt everyone could feel a divided directorate. Benois was mostly in St Petersburg these days, and took no part in the 1912 seasons. Not that Diaghilev had ~~not~~ quarrelled with him again but he seemed to want to be free of the 'old guard', or rather those who had force-

Karsavina had many difficulties in rehearsal. 'As I had to keep my head screwed on one side, with hands curled in as one maimed from birth, it would have helped me to know what it was for, but Nijinsky was unable to explain.

Serov was dead, and Begobrazov had also died recently of diabetes in Monte Carlo. Diaghilev

that might inhibit plans for an artistic revolution, with its inevitable element of insecurity, its risk of ridicule:

ful ideas, ~~those he would~~ the men he could still work with, like Bakst and Stravinsky, were not 'teachers'; like Benois, he engaged Boris Romanov, the Moscow ballet master, to replace Fokine, whose pupil he had now been, and work started on a new ballet, Salomé, with music by Florent Schmitt, ~~and~~ the setting by Serge Sudeikine. This was a solo dance by Karsavina in a fantastic costume with a long train--she was surrounded by negro slaves. That too rather failed when it came to be seen. Possibly ~~And~~ it ~~may~~ came only into being to stop Karsavina feeling that too much attention had been ~~was being~~ given to Nijinsky.

At the same time the Russian Ballet was at the height of its social desirability. In Paris, during the Châtelet season, Mme Ephrussie, the Maharajah of Kapurthala and Misia Edwardes had given fêtes after fêtes for them. In London the Aga Khan gave a garden party for the king and queen at which Karsavina and Nijinsky danced a variation. Diaghilev asked 15000 gold francs for Nijinsky, who danced for four minutes. After the London the company was invited to celebrate the opening of the fashionable new resort of Deauville in France with a short season.

The new ballet that aroused hopes was Stravinsky's Le Sacre du Printemps. He had ~~great~~ misgivings about working with Nijinsky, having seen him at work on Faune. They were ~~great~~ friends, and he admired Nijinsky as a dancer and mime. But 'his ignorance of the most elementary notions of music was flagrant. The poor boy knew nothing of music... His reactions to music were expressed in banal phrases or the repetition of what he had heard others say'. Yet Diaghilev still seemed hopeful of making a ballet-master out of him. As before, Nijinsky began asking for untold rehearsals. Stravinsky had to buckle down and teach him the rudiments of music--- from crotchets to tempi. It was hard work, and Nijinsky had the greatest difficulty observing tempi with the steps he was working out. He was also quite unable--- as Ansermet saw---of explaining what he wanted ~~to~~ of ~~the~~ his dancers. Stravinsky had to travel all over Europe with the company so as to keep some kind of guiding hand on the preparations. Nijinsky seemed to understand that he was losing face in the company, though he was still supported in everything by Diaghilev, and this made him 'preumptuous, capricous, and unmanageable'. Yet he was not really responsible for the predicament he was in. That was Diaghilev's doing, and Stravinsky often ~~spoke~~ complained to him. ~~about Nijinsky's inadequacy.~~ But Diaghilev felt (encouraged by the marvellous effects Nijinsky now and then achieved, mainly by the method of improvisation) that it was only a matter of time and training.

The première of Le Sacre was to be the most important event of the 1913 season in Paris, which would take place at---in fact, ~~open~~---Astruc's Théâtre des Champs Elysées, ~~the smartest theatre in the city.~~ To be lured from the Opéra, Diaghilev extracted the fabulous sum of 25,000 francs for each performance from ~~him~~ Astruc, which involved ~~Astruc in~~ the heavist loss of his carreer. Boris Godunov was to be ~~given~~ seen again, and ~~once more~~ Daphnis and Cloe was to be given its second chance. ~~(Once more it was overshadwoed by a scandal).~~ Le Sacre was more in the nature of a valid shock, ~~given the support of~~ in view of Stravinsky's disturbingly relentlëss music. The theme of the 'chosen maiden' who must dance herself to death as an offering to the goddess of fertility was no less relemtless. The first-night audience watched and listened angrily and rebelliously. ~~The orchestra had laughed during rehearsals, and it had needed all the conductor's efforts to keep them in their places.~~ From the first notes they ~~audience~~ began hissing and shouting. And they ~~continued~~ went on shouting throughout the ballet. The smart crowd became rough in places, pushing and fighting each other. Diaghilev ordered the house-lights on and off, ~~several times,~~ as the orchestra could not be heard. ~~But~~ Maria Piltz as the chosen maiden forced a respectful reaction to her delirious and overwhelming dance. For Cyril Beaumont, when he saw it later in London, it succeeded in creating an atmosphere of savagery, with something religious about it as well. And it was 'a tremendous shock' after the romantic beauty of Fokine's ballets. 'It was so extraordinary that Nijinsky, the personification of grace and a true child of the air, should replace speed and elevation by slow, uncouth movements in which the dancers were so seemingly obsessed by the heath that they appeared unable to stand upright. Stravinsky's music, with its insistent, throbbing rhythm, emphasised by the dancers' feet pounding on the stage, becams as irresistible and dominating as the remorseless thudding of the drum which sets the atmosphere for O'Neill's The Emperor Jones. The music and choreography of the Sacre were united not

by steps danced to notes, but by the immense force of rhythm'. Clearly, Stravinsky's musical schooling of Nijinsky had been effective. Again the steps were in ~~contradiction of~~ reaction to classical ballet, with inturned ~~toes~~ feet and opposing movements between one group and another. Here Nijinsky had made his own choreography: Diaghilev interfered and advised little. And the result was a disturbingly new work, so 'starkly primitive', so 'brutal in its movements', in Beaumont's words, that many people found it repellent. One of these was the Dowager Countess de Pourtalès, who swept out of the theatre ~~saying~~ telling Astruc that if this kind of tomfoolery was repeated she would ~~not~~ never be seen at ~~Astruc's~~ his theatre ~~establishment~~ again. For an opening that was not good news.

People in the audience jumped on their seats and yelled. At the same time those under the hypnotic influence of the throbbing rhythm stood up to see more clearly. Diaghilev went up to the gallery and called out to the audience below, 'Je vous prie! Laissez s'achever le spectacle!' Astruc shouted from his box, 'Ecoutez d'abord! Vous sifflerez après!' Stravinsky dashed backstage and stood behind Nijinsky, who was on a chair shouting numbers to the dancers (since as they could not hear the music). Nijinsky was as white as a sheet. Yet afterwards, when the audience had gone home, no one of the 'committee' seemed ~~to feel~~ unhappy. They were only angry. Diaghilev murmured at dinner afterwards, 'Exactly what I wanted'. In the subsequent performances there were few interruptions. And in London, where the Diaghilev company went under Sir Joseph Beecham's management ~~in~~ the Drury Lane theatre, reaction to Le Sacre was mixed but polite. The Times said, 'London takes both its pleasures and its pains more quietly than Paris.' Diaghilev took care to print a scenario of the ballet for London, and got Edwin Evans to introduce it at the curtain, but the audience cut his lecture short, ~~though~~, and the ordeal was on. Nijinsky looked relieved when he took his curtain. Piltz and Monteux got a warm hand.

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and Stravinsky had to hold him back from the stage by his clothes. A stupendous battle seemed to be raging in the auditorium.

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'The audience played the role written for it', Cocteau said.

except the exhausted Nijinsky, who had danced in Le Spectre after the 'earthquake' of Sacre.

There was no doubt, The Times said, that the Sacre music had moved so far ahead of Petrouchka that it parted company with 'anything coming even from Paris'. That was the last time Nijinsky worked directly with Diaghilev. Not many months later Astruc was bankrupt.

Stravinsky was not satisfied. He felt that his music, being 'clear and defined', demanded an equally clear choreography. Nijinsky, though he had grasped 'the dramatic significance of the dance', had been incapable of giving 'intelligible form to its essence, and complicated it either by clumsiness or lack of understanding. For it is undeniably clumsy to slow down the tempo of the music in order to compose complicated steps which cannot be danced in the tempo prescribed'.

Maestro Cecchetti found the modern ballets, which meant all those after Swan Lake and Giselle, rubbish, and complained about the music: 'Very soon I won't be able to go on the stage, to listen to that sick-cat music of Stravinsky and those crazy French composers'. He continued his rigorous classes in classical dancing, and according to Romola Nijinsky he invariably started his class for the principals by saying, 'Tamara Platonova, Vaslav Fomitch, you may be celebrated, great artists, but here in my class you are my pupils, nothing but my pupils! Please forget here all your crazy modern movements, all that Fokine, Nijinsky nonsense!' And Karsavina and Nijinsky, she added, obeyed him and sweated far more than the corps de ballet did. Diaghilev usually came at the end of a class, just to fetch Nijinsky, who was otherwise trailed and guarded by his valet, unless Cecchetti was at work with them. Nijinsky was most irritable lately. He insisted on having a room of his own, as otherwise he could not sleep. In Vienna he kept to his hotel room for three days, barring even Diaghilev (perhaps, now, especially Diaghilev).

There were rumours in the company of a coming South American tour. When the heady London season was over the company dispersed for a fortnight's holiday. Diaghilev went to Baden-Baden with Nijinsky and Walter Nouvel, and spent most of the holiday discussing a new ballet based on Bach's music, again to be choreographed by Nijinsky, which in fact never came off. Benois joined the group from St Petersburg, and the Bach excerpts were chosen. Diaghilev and Nijinsky seemed to be getting on well again, and there was much laughter. The company was due to sail from Southampton on August 15 with Baron Günsburg in charge, since Diaghilev had decided ~~not to go,~~ to give way to his horror of the sea---those periodical Channel crossings were nightmares enough. He would go to Venice instead. ~~As it turned out,~~ Nijinsky joined the boat for South America at Cherbourg, and his future bride Romola began her decoying operation: 'Now here is my chance. Twenty-one days of ocean and sky---no Diaghilev. He can't escape. By the time we arrive I will have a flirtation with le Petit. Ce que femme veut Dieu le veut!'

Diaghilev got the news in Venice, where Misia ~~(now Sert)~~ and Lady Ripon had joined him. He had just called her to his room to play over a score that had ~~just~~ arrived. He was still in his nightshirt and slippers. He was in his gay Venetian mood and danced capers across the room for her. He seized her parasol and opened it. Misia stopped him and ~~told him~~ said to close it again quickly, as it was such bad luck, and she knew how fearfully superstitious he was. Someone knocked on the door. There was a telegram from his faithful Vassily. Diaghilev opened it and 'turned livid'. According to Stravinsky, he begged him and his wife not to leave him, after he had called 'a council of war'. Bakst came to the room, also Misia's husband. There was some uncertainty as to whether the wedding ceremony had actually taken place. Diaghilev was against anyone marrying, but for dancers he regarded it as fatal, since it 'weakened the knees'. More telegrams arrived, confirming that the ceremony had actually taken place.

(And such a fantastic notion — Mme Sokolova, who taught Pavlova and Karsavina, also advocated celibacy for dancers, though a mother herself).

and so passive!

They were all astonished. Nijinsky was such an unmarrying kind! Baron Günsburg had clearly played a leading role---and as for that rich young girl! Nijinsky had been trapped. Diaghilev sent off a telegram forbidding the union. He was mad with grief and rage. The party travelled to Naples, where he launched into a 'frantic bacchanalia' (Misia Sert's expression). No one could console him. Of all this Nijinsky, on the other side of the Atlantic, was trustingly unaware. He felt that Diaghilev would understand, as he had understood him so well in the past. Romola was not so sure. Nijinsky wrote off a letter explaining the whole thing, and assuring Diaghilev that he would remain a true friend and 'serve the cause of the Russian Ballet'. The truth was that he was growing into a man, quite suddenly. Romola noticed with some astonishment how seriously he took marriage: having learned the words previously from Günsburg (for as yet he and his wife had no common language) he told her about his affair with Diaghilev, and in a way that showed how well he understood his new situation. Diaghilev would approve, he said, even if he was incapable of understanding this sort of love. As for Diaghilev, he was to have joined Benois at Lugano, and to have brought Ravel with him. He failed to turn up, and Benois wrote to Stravinsky from St Petersburg asking for news, having only heard vague rumours. When he knew the truth he wrote a second letter to Stravinsky saying that he doubted if Diaghilev was really heartbroken, since the 'romance' had been breaking up for some time. 'The whole story is such a phatasmagoria that I sometimes think I have read it in a dream and am an idiot to believe it.' What would happen now? Would Nijinsky continue with the company? Why not? Benois asked: 'Why can't Nijinsky be both ballet master and a Hungarian millionaire?'

(which took three weeks to reach Europe)

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Diaghilev sent Nijinsky a telegram, or rather got Grigoriev to do so, dismissing him from the company on the grounds of a breach of contract (though Nijinsky had

(after a phone-call lasting for five hours). Fokine's story was that Diaghilev came to his apartment and made him a long speech in which he said that his infatuation with Nijinsky was over.

had no contract since 1909). But this was not for some months, and the telegram was sent from St Petsrburg, ~~after the company had returned from South America.~~ Thus Diaghilev's decission to do without him was not an unpondered one. First he got Fokine to work with him again; (Months before, he had met Hugo von Hofmannstal in Venice to talk over a Strauss ballet, and had told him that Fokine and not Nijinsky would be doing the choreography. Grigoriev (with the company on its South American tour) thought that Diaghilev could not possibly do without Nijinsky, having virtually created a new type of ballet with him alone; Yet he also knew how unpredictable Diaghilev could be. Nijinsky and ~~his wife~~ Romola (who was pregnant), arrived in Paris expecting to meet Diaghilev. He was not there. He had been in Paris in November to see Astruc's presentation of Boris Godunov (after which Astruc declared his company bankrupt, ruined by the earlier ballet season). In December, ~~He~~ Diaghilev went to Moscow, where Benois was working on Goldoni's La Locandiera at the Stanislavsky theatre. He took with him a copy of Stravinsky's opera Le Rossignol, for which Benois agreed to do the setting, and they also discussed a production of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera Le Coq d'Or, mostly on Benois' insistence. It was clear that Diaghilev was returning to opera again, perhaps as a safeguard against losses incurred with ballet, perhaps also in an effort to cover the gap left by the end of his collaboration with Nijinsky.

Nijinsky went from Paris to Budapest, and was anxious to get down to work on a new ballet, Joseph, which he and Diaghilev had discussed months before, and also the Bach ballet. According to Grigoriev, who went straight back to St Petersburg from the boat, Diaghilev was preoccupied by the failure of Nijinsky's two ballets, and had come to the conclusion that he did not have a ~~great choreographer in him after all. When Diaghilev showed Grigoriev the telegram he had received in Venice he quickly covered it with his hand---a characteristic~~

He also met the young Leonide Massine in December, and must have seen in him his new collaborator, a further development that sealed Nijinsky's fate.

great choreographer in him after all. From Budapest Nijinsky cabled him to ask when rehearsals would begin. Meanwhile Diaghilev had heard from Grigoriev and Günsburg that Nijinsky had missed an evening's performance at Rio without explanation (this Romola always denied). Diaghilev showed Grigoriev the telegram and quickly covered it with his

(to be signed by Grigoriev)

(hand, a characteristic) gesture of his when displeased about something. And he dictated to him his reply: 'I wish to inform you of the following. Monsieur Diaghilev considers that by missing a performance at Rio and refusing to dance in the ballet Carnaval you broke your contract. He will not therefore require your further services. Serge Grigoriev, Régisseur of the Diaghilev Company'. (December 3 1913) ~~It was a cheap and cowardly act, but like all snobs Diaghilev had it in him to do such a thing. He must frequently have thought of his cruelty in later years when, together with Serge Lifar, he was hoping to coax Nijinsky from his madness. And it~~ (It was a little cruel and) proved perhaps that the homosexual realtionship was not necessarily so 'lofty' as Diaghilev had ~~always held, if it could end like that.~~ maintained. But he plunged the dagger in, up to the hilt, and his Russian Ballet did not gain from it.

Nijinsky could not believe it, but cabled Astruc to inform the Parisian press that he was no longer working with Diaghilev. He also wrote to Stravinsky asking him to find out all he could, ~~and saying~~ adding that he could not believe Diaghilev ~~could~~ meant to act so meanly towards him, particularly as he owed him a vast amount of money (Nijinsky ~~claimed that he~~ had not been paid, either as a dancer or a choreographer, for two years). Stravinsky thought this incredibly naif of him---to be 'so unaware of the politics and sexual jealousies and motives within the Ballet'.

Apparently most of the friends round Diaghilev agreed that he could not go on working with Nijinsky: this at least two months after the marriage. According to Diaghilev's new secretary Drobetsky who had gone on the South American tour, Diaghilev showed no resentment of Nijinsky on their return to Europe, only seemed depressed. His conversation bore no trace of hatred towards ~~the dancer~~ Nijinsky, 'only a feeling of affection and love, quite incomprehensible to me'. And the cable to Nijinsky ~~had only~~ was been sent after long discussion. No one had really been happy about 'the Nijinsky period', Grigoriev felt. 'It had seemed to be leading us nowhere, whereas Fokine's return gave us fresh hope of success' (in spite of the fact that

(company,)

('a shrewd, comical Polo with a curly handle-bar moustache', Massine says),

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Fokine had demanded Grigoriev's dismissal as a condition of his return---which Diaghilev had refused). The company's recent failures were now identified with Nijinsky's name, and his dismissal must have begun to seem a healthy necessity, ~~for the company.~~ For a time the company had gone off the rails: now it was back to the old days, and everyone was relieved. There must also have been much discussion about Nijinsky's failure to dance for one performance in Rio, in a ballet for which he had had no understudy. Both Günsburg and Grigoriev agreed that he and Romola had been 'adamant' about his now appearing, and this may have been the deciding factor when

Diaghilev sent his cruel telegram. Above all, there was a clause in Fokine's contract that Nijinsky was not to be in the company while he was choreographic director.

But the good old days did not return. La Légende de Joseph (music by Strauss and settings by José Maria Sert), Les Papillons (not the ballet-divertissement of that name choreographed by Katti Lanner and first performed in London in 1901) and Midas, together with the danced portions of Le Coq d'Or were Fokine's work, and none of them remained long in the company's repertory after the 1914 season. Joseph was to be danced by Diaghilev's new acquisiition, an exceedingly beautiful eighteen-year-old youth with large brown eyes who had remarkable qualities of mind as well. In many ways Miassin was Diaghilev's most complete pupil, responding with immediate zest to the 'grand tour' of Italy under his guidance.

Diaghilev had seen him dance the tarantella in the last act of Swan Lake at the Bolshoi theatre in Moscow, and had at once made him an offer. Kostrovsky, of the Moscow ballet school, advised Miassin not to join Diaghilev as he would lose the chance of playing Romeo (for he acted as well) at the Maly theatre. Miassin visited Diaghilev at the Metropole hotel in Moscow, meaning to refuse, and found himself accepting.

The boy had to travel to St Petersburg to be approved by Fokine. On the 'plushy' train Diaghilev began to describe Fokine's choreography---'a new culture emerging from our old academic traditions', in a fusion of music, dance, painting, poetry and drama. Miassin was excited, though he failed to understand much of it. He was impressed by Diaghilev's 'quiet, persuasive voice' and the self-confidence with which he explained his ideas, and he began to wonder whether he could ever attain his 'high aesthetic standards' himself. On another train-journey, to Cologne, Diaghilev explained his first leading part to him, Joseph. 'I was thrilled by the fervour and conviction with which

he spoke, and by his complete dedication to the realisation of his artistic ideals'. He noticed how Diaghilev's dark eyes brightened when he talked about his new plans---not as if he was talking to a stranger but to someone who shared his hopes and fears. Miassin was now in ~~his~~ the 'family'. Listening to him, the boy decided that he was the most cultured and yet most modest person he had ever met. 'In spite of his authoritative air and commanding presence Diaghulev had an underlying humility and integrity which, I felt, derived from his total commitment to his art. I began to feel that all my past experience was negligible, and that I was now embarking on an entirely new career.' By the end of that train journey he felt more at ease with the great man. Apart from his monocle and his streak of white hair ~~he~~ Diaghilev seemed 'elegant but unremarkable', and the boy even noticed that he had holes in the soles of his shoes.

The Joseph rehearsals began in Montecarlo. Von Hoffmannsthal was there explaining the story in his quietly self-effacing way. He envisaged Joseph as 'a noble, untamed young savage in search of God', whereupon Count Henry Kessler ~~would then say~~ said, in his 'brooding German manner', that while he agreed with von Hofmannsthal he wanted to point out that they were not simply interpreting a Biblical story but... and would drift into a speech about the spirit and its 'eternal conflict with the forces of evil, decadence and materialism'. Diaghilev ~~would sit~~ sat there looking irritated. 'Yes, yes', he said, ~~would say~~, 'You're both right about the underlying philosophy but you must remember this is a ballet, and our prime concern must be with its visual impact'.

As soon as rehearsals began Miassin felt the difference between the Diaghilev company and that of the Bolshoi in Moscow. 'Here everyone seemed to be aware that they ~~were~~ are part of a great new movement in the world of ballet.' Maestro Cecchetti, whom he saw as 'a plump, animated Italian', was now in his sixties, and presided over the classes with a gold-topped cane which Nijinsky had given him in Paris on his last birthday. The Paris and London

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seasons were to be more safely balanced between opera and ballet this year. Stravinsky's Le Rossignol was to be choreographed by Boris Romanov, probably to spare Fokine more friction with Stravinsky. Rimsky-Korsakov's opera Une Nuit de Mai was to be given, with Chaliapine singing in Boris Godunov and Ivan the Terrible and (London only, opening June 8) Prince Igor in a complete performance. The ballets were also to include Schéhérazade, Daphnis (Fokine wanted a decent showing for this at last, ~~with him dancing~~ opposite Karsavina), and there was to be Thamar again. Fokine's relations with Diaghilev were still under great stress, and he 'bustled about nervously', in Prince Lieven's words. Les Papillons was conceived as a sequal to Carnaval and, like that ballet, was to Schumann's music. Doboujinsky did the setting. Midas was another Greek ballet to music by Rimsky-Korsakov's son-in-law, Maximilian Steinberg, in a story by Bakst, which most people thought absurd on its Paris première on June 2, and it did not remain on the repertory.

Since a second Parisian scandal-over Sacre-led over-shadowed it, and he wished to dance it

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The Paris and London seasons were immensely successful, and yet no particular ballet was, and many felt that in losing Nijinsky the company had returned to an old path without conviction or much possibility for the future. Alfred Bruncan wrote, 'With his good taste M. Michel Fokine brings back to the Russian Ballet all his graceful attitudes and harmonious gestures which M. Nijinsky, with his grotesque ideas, sought to abolish'. But others missed the excitement and the risk. 'Little ~~Massine~~ Miassin', as Paris called him, looked 'peetical' but was not yet a dancer to compare in any way with Nijinsky. He was also so nervous that he could barely get through his part. Le Rossignol went down well, so did Le Coq d'Or, but Benois' new method of producing (after Diaghilev had voiced ~~doubts~~ misgivings about its being ~~more than~~ a kind of 'recital') did not seem all of a piece, though later London ~~adored it~~ liked it even more than Paris, and Osbert Sitwell wrote, 'Besides giving us some of the most dramatic

and haunting music of the past century, Le Coq d'Or constituted a great satire... Fortunately for its success, the fashionable audience could revel in the beauty and strangeness of it without concentrating too much on its meaning or implications'. Fokine had wanted to do Le Coq d'Or purely as a ballet for Anna Pavlova, using only one suite. Diaghilev suggested doing the whole opera, and Benois wanted the chorus and singers on the stage ~~instead~~ instead of in the orchestra pit. Natalia Goncharova did the settings. Fokine was somewhat horrified when he heard that she was to have the job, as she and her husband Michael Larionov, also an artist, had the ~~artist~~ reputation of belonging to a set of Moscow 'futurists' who painted their faces and tossed bowls of water in the faces of their audiences. Diaghilev suggested they all travel to Moscow to meet the couple, and this they did---Fokine, Benois, Diaghilev and Fokine with his wife. He found a most charming couple. ~~(who were to do much important work for Diaghilev).~~ Goncharova was 'quietly dedicated, sincere and concentrated' when she talked about her designs. Her paintings at first shocked Fokine. A portrait only had one eye, for instance. But gradually he began to acquire a taste for the paintings of this 'frail, nervous woman'. As to Larionov, he was at this time absorbed in a study of Japaneese art. The singers in Le Coq d'Or were to take no part in the action, but sit perfectly still in pyramids on either side of the stage, almost blending with the wings in their 'warm vermilion and brown' costumes, while the colours of the stage-setting were fiery yellows and reds and greens and blues. The libretto was by Belsky, on a story of Pushkin's. The Prologue consisted of an old astrologer passing in front of the curtain to sung words, 'This fairy tale is a fable, but it contains a hint, a lesson, to all good people', shaking his finger at the audience. When the curtain raises the astrologer presents the Tsar Dodon with a golden cockerel which will protect

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him against war-like neighbours. Twice the cockerel crows to warn the Tsar, and he leaves for the battle-field, where his two sons are killed. A fantastic tent rises up before him and the lovely queen of Shemakhan appears. ~~The Tsar~~ He falls in love. The astrologer appears again and reminds ~~the Tsar~~ him of a promise he made in exchange for the golden cockerel, namely that he will grant ~~him~~ anything he ~~asks for~~ wishes. The astrologer asks for the lady. The Tsar refuses and hits him. The ~~a~~astrologer dies, and the golden cockerel pecks the Tsar mortally in the temple. The lady disappears with a laugh, as ~~and~~ the Tsar dies, while the astrologer reappears, to tell the audience that only he and the queen were living people: all the rest was a nightmare, 'an apparition pale and empty'. This extraordinary piece---which divided only the critics---was the last work Fokine did for Diaghilev.

Several people tried to bring Diaghilev and Nijinsky together again in Paris. Diaghilev would not hear of it, though in the end he did promise to give Nijinsky a part in London, which he failed to do, thus making matters even worse between them. Some people say that Lady Ripon, anxious to see justice done to Nijinsky, gave Diaghilev an ultimatum that if the dancer did not join the company for the London season there would be no season. But the season had been planned long before, and the Drury Lane theatre booked, and not even Lady Ripon had the power to stop it. ~~But she was certainly trying to bring the former friends together.~~ Nijinsky ~~came~~ went to Paris, but did not meet Diaghilev. ~~He did not visit the theatre~~ They must have seen each other however as Nijinsky was present at the première of the Russian Ballet on May 14, ~~Nijinsky~~ He had already received many offers from managements, including the Opéra, and had ~~already~~ appeared at the Palace theatre in London (after a clown's act) in Le Spectre de la Rose, and a new version of Les Sylphides and Danse Orientale, back in March. The whole

enemies

the astrologer

the Comtesse de Greffulhe, Lady Cunard and Lady Ripon.

the Russian Season Comittee

when la Légende de Joseph was given.

(Nijinsky season in London had been) ~~thing had been~~ a miserable tragedy. Diaghilev had brought a lawsuit against Bronia to stop her appearing with her brother, on the grounds that he had not accepted her resignation. It failed, but Nijinsky's tendency to hysteria and his utter inability (as with so many performers) to organise anything or see matters from a manager's point of view plunged him ~~from~~ into one crisis ~~to~~ into another, until he became too ill to perform and, missing three performances, lost his contract with Alfred Butt (whom he had offended quite unnecessarily before ~~his~~ the season opened). His thirty-two dancers had ~~been~~ to be paid out of his ~~own~~ savings. He ~~had~~ quarrelled with his sister. ~~H~~Her husband had spat on the floor before him 'like a moujik' (said Romola), and Nijinsky had smashed a table in a row with the management. He had refused to ~~let~~ allow music ~~be played~~ during the pauses between one ballet and another, or even to have the house-lights up. To recoup on his losses he had accepted an invitation to dance in Madrid at Kermit Roosevelt's wedding reception, at the American Embassy, with Spain's king and queen present. For that he was paid three thousand dollars. It was on his way back from Spain that he saw the Russian Ballet première in Paris. During the intermission he went to Misia Sert's box, where there were a number of Diaghilev's circle, including Cocteau. According to Romola (who was in England expecting a baby), only Misia tried to make conversation with him. The others were facetious, and Cocteau remarked that birth was 'disgusting', at which Nijinsky left. They may simply have been joking with him about his new role as a father, ~~but it seems that no one turned his back on him.~~ Both Bakst and Benois met him, and talked to him in the old way. They found him changed---'garrulous', and planning the impossible.

Nijinsky ~~He~~ then went to Vienna, where Romola joined him. They ~~and~~ received a letter from Lady Ripon saying that Diaghilev had consented to have him back in the company, for the London season. He did return, and he did begin rehearsing with the company. Baron Günsburg and the secretary Drobetsky received him, but no one else

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His performances, too, had been a disappointment. Cyril Beaumont found that this rearrangement of Les Sylphides robbed it of its former magic. Nijinsky had lost this magic too. He no longer danced 'like a god'.

seemed aware of him, including the dancers. Diaghilev avoided him, though they were both staying at the Savoy, and after the first rehearsal Nijinsky left again for Vienna without seeing Lady Ripon, though he did write her a letter of thanks for all she had done. His predicament was, in the most tragic way, a tribute to Diaghilev's powers; for he was Diaghilev's product in so many ways. Diaghilev had isolated him so carefully from the world that now, alone, he floundered, believing the web of publicity that had been spun around him. Diaghilev's cruelty was to abandon him to a world he could not hope to understand. And he abandoned Nijinsky without the smallest recognition of his instability of mind, though the signs were clear (within days of the wedding Romola had noticed them) ~~The weakness of the Russian Ballet was perhaps its homosexual hub, with the resultant devastating nervous crises (which Diaghilev on the whole controled so marvellously). The petty intrigue and malice for which the ballet world is notorious may have that origin, more than anything endemic to the dancing itself.~~

War broke on August 4, when the company had dispersed. Really it brought to an end the Diaghilev Ballet, and made a fresh start necessary, just as it brought to an end the fashionable audiences that had made its last seasons in Paris and London the most brilliant yet. It looked as if the 'forthcoming struggle' ~~he~~ Diaghilev had referred to in his 'summing-up' speech in 1905 had arrived, and that his fear that 'the amenities of life' would be damaged was to be fulfilled. It was not long before he was wondering where his next meal would be coming from.

7

War, Revolutions and a Season at the Met

The War meant that Diaghilev was for the first time alone. At first it did not look like this. He had signed a contract with the Metropolitan Opera House in New York for a season there. The ordeal of crossing the Atlantic (the Met insisted on his going) seemed worse than a war which, as everyone who knew about such things said, would only last a few weeks, at most months. Lady Ripon had written desperate letters to Nijinsky and his wife in Vienna pleading with them to return to England, but they had taken this as a renewed effort on her part to get him back into the Diaghilev Ballet, and they moved on to Hungary. She knew that a war would soon be cutting Europe in two, and Nijinsky might find himself on the wrong side. He did. He and Romola were arrested at the border as foreigners, on their way to Russia. Karsavina was in St Petersburg and could not get out again. So was Grigoriev. The company was due to reassemble on October 1, but there was little likelihood of that now.

The Met was also insisting that Nijinsky and Karsavina appear together in the New York season, and Diaghilev was now obliged to make friendlier noises to Nijinsky. He wrote him a long letter, and sent him a telegram. He simply could not understand it when the reply came, 'Cannot come'. At the end of November, 1914, he wrote to Stravinsky, 'Nijinsky behaves so stupidly'. He had sent the boy a reply-paid cable too! And all

he could reply was, 'Letter received. Cannot come'. 'I am sure,' Diaghilev added, 'that his wife is busy making him into the first ballet master of the Budapest Opera...I will now write him a second, less modest and less reasonable letter and this miserable person will understand that now is not the moment for joking'. It certainly was not, as the whole of Europe was about to discover.

in this letter to Stravinsky,

Diaghilev was quite used to making reconciliations of this kind, and unashamed about them. He expected other people to look after themselves, and bore no grudge if they tricked him successfully. He would say of someone who absconded with the company's funds, 'Oh, he's only looking after himself'. He quarrelled with all his collaborators, and returned to them after a time. It happened with Benois, Bakst, Cocteau, Larionov, Stravinsky, Rvael, Prokofiev, Fokine, Massine (as Miassin was to be called). And now he needed Nijinsky, having not many weeks before virtually told the western world that he was finished with him. In the same letter to Stravinsky he wrote that only Nijinsky could choreograph the new ballet Noces.

News of the outbreak of war reached Diaghilev in Venice. Then he travelled south to Viareggio with his secretary to meet Massine. The resort was crowded and stifling, and Diaghilev spent most of his time sending desperate telegrams to St Petersburg and Moscow, and in conference with Drobetsky. He was trying to build a new company. Luckily Drobetsky had both a Polish and a Russian passport, and would be able to move freely across the frontiers. Diaghilev put him on a train for Poland with the injunction to return with a group of young dancers. At the end of August he and Massine went to Florence, where ~~Diaghilev~~ they took a villa so small that the dining-room door had to be opened if there were more than two guests at table. They went sight-seeing together, and Diaghilev's quite moulding of one more dancer and choreographer began. In the Uffizi

one day he asked the boy, 'Do you think you could compose a ballet?' To which Massine said, 'No, I'm sure I never could'. Then, in the room they moved on to, where ~~he~~ Massine suddenly became aware of the 'luminous colours of Simone Martini's Annunication', he corrected himself and said, 'Yes, I think I can. Not only one but a hundred, I promise you!' In all he composed for Diaghilev nearly twenty ballets, in two periods.

Stravinsky joined them in Florence, to help keep up Diaghilev's spirits, despite his own rather desperate situation with four children to feed and not much chance of getting help from Russia. He returned to Switzerland, but visited Diaghilev again, this time in Rome, after another urgent appeal. Diaghilev had taken a furnished apartment for the winter, and they played over some piano pieces Stravinsky had brought along with him. One of these was a Polka dedicated to Diaghilev. He told Diaghilev that while composing this he had thought of 'a circus ring-master in evening dress and top-hat, cracking his whip and urging on a rider'. Diaghilev looked at him in some astonishment, not knowing whether he ought to be offended, but they had a good laugh about it. Quite a circle had gathered round Diaghilev ~~already~~ in Rome. There was Prokofiev, from whom he had commissioned a new ballet, and Gerald Tyrwhitt, later Lord Berners, who was to write The Triumph of Neptune for him. From Rome, joined now by Misia and José Sert, ~~Diaghilev and Massine~~ they drove up to Switzerland, visiting San Gimignano, Siena, Monte Oliveto Maggiore and Pisa. They settled near Stravinsky at the Villa Bellerive in Ouchy, ~~near~~ Lausanne, and the composer hoped to see them frequently---but one of his children caught the measles and Diaghilev's horror of infection kept him firmly away from the man he needed most.

Grigoriev came from Russia, travelling through Norway and Sweden ~~to~~ and England, and then via France to Switzerland. Bakst arrived, also Larionov and Gontcharova. Ernest Ansermet, being Swiss, was always on call: it

was agreed that he should conduct for the New York season. n.p. One day, when Massine was talking about 'primitive' Italian art (as Byzantine mosaics and even the Sienese school were then called) Digghilev suggested that he should do a liturgical ballet based on the Passion. ~~He had seen where the youth's gifts might lie.~~ Like Nijinsky, Massine had a latent mystical quality, in his case much more overtly expressed, and closer to art, while Nijinsky's went deep into the formative receesses of the self where ecstasy and madness ~~could lie~~ lay. Massine had been struck by the Christs of the Italian painters, ~~that~~ those poignantly tender figures which seemed ~~through these painters~~ in their paintings to have achieved ~~a kind of~~ divine choreographers. ~~The idea even formed in Massine's mind that those painters were 'great choreographers'.~~ Something of the Passion was in all art: Massine saw to what extent ~~that story was~~ the Passion itself was the pinnacle of ~~art or~~ artistic form, and how Christ had chosen that story with the predilection of an artist, except that it was to be played out in his body. n.p. The ballet was to be a series of tableaux in the style of the early Italian masters, and Larionov was to work with him. Diaghilev had taken a small rehearsal hall in Ouchy, and rehearsals started with the other members of the company who had by now arrived---Kremnev and Hilda Munnings or 'Muningsova' (now to be called Lydia Sokolova), Woizikovsky and Slavinsky, Tchernicheva, Adolf Bolm, the Nemchinova sisters, the Chabelska sisters and the Soumarakova sisters, and Xenia Makletsova from Moscow. Droubetsky and Grigoriev had done their work well. n.p. Lydia Lopokova would be joining the company in New York, and Diaghilev engaged a striking French opera singer called Flore Revalles to do the Ida Rubinstein parts. This was at Bakst's suggestion---he had probably fallen in love with her in Geneva, where he saw her in Tosca. Karsavina would not leave Russia, and Diaghilev was now doing all he could ~~now~~ to get Nijinsky out of Hungary. ~~(this was only successful in time for the second New York season).~~ Fokine too refused to leave Russia, and so Massine was virtually forced into his new role of choreographer. But there was

Maestro Cecchetti, as always, to drill the newcomers into an ordered company.

Massine and Sokolova went through some preliminary steps together for Liturgie, as the new ballet was then called. Larionov and Gontcharova started work on the backdrop, but then the whole idea was collapsed. ~~dropped because~~ Diaghilev wanted it performed to silence, with ancient chants from Kiev in the pauses, and when he found that these chants were unavailable he abandoned the idea altogether. ~~it.~~ Possibly that was the story he gave to Massine, feeling that he was not yet ready to compose a ballet of such weight, ~~and novelty.~~ Massine's first ballet for the company was actually Le Soleil de Nuit, an ensemble piece based on Russian folk dances, in which he himself danced the Midnight Sun. Diaghilev tried this and the new company out in two Red Cross charity performances in Geneva on 20 December 1915, before the Paris opening nine days later. He also Diaghilev took frequent trips to Paris for money, taking Massine with him. ~~and~~ In her book Dancing for Diaghilev Sokolova describes how they always knew if he had been successful by whether Massine was wearing a new sapphire ring ~~or not~~ (~~for~~, like Nijinsky, he was a 'king of the sapphires', only he set them in platinum while Nijinsky set them in gold). According to Sokolva these six months in Switzerland were the company's happiest, and Diaghilev seemed relaxed and optimistic. The Paris performances (the Opéra, closed ~~after~~ at the outbreak of war, was specially opened for the Russian Ballet) proved enormously successful, and over 400,000 gold francs went through the box office. Massine's first ballet ~~went~~ was received ~~down~~ well, and Diaghilev said to his business manager, 'You see? Given the talent, one can make a choreographer in no time!' But he deflated Massine---'I didn't hear them cheering', he ~~said.~~ told him. ~~The ballet was if anything more due to Larionov's influence than the young dancer's unfolding abilities. Larionov had suggested fusing the story of the sun-god Yarila with that of the Snow Maiden, King Frost's daughter. Massine was responsible for bringing in Bobyl, the village half-~~

~~success~~ of the ballet

This was a gala Red Cross performance. Paris was 'gloomy and sinister', Stravinsky felt, now that the war was on. He conducted his own Firebird.

For Diaghilev had to cope with the added terror of lurking German submarines.

~~wit, danced by Zverev.~~ One Italian critic called the production 'stravgante e stupido'.

The company sailed from Bordeaux in a small vessel intended for summer cruises on the first day of 1916, and, as if to prevent Diaghilev from ever undertaking the trip again, it was a rough and stormy crossing. He stayed in his cabin studying production schedules with his new business manager Randolfo Barocci and his secretary Drobetsky. Some say that he wore two life-belts throughout the trip, and refused to eat, and looked thoroughly mournful and green until the moment they docked. Vassily's job on board was to pray for him as hard as he could, before the ikon in his cabin.

'America will have a lot to say in the art of the future', Diaghilev once said to Arnold Haskell. But that was in 1926. In 1916 he found much in the United States to perplex him. It was really the end of his 'aristocratic' period. After the American trip he did his accounts better, or rather he did them for the first time. He cut down spending to what he could afford, or what the box office could be calculated to yield, rather than what he needed. The casual days when even funds could safely rely on a word from a friend, and a countess or marchioness could move thousands of francs in his direction, were clearly finished in Europe. In the United States they had never existed. That country represented both a challenge and a reminder. He would have to adopt some of its realism in matters of money and contractual commitments, or else go under. He bitterly resented the Christian names and other familiarities of approach that a wealthy democracy goes in for. Not that he held back from American taste where it was less refined than what he was used to. He predicted that would influence European music. He ~~listened to the~~ New Orleans jazz, and liked the Hoffman sisters. There had been a great deal of advance publicity for the company. The opening at the small Century theatre on Central Park West was a bitter disappointment for him. The audience simply did not seem to understand

He went to the musicals and admired their professionalism. But he found 1916 America 'crude'.

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(at least, that is what he told the Press)

what was going on. He felt that for them it was 'light entertainment', something that could be more or less yawned through after a hard day at the office. They were not yet 'ready' for the Russian Ballet, that is the new ballet as oppsoed to the kind of Anna Pavlova evening that New York was used to. Despite some lovely performances the audience seemed 'puzzled', and ~~Massine~~ Miassin felt that Diaghilev took this to heart, though he made sure (his eye on future New York seasons) that he was reported in the newspapers as liking America and finding the audiences most appreciative.

The first night consisted of Schéhérazade, with Bolm dancing Nijinsky's role of the slave, Firebird with Makletsova and Tchernicheva, La Princesse Enchantée (the pas de deux from Bluebird, with Bolm and Makletsova) and Massine's Soleil de Nuit. Bolm was ill for a few days, and not at his best form for the opening. And the Ballet was a disappointment for the audience too, in that the 'biggest name' ~~of the company~~---and life in the States was much more publicity-orientated than life in Europe--- was missing. Nijinsky was already known there, while the company was seen more or less as a support for his greatness. Word had come from South America of this 'god of the dance', and it was impossible for Bolm, much less the untried Miassin (now named Massine for the convenience of Anglo-Saxon audiences), to counteract the effects of this legend by sheer fine dancing. Karsavina was missed too. But it was not all a

a matter of publicity and gullibility. One or two people in the audience who had been present at the Opéra and the Châtelet felt that without Nijinsky and Karsavina the company lacked its former brilliance. Carl van Vachten, the music critic, was one of these. Massine, he said, was neither a great dancer nor a great mime. Makletsova was accomplished technically but she was without poetry. Lopokova had charm but 'floundered' in her ballerina roles. And Flore Revalles was no Ida Rubinstein. The other critics were, on the whole, enthusiastic, and there was no doubt that Diaghilev had given New York better than it had been given before, in ballet. But perhaps the audience was more 'ready' than Diaghilev thought---for the kind of ballet he had given Paris and London and distinctly did not give New York.

Puritanism hit the company rather hard, though Romola Nijinsky maintained that the director of the

Met, Gatti-Casazza, and the rest of his 'Italian clique', were against the Russian Ballet from the start. Police were present in the audience after complaints had been received on the first nights of Schéhérazade and L'apreès-midi d'un Faune (Massine was given Nijinsky' roles in Faune, Petrouchka and Schéhérazade). Some people did not like 'blacks' mixing with 'whites' in the Schéhérazade harem---there was talk of a kind of choreographic apartheid being devised to accomodate the sensitive. And by now Faune had its own inbuilt and pre-shocked audience because of the publicity given to the Paris 'scandal'. Both ballets had to be modified before they could continue. The Bakst sets and the Stravinsky music were singled out for praise in the press---but Diaghilev was unable to persuade the Met to invite Stravinsky over to conduct his own work (the composer was finding it difficult to survive in Switzerland). The audiences did get warmer during the fortnight. Then the company, minus Makletsova, moved on to Boston. Meanwhile Diaghilev's efforts to get Nijinsky and Romola out of Hungary had started working, and the newspapers were hoping that he would arrive in time for the second New York season on 3 April. Queen Alexandra had (through Lady Ripon and Comtesse Greffuhle) become involved, together the Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna and the Emperor Franz-Josef. The pope and the king of Spain also intervened, and negotiations went on in Vienna through the American ambassador there.

In Boston Diaghilev busied himself with the lighting, and spent whole afternoons adjusting the footlights and the lanterns. After Boston there was the horror of one-night stands in about sixteen ~~other~~ towns including Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, Kanasas City and Pittsburg. There would be rehearsals in the morning and afternoon, a performance in the evening followed by a late supper, than on to a Pullman train for the next date. The sleeping cars were crammed with dancers, electricians, musicians and carpenters. In Washington the company performed before President Wilson and his wife. Back in New York Nijinsky had still not arrived, though he had left France. His boat actually

Diaghilev exploited this for publicity purposes as hard as he could.

and blamed Diaghilev

in the Nijinsky case

h.p.

docked the day after the opening of the second season. Diaghilev with Massine and other principal dancers went to meet him, and fought their way through reporters and press photographers. But there was little fraternisation. Diaghilev and Massine ~~had put up~~ were staying at the Ritz. Nijinsky and Romola went to Claridge's. Nijinsky refused to dance until the subject of his arrears of pay had been discussed, ~~and~~ the management of the Met insisted that these ~~would~~ be paid out of Diaghilev's receipts each evening during Nijinsky's eleven performances. It involved Diaghilev in a certain loss, however well the second season did. In fact he ended in debt to the Metropolitan. Grigoriev found Nijinsky 'vague and unfriendly'.

Diaghilev and his 'committee' usually met at the Plaza hotel for late supper, to the sound of a ragtime band. There would be Grigoriev, Massine and Lopokova, and sometimes Otto Kahn, directing the Met, would join them. Kahn was madly in love with Flore Revalles and sent her bouquets of roses continually. Elsa Maxwell played her well-known role by organising lots of parties. Massine had come to admire Nijinsky through the choreography of Faune. Now he saw a 'quiet and reserved' man who was utterly transformed on the stage. Nijinsky had 'an instinctive, effortless control of his body, every gesture expressed most tender and complex emotions. Movements merged into one another'. He endowed Petrouchka with 'an undefinable quality of self-revelation', with his peculiar jumps and turns and tilts of the head. Technically his dancing was incomparable. Massine had, of course, never seen him before. Nijinsky's fluttering wrist-movements in the Blue Bird were so fast as to seem impossible: they were actually double the usual rate. With the other members of the company Nijinsky was not too popular, because of the hard demands he was making. Not until 12 April did he make his debut, and some critics claimed that his presence on the stage ~~made a difference~~ gave a new quality to the ~~quality of the~~ orchestral sound, and the tempi, and even the action. Perhaps too the Nijinsky-Diaghilev union was, for those eleven performances, alive again,

invisibly, unknown even to themselves. Not everyone in the company agreed that Nijinsky was at his best, though. Grigoriev thought that he improved gradually during the season, while Sokolova saw a definite deterioration from his great days.

Otto Kahn fixed up another season for the company in the autumn, with a coast-to-coast tour, and was unwise enough, being quite inexperienced as an impresario, to suggest that Diaghilev should leave the management of the company to Nijinsky while he returned to Europe. Clearly, a gun was being pointed at Diaghilev, and he could hardly sacrifice a lucrative tour at a time when most of Europe was closed to him. He agreed that the company should be 'rented' to Nijinsky. He also accepted an invitiation from King Alfonso to appear in Madrid and San Sebastian. He seemed most ~~very~~ tired, and was glad to leave the State after the pressure of the one-night stands. Nijinsky stayed behind, to await the return of the company later in the year. They sailed on May 6 on an Italian boat called Dante Alighieri. For Diaghilev it was a far more terrifying journey than the earlier one, since the ship was full of munitions, apart from stampeding horses. The war was now under way, and the danger from submarines was greater than before. Half way across the Atlantic the Dante Alighieri listed to one side, and for several days they could not reach their cabins and had to sleep on deck. There was a hole in the ship. The horses kicked and screamed, and many died. Diaghilev sat wrapped un a dark grey beaver-lined coat, clutching the arms of his chair and seeing his end in every wave. But they arrived safely in Cadiz, for spring and the scent of lemon blossom. They had to travel at once to Madrid for the opening night at the Teatro Real, in a gala performance before the king and his queen Ena, and an aristocratic audience in full regalia. Massine saw brocades, velvets, tiaras, and the audience responded warmly to Carnaval and Schéhérazade. On his fee evenings Massine watched flamenco dancing in the Madrid cafés, and was astonished at the perfect

before the ~~next~~ next American ~~second~~ season ~~company~~ started.

timing and control. He and Diaghilev spent the afternoons ~~often with Diaghilev~~ at the Prado, and ~~they~~ contemplated doing a Spanish ballet. Diaghilev suggested Fauré's Pavane as music, with its 'haunting echoes of the Golden Age of Spain'. Massine wanted it based on Velsquez, visually, and Diaghilev commissioned José Sert, 'the epitome of a Spanish grandee', to do the costumes. The ballet, Las Meninas, was quickly done, and got its first performance in the company's next season at San Sebastian, in the Teatro Victoria-Eugenie, with Massine dancing the courtier opposite Sokolova, while Tchernicheva danced her companion and Woizikovsky the other courtier. The king and queen were delighted. Within days Massine had another ballet ready, this time a Russian folk story about an evil witch, Kikimora, with music by Liadov. That too got its première at San Sebastien. In early September most of the company returned to the United States for its season under Nijinsky, while Diaghilev and Massine took a rest in Rome, though not for long, as Stravinsky joined them and there were sixteen dancers to rehearse, with Luba Tchernicheva as ballerina. Yet more new ballets were planned---Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur, to music by Domenico Scarlatti which Diaghilev discovered himself, Parade in the Cubist style, La Boutique Fantasque, Massine's most powerful work so far and ready only in 1919, and the company's first English ballet, The Triumph of Neptune.

Diaghilev took an apartment on the Corso Umberto, and intensive rehearsals started in a basement studio in Piazza Venezia under Cecchetti. Meanwhile the rest of the company had begun its tour in the United States, and stories drifted to Rome that it was not proving successful, and that Nijinsky's new ballet Tyl Eulenspiegel had been coldly received. Also Nijinsky was quarrelling with the conductor, Pierre Monteux, who on his side was refusing to conduct the 'German' music of Strauss. The dancers also went on strike, refusing to dance to such music, 'as Russian citizens'. Nij-

insky slipped and nearly broke his foot, being ballet-master, dancer and manager in one, which could not work. On the company's arrival at Atlanta, before a he was summoned to appear within ten days ~~at~~ St Peresburg Tribunal for military serivice, though in fact he was exempt. Romola was later under the impression that this was Diaghilev's work. ~~was machinating against him.~~ As Cecchetti once said to her, 'These Russians are a strange lot. For thirty-five years I have taught and studied them. They are my friends, I love them, but there is something about them that we Europeans can never, never penetrate... Serge Pavlovitch should not mix up love and art; it's a very great mistake.' Still, it is doubtful whether he intrigued against Nijinsky anywhere, let alone Russia. But Romola became ~~increasingly~~ so suspicious--- such was Diaghilev's magnetic hold on ~~the~~ her imagination--- that every accident during the later South American tour, like a nail on the stage-boards or the collapse of scenery, ~~was~~ seemed his devising. 'His amazing hypnotic power did not seem to have lessened with the years,' she wrote of this period. 'While listening to him at dinner once, when we were watching the ladies dancing at the Palace hotel' (later in Madrid) 'I could understand how he subtly suggested his ideas about women to his youthful followers. For as he criticised the lines of the women's bodies, I myself too could only see the ugliness of them'.

Diaghilev would sit with his committee in the Ariana café on the Corso, and sometimes Mikhail Semenov would join them---he was a former music critic from St Petersburg. Massine practiced on the 'creaky stage' of the old teatro Metastasio ~~every~~ each day under Cecchetti. The afternoons drifted away pleasantly in talk as the weather became hotter and the hours after lunch made work impossible. It was Diaghilev who suggested the Goldoni play (Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur) and gave Vincenzo Tommasini the job of orchestrating the Scarlatti sonatas, about twenty of them, ~~which they~~ chosen from at least five hundred. The set by Bakst, in the atmosphere of Francesco Guardi's Venice, was one of the finest he ~~ever~~ did, while Massine studied the tiny 'social' pictures of Pietro Longhi for the supper-party given by the maid Mariuccia to her admirers in the absence of her mistress Marchesa Silvestra. The maid Mariuccia ~~This~~ was Lydia Lopokova's part, while Cecchetti and his wife played the old marquis and his wife. Massine also turned the one-act Kikimora into the full-length Contes Russes at this time. He was already showing signs in his choreography of that ~~extraordinary~~ amazing flowing vigour which later astonished audiences, where every moment in the action, every feeling was danced and never mimed. In the Massine ballet dancing never ceased: even the miming was expressed in a dance-form; ~~and~~ his ballets were an exhilarating manifestation of the music and the drama in movement alone, that ceased only with the fall of the curtain.

Unlike Nijinsky he moulded the ~~moment~~ expression to the music, ~~and seemed to have~~ He had learned much ~~more~~ from Italy, in his acceptance of dancing as celebration more than the truth of individual feeling, and above all in his acceptance (for he was an excellent actor) of the yoke of the story, in a deft fidelity to period.

(in such a way that the two seemed to have created each other.)

There was trouble over the knight's horse in the Contes Russes. Diaghilev entrusted this to the futurist artist Fortunato Depero, but when he and Massine went to his studio on the outskirts of Rome they found a huge 'bulbous' beast looking like an elephant. Diaghilev smashed this papier-maché creature with his stick, ~~with~~ while Massine ~~trying~~ tried to tell the artist that 'this was not quite the thing we had in mind'. 'But it was how I SAW it!' Depero told them, with paper guts all over the studio-floor. ~~now.~~ In the end Larionov did a 'graceful' creature out of wood, and painted it white.

(whom Diaghilev had met in his Montparnasse studio in the spring of 1916)

Picasso was also in Rome at this time, and saw Olga Kokhlova dance the part of Felicità in Les Femmes--- he later married her. There were Jean Cocteau and Eric Satie too. They were collaborating ~~in~~ on Parade. The book was by Cocteau (his endless fantastic talk amused and, in the heat, irritated Diaghilev). ~~Cocteau~~ He was much absorbed by music-hall and circus ideas at this time, and the story with its French manager ~~in evening dress~~ inside a cardboard construction painted with a frock and shoes like a man (Woizikovsky) introducing the Chinese conjurer ~~act~~ (Massine), and the New York manager (a skyscraper painted on his back---Statkewicz) opening the curtains of a booth to a performance of a 'little American girl' on an invisible horse (Chabelska), ~~with~~ the music bursting into ragtime, was a satire on the street parades that used to precede a circus or music hall. The composer gave each character his 'signature-music'--- in the case of the American girl the clicking of a typewriter, for the acrobats the sound of an aeroplane engine. Cocteau wanted many more sounds that were not allowed him, though they would have helped to demarcate the characters even more wittily than they actually were. The ballet was slick, quick — like a film, and slight too.

Though Parade was not revived during Diaghilev's lifetime except as a solo dance by Woizikovsky (as the Chinese conjuror), it was an astonishing glance forward into the post-war world, and captured the feeling of the new art with its combination of jazz, ragtime, cinema, circus and music hall styles, and the 'noises' that the 'lovable maniac', as Satie called Cocteau, wanted inserted, ~~everywhere.~~ Cocteau even wanted the managers to speak through megaphones, ~~and~~ until Diaghilev pointed out that the spoken word was entirely out of place in ballet. Picasso painted a 'cubist' curtain---and presented the audience with the newest thing about the ballet. (When Diaghilev ~~thought him might~~ wanted to revive ~~the~~ this ballet in 1923 he asked Picasso to retouch ~~this~~ the curtain but the painter said, 'No, it's like one of those deteriorated Pompeii frescoes, and is much better left alone'.) For the Paris performance in May 1917 Diaghilev published a preamble by Guillaume Apollinaire about this 'Pioneer cubist manifesto' which said, 'Parade will upset the ideas of amny people in the audience. They are sure to be surprised, but surprised in the most agreeable way, and, being charmed, they will come to know all the grace of modern movement, of which they have never dreamed. A magnificent music-hall Chinese will release their imagination; the Young American Girl, as she cranks an imaginary car, will express the magic of their daily life, whose wordless rituals the Acrobat in blue and white tights celebrates with exquisite, amazing agility'. ~~Most people thought it rather silly. Yet it had an air of theatrical significance, as if it had come to undo the past rather than make anything lastingly new. It was the kind of boldly irresponsible enterprise that gives a few essential writers and artists and musicians new ideas without much appeal below the level of the intellect. And Diaghilev was straining towards an even greater break with the past than hitherto in the Russian Ballet.~~ However much irritation he had felt in the States, he had absorbed a great deal, and was perhaps

less squeamish than hitherto about the disappearance of the old ~~society~~ régimes. 'We are doomed to die', he had said in that 1905 speech, 'to pave the way for the resurrection of a new culture, which will take from us what remains of our weary wisdom'. He was more and more determined in the coming years to associate himself with the young people in whom he identified that new culture, ~~and sometimes just because they were young.~~

n.p. Yet the new culture failed to happen. And what had looked like a natural process of self-renewal in society was, as matters turned out, only a stage in a mounting self-destruction. By the end of the war that was a little clearer. By the end of his life he began to find ~~felt he had taken a step in the wrong direction by always searching for something new and different, at the cost of value.~~ more pleasure in rare books printed three centuries before than in ballet.

Les Femmes was given on 12 April at the Teatro Costanzi to an enchanted Roman audience, together with Stravinsky's Fireworks as an unbalanced concert piece against a cubist background of concial and rectangular structures designed by the futurist Giacomo Balla, with ~~the~~ lights blinking on and off in time to the music (lighting by Diaghilev). This ~~too~~ was popular with the avant garde.

1917 was the year of new things in Russia too. The revolution that had really been going on since the first years of the century now toppled the old régime. ~~and~~ Kshesinskaya's house in St Petersburg was ~~later,~~ looted ~~(like that of the Minister of the Court) in the second phase of the revolution,~~ and then used by Lenin as his headquarters. He harangued the people from her balcony. She was lucky enough to be in the Crimea on holiday at the time. ~~her house---together with that of the Minister of the Court---was looted.~~ ~~And~~ She later had a villa at Cap d'Ail and ~~She later~~ became ~~the wife of~~ the Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovitch's wife. ~~and was known as the Princess Krassinskaya.~~ She had lost nearly everything she ~~had~~ possessed, and settled in the Riviera, showing not a trace of worry in her face. n.p. Perhaps Diaghilev felt a mite of satisfaction when the news came from Russia of the new ~~Bolshevik~~ government. At any rate, he decided to mount a red flag on the stage for Firebird, at the Teatro

On March 15 the Tsar abdicated, and Kerensky formed his government. In the second revolution, Bolshevik phase

Costanza, and to change Ivan Tsarevitch's crown, sceptre and ermine for a red robe and a carmagnole cap, which produced a sour reaction in the audience. On the second night the flag was removed, but the red robe remained, indeed became part of the tradition of that ballet. ~~Grigoriev has a different story here.~~ He did the same in Paris. ~~remembers~~ the red flag figured at the Châtelet performance in May: the audience froze, and ~~Diaghilev~~ he received many letters of protest. His action was not quite tactful at a time when Paris was in an alarmist state, expecting a German invasion.

From Paris the company returned to Spain and settled in Madrid, where Nijinsky joined them after the Number One (or did Diaghilev consider it Number Two now?) company had finished its tour through Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee and finally Chicago and Albany. In February ~~he~~ Nijinsky had received a cable from Diaghilev asking him to come to Spain as he wanted him to dance there before taking ~~a~~ his company on a new South American tour he was planning. Romola ~~had~~ advised Nijinsky not to promise anything. She learned later that as far as Diaghilev was concerned his 'own' company was the really modern one, while the one he meant to send on tour with Nijinsky was the 'money-making' one. Nijinsky, on his side, hoped for a reconciliation with Diaghilev, and began working hard at his system of notation (he had devised a ~~way of~~ new system ~~based on Stepanov's plotting steps~~) in preparation for the new work he expected to be doing for Diaghilev. He was also thinking of returning to his own country. Like Diaghilev, he seemed to assume that the air had been cleared there by the Revolution: 'I am sure the revolution isn't going to change artistic life in Russia', he told Romola. 'We love art and will always work for its sake. And of course they must ask Sergei Pavlovitch to be director of the Marynsky now'. ~~When they arrived in Madrid Diaghilev was in Paris.~~

~~But~~ this time Diaghilev treated him like a friend. He burst into the lobby of the Ritz in Madrid and embraced ~~Nijinsky~~ him with great warmth, ~~and to~~ For Romola it

was like the reunion of friends who had never quarrelled. ~~been away from each other a few hours.~~ Diaghilev was his old self. They sat in a corner of the lounge and started ~~talking, mostly~~ chatting about recent events in Russia. They talked for hours. ~~And during~~ the next few days ~~they were~~ together. ~~nearly the whole time.~~ As for the South American tour Diaghilev seemed to brush that aside for the moment. He told Nijinsky, 'We open in Madrid at the Teatro Real, and then we will give some performances in Barcelona. Massine has composed some new ballets. I want you to look at them and give me your openion. Have you composed anything new? I want you to do so'. One day he introduced Picasso to them---he was little known at this time. Nijinsky was once more a member of Diaghilev's intimate circle---the élite. He said to Romola, 'You see? Sergei Pavolovitch is the same as ever. He'll be fair to me---let's give him a chance to prove it'.

They spent most of

According to Romola

Nijinsky did not like Parade. He told Diaghilev that it was 'an essay', not fit to be shown to the public in its unformed condition. 'It comes out of a desire to be modern', he said, 'but it is not felt, it is an artificially constructed choreography'. After a performance of Massine's Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur Nijinsky went to his dressing room and embraced him. He told Massine he thought Les Femmes a wonderful ballet, and looked forward to dancing Battista one day. ~~Himself.~~ They had a long talk, and Massine found him delightfully sympathetic. Romola was becoming increasingly nervous at this time, as Nijinsky was becoming ~~more~~ religious---~~and beginning to wonder if he should~~ He ate ~~eat~~ meat ~~or have~~ sexual intercourse independently of wanting a child. This she saw as the 'sinister' influence of two dancers in the company. ~~And~~ Soon she was seeing, behind this influence, ~~that of~~ the ubiquitous Diaghilev. ~~himself.~~ One day, in the semi-darkness of the theatre, she ~~saw~~ Diaghilev in conversation with one of the dancers. ~~talking to Diaghilev quietly~~ She recognised the 'mystical' dancer. They talked quietly, like ~~an~~ accomplices. 'I sensed now that Sergie Pavlovitch would rather annihilate Vaslav completely if he

proportionately

reluctantly

and wondered if

was justified.

could not own him both as an artist and as a man'. How Diaghilev could have annihilated ~~him~~ Nijinsky by turning him into a mystic and a vegetarian---how a man of Nijinsky's remarkable purity could have listened for hours on end to the persuasions of malevolent friends ~~she did not~~ only a thoroughly unmystical individual could have explained. ~~But what did become clear was that she~~ Romola was ~~still~~ terrified of Diaghilev. She even encouraged 'the Duchess of X' to fall in love with her husband ~~feeling~~ so as to have ~~that she needed~~ the support of another woman against a homosexual on the one hand and a couple of mystics on the other. ~~And~~ She provided her husband with as many diversions as possible--driving out to the Escorial, relying on every dinner and ~~accepting~~ invitations. Diaghilev's secretary, Drobetsky, hinted to her that her fears of Diaghilev ~~were~~ was well grounded, and ~~some~~ trouble would be coming ~~up~~ soon. The company moved to Barcelona, and Nijinsky took rooms in the same hotel as Diaghilev and Massine. He made love to the Duchess of X. One day at lunch Diaghilev brought up the subject of the South American tour. 'I'm not sure I want to go,' Nijinsky said. 'South America won't be a creative trip artistically' (Was this his or Romola's conclusion?) Diaghilev gave him a cold smile: 'But you have to go, you are under contract'. 'To whom?' Nijinsky asked: 'I have no contract'. Diaghilev ~~then~~ explained that Nijinsky had cabled his acceptance of the South American plan 'in principle' from Cleveland, and that in Spain a telegram was equivalent to a contract. ~~In Spain.~~ And Diaghilev laughed---'I shall force you to go!' Nijinsky decided he would rather leave the company at once, and told ~~Diaghilev~~ him so. ~~Just~~ As he and Romola were getting on the Madrid express two plainclothes policemen approached them: 'M. and Mme Nijinsky, will you please follow us? You are under arrest.' ~~And they~~ The policemen gave as their authority the governor of Catalonia, 'in the name of the king'. Diaghilev had ~~contracted~~ arranged with the authorities to ~~and had~~ have them stopped on the grounds of a breach of contract. Romola contacted the duke of Durcal in

He packed his bags.

n.p.

~~In~~ by plane Madrid, and within an hour they were released. ~~And~~ Nijinsky agreed to dance, after urgent pleas from the director of the Liceo theatre, who stood to lose his whole investment, having made a guarantee-arrangement with Diaghilev to the latter's advantage. Nijinsky's last performance was on June 30. A contract was drawn up by Romola's lawyer for South America, ~~and~~ She insisted that during the tour ~~Nijinsky~~ he be paid in gold dollars one hour before curtain-up at each performance. The penalty on his side for breaking the contract was to be 20,000 dollars. Diaghilev---not quite the devil Romola made him out to be, as he had the desperate job of keeping the company solvent in wartime (nor were the gold dollars to Nijinsky's detriment)---signed it in his drawing room. It was the last time they spoke together as friends---until the period of Nijinsky's madness. On July 4 Nijinsky's part of the company, with Grigoriev, sailed, and Diaghilev and Massine, with their sixteen dancers, went on working on the idea of a Spanish ballet.

The two friends spent delightful evenings in the Albaicin, the gypsy quarter of Granada, which they visited. They ~~would go~~ went to the Novedades café and drink manzanilla, together with a famous torero called Belmonte (for Massine was fascinated by the bull-fight---no doubt for its choreographic side and not its bestial ~~and senseless cruelty).~~ (ity). They would watch Felix Fernandez García, dancing, nervous and highly strung. ~~dance in that was~~ For Massine, a quite revolt-ionary ~~way.~~ Felix ~~went to Diaghilev and~~ told Diaghilev one evening ~~him that~~ he was ~~unhappy in his present job, and~~ A contract was drawn up. The boy was twenty-one at this time. He joined the company ~~and~~ in Barcelona and taught Massine the intricate foot and leg movements of flamenco---which was why in later years many ~~thousands of~~ people thought ~~were convinced that~~ Massine ~~was~~ Spanish in origin. ~~so convincingly did he dance.~~ Felix quickly taught him Spanish too. Indeed he was quick about everything---

The flamenco dance was

Tired of dancing in cafés and wanted to join the Russian ballet.

he could sing the difficult sequidilla and allegria songs while going through the ~~equally~~ difficult foot movements or zapateado. ~~The work, according to Massine,~~ The work put a terrific strain on Felix's nervous system and it was little wonder that he later went mad, ~~in London and spent the rest of his life in a mental home.~~ Diaghilev arranged a trip through Spain to cover Saragossa, Toledo, Salamanca, Burgos, Seville, Córdoba and Granada, with Massine, Felix and the polite and unassertive yet tensely compelling composer Manuel de Falla. In Granada they hired donkeys to reach the Alhambra and the gardens of the Generalife, ~~but~~ Diaghilev's collapsed ~~early~~ under his weight and he had to prod it into action again with his stick.

'Spanish'

The ballet was called Le Tricorne. Picasso did the settings but it was not produced until after the war---at the Alhambra theatre in London, on July 22 1919. Massine did everything to capture the native dances of Andalusia. He used a cine-camera, he organised parties and paid local dancers to perform for him. He went to obscure cafés where he heard there was dancing. The melody of the Sevillana in the second part of the ballet was actually derived from a 'mournful little tune' de Falla and ~~and Massine~~ heard while wandering round the Alhambra one afternoon. ~~It was~~ A blind old man was playing the guitar, ~~and~~ de Falla asked him to play the tune over and over again until he had mastered it.

Had another new ballet in mind and

~~At the same time~~ Diaghilev played for Massine some little-known pieces by Rossini which Respighi had shown him in Rome. ~~Rossini had~~ They were originally composed them for private performance ~~to~~ guests, but their gaiety so struck Massine that he had the brilliant idea of making 'a ballet in a toyshop'---it was to prove one of the Diaghilev Ballet's most superb works. ~~Some months later, when~~ and ~~Derain were walking through Leicester Square in London, Derain suggested the idea of a fight between the dolls and their purchases, and the ballet~~

before Rossini's

Gradually it was all pieced together into a rich and breathing design—

~~with~~ / ~~its~~ the quaint old shopkeeper in white drill and Panama hat, and his assistant with a spotted handkserchief hanging out of his pocket, and the thief who tries to rob the dolls of their gold, and the two old ldies with their parasols come to ~~p~~nspect the dolls, and the American family, ~~with two children~~, and the dolls representing court cards, and the Russian merchant with his four daughters in furs, and the dancing poodles, and the Can-Can dance. ~~all this was gradually pieced together into a rich and bustling design.~~ Cyril Beaumont was present at the first night of the / La Boutique Fantasque---~~again~~ given at the Alhambra in London, June 5 1919---and witnessed one of the wildest triumphs of the Russian Ballet. The theatre was packed to standing. Cecchetti's shopkeeper was 'benevolent and whimsical', ~~while~~ Gavrilov's assistant was 'quaint', ~~and~~ Mme Cecchetti as the Russian mechant's wife 'was particularly good when, in well simulated horror, she prudishly shrank from the unwelcome attentions of the Snob'. Of the dolls, Beaumont's favourites were Sokolova and Woizikovsky as the tarantella dancers (they were Italian 'peasant' dolls): they 'danced with a gusto---not to be seen nowadays---which made you long to joim them'. Vera Clark and Kremnev were the poodles, 'the feminine character of the one ~~was~~ well contrasted with the gruff masculine attributes of the other', / Vera Clark danced her brown poodle number in 3/4 time, with the most intricate steps; ~~she was~~ 'so light, so playful, so delightfully wanton'. The Can-Can dance was not that of the Bal Mabille but a clever choreographed version with only a touch of ~~coarseness~~ coarseness (Beaumont ~~disliked it~~ was a little shocked when Massine slipped to the ground and his partner whirled her leg over his head). Lopokova looked lovely in her pale blue blodice and white skirt trimmed with black lace and blue bows. Massine was dressed in black velvet, with curly black hair and dead-white make-up. The audience screamed 'Lopokova! Massine!' 'With the fall of the curtain the applause was

n.p

seventeen days before Le Tricorne on

and Massine had the male one light his leg on the American toy.

in Paris

literally defeaning.' Derain's set was a complete departure from those vivid 'barbaric' colours of the early Diaghilev sets: the doll's house had terracotta walls, and its big windows overlooked Nice harbour, backed by a kind of Douanier Rousseau landscape, all in soft colours. Bakst prepared designs for this ballet which Diaghilev disliked. He sent Massine from London, later in 1918, to meet Derain at his Paris studio and discuss with him what they wanted---'an unrealistic toyshop'. The young Massine felt that this was ruthless, but it did not surprise him. 'In the theatre there are no friends', Diaghilev was never tired of saying. Bakst's 'pre-war' style had lost its appeal. The tone now was less 'lavish splendour' than 'simplicity and rigid artistic control'. Bakst was almost mad with indignation.

Derain was so terrified of the first-night audience's cheers that he had to be dragged on to the stage. Through-

out the ballet applause ~~had~~ burst in continually. The audience was overwhelmed by so much humour and radiant joy, as dance after dance toppling over each other with unexpected freshness and variety. Massine took call after call, Lopokova was 'half-laughing, half-crying'. It was the first of many dozens of performances this century.

But that happened after the company's darkest problems had been solved. ~~After~~ when Nijinsky returned from South America Diaghilev took ~~his~~ her whole company to Portugal, where a revolution promptly broke out and marooned them in Lisbon. Diaghilev, Grigoriev, Massine and a Portuguese friend were walking back to their hotel after a performance ~~with Massine~~ when they heard firing and shouting. ~~Then~~ Some bombs exploded. They dashed into the hotel foyer and were told by the management to take refuge under the main staircase. They remained there for three days and three nights. ~~after which the Portuguese revolution ended.~~ The snow-white, pleated evening shirt of the Portuguese friend became steadily greyer ~~during those days~~, as smoke from ~~the firing~~ machine-gun fire and bombs filtered ~~seeped~~ in from the streets. As for Diaghilev, he was irritated rather than frightened. He had problems enough without unexpected revolutions. The rest of the company was scattered about the hotel. Felix locked himself in his room and almost starved to death. ~~And~~ Massine, delightfully and typically, occupied himself working out further sequences for La Boutique Fantasque. After that---with General Sidonio Paes running the country---Lisbon was in no mood for ballet, and the season was a flop. And the general was assassinated a year later. Nijinsky was no longer with the company. n.p.

He, ~~and~~ Romola ~~had~~ decided that he could no longer work for Diaghilev, ~~against whom~~ they ~~now had~~ filed a lawsuit for failing to pay the company's return fare from South America. ~~The couple~~ took a train straight through Spain and crossed the French frontier without contacting Diaghilev again. The accidents natural to any tour, such as rusty nails on the stage and falling scenery, had been attributed by Romola (but not, almost certainly, by Nijinsky) to Diaghilev's agents working to his orders. There was clearly nothing to be done on Diaghilev's side if a dancer's wife ~~had~~ developed a well-nigh obsessively suspicious attitude towards him. ~~Diaghilev simply could not have had a motive for trying to rid himself of the company's most money-making artiste.~~

The company returned to Barcelona, where they faced the hardest days yet. Diaghilev made frequent trips to Madrid, as he had ~~so often~~ taken trips to Paris before the war---to find money. Picasso and de Falla had joined the company again to work on Le Tricorne, while Massine rhearsed Tchernichéva, Nemchinova, Statkiewicz and Novak in Boutique, and Picasso made sketches of them in repose. The famous spy Mata Hari was staying at the Ritz hotel in Madrid when they were there. She approached Diaghilev and told him that she admired Stravinsky's music ardently, and could she become a member of the Russian Ballet? Diaghilev refused to consider it, and she wrote him pleading letters. ~~Later, on the train back to Barcelona, he was questioned by police about her.~~ It was an unsettled life, and his clothes were getting shabbier. He at last managed to get hold of a tour, with dates at Valladolid and even smaller towns, for March 1918. It was bitterly cold, but the audiences were appreciative, though their money failed to pay for the productions. The hotels were usually without heating, and the company sometimes slept in their overcoats and hats. They returned to Madrid to perform before the king again, then did a considerably warmer tour of the south---Valencia, Murcia, Alicante.

In Madrid again Diaghilev began telegraphic negotiations with Sir Oswald Stoll ~~in London~~ for another season ~~there~~. in London. These Madrid days were ones of near-starvation. Sokolova had a baby---~~it was a far from devilish~~ and Diaghilev ~~who~~ did everything to ~~get~~ find her food. He ~~found a~~ discovered a heap of foreign coins in one of his trunks, took them to ~~the~~ a brueau de change and with the pesetas bought medicine and food for the child. He visited Sokolova at least once a day. He himself was getting weak and thin. All hopes of a Barcelona season had fallen through. For a whole month he was in a tense and desperate state, sending telegrams to London every day. To make matters worse an impostor with a ballet group was touring Spain under his name. Robert and Sonia Delaunay, who had designed the costumes for the New York production of Cleopatra, did their best to keep ~~his spirits up~~ him cheerful in the evenings, but it was uphill work. The rest of the company, under Grigoriev, was in Barcelona waiting anxiously. At last Stoll's cable arrived, promising a season at the Coliseum, with an advance. Diaghilev almost broke down with the relief, and telegraphed the news to Barcelona at once. That was not the end of his troubles. News came that the French were refusing visas through France. He began rushing round the embassies--- the French, the Russian, the British---and in the end managed to get visas through the intervention of king Alfonso.

In August 1918 he and Massine travelled to England ahead of the company. At the French border two Spanish detectives in dark glasses boarded the train, looking rather sinister, and entered their compartment. They stood ~~looking~~ gazing at Diaghilev, and ~~then~~ began questioning him. Had he ever been associated with Mata Hari? The monocle dropped from his eye with amazement. Had she ever been a member of his company? Had she ever been given an audition? Had he received letters from her? Having left the letters in Madrid, he felt he could say no, and they seemed satisfied. They warned him to beware

Though the production was to be squeezed between music-hall acts like Lockhart's Elephants, with only one ballet an evening, and a revival at that. And it was to be Massine's debut in London.

of the lady in future, and left the train ~~again.~~

Massine found Paris grey and lifeless. ~~when they arrived.~~ The cafés were closed, the shops shuttered. A Big Bertha was sending over shells every now and then, and the ~~crash of the~~ explosions echoed and rumbled through the narrow streets. At the Hotel Meurice in the Rue de Rivoli José and Maria Sert were waiting for them. When they ~~all~~ left the hotel again later ~~and~~ the bombs were still exploding. There was a direct hit on a house near by in the Rue des Capucines just as they turned into it. Its glass rained down on the taxi roof. They went straight to the train and after another day's travel reached London, where the atmosphere was quite different. On Victoria station there was bustling activity everywhere, and people seemed excited to the point of frenzy. It was the same at Oxford Circus and Trafalgar Square. Everyone seemed to sense the approaching end of the war. It was the same story at the Savoy hotel and at the Coliseum theatre---an almost hysterical expectation. There were only four weeks to prepare and rehearse the Coliseum production, and above all to bring the company up to peacetime levels. In recent years it had dwindled to forty dancers, while in 1909 it had been fifty-five, in 1911 as many as eighty-three. ~~Diaghilev~~ He recruited English girls and Russianised their names--- Murray to Muravieva, Grant to Grantzeva, and Thomas to Istomina. Cecchetti had once more to drill a new troupe into being. Diaghilev complained about lighting facilities at the Coliseum. He naturally hated to see his dancers waiting for music-hall artists to clear the stage for them, but it was better than starving. And the clown performing was the great Grock. They enjoyed watching this saddest of all funny men from the wings.

Amd the production opened at the height of an influenza epidemic. The six-foot policeman who stood on duty at the front of the house died of it. Cecchetti spared no one at his Shaftesbury Avenua studio, and no doubt his dancers ~~they~~ sweated the flu germs out. Diaghilev

Cyril Beaumont noticed that Diaghilev's lounge suit and Homburg hat were 'distinctly shabby'.

had had too many frights during the war, including the daily fright of ~~the~~ ~~threatened~~ starvation, for this to bother him much, especially as the season was to last six months. Les Femmes on opening night, with Lopokova, Woizikovsky and Idzikowski, was a great triumph and set the tone for the rest of the season, ~~though~~ everyone in the company had been ~~very~~ nervous about how the English would take to a highly stylised Venetian work. According to Osbert Sitwell, who was in the house, Lopokova won new devotees for the Russian Ballet ~~in every part of the house.~~ with her dancing. Audience feeling for her was of a tender and intimate kind---~~for her miraculous~~ she combined ~~combination of~~ a touching virtuosity with youthful awkwardness. ~~She had been hardly more than a child in Diaghilev's second Paris season, when she had fainted at the railway station on to piles of luggage with excitement. Karsavina said of her that she had a unique blend of eagerness and naivetè.~~ Within a month she was the company's most celebrated ballerina, though Diaghilev lost her for some years to an American impresario who cleverly snatched her away. 'Whether she danced or talked,' Karsavina ~~wrote~~ said about her, 'her whole frame quivered with excitement, she bubbled all over.'

While in London Diaghilev gave an interview to the Daily Mail in which he attacked German composers, among them Beethoven, Brahms and Schumann, as 'dummies' whose work was 'poison gas'. He enjoyed this kind of thing. He added that England was artistically 'Bochefied', and added, 'The war was nothing else but a struggle between two cultures, and this struggle is not concluded by the victory of arms.' His choice of Spanish and Italian subjects, with French artists and composers collaborating, was a definite cultural choice: he seemed to see in the opposite, monumental type of art a dangerous inflexibility---madness at one end and logic at the other---which shut the door on that ~~ridiculous and~~ defiantly humanistic 'fusion' of ~~then~~ the ideal ballet performance.

Successful as the London season was, Diaghilev could not get used to conditions at the Coliseum. The season was ~~They were~~ still on ~~dancing~~ when the Armistice came on November 11. Diaghilev, Massine and Osbert Sitwell dined together at Sitwell's house in Swan Walk that evening, and afterwards ~~they went~~ walked to Trafalgar Square ~~together~~ to ~~mix~~ mix with the over-excited crowds. Like all artists after great massacres, Massine was 'strangely unmoved'. He realised all of a sudden what a tremendous role Diaghilev had played in his life during the last few years, ~~how~~ and how courageously he had bolstered his ~~and every other dancer's~~ morale, ~~keeping them going~~ while he himself got weaker and weaker, and had urged him ~~plunged Massine into~~ feverish activity as dancer and choreographer, as if to hide from him the true facts of their predicament. And perhaps this helped Massine to see, as he stood with Diaghilev in Trafalgar Square, that what the crowd was celebrating

e.g. the excitement ~~and madness~~.

was not the end of war but that of civilisation.

From the Coliseum the company moved on to the Alhambra, and the new season opened on 30 April 1919 with Les Sylphides, Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur and Petrouchka. It lasted until the end of July. At least there was now money. Diaghilev bought himself a completely new wardrobe and appeared in the theatre wearing a new bowler hat, a new suit with dove-grey spats, a new overcoat and a stick that looked ~~most~~ expensive. He walked backstage and ~~the~~ his dancers crowded round him, his 'children', fingering his clothes and making admiring noises, while he smiled proudly. The reception of La Boutique Fantasque, set in Naples in the 1860s, was perhaps more expected now that the English had shown their appreciation of the other Italian piece, Les Femmes. But it was wonderfully exhilarating after those war-years just the same. The Times adored 'this mixture of childlike gaiety and ballet-bouffe mime and dance'. Roger Fry acclaimed the Derain set, and called him a major painter. That artist now began to exhibit in London, at the Mansard gallery. This was how Diaghilev wanted it: his décors must be art, not 'scenic art'!

A few days after the opening Lopokova vanished. The headlines in an evening newspaper was the first most of the company knew about it. Massine had just one and a half hours to find a substitute, and chose Vera Nemchinova, who gave an excellent performance. Lopokova returned a few days later, offering no explanation. Cyril Beaumont, ~~who was~~ a close friend of ~~Lopokova's,~~ hers, had noticed a cooling of her relations with her husband Randolfo Barocchi, partly due to overwork on her part, ~~and~~ partly the strain of ~~the~~ war. She would sometimes lean back in her chair in her dressing room, before the make-up mirror, and sigh, 'How tired I am!' One night---Thursday, July 10---she ~~had~~ felt she had enough, and left her house to stay with some Russian friends, saying she would never dance again. She was not alone in feeling the strain n.p.

after months of a poor diet. Later in the year, during the company's autumn season at the Empire theatre, Idzikowsky staged another 'disapperance'. He went to Cyril Beaumont's ballet shop and watched him printing as the evening wore on to performance-time. Beaumont reminded him that he ought to be leaving for the Empire, but the dancer said he preferred watching a man print a book. In the end, as it got past nine, Beaumont said, 'I'd better tell Grigoriev where you are'. He went to ~~the stage-door of~~ the Empire and found Diaghilev restlessly pacing ~~on~~ the stage. 'Have you seen Idzikowsky?' Diaghilev asked him. 'Yes,' Beaumont said, 'he's at my shop'. 'What the devil is he doing there?' Diaghilev snapped. 'Printing', Beaumont said. 'Printing!' Diaghilev shouted, opening his mouth and screwing his eyeglass into his eye, with a gasp of mingled rage and astonishment'. For this 'disapperance' there was punishment--- ~~Diaghilev ordered that~~ in future all Idzikowsky's roles were to be doubled, not a comfortable thing for a principal dancer.

By this time Karsavina had rejoined the company and found no difficulty at all in adjusting herself to the 'new taste' of ballets like Parade. At the same time she was a little afraid for Diaghilev---that he was moving away from the origins of ballet, really from its meaning, with a certain 'eclecticism'. 'Though it required a great detachment at times from my own personal sentiments,' she said, 'I could follow Diaghilev with a clear conscience in a difficult task, perhaps even with more satisfaction than in works to which I am naturally

suited. But there I had to stop.' But why stop? For Diaghilev stopping would have made his whole enterprise, from the beginning, meaningless. Indeed, it would have made even the classical dancing, for which Karsavina and most of the other great dancers of the time were 'naturally' suited, stale and finally unwanted by the very audiences which were enraptured by them. Art must evolve---there is no other way of keeping even its roots and traditions alive. The modern audience, delighted by a Tchaikowsky pas de deux choreographed in the traditional style, would simply not be there without ballets like Parade and Le Tricorne, not to say Faune and Le Sacre, quite apart from their value. Delight is never enough on its own. By always concentrating on evolution---even at the expense of artistic value---Diaghilev made it possible for Maurice Béjart ballets to be conceived half a century after his death. Had he 'stopped', ballet would have stopped, even classical ballet.

Karsavina got a tremendous ovation, and it was planned that she would dance the miller's wife in Le Tricorne. Felix---also in London---would teach her the Spanish steps. Picasso had joined them too, and a studio was hired for him in Covent Garden where he could work on the Tricorne set.

Karsavina's part in that ballet rouesd the audience to great excitement---and this had the effect of making her dance with a power she had hardly known in herself before. Thus, unwilling as she might be to take modern ~~parts~~ roles, they played their part in the evolution of her dancing.

As for Felix, he never got beyond the corps de ballet, apart from his purely teaching role for Le Tricorne. He simply could not adapt himself to the classical style, though he wore himself out night and day with practice at the barre. A few weeks after the opening of Tricorne, which he must have seen as so deeply his own work, and for which he did not get sufficient credit on the hoardings, he was found in the middle of the night dancing in front of the altar at St Martins-in-the Fields, just down the road from the Coliseum. He had thought the red light meant a brothel, and had smashed a window and climbed in. He was taken to a mental home at Epsom, and never recovered his sanity. He died there in 1941.

Between the Alhambra and the Empire seasons there was a short holiday for Diaghilev and Massine in Italy. Massine studied the commedia dell'arte scenarios and began to feel dissatisfied with his choreography, which needed 'new breadth'. The Pulcinella ballet was forming in his mind, and he bought a pulcinella mask from an old actor in Naples which had once belonged to Antonio Petito in the eighteenth century. Diaghilev suggested Pergolesi music for this, and they went together to S. Pietro-a-Maiella to search among the Pergolesi manuscripts. They found fifteen unpublished pieces, and Diaghilev gave them to Stravinsky to orchestrate. Back in London they gave a gala performance before King Alfonso of Spain, the Shah of Persia and King George V. It looked as if fortune was set to shine on the company again, especially as it was preparing for a season at the Opéra, with premières of Tricorne and Boutique.

There were intense preparations during these new months for other new ballets, in a post-war orgy of ideas. Diaghilev wanted one made out of Stravinsky's symphonic poem Chant du Rossignol, and asked Matisse to do the set. Massine went to Nice to meet the artist, who lived in a penthouse. One of the best rooms was

almost entirely ~~taken up~~ filled by a giant birdcage with hundreds of exotic birds. ~~from every part of the world.~~ Matisse was naturally delighted by the Rossignol idea. Idzikowsky danced the mechancial nightingale, Karsavina the real one, while Sokolova danced Death. In February they were all in Rome, and Diaghilev asked Picasso to design Pulcinella, with an abstract décor. At the end of May (1920) Le Astuzie Femminile, the Cimarosa opera, was to be performed in Paris with a company of Italian singers. Cimarosa had once served at the court of Catherine 11 as chapel master, and the divertissement at the end of the opera was for this reason called Ballo Russo. It enchanted Diaghilev, and he thought Massine had mishandled the choreography. They quarrelled rather violently. Like so many of Diaghilev's most gifted associates Massine wished afterwards that he had said nothing, because Diaghilev was great enough to be heard with respect at all times, especially in an artistic matter. There was no question, yet, of a break between them. Massine had been ballet master for six years, and ~~Diaghilev may have felt that he was running otu of ideas.~~ This was the usual preliminary of a rupture —the favourite began to feel outside the warm glow of ~~his~~ the master's admiration. Yet Diaghilev's ~~his~~ loyalty was tremendous. One day at the Opéra Karsavina was trying to find her way through the endless identical corridors when she heard Diaghilev hurrying behind her: 'Tata! I've been looking for you everywhere. Today is the tenth anniversary of the Firebird, we must celebrate!'

In 1920 the company appeared at La Scala

in Milan, in a not very successful season, and then returned, in a restless and exhausted state, to Monte-carlo. On the day it was due to leave again for Paris there was a train-strike and Diaghilev was in despair. But one train left, with sleepers, which they managed to take. During the night it was derailed and lurched over to one side. Massine woke up and found a bottle of mineral water pouring out its contents from the top berth on to an Englishman on a lower one, and heard the Englishman call out, 'I say, could there be a leak?'

The dancers, including Karsavina, ~~together with Diaghilev and Matisse~~, managed to crawl out of their compartments, and found that they were stranded in a small place called Bar le Duc, a three-hour train-ride from Paris. Apparently strikers had cut the railway line. The company ~~were~~ was taken to ~~the capital~~ Paris by road, and the season opened on 8 May with a charity performance. On 15

n.p.

May Pulcinella was given for the first time. Massine danced Pulcinella, Karsavina Pimpinella, with Tchernicheva as Prudenza and Nemchinova as Rosetta. The theme was taken from one of the Neapolitan scenarios Massine had found, called The Four Pulcinelle, and piecing together fragments had not been an easy job for any of the three collaborators—Picasso, Stravinsky or Massine. Most of the work was done in Paris, and there were a continual good many rows. Also the costumes had failed to come up to Diaghilev's expectations. The musical rearrangements sometimes upset him. Stravinsky was often horrified when he saw the steps Massine had set to his music---which was arriving in the choreographer's studio piece by piece as it was written. Stravinsky felt that Massine's vigorous dancing suited a larger orchestra than could possibly be used for Pergolesi, and so the choreography had to be constantly modified and restrained. But, probably because of the arduous collaboration, Pulcinella was a totally harmonious work, product, and for Stravinsky this was one of Massine's finest choreographic achievements. Towards the end of the same season Diaghilev asked Massine to re-choreograph Stravinsky's Sacre de Printemps, and Stravinsky could now admit that he had not been entirely happy with Nijinsky's work. The new projects toppled over each other. In the autumn, during another English tour, Massine began rehearsing Sokolova as the Chosen Maiden in Sacre du Printemps, which had its first performance in the new version at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées in Paris on 15 December. Matisse went to Massine consulted with Stravinsky before he began starting work on this, and they agreed on the basic principles: which should govern the new version: Nijinsky, with the smallest knowledge of music and choreographic technique, had 'followed the time', and slowed up the time when it became impossible. Already Matisse Massine was working towards his basic principles of harmony and counterpoint, as the key to choreographic composition, so that and he could make a

bridge over Stravinsky's broken rhythms which was entirely to the composer's satisfaction. Many people still preferred Nijinsky's version, finding Massine's version too 'mechanical' or 'lacking in the warmth and pathos of the original'. But others found it 'brilliantly' different. Massine's work was not easy. Unlike Nijinsky he was a born choreographer, and had the kind of intelligence necessary for moulding intuition into knowledge and authority. His jerky movements were in contrast to the sustained line of his concepts, never satisfied with short four- or five-bar developments as even Fokine was, fascinated a great many, and seemed a climax of the Russian Ballet's efforts. He was

Yet the London eason was not a success. Diaghilev had trouble with the Covent Garden management, after there were serious gaps in the stalls. Though he paid his dancers, the production had to go into liquidation and the last performance was cancelled. The masses of flowers sent to the theatre for the last curtain-calls were diverted to the Savoy hotel. He was owed money by the management and a court-case followed which dragged on for years: in the end he was repaid part of the sum. Pulcinella was a great success. Karsavina was dancing as well as Tchernicheva, Nemchinova, Sokolova, Woizikovsky. Cyril Beaumont found Massine's dancing remarkable for the way in which he made certain steps 'expressive in themselves', and 'it was extraordinary to observe how, by the tilt of his head and the angle of his body, and by the varying speed and variety of his movements, he was able to suggest his thoughts and emotions' (that is, not by direct mime).

Diaghilev was obliged to return to Paris. Not until January 1921 was there to the another date---at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome. He had to borrow money for his own needs. Luckily he had a new friend in Gabrielle Chanel, and of course Misia Sert was still behind him, scheming and whispering on his behalf. An English tour was fixed up which proved one of the biggest

disasters yet. One of the managers escaped with the week's receipts, and the company was on the point of being disbanded. Gabrielle Chanel came to his rescue with a loan ~~that~~ which some describe as large and others ~~(like Serge Lifar) was~~ as only a few thousand francs. However much ~~Whatever~~ it was, it got things going again. Mlle Chanel had a particular admiration for Stravinsky, and there was talk of ~~reviving~~ putting on Sacre (once more). Some of the company's now tatty costumes were renewed. Walter Nouvel had now joined the company again from Finland, where Diaghilev had sent him money to help him through family difficulties after the war. At Victoria station, where the two old friends met, Nouvel found Diaghilev 'a little stouter' but 'gay and pleased with life, and more energetic than ever'. Now Rolf de Maré was managing the Champs Elysées theatre in Paris for his Swedish ballet company, and put Jacques Hébertot--- a friend of Nouvel's---in charge there. The Swedish ballet happened not to be ready to take up its date, and Hébertot suggested a three-week season of Russian Ballet to fill the gap. Sacre, in its Massine version, was seen again.

It was in Rome that the row between Diaghilev and Massine came to a head. There had already been ~~increasing~~ a number of scenes ~~between them.~~ Now Vera Savina and Massine started an affair. No doubt neither of them made it a secret. For some time now Massine had been restive--- for new scenes and new faces. Diaghilev really did no more than oblige him by parting company. One day he summoned Vera Savina to his room and told her that he wished her to concentrate on her dancing and not on her affair with Massine. She must give up one or the other. If she chose dancing he would mould her into his leading ballerina. He asked her to dine with him several times in the next few days, and at the end of January he suggested drawing up a contract in which his conditions were specified. It threw her into a distressing state of indecision. But in

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the end she chose Massine. In the spring Massine asked her to marry him, and the tension between him and Diaghilev ~~mounted.~~ became unbearable.

One day Grigoriev took Massine aside and told him that he had been dismissed from the company. Although ~~the~~ he ~~dancer~~ had been wanting nothing else for some months it still came as a shock. ~~to him.~~ Massine ~~He~~ felt frightened and confused, and very much alone. It was something to sever yourself from a man like Diaghilev: there was no telling how pale life ~~would~~ might seem afterwards. And he always regretted that final quarrel. The actual reasons---both choreographic and intimate---were not important. ~~They~~ The two men had been associated ~~with each other~~ together for five years---it seemed enough, for the time being. Lately new ideas had ~~begun to~~ come more slowly. Yet Massine blamed himself, not Diaghilev: 'I couldn't have been right!' he said something like ~~thirty-four~~ forty-five years later, 'I must have been wrong to quarrel with such a man!' And as to Diaghilev disapproving of his marriage--- as he had disapproved of Nijinsky's---'Well, even that---yes, such a great man must be permitted ~~such~~ these liberties!---even to the point of disapproving of marriage---you see, he did so very much for us!'

Diaghilev had once said of him, 'Massine understands everything from just half a word---one day he'll be one of us!' And now he was. He was now 'formed', as Nijinsky had been formed. He was strong enough to fly on his own---at the age of twenty-four.

~~Vera Savina and~~ Massine ~~were~~ married Vera Savina some weeks later and stayed on in Rome, where they were approached by Walter Mocchi, the Italian director of the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Massine ~~began to~~ formed a company of his own and was even able later on to draw some of Diaghilev's finest dancers ~~away~~ from him, after the failure of ~~his~~ the grand Sleeping ~~Beauty~~ Princess enterprise in London. Lopokova, Sokolova, Ninette de Valois, Woizikovky and Slavinsky joined him.

It was rare that a dancer left Diaghilev without continuing to benefit from him.

8

The Last Trip to Venice

Poverty was a great shock for Diaghilev when it hit him again. The fact was that post-war audiences did not finance lavish productions as the pre-war ones had done. The same happened in the theatre, and Bernard Shaw was among those who noticed the decline in box office receipts, due to the end of the abonnement system which had been a kind of patronage. Popular as it was becoming, ballet proved too expensive at its production-end for even capacity houses to bring in the recouping margin. The smallest gap in a large theatre like Covent Garden need only be repeated a handfull of nights for the management to start looking worried. However Misia Sert or Gabrielle Chanel 'whispered' for him now, the compact 'society' of pre-war years was no longer there, or rather it was in liquidation.

Massine's departure, however much Diaghilev may have felt the need for it, was a worse blow to him in a certain sense than that of Nijinsky. Any rupture of an intimate kind was a blow to his resilient yet strangely fragile nervous system. In business he could be gruff and make a show of ruthlessness. In love the show was less convincing. And his new loneliness always tortured him. For in these post-war years he was more alone than ~~before in any case.~~ he had ever been. The World of Art family was no longer there. That is, he could call on Bakst or Benois any time he wished, but the family atmosphere was ~~not there.~~ gone. Nowadays

N.B. Grünberg had been killed in the war.

his will to show art as an evolving process was a lone one. He worked with Picasso, Derain, Braque, Utrillo, di Chirico---they were simply the new artists, they had established themselves, and he allowed them to bring their influence to the ballet. In music it was Darius Milhaud, Poulenc, Eric Satie, de Falla, Auric. Many of his old collaborators, especially the Russians, who perhaps felt that he had ceased to be essentially Russian, ~~began to feel~~ thought that nowadays he was falling over himself to be up-to-date: it was enough, they said, to tell ~~him~~ Diaghilev that he was being 'old fashioned' if ~~he~~ his dislike ~~of~~ a ~~something~~ new idea to get his immediate approval. But ~~the fact was that~~ post-war audiences were different from pre-war ones. The Russian Ballet in the pre-war sense no longer existed, precisely as the Tsarist régime no longer existed. Society had undergone fearfully turbulent changes, and was still doing so: in that sense the First World War led into the Second World War, and the restless years in between them were ~~both~~ simply an aftermath and a preparation. This turbulence was in Diaghilev's work. He recognised it in the artists he now commissioned. Sometimes he deliberately revived tradition, to make the new stand out all the ~~sounder for the lesson:~~ more sharply: The Sleeping ~~Beauty~~ Princess was such a revival.

He now found himself without a choreographer. Woizikovski was not enthusiastic, and Sokolova was simply not good enough. The work fell---it was a matter of urgency---into the hands of Larionov, who worked closely with Stravinsky. It was partly desperation, too, that made Diaghilev engage a Spanish troupe for a ballet called Cuadro Flamenco, ~~against~~ with Picasso's setting. Lopokova returned to the company for a revival of Firebird. And there was a new ballet, Chout. This was the Larionov-Slavinsky work, and proved something of a flop. The music---folk tunes and jazz---was by Prokoviev, and Larionov ~~also~~ designed a startlingly colourful set which Cyril Beaumont, who saw the ballet in London, thought the best part of the production. As a whole,' ~~Beaumont~~ he felt, 'the choreography was disconnected and lacked design'. It

clearly would not work to have painters as ballet-masters.

Dates followed one ~~another~~ another unfailingly, but it was a ~~day-to-day~~ hand-to-mouth existence. There was not the breadth of the old days---neither the long seasons, booked far ahead, nor the money for pre-production costs. These days you snatched what you could get, at almost any size of theatre! In 1921 there was a Spanish tour, ~~with~~ In Madrid the king of Spain attended every performance, ~~in Madrid.~~ In Seville Diaghilev met C.B.Cochran, the London impresario, and a contract was drawn up for a season at the Prince's theatre. This was in Easter Week. The company then travelled to Paris, taking in a one-week season ~~in~~ at Lyons on the way. In Paris the Gaieté Lyrique had been engaged through Astruc. Though ~~his~~ the Spanish dancers were liked, especially the lovely Maria Dalbaicin, then under twenty, ~~it~~ was felt to be foreign to the Diaghilev Ballet. When the company arrived in London ~~for its Prince's theatre season, with the same repertoire,~~ one of those little incidents occurred which meant a great deal to Diaghilev: a black cat walked across the stage. ~~For many this is the height of good luck, for Diaghilev~~ it meant ~~was~~ disastrous. And as it happened Cochrane lost over five thousand pounds.

~~Diaghilev~~ He had found a new secretary in Paris. During the Gieté Lyrique season Soudeikine happened to be painting the portrait of a seventeen-year-old Russian boy called Boris Kochno. He ~~decided to give him the commission of going to see~~ asked Kochno to visit Diaghilev on his behalf: ~~Kochno~~ he was to suggest the revival of Salomé at the Opéra. Soudeikine told the boy exactly what to say, and even supplied him with the answers to questions which he supposed Diaghilev would ask. At ten o'clock on the morning of February 27 1921 Kochno arrived at the Hotel Scribe and asked to see Diaghilev. The porter told him that Diaghilev had not been staying at the hotel for years, but would

probably be found at the Continental. So Kochno went along th the Continental. There, to his astonishment, the hall porter gave him the number of Diaghilev's room, after glancing up at the clock and without even asking his name. It was his lucky morning. Diaghilev was expecting someone to call at precisely that time, and contrary to precedent (Diaghilev always refused to see strangers) he had told the porter to send the visitor up without announcing him. Diaghilev's valet met Kochno at the door, and asked him to wait in the corridor a moment. Then Diaghilev came out and quickly walked towards him, apologising for the delay. He walked the boy towards the hotel's Turkish salon. There they sat down. Kochno went through his speech, which he had never really mastered, and at the end he abruptly stopped. Diaghilev had clearly heard nothing. He simply sat there chewing his tongue with thought. Then he seemed to rouse himself from a deep sleep and murmured, 'How old are you?' Kochno told him. Diaghilev began asking him questions about the Soviet Union and the effects of the Revolution (Kochno had just come from st Petersburg). He listened to the boy's replies closely, then a dream seemed to take hold of him, and he began to gaze over Kochno's head, quite lost, his monocle fallen from his eye. They sat there for nearly three hours. At the end Diaghilev took him to the door and said, 'We will meet again.' A few days later Boris Kochno became his personal secretary, and left with him and Stravinsky for Spain.

In the suite

social

Diaghilev had always wanted to present a full Tchaikowsky evening, and he felt that London was an ideal place for it. And partly he wished to regain a large audience with a spectacle that was not outstandingly modern. He thought of Aurora's Wedding, on which Tchaiwkowsky had worked closely with Petipa. It had been produced in 1890 in a lavish Marynsky production with Carlotta Branza as Princess Aurora and Enrico Cecchetti as Bluebird. Diaghilev was anxious to see

not but provided with new numbers,
it re-choreographed and through Walter Nouvel began
negotiating with Bronia Nijinska, who had managed to get
out of the Soviet Union that same year. He also thought
of an engaging publicity-coup: Branza herself was then (Carlotta)
living in Paris, and he signed her on to play the wicked
fairy Carabosse. ~~And~~ He drew up contracts ~~for~~ with Wilzak,
Schollar, Spessivstseva, Egorova, Trefilova and Vladimirov.
After endless arguments Bakst agreed to do the setting.
~~The~~ Wedding was to be as lavish as the original production, and Diaghilev's
~~his~~ most expensive venture yet. A contract was signed
with Oswald Stoll for a season at the Alhambra, on which
large sums of money were to be advanced, repayable out
of ~~the~~ box office receipts. ~~But~~ Inevitable the production began to h. p.
cost more than ~~the budget had foreseen~~. Also Bakst
delayed. There were more arguments. Bakst, still
smarting from what he felt to be Diaghilev's earlier
infidelity, insisted that he should also be given the design
of Stravinsky's forthcoming opera Mavra. Should Dia-
ghilev not give him Mavra ~~Bakst~~ he was to be paid double
for the ~~Tchaikowsky~~. They screamed at each other
in Bakst's Paris apartment. The painter dashed in and
out of the room applying cold compresses to his head.
~~And~~ In the end Diaghilev signed. Then he told Bakst
that he had no intention of honouring it. But Bakst
had got what he wanted, and the work went forward. First h. p.
night was postponed many times, and the Alhambra proved
itself inferior backstage ~~than~~ to the Marynsky, for the
enchancted forest refused to grow even on the première.
Only creaking was heard---~~and~~ the forest stood still.
Diaghilev sobbed afterwards. And some date his physical decline
from that evening. The truth was that he was already
a sick man, and turned fifty. He began to look diff-
erent. ~~He~~ His face had always worn a certain tired look ~~on his~~
~~face~~---dispelled only by Italy. Now it seemed to dig
into his skin, and circle his eyes. The Sleeping
Princess, was a triumph despite the first-night mishaps.
There were capacity houses. The press was favourable.
But then the houses inexplicably began to fall off, at least
enough to make Diaghilev's production-costs seem
foolhardy now. During rehearsals he had not simply not

understood Stoll's horror of his overspending. ~~more than he had estimated.~~ The season had to close at the beginning h.p. of February. The vast cast had to be paid; there were between thirty and forty ~~principal~~ dancers, some of them doubling up, apart from the corps de ballet. Yet the ~~entire~~ evening was a delight. And it had all been done with such care. Diaghilev had as usual rehearsed the lights interminably. He disregarded the mounting overtime pay, and the fact that backstage staff liked to eat, and went on as usual until ~~he had~~ everything ~~right---until dawn if necessary.~~ worked to his satisfaction. He had edited this old ballet with infinite care, trimming it to the modern taste, ~~of his audiences,~~ (which he took to be his own). h.p. ~~taste.~~ Diaghilev 'seemed to feel instinctively what was good and what was bad', Cyril Beaumont said of these rehearsals, 'and when he was preparing the Belle---as he always referred to the ballet---for production, he did not hesitate to remove some of the weaknesses of the original version.' It was during these rehearsals that he ordered the gold braid to be cut off Vladimirov's superb tunic, and shortened the skirt, so as to facilitate his elevation, though the tailor almost wept. The Sleeping Princess was in fact the climax of his living role in the ballet. Deft cutting is perhaps the most difficult art of all, especially in the theatre. A sluggish scene, about to be thrown out altogether, can often with masterful cutting become the most dramatic scene of all, a key to the rest of a production.

In Serge Lifar's possession there used to be Diaghilev's notes on The Triumph of Neptune, showing the meticulous care he gave to every detail of a production: 'Scene V (Fleet Street). Cut score in first part, and lengthen 'jig'...Journalists have quills behind ears...Two large shawls for both women... Add two wings and introduce six flying fairies (two new costumes), sprinkling snow... Scene V11 (Dance of Goddess) Cut music... Scene 1X... green spot for

clowns and later white---stronger---for journalists and sailor... Scene X1 (Neptune) musical cuts at the end of the pas d'action?... Cuts in "Matelotte".'

The original sum guaranteed by Oswald Stoll for The Sleeping Princess was £10,000. During production Diaghilev made a further call for £5000. When he had spent that he asked for another £5000. The budget thus doubled itself, and Stoll's estimate of probable box office returns was rendered dangerously close to

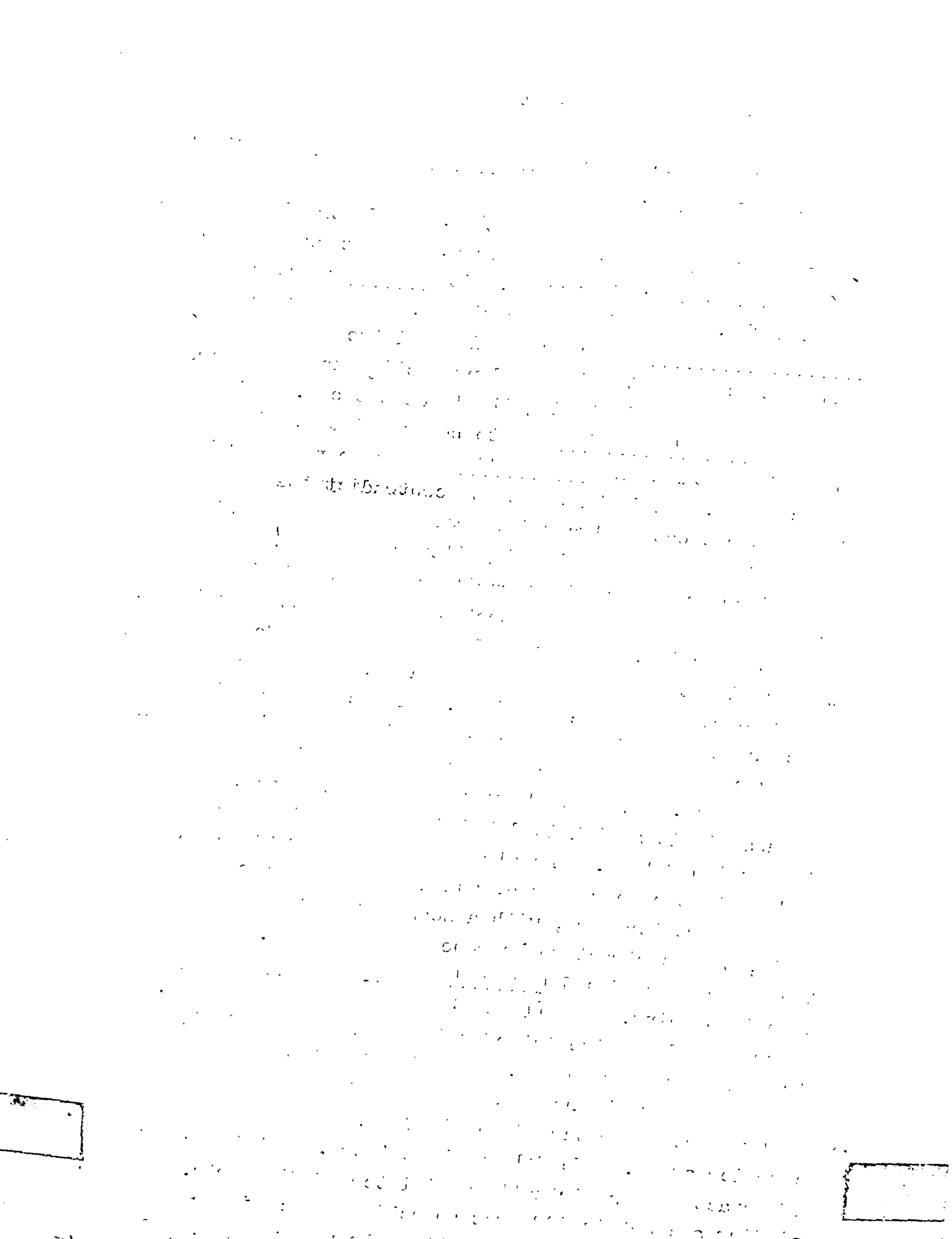
break-even point. It only needed a few slack evenings to plunge the production into a deficit. It was far more this that toppled the production than London's failure to support it. Like Edwardes years before, Diaghilev's present London man-of-all~~-~~work, Edwin Evans, concluded that he had no business sense whatsover. (This was not true. Diaghilev ~~He~~ had a great deal of business-sense. Only he did not give a damn for ~~it.~~ money. ~~Money~~ was simply not ~~an~~ important ~~matter~~ for him, and he had no time for people who disliked losing it.

He managed to borrow £1000 from a millionaire, but there was nothing left to pay the company with. He dashed off to Paris, leaving Nouvel to look after the last week of the season (with the dancers threatening a strike). Somehow they were paid off, and Nouvel managed to join him. They had no money for meals. Diaghilev sold a present from Lady Ripon, a pearl stud. Another admirer of Stravinsky (now ~~usually at~~ perhaps Diaghilev's ~~side~~ closest collaborator) came forward and paid the company—Princess Edmond de Polignac. It was a close shave. ~~And~~ The Sleeping Princess was perhaps Diaghilev's finest production, in terms of craftmanship and completeness, ~~too:~~ for it gave a resumé of everything the Russian Ballet had been.

His new protégé, Boris Kochno, was quick to become 'one of the family', responsible for the company's libretti. He it was who collaborated with Stravinsky in the preparation ~~for~~ of Mavra, and wrote most of the books for the company's ballets between 1923 and 1929. ~~the year of Diaghilev's death.~~ He was not liked by everyone; among other things he ~~and~~ would tutoyer Diaghilev in front of the company. ~~For~~ Diaghilev also entrusted him with the general supervision of the productions: here he might have ~~be~~ been accused of an excessive belief in youth---yet he showed a certain instinct too, as Kochno, still under twenty, knew how to make himself feared, ~~and~~ He was regarded by ~~most of~~ the dancers as ~~the one~~ Diaghilev's ~~had chosen as his~~ chosen 'suceessor', now that he himself was becoming more and more aloof---not simply frpm the company's affairs but from ballet altogether.

He did not after all give Mavra to Bakst, and finally lost an old friend. But the Bakst décors belonged to the pre-war years, in his eyes. And Stravinsky supported him in his choice of Survage for the settings. The season at the Opéra was not a great success, with Renard choregraphed by Nijinska, the music by Stravinsky. Also the loss of The Sleeping Princess was a great disappointment to the Opéra management: the settings and production material were held in London against Diaghilev's debt there. The shorter Aurora's Wedding had to be substituted, with Benois's costumes for Le Pavillon and some new ones by Gontcharova. And that, just to prove how untiringly impish the theatre is, proved one of the most successful ballets on the Diaghilev repertoire.

Since London was temporarily closed to him he accepted a tough tour to Marseilles, Geneva, Biarritz, Bordeaux and Belgium. The dates were coming too fast to make new ideas (rarely present to over-pressed minds) possible. The company---its dancers and its directorate---was getting stale, and Diaghilev began to look for some way of establishing it in one place. Montecarlo was the obvious choice, as his associations with it dated from the beginnings of the Russian Ballet. He already had part of his company on loan to the opera house there, and now he suggested making this the greater part, with a season for himself every April, on a contract to be renewed every year. The terms were agreed and Les Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo came into being. Still he did not buy a house there. He continued to live out of suitcases, as he had lived for fourteen years or more. But it did give him the breathing space he needed, and something of his earlier mellow serenity returned to his face, as he became a



→ with royal portraits painted), Picasso, and a Palais des Beaux Arts ~~de Monte Carlo~~ in the theatre de Monte Carlo (then a variety theatre), the remodelled by Braque into exhibition hall, hosts an annual festival of the arts. The Prince approved — the bureaucrats (the Société des Bains de Mer) did not. And there the plan ——

courtier again. He felt at home. At the court of Monaco he was virtually a minister of the fine arts. Finding a court in 1923 was quite an achievement. It had the theatrical atmosphere he was used to, and, being small, was relatively uncorrupt, like a Mediterranean Weimar. ~~In the same year~~ He tried to found an arts centre there. He visualised a Museum of Modern Art, with royal portraits painted by Picasso, and a Palais des Beaux Arts at the Théâtre de Monte Carlo (then a variety theatre), which was to be remodelled by Braque into exhibition halls, to house an annual festival of the arts. The Prince approved---the bureaucrats (the Société des Bains de Mers) did not. And there the plan ended.

He temporarily lost Cecchetti, who accepted an invitation to become director of the dancing schools at La Scala, Milan. For some years now he had been living in London, but found the climate more than he could take. Nijinska told Diaghilev of some young dancers she had been training in Kiev, and in January 1923 they arrived in Paris--- Lapitsky, Unger, the brothers Hoyer and an unexpectedly handsome, ignorant and lively young creature called Serge Lifar. After a glance at them all, and an audition which showed that these were not the days of Nijinsky, Diaghilev packed them off to Montecarlo for rigorous classes under Bronia. Les Noces, on a wartime idea of Stravinsky, n.p. was under production, and Felia Drubovska was to dance the Bride. The ballet harked back to Sacre in being about the half-pagan rites that had once surrounded the marriage of peasants in Russia, and Nijinska's choreography was to be in a startlingly new style--startling ~~at~~ least for 1923 Paris, ~~and~~ 1926 London---in which masses of dancers were used like constructions, leaning and twisting in pyramids ~~and columns~~. Stravinsky's original idea was to have the orchestra onstage in evening dress, with the danced part in the form of a divertissement. There remained of this conception the four pianos on-stage ~~which in London were~~ played by Auric, Dukelsky, Poulenc and Rieti. The tones of Gontcharova's setting were sombre to the point of drabness, which may have put many of the London critics ~~in Paris and London~~ into a panning state of mind at the outset. It was three years before Diaghilev plucked up courage to put it on in London at His Majesty's theatre in a programme with Carnaval and another new ballet called Les Matelots. The Times called it 'lugubrious' and 'barmecidal' (after the prince in Arabian nights who offered a beggar a sumptious-looking feast with nothing under the golden dish-covers). H.G.Wells complained in a letter to the press that it was the most intreesting ballet he had ever seen. Cyril Beaumont found that it radiated 'a genuine spirituality', which perhaps explains the

unpleasantly so for — pleasantly

and piles and geometrical designs.

hostility of the press.

For H.G.Wells 'it was an amazing experience to come out from this delightful display with the warp and woof of music and vision still running and interweaving in one's mind, and find a little group of critics flushed with resentment and ransacking the stores of their minds for cheap trite depreciation of the freshest and strangest thing that they have had a chance to praise for a long time'. The Times's description of the four pianos as part of the scene Wells called 'wilfully stupid'.

In 1923 The box office success of Noces at the Gaieté Lyrique did Diaghilev's heart good after the disappointments of The Sleeping Princess. Meanwhile Bakst was sueing him like mad from London, and managed to have his ~~Diaghilev's~~ receipts there seized. Most of Bakst's friends broke with him over this. But it was the customary story now: the degree of love and awe Diaghilev aroused in his collaborators was matched by the same degree of anger afterwards. But Bakst was no longer a sane man. He wrote hysterical letters abusing ~~not only~~ Diaghilev ~~but those~~ and everyone round him. He finally got his money. At the end of the Paris season Diaghilev organised a fête at the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles with a sumptious programme, ~~and even~~ for which three thousand francs failed to buy a seat. It seemed that all of a sudden ~~Diaghilev~~ he was back in his seat of original power, at the head of Parisian taste. According to Benois, who visited him in Montecarlo after nine years' absence, Diaghilev had passed from his earlier period as the man who 'simply created the atmosphere of adventure and hard work' to a new one in which he 'directly imposed his ideas'. It was true that ~~Diaghilev~~ he was now working closely with Cocteau, Satie, Poulenc, Auric, Braque, Marie Laurencin, Milhaud, and was looking for new ~~ideas~~ ballets, even feverishly, ~~for~~ to fill his dates. ~~had to be filled.~~ But the change was perhaps only in Benois---that he saw Diaghilev with a

certain detachment now, and in his proper role, which the actual work of close collaboration had so often hidden from him. ~~the collaborator. Benois~~ He found Diaghilev's taste poor in a ~~lot~~ member of things. ~~that was another matter.~~ He felt that Massine, Kochno and latterly ~~the growing~~ Serge Lifar had 'genuine talent' but also, because of Diaghilev's influence, ~~the talent was used towards~~ 'much that was absurd and simply in bad taste'.

With his Paris composers Diaghilev had unearthed a Gounod manuscript (Le Medicin Malgré Lui) and decided to try opera again for his Montecarlo season. With Nouvel he went to Italy to recruit singers, and got his composers to write musical recitatives in the Gounod manner to replace the spoken ones of the manuscript. Benois did the settings. The 1924 Montecarlo season was brilliant enough, but it was the ballet part that succeeded, and the only operatic work Diaghilev did after that was Stravinsky's Oedipus Rex, and then only as a concert performance. This was a good year for new dancers. Danilova, Geverova, Balanchine (then George Melitonovich Balanchivadze, aged twenty) and Efimov. Anton Dolin, ~~of Irish origin~~ came from London, a contact of Seraphine Astafieva who was teaching at that time in London and wrote to Diaghilev about the young man who had appeared in The Sleeping Princess and 'improved so much since then'. This time Diaghilev was happy with what he saw in audition, and packed the boy ~~him too~~ off to Montecarlo. One day Cocteau saw Dolin ragging about in a backstage corridor and thought of a ~~sort of~~ 'sporting ballet' which would not repeat the weaknesses of Jeux from before the War. Milhaud did the music in a musical-comedy style, Chanel the bathing costumes and the constructivist sculptor Laurens the setting. Le Train Bleu was first given at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées in Paris on June 20 1924. Diaghilev wrote about it later ~~himself~~: 'The first point about Le Train Bleu is that there is no blue train in it. This being the age of speed, it has already reached its destination and disembarked its passengers.

n.p.

an Englishman born in Sussex and in fact called Patrick Healey-Kay,

Nijinska's playful and malicious Les Biches (The House Party) was given, with music by Poulenc and settings by Marie Laurencin.

These are to be seen on a beach which does not exist, in front of a casino which exists still less. Overhead passes an aeroplane which you do not see. And the plot represents nothing. Yet, when it was presented for the first time in Paris, everybody was unaccountably seized with the desire to take the blue train to Deauville and perform refreshing exercises. Moreover, this ballet is not a ballet; it is an operette dansée. The music is composed by Darius Milhaud, but it has nothing in common with the music which we associate with Darius Milhaud. It is danced by the real Russian Ballet, but it has nothing to do with Russian Ballet. It was invented for Anton Dolin, a classical dancer who does nothing classical. The scenery is painted by a sculptor, and the costumes are by a great arbiter of fashion who has never made a costume'. Touché to Benois!

in his role of Le Beau Gosse.

Some of Dolin's movements were incredibly dangerous ~~both~~ to ~~look at and~~ execute. 'Nothing seemed to hurt me,' ~~Dolin said~~ he himself wrote about the London performance of Le Train Bleu. 'My body for that half hour did not belong to me. Someone other than myself, someone far greater, had taken control of it and those senses were telling it what to do. It was not then to feel the cuts and bruises it was sustaining'. The Paris première made ~~Dolin~~ him a star.

The Russian Ballet had a home, and its productions played to full houses, but still not enough came in to keep the company solvent. Also Massine's company, under the management of Comte Etienne de Beaumont, was appearing in Paris and attracting not only Diaghilev's dancers but his collaborators as well----Picasso ~~was one of~~ among them. Diaghilev was angry. When someone asked him how he could feel angry about ~~someone else~~ other people trying to earn ~~his~~ their ~~own~~ living he said, 'This is true, I have no monopoly in ballet. But I am a barman. I have invented a certain cocktail according to a recipe of my own. You can't expect me to be anything but annoyed when others come along and try to combine the same ingredients!' It was not a very dangerous anger, since that year ~~Diaghil=~~ he

Above all, he was losing Bronia, with whom he had been having a series of the tell-tale tiffs on artistic matters.

was sending a message via Cecchetti (back again in his Shaftesbury Avenue studio) to say that he would like to see Massine again. They met, and it was like 'a family reunion'. Diaghilev told him that he had enjoyed Massine's Soirées de Paris in Paris, except for the ballet Beau Danube. He was also 'intrigued' by another ballet of Massine's called Mercure, with settings by Picasso. Later he absorbed this into the Diaghilev Ballet. Meanwhile he asked, 'Will you choreograph two new ballets for me?' It was not exactly an invitation to rejoin the company, and Massine hesitated before saying yes, precisely as he had done over ten years before at their second meeting at the Metropole hotel in Moscow. Diaghilev needed a choreographer ~~at this time~~ badly, having found that Dolin would probably not fit the bill. ~~He could not lean entirely on Bronia.~~ And he admired Massine for having made his way so successfully—at what an age too!

~~It was agreed that~~ Massine ~~s~~would join him in Montecarlo. This was agreed during the Coliseum season at the end of 1924 which ~~he~~ Diaghilev had arranged with the incorrigibly optimistic Oswald Stoll. It was ~~there also~~ the only thing that ~~his new Russian dancers, including Balanchine, came to him.~~ was agreed. His negotiations with Massine raged on through Walter Nouvel, and finally some modus vivendi was arranged. His first ballets were to be Zephire et Flor (Taglioni had made her London debut in 1830 in Didelot's Flore et Zephire) and a 'romp' to be called Les Matelots. Meanwhile the Coliseum season was successful, opening with Cimarosiana, which Massine, before leaving the company, had devised from the ballet sequences in Cimarosa's opera, and which now included a new number by Nijinska, a pas de quatre in which the young Lifar danced. Le Train Bleu was also given. Cyril Beaumont found it boring, too much 'the very latest thing', its only bright spot being Anton Dolin. This dancer had, in Beaumont's view, changed radically from his

earlier 'mannered' days, now that he had been through the Diaghilev machine. 'On that night he danced like a man in ecstasy'; ~~and~~ his steps were such that at any moment 'he could have done himself serious injury and ruined his career'. The press rather went to town on the fact that the two triumphs of the evening---Dolin and Sokolova---were 'English', which so annoyed Diaghilev that he threatened not to employ an English dancer again. After this it was usual to say that the 'Russian' ballet was ~~in fact~~ it was no such thing. In reality the company only had a few British dancers.

On December 28 journalists broke the news to Diaghilev that Bakst had died. He rushed out into the street in tears.

In Montecarlo Massine met Lifar and the other new dancers, including Markova (Alice Marks), another ~~pupil~~ of Astafieva's pupils, and the new favourite Boris Kochno. Les Matelots, like Le Train Bleu, had almost no plot---Slavinsky played the American sailor, Woizikovsky the Spanish, and Lifar (in his second solo role after Boréas in Zéphire et Flore) ~~as~~ the French. The music was by Auric, settings and costumes by Pedro Pruna. It was first given at the Gaité Lyrique on June 17 1925, and Lifar made a great impression. In the same programme there was George Balanchine's first effort as a choreographer, Le Chant du Rossignol, with Markova as the real nightingale. ~~Cyril Beaumont saw this but could not remember it in later years.~~ Massine did not dance. According to Serge Lifar, the young Balanchine had great difficulty in working ~~for the ballet as~~ with Diaghilev ~~was~~ as the latter no longer collaborating closely in the ballet as he had done. This ~~works that came out. He seemed more and more satisfied only to supervise, so that Balanchine's work struck people as on of promising possibilities only. On the other hand it is possible that his choreography simply did not interest Diaghilev at this stage.~~ is not supported by the work he did in The Triumph of Neptune. Also he had ~~two young~~ three other protégés on his hands, ~~already~~ at the time---Lifar, ~~whom Cyril Beaumont described (seeing him in the last row of stalls~~

He corroborated Dolin's sense of dancing in Le Train Bleu with strangely transcendent perfection:

composed of foreigners:

, during a press interview,

in Paris

'that handsome ~~Hadnsome~~ sun-burned youth whose chief characteristics were an infectious smile and glowing dark eyes' (Beaumont's description), and secondly the 'unusually keen and determined' Boris Kochno, who had a habit of half-closing his eyes when he talked, and thirdly Anton Dolin. With so much on his hands it was little wonder that Balanchine found himself working alone at times, and that Diaghilev soon had a tiff with Anton Dolin and failed to renew his contract for that year. Diaghilev was distressed by Dolin's apparently philistine way of life. He always seemed to be playing tennis or going on picnics---so unlike the Russian protégés who were excited by the talk at Diaghilev's dinner table, and even had minds of their own.

Massine went on with his work in London, this time in On with the Dance, a Noel Coward show presented by C.B.Cochrane. The previous year he had choreographed a series of divertissements in the revue You'd be Surprised which ran at Covent Garden (not yet the State Opera House). Some of the numbers were clever but no one could say that this was in the Diaghilev tradition. And not even Benois could have laid it at the door of Diaghilev's influence. It just went to show---like Mercure---what happened to people's taste when they were outside his orbit.

In these last years of his life Diaghilev was rarely satisfied with his own productions. Yet his seasons were making money again, to some extent. The Berlin season in 1925 was most successful, but lost money. In London he was backed these days by Lord Rothermere, and his Coliseum season did well financially. In 1926 he had a summer season at His Majesty's theatre, which brought in £25000, and towards the end of the same year a four-week season at the Lyceum theatre at popular prices which ensured capacity houses but did not seem to please him because

of the theatre's lack of grandeur (he wrongly thought it the home of melodrama). And perhaps he had a canny idea that ballet should not be~~come~~ too popular, in case ~~it became stultified with~~ the commercial ~~success.~~ The ballet-jamborees of the last two decades seem to have proved him right. rewards stultified it.

In London he commissioned Constant Lambert to write music for a new Romeo and Juliet, with the surrealists Max Ernst and Joan Mirò doing the settings, though Lambert felt that Christopher Wood would have made a ~~much~~ more convincing décor than theirs turned out to be. At the Paris première there was uproar--- from other surrealists who felt that Mirò and Ernst had betrayed them by designing for the bourgeoisie--- and police had to be called in. Diaghilev ~~had~~ a pleasant reminder of the good old pre-war days, when a scandal ~~was~~ had been a scandal: these 1926 whistles and scuffles were rather aneamic in comparison, and the mass of the public was not interested, but ~~it~~ they still did the heart good. ~~to hear it.~~ As to the ballet, with Lifar as Romeo and Karsavina as Juliet, it started with a ballet-class onstage and ended with Romeo and Juleit in flying kit about to leave in an aeroplane, with a rehearsal of the ~~period~~ real Romeo and Juliet between them in five episodes. Another new ballet was La PaSTORALE, also written by Kochno, the choreography by Balanchine to music by Auric, and the setting again by Pedro Pruna, ~~who had also~~ whose designs for ~~(but more impressively)~~ Les Matelots were more impressive. This ~~it~~ was a peculiar little story, ~~and again~~ almost no story at all. A telegraph boy arrives to take a swim, and while he is bathing a young girl runs off with his bundle of telegrams. A camera crew arrives, ~~together~~ with a director and a star. The star does not want to work and sends them away. The telegraph boy is alone with the star and they fall in love. The young girl returns and chases the star off, and she and the telegraph boy ride ~~go~~ away on his bicycle. Also there was

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He often disliked the things that came off— he was only won over by Ode by the warm reception it got.

little dancing, and Cyril Beaumont described it as 'weak in design, feeble in action, slight in dance invention'. It was little wonder that people began to say that Kochno's increasing hold on Diaghilev's imagination was not to the good. But for Diaghilev the 'new' ballets were simply trying to come to terms with the modern world, and necessarily some things---like Nicolas Nabokov's Ode---came off and others did not. In his last years, far from giving way to a kind of senile belief in youth at any price (which is the usual story) he cast round---yes, with a certain wildness too---for new ideas in a world that could no longer find a convincing artistic language in any field. That was the explanation of Romeo and Juliet in flying kit, far more than a feeble desire for le dernier cri.

The first 'English' ballet, The Triumph of Neptune, was produced in 1926 too, with music by Lord Berners (after Diaghilev had cast around among other English composers from the Elizabethan John Bull to William Walton), ~~and the~~ its exquisite pantomime-book by Sacheverell Sitwell, whom Diaghilev once said that ~~Sitwell~~ he was the only Englishman he knew with a 'Russian Ballet outlook'. This was the year too of the 'Soviet' ballet called Le Pas d'Acier, ~~with~~ music by Prokoviev and choreography by Massine, ~~where~~ the second, factory-scene, with its powerful throbbing rhtythms, as the dancers mass~~ing~~ and divi~~ding~~ like the parts of a machine, got a fantastic reception. La Chatte was another story by Kochno, about the ~~man~~ youth who falls in love with a cat and asks Aphrodite to change it into a girl, thus reversing Aesop's fable (where the cat falls in love asks to be made human). This was, in fact, another 'Greek' ballet and managed to convey more than other deliberately Greek pieces the ~~ancient~~ worship of the human form. That too went down well. The cat was danced by Diaghilev's favourite classical ballerina, Spessiva, (~~who~~ she had returned to the Soviet Union after the closing of The Sleeping Beauty in London). He wanted her ~~as~~

Feelings behind the Greek

to become a permanent member of the company but the Paris Opéra got her. It was difficult enough persuading her to dance the Cat, which was against her 'ideas'. Perhaps Diaghilev's greatest problem in his last years of experiment (meaning simply the presentation of the unfamiliar) was the fact that dancing lagged far behind the other arts associated with it. In so many ways the choreographer was at the beginning of the road while the painter who worked with him was at the end. Anything like the composure and completeness of Indian dancing, with its use of the neck and fingers and facial muscles, was still missing in the west.

Stravinsky, having 'betrayed' Diaghilev by writing Le Baiser de la Fée for Ida Rubtinstein (a fearful piece of fayness which is still going strong), undertook to write a new ballet for him, Apollon Musagète, which Diaghilev came to consider one of the finest works he ever produced. Serge Lifar danced Apollo, the three Muses were Nikitina, Tchernicheva and Dubrovska. There was nothing of the earlier Stravinsky fireworks in the music, as this time the composer had gone to classical sources, and Balanchine based incredibly lovely sequences on the academic framework. André Bauchant did the setting. Lifar danced superbly.

Of the other two new ballets, Le Fils Prodigue (with Lifar again) and Le Bal, he felt mildly intrigued by the first but said to Walter Nouvel, 'C'est tout que je déteste.' Still, he resented the criticism that his productions degenerated into 'acrobatics'. He even thought it necessary to write to The Times about it, two days before the dress rehearsal of another 'gymnastics' ballet, Le Renard (a new version by Lifar, under the guidance of Larionov).

'Sir,' he wrote, 'the longer the globe revolves,

the less movement we find on it! People may fight world wars, empires may tumble, a colossal Utopia may be given birth to, but the inborn traditions of humanity remain the same. Social revolutions upset political statuses, but they do not touch that side of the human spirit which leads to beauty. On the contrary, in such moments one has not got the time to busy oneself with aesthetic problems. In a period of this description we find ourselves at the present moment, when individual talent and human genius, always alive, enter like a microbe into the human system, but then it is refused any support.

'Our century, without halting, interests itself with new "Mouvements mécaniques", but whenever new "Mouvements artistiques" occur people seem to be more frightened of being run over by them than by a motor-car in the street. For 25 years I have endeavoured to find a new "Mouvement" in the theatre. Society will have to recognise that my experiements, which appear dangerous today, become indispensable tomorrow. The misfortune of art is that everybody thinks he is entitled to his own judgement. When a scientist invents an electrical machine it is only experts who assume the right to be competent to criticise, but when I invent my artistic machine, everybody, without ceremony, puts his finger into the most delicate parts of the machine and likes to run it his

own way.

'But let us come to the events of today!

'The new appreciation of my "Spectacles" of today is a series of exclamations: What an "Etrange", "Extravagant", "Repellent" show, and the new definition of the choreography are "Athletics" and "Acrobatics". The show, before anything, must be "Etrange". I can picture to myself the bewilderment of the people who saw the first electric lamp, who heard the first word on the telephone. My first electric bell for the British public was the presentation of the Polovtsian Dances of Prince Igor. The small audience could not then tolerate this eccentric and acrobatic savagery, and they fled. And this only happened in 1911, at Covent Garden. At the very same theatre in 1929 the critics announced that my dancers had transformed themselves into "athletes" and my choreographic parts were "Pure acrobatics".

'I have no reason here to discuss this grave question in detail, but, in a few words: The classical dance has never been and is not today the Russian Ballet. Its birthplace was France, it grew up in Italy, and has only been conserved in Russia. Side by side with the classical dance there always existed the national or character dance, which has given the evolution of the Russian Ballet. I do not know of a single classical movement which was born of the Russian folk-dance. Why have we got to take our inspiration from the minuet of the French Court and not from the Russian village festival? That which appears to you acrobatic is a dilletante terminology for our national dance step. The mistake really, in fact, goes much deeper, because it is undoubtedly the Italian classical school which has introduced into the dance the acrobatic elements. The coarsest acrobatic tricks are the toe-dancing, the "Doubles tours en l'air", next to the classical "Pirouettes en dehors", and the hateful 32 "Fouettés", that is where acrobatics should be

attacked. In the plastic efforts of Balanchine, in The Prodigal Son, there are far less acrobatics than in the final classical Pas de deux of Aurora's Wedding.

'Monday next I am presenting to the public two new items. Lifar is, for the first time, in charge of the dancers; he is the inventor of the choreography of the Renard, and it is there where really one has the first opportunity to talk of acrobatic ballet. It is not all Lifar's principle, but just because he could not see any other form to express the acrobatic music of Stravinsky. Stravinsky is, without doubt, the acrobat of sound, as Picasso is the acrobat of outline. Several constructive elements have introduced themselves into the field of acrobatics, and "Constructivisme" in painting, décor, music, and choreography is the craze of today.

'The forms change. In painting and in scenery this craze is finishing. But in music, where we were full of impressionism and neo-sentimentalism, and in choreography, where we paid reverence to the classical dance, "constructivisme" acquired an extraordinary strength.... On the outside cover of Renard (score) Stravinsky has written: "This ballet msut be executed by buffoons, acrobats, or dancers". Lifar has taken dancers and real acrobats of the circus, and the task of the choreographist has been to combine the plastic of the circus and dance tricks, while Stravinsky compels the bass to sing with a female falsetto voice and expresses the sentimentality of the fox by the sounds of the cymbalum of the restaurant. The public and the critics will probably be annoyed with my two young friends, but they are both "débutats", and they are not afriad of it.

The more the glove revolves, the less movement we find on it.'

On July 15v1929 Diaghilev gave a public dress rehearsal of Le Renard for a few guests who filled the first two rows of the Covent Garden stalls. One of them was

the loyal Cyril Beaumont. Diaghilev stood at the head of the short flight of stairs leading to the stalls ~~in order~~ so as to receive his guests the royal way. 'This was the first time I had seen Diaghilev during the season and I was shocked by the change in his appearance since the

year before,' wrote Beaumont. 'His cheeks were of a strange leaden pallor and he appeared to be a very sick man. The cynical glance, the familiar curl of the lip, were still there, but he seemed to be unusually reserved and uncommunicative'.

His last Paris season played to capacity houses throughout. ~~was a great success.~~ He seemed even to have mastered the financial problem. ~~of ballets.~~ He had bookings for the next two years. He approached Hindemith for a new work. But, as he told the adoring Lifar later on in Venice, 'I'm tired, so terribly, terribly tired!' He had diabetes and did not ~~take~~ follow his doctor's advice to take a cure. He went on eating chocolates and drinking champagne. ~~And~~ He had a new passion---rare Russian books. For hours he would lie in his hotel rooms in Paris, Rome, Munich pasting together the disintegrating pages of the Acts of the Apostles in a Moscow edition of 1564, or a Book of Hours, or a Lvov New Testament, or the Sermons of Grigorius of Nazianz, printed in 1665. He had returned full circle, perhaps, to his early indifference to ballet. It had been like any art, an excuse, a formula for the spirit, and finally the language was discarded for a growing sense of the real thing that lay just ahead.

In July 1929 he was in Baden-Baden, and Princess de Polignac too noticed a ~~tremendous~~ shocking difference in him when they met ~~there~~ at a concert. Travelling with Igor Markevitch, whose debut as a composer he had arranged the previous season, he went on to Munich and the Salzburg festival. ~~All this time hwas working.~~ Strauss tried to interest him in his Electra, and he listened to Hindemith's Cantata. He wrote to Serge Lifar from Munich, 'My sustenance here is Wagner and Mozart. What geniuses, and how well performed here (in Salzburg)! Today, at Tristan, I shed bitter tears. Books take up a lot of my attention....Don't forget your 'cat' who embraces and blesses you' (after which a sketch of a cat with its tail in the air).

He left Salzburg on August 7 for Venice, where he was to meet Lifar the following day. Lifar,

arriving from Paris, expected to see him at the station, but Diaghilev was not there. He hurried to the Lido, expecting to see him in the foyer or the lounge of the Hotel des Bains, but instead saw him waving from his bedroom window, deathly pale, 'aged, enfeebled and bedraggled'. Typically Diaghilev had left all his underwear in Germany, and lacked even a handkerchief. A few days later he took to his bed, and Kochno arrived. His temperature ~~mounted.~~ rose. Coco Chanel and Misia Sert came from the Duke of Westminster's yacht, in which they were holidaying, and paid him an unexpected visit. They stayed with him ~~for~~ an hour. They put out to sea afterwards but became so anxious about him that they returned. By now Diaghilev's fever was dangerously high, and he was delirious. He recognised Misia and whispered to her, 'Oh, comme je suis heureux! How well white suits you Misia, you must always wear it!' And afterwards, when they were gone, he kept repeating to Kochno, 'They were so young, all in white! They were so white!' He stayed awake all night, and at dawn, just before dropping off to sleep, he murmured, 'Forgive me.'

A German specialist, Dr Martin, was called in, and could not say what was wrong. He suggested rheumatism or typhoid fever, and a cable was sent to Paris, to Diaghilev's doctor, asking for a vaccine, as there was none in Venice. A nurse from the American Hospital came to look after him. He lost consciousness. He awoke for the last time and looked up at Misia, who was sitting by him: 'You're my one true friend, the only one I ever had'. Then he added in Russian, 'It seems to me as though I'm drunk'. Towards dawn next day his breathing became most tortuous. At

6.00 a.m. on August 19 1929, at the age of fifty-seven, he died, 'on water', as it had been predicted, in that magically evanescent city that was his real home. His head sank on to his shoulder, and a tear rolled down his cheek. He was buried on San Michele, as Stravinsky was over forty years later.

n.p. The material of fifty-five ballets, in a Paris warehouse, were seized by the French government, as he left no will. The Russian Ballet survived for a time at Montecarlo. But its only reason for existing, as the vehicle of one man's will and imagination, had disappeared. And it was therefore natural that the de Basil company's performances should be simply a memorial.