



Diaghilev's Ballets Russes

By Lynn Garafola



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In the history of twentieth-century ballet, no company has had so profound and far-reaching an influence as the Ballets Russes. Under the direction of impresario extraordinaire Serge Diaghilev (1872–1929), the Ballets Russes radically transformed the nature of ballet—its subject matter, movement idiom, choreographic style, stage space, music, scenic design, costume, even the dancer's physical appearance. From 1909 to 1929, it nurtured some of the greatest choreographers in dance history—Fokine, Nijinsky, Massine, and Balanchine—and created such classics as *Les Sylphides*, *Firebird*, *Petrouchka*, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, *Les Noces*, and *Apollo*. Diaghilev brought together some of the leading artists of his time, including composers Stravinsky, Debussy, and Prokofiev; artists Picasso, Braque, and Matisse, and poets Hoffmansthal and Cocteau. *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* is the most authoritative history of the company ever written and the first to examine it as a totality—its art, enterprise, and audience. Combining social and cultural history with illuminating discussions of dance, drama, music, art, economics, and public reception, Lynn Garafola paints an extraordinary portrait of the company that shaped ballet into what it is today.



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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

The Ballets Russes, in existence from 1909 to 1929, heralded modernism in ballet. The company's infamous impresario, Serge Diaghilev, had an uncommon facility for recognizing talent and fostering successful collaborations. He brought together innovative artists, dancers, composers, and choreographers in groundbreaking productions such as *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*. Fokine, Nijinsky, Picasso, Stravinsky, Massine, Bakst, and Balanchine were just a few of the key players in the company's history. Garafola's approach to dance history is expansive, taking in the cultural and artistic influences and economic realities, and applying newer methodologies. Scholarly, yet extremely readable, this is highly recommended for most libraries, even those owning Richard Buckle's *Diaghilev* (LJ 10/1/79).

- Joan Stahl, *Enoch Pratt Free Lib.*, Baltimore

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About the Author

Dance critic and historian **Lynn Garafola** is the editor of *Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Edition* and coeditor of *André Levinson on Dance: Writings from Paris in the Twenties*. She lives in New York City.

Users Review

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Adrian Johnson:

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