Pavlova at the Hippodrome, Baryshnikov on Broadway: Russian Ballet and American Popular Culture (1)

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On August 31, 1916, Anna Pavlova and her troupe opened at New York City's Hippodrome. She danced an abridged version of *Sleeping Beauty-- four* tableaux which contained all the main events of the original: Christening, Birthday, Vision, Awakening and Wedding, the latter of which Pavlova danced in heeled shoes. For six weeks, five thousand people came to each matinee and evening performance, twelve shows a week. Hippodrome audiences loved Pavlova --reviews described her as "the Incomparable" and "Anna the Great," but they were not prepared to sit through the intermediate scenes in which she did not appear. The Hippodrome's manager, Mr. Burnside, decided that the public needed "bowl'em over and knock'em out numbers" so the Vision scene was sacrificed for short, brilliant dances such as *Dragon Fly , Second Rhapsody* of Liszt, and *Obertas,* a suite of Polish peasant dances (Oliveroff 1932:34).

The star of what became known as the Big Show was Pavlova; indeed, she was credited with being the first to bring beauty to the mammoth playhouse. The same critic (Heywood Broun, writing for the New York Tribune) went on to say "Classical dancing of the finest sort was shown by her. It is a pleasure to watch Pavlova dance, since you can applaud her without being told when (in Money 1982:237).

But many other acts made up the Big Show. One of Pavlova's troupe, Andre Oliveroff, described the experience of playing the Hippodrome as rather like being in a circus. There were 418 Mammoth Minstrels, a street parade, Power's elephants playing a ball game, an animal act called "The Revenge of the Lions," Broadway choristers playing West Point cadets singing a rousing "We'll Stand by Our Country," "Somewhere in Spiritland"--a number featuring a dancer on top a piano hoisted high above the stage, her accompanist, legs locked around the piano stool which was clamped to the piano, bravely playing as he, the piano and the dancer swung back and forth at a giddy height, Charlotte, sometimes called the Karsavina of the ice, who skated with the speed of light around her little frozen pond, and the ballet fairies in *Sleeping Beauty,* who, in this spirit, were hoisted high on wires at the finale of the ballet and the climax of the show.

When Pavlova made her Hippodrome performance, she was already known to American audiences.

After taking Paris by storm in the 1909 season of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, she turned her back on a continued partnership with Nijinsky and came to America in 1910. Her partner in this venture was Mikhail Mordkin. They were engaged by the Metropolitan Opera, following a tradition of combining opera and ballet, the latter regarded as the sweet dessert to the more substantial operatic meal. The two dancers performed after a complete performance of Massenet's *Werther,* finishing an abbreviated *Coppelia* at one in the morning. The critics raved and headlines proclaimed "Little Russian, lithe, exquisitely formed, captures Metropolitan audience in first waltz" (in Money 1982:98). The second evening was a benefit for the Metropolitan Opera pension and endowment fund and Pavlova and Mordkin contributed to the full house with a performance of the *Bacchanale.*

As big box office, Pavlova and Mordkin were also booked at the New Theatre, a house for which the Met held the franchise. Because they had no company and no corps for anything but *Coppelia,* their programs there were solos and pas de deux. Pavlova performed Fokine's *Swan* and *Papillon,* Mordkin his bow and

arrow dance; they filled out the program with *Danses Orientales* and *Danses Classiques* and several pas de deux. They made brief visits to Boston and Baltimore in addition to their many performances in New York venues. They were much sought after, managers competing for the privilege of engaging them. The Met retained them even over the objection of manager Gatti-Casazza who feared that their popularity might diminish the public's love of opera. Twenty-five years later, George Balanchine would encounter the same prejudice at the Met.

For the next two years, Pavlova performed in Europe and Russia; she established herself at Ivy House in London and began a school; she worked with Michel Fokine on new ballets and was regarded by Serge Diaghilev as a reactionary force who threatened the new revolutionary ballet he was trying to create. At the end of 1913, Pavlova was back in the United States, this time with partner Laurent Novikov, her old ballet teacher Enrico Cecchetti, two female dancers, and one male who also doubled as the ballet master.

Theodore Stier of the London Classical Orchestra traveled with her as conductor. On December 6, 1913, she and her small troupe performed at the Majestic Theatre in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. The evening was divided into three parts: The first featured *The Magic Flute* arranged by Cecchetti to music of Drigo; the second was *Invitation to the Dance* to music of Weber; the third was a set of divertissements, including the *Gavotte Pavlova, L'Automne Bacchanale,* and *Le Papillon.* With the same dancers, she gave this program in Salt Lake City and Toledo.

By 1915, Pavlova had replaced Novikov with Alexandre Volinine and had also engaged another of the Ballets Russes crowd, Ivan Clustine, to arrange dances. He promptly "arranged" *Chopiniana* to music of Glazounov (2), and this became Part II of a new program, Part I being *Puppen-Fée* and Part III the standard Divertissements, including the very popular, Clustine-arranged *Gavotte* (Programmes Pavlova (Anna), PRO.A.551, Bibliothèque de l'Ópera, Paris).

A critic for the Indianapolis News who had seen the Diaghilev company in London said about Pavlova and her new troupe: "It is to the credit of Clustine and Pavlova herself that she is able with her

thirty dancers to approximate the lightning power of striking clean to the heart of our feelings and sweeping us into a world of emotion and enthusiasm of which we have never dreamed ourselves capable. It was that one moment at the close of *Walpurgis nacht*  which sets off the Russian ballet against all other forms of

present-day art as a vital part of our emotional life, a stimulus that comes all too seldom into our lives to thrill us into new worlds of sense and sound and sight" (in Money 1982:206).

This tour was preceded by the first in a series of endorsements of social dances by Pavlova. The

New York Evening Sun ran a series on the new dances, featuring Pavlova and Novikov. The tango took up a whole week of newspaper space. She had also agreed to endorse Pond's Vanishing Cream, the ad quoting

her as saying "I find it is very good for softening and whitening my skin."

Between the end of 1913 and May of 1916, she and her company had crossed the United States three times from east to west and from the Canadian border to the Rio Grande. It was a killing schedule with

many one-night stands in out of the way places, traveling to every corner of the country accessible by train. It was a tour already made familiar by the vaudeville circuit. While Pavlova was approached often by vaudeville impresarios, she always refused to perform as part of that circuit, finding other, more appropriate halls.

At various times, the company, now grown to eighty, was on the verge of bankruptcy-- Pavlova would step in with additional performances--the long, exhausting run at the Hippodrome kept the company

solvent for a time, more endorsements--O'Sullivan's heels of New Live rubber, the Angelus Player piano, and Cutex liquid polish, and additional series of social dances which bore her name. She graced the cover of the January 1915 *Ladies Home Journal* with a series of articles on three new dances . The first dance, the *Pavlowana,* was introduced by Pavlova: "I have the pleasure to present to the women of America the new original ballroom dance created by me during the summer of 1914. It is in 2/4 time, and although it has a suggestion of the *Maxixe,* it is yet entirely different, and, what is more important to my mind, is much simpler for

general home and dance use. My partner in this dance...is Monsieur Ivan Clustine, who for the past two years has had sole supervision of the ballet of the Paris Grand Opera, and previously was in charge of the

ballet at the Imperial Opera Houses at St. Petersburg and Moscow, so that the postures are intelligently as well as accurately given. I commend this dance with its music to the girls and women of America as a dance that will be generally liked" (Ladies Home Journal, January 1915). From this statement, it is clear that Pavlova had a keen understanding of what would appeal to the American public. She did the same kinds of articles for Vanity Fair.

Apart from these, Pavlova also wrote many pieces on the Russian ballet which appeared in such widely read magazines as *Good Housekeeping* and the *Ladies Home Journal,* and gave substantive interviews for countless newspapers and journals--the  *New York* *Times, Harper's* and *Musical America* among them.

In 1915, she also made a film*, The Dumb Girl of Portici.* Ironically, it premiered in New York on the same evening as the opening of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes at the Metropolitan. Although she was not at the film's premiere because she was dancing in Salt Lake City, she did manage to wrest the headlines of the theatre page from her Russian compatriots: "Pavlowa again is "incomparable" on the screen. Achieves wonderful triumph in picture." The review continued with superlatives: "Anna Pavlowa, the inimitable, proved a revelation because of her wonderful power as an actress....Pavlowa, in her first attempt, has revealed so marvelous a histrionic ability as to call from many in the brilliant first-night audience the opinion that she would make the greatest Carmen of them all" (in Money 1982:229). Seemingly unaware of Pavlova's film efforts, a young admirerer of yet another Russian ballerina, Olga Spessivtseva, wrote to a friend in Los Angeles, January 10, 1934 about the desire of some of the Russian dancers then at the Paris Opera to come

to America: "This might be just the thing the picture people are looking for as it's something new to America and these Ballets are about the most thrilling thing I have ever seen. They still give them in Russia but under the Soviets they are tamed down" (Fonds Spessivtseva, piece 8, Bibliothèque de L'Ópera, Paris). The American public would have to wait for such films until the next contingent of Russian dancers defecting from the Soviet Kirov.

Pavlova's touring schedule did not permit development of a film career but Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford collaborated to film her dancing several of her most famous divertissements. This was probably done at Pickford's studio in 1925.

By the time of her death in 1931 at age fifty, Pavlova had toured America from ocean to ocean at least nine times, appearing in virtually every town and city on the major rail lines. On her last tours, she was under the management of Sol Hurok, one of the great impresarios of this century. He, in turn, was totally smitten by this dancer who seemed to have a charismatic appeal in even the most remote communities. Her face graced the cover of the most widely read magazines; her endorsements of commonly used products gave her a different but equally compelling kind of visibility; her reflections on ballet and culture were widely printed and read. Perhaps most important, she gave classical dance the kind of status and salience that made every little girl who saw or heard about her want to dance. Finally, to make this desire a possibility, she opened free ballet schools in the larger cities where she had longer stays, auditioning the young hopefuls herself.

Let us look for a moment at what American culture and society were like before and during the time that Pavlova was a presence. America was far behind Europe and Russia in terms of theatre and dance.

Much of this has to do with Puritan attitudes toward dance and entertainment--witness Increase Mather's tract, *An Arrow against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing Drawn out of the Quiver of the Sctiptures, distributed* in Boston in 1684. John Durang, the first internationally known American-born dancer, when performing in Philadelphia in 1785, had to disguise his performance as a lecture (Sorell 1981:122).

The situation began to change slowly as affluent families whose money came from newly emerging industries and necessary infrastructure such as railroads began to emulate their European business associates. Arts patronage was certainly established in the Old World and it was this model that brought museums, theatre and opera companies, and the like to America. The Metropolitan Opera was founded, for example, in 1883, some 250 years after the first public opera house was opened in Venice (1637).

When Fanny Elssler, the great French ballerina of the 19th century, danced in America in 1840 and 1842, she danced in public halls in cities on the east coast and in those towns accessible by packet boats. She was the first recognized ballerina to visit America, and she took the place by storm. Even in New England, she aroused admiration among the intellectual set. Nathaniel Hawthorne hung her picture between portraits of Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier. But the context was not yet right for ballet to take hold--neither the patronage nor the means of transportation were there.

Ballet probably escaped the notice of the new American millionaires because the center of classical ballet had shifted from Paris to St. Petersburg after the middle of the nineteenth century. Whatever the reason, ballet was not one of the arts cultivated here. Serious dance in America relied on the efforts of dancers such as Loie Fuller (1862-1928), Isadora Duncan (1878-1927), Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham, and Doris Humphrey. Fuller and Duncan were more well-known in Europe than in America, however, and neither was a trained dancer.

Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, a divinity student when he met Miss Ruth, tapped into the growing interest in things oriental, exotic, and "primitive." Shawn, in particular, drew from American Indian, Australian aborigine, and indigenous civilizations of Mexico and Peru. Their school taught a kind of modified ballet technique but most dancing was based on a re-presentation of exotic, to American eyes, dances with little foundation in any systematized technique.

Encouraged by Louis Horst, Graham rebelled against the superficiality of Denishawn, and developed her own style, school and technique. We now know the impact of that rebellion but it was still very much in a nascent stage in the twenties and thirties.

Why did Pavlova exercise such a powerful influence on American culture, almost singlehandedly establishing ballet as an art worthy of development and patronage? How was she able to present an elite form, cultivated for centuries by the aristocracy to the American public so that it caught their imaginations and their hearts? [see Royce 2004].

Perhaps most important, she was at once absolute mistress of the classical technique, and at the same time went beyond the technique to express emotions common to all. Technique was a means to an end and the end was to move the audience to experiences they had not known before. Critics in Russia and Paris (America had yet to develop ballet critics with a vocabulary sufficient to describe such a phenomenon as Pavlova) captured those qualities that made her an artist of the highest caliber: [writing of Giselle] "She is in absolute command of her own beauty, which is lit up with every flame that arises from her soul, to burn bright with every one of her movements, with every flash of her inspiration" (in Money 1982:42); another, after a performance of *Paquita:* [her style] "has an astonishingly noble quality rather in keeping with the Old School, untouched by any abruptness. This artist dances with an innate loveliness, sweetness, temperament, and there is an ethereal quality about her movements which illuminates the real significance of her dances" (ibid.:49)

While maintaining high standards, her performances were accessible. The true art lay in the fact that she never compromised the integrity of the classical form; instead, she raised the American public's understanding and appreciation. Her programs were always balanced between the purely classical, the abstract, the folk and exotic, and the short virtuoso pieces. Her costumes were the best that could be designed, made or borrowed--many from the Imperial Ballet or its emissaries in the European capitals. The music was invariably of the highest quality. She also danced several solos and pas de deux at every performance, working harder than anyone else in the company. She had great respect for audiences and never withheld herself--even when it meant dancing in a church hall and changing costumes in the organ loft.

We get a good idea of Pavlova's accessibility from this letter from the concert managers of Mordkin's ballet company to Olga Spessivtseva trying to convince her to join the company in America in which they argue: "you can see for yourself that Mr. Mordkin has no intentions of presenting anything radical for the American public. Moreover, it would be bad policy for any dancer to present modernistic programs in this country as they are not at all popular. Indeed, Mme. Pavlova's strength in America as a drawing card lies in

the fact that all her numbers are of popular classical dances familiar to everybody" (Fonds Spessivtseva, pièce 8:53, Bibliothèque de L'Ópera, Paris). In their eagerness to convince Spessivtseva, they exaggerated the familiarity of Pavlova's repertoire but not its popularity.

Secondly, Anna Pavlova was strikingly beautiful, not in the classic sense of a Ruth St.Denis, but rather more like Sarah Bernhardt. The first decades of the twentieth century were ones in which ideas about female beauty were certainly volatile: On the one hand, the sensuality and exoticism of a Mata Hari, Theda Bara or Ida Rubenstein held a strong appeal; on the other, there was the classic prettiness of a Ruth St.

Denis, Mary Pickford, or Mathilde Kchessinskaya. Pavlova, Bernhardt, Tamara Karsavina were paradoxes-­ they were exotic yet familiar; they were sensual yet chaste; they were dramatic yet full of wit and humour; they were strong yet also vulnerable; they were unquestionably the best in the world yet displayed a kind of modesty that made them beloved. They were always artists, even offstage, without being conscious of their considerable art.

In sum, Pavlova was the ballerina of small-town America just as she was undeniably "the Incomparable" of the big cities. Even those who had never seen her dance had probably seen her in popular magazines or in ads or had read her thoughts on ballet, theatre and music. Yet others were touched by the countless benefit performances she gave in America and elsewhere: Hope Farm, an orphanage in New York, Serbian refugees, the Pasteur Memorial, the Charlotte Cushman Fund for young women of the theatre, Russian ballet schools and starving Russian artists, and many more. It is no wonder that Pavlova is still remembered with such reverence and awe.

What happened in America between the blazing star that was Pavlova and the equally incandescent Mikhail Baryshnikov? The simple answer is that the shape of American elite and popular culture was changed forever by the Russian emigré dancers who became the teachers of the next generation of American

dancers. Michel Fokine was among the first to establish a school in New York City. Still choreographing and touring, he nonetheless took seriously his obligation to continue the tradition by teaching. The most famous, however, of these emigré dancers was George Balanchine who was recruited in 1933 by Lincoln Kirstein whose dream was to create a truly American ballet that would be second-to-none. Balanchine agreed, saying that Europe had become a museum while America had possibilities. "Furthermore, he would dearly love to go to a country that produced girls as wonderful as...Ginger Rogers" (Taper 1974: 162).

The School of American Ballet opened January 1, 1934 with twenty-five students. The small faculty included Balanchine and another Russian emigré, Pierre Vladimirov. Soon other emigrés joined the school-­ Anatol Oboukhov, Muriel Stuart (one of Pavlova's dancers) and, before starting their own schools or moving to the competition, Anatol Vilzak, Ludmilla Pereslavic, Alexandra Danilova. Trained there in these early years were William Dollar, Lew and Harold Christenson, Ruthanna Boria, Gisela Caccialanza and others who moved west and started schools of their own thus spreading the Russian influence.

The company that was most influential at this time was not Balanchine's, however. He was choreographing for the Metropolitan Opera, and constantly bickering with the opera-oriented management. The small company Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein had collected was limited almost exclusively to performing ballets in the operas with which the Met filled its seasons. When Balanchine and the Met parted ways in 1938, his American Ballet had no means of support and so was disbanded.

The transplanted Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo was the company that most Americans knew because it had a lively, popular repertoire, interesting dancers, and it toured widely. Like Pavlova, the Ballets Russes toured under the aegis of legendary impresario Sol Hurok. It bridged the gap between the Diaghilev period and that of the first generation of American ballet companies.

Balanchine, in the meantime, garnered great success choreographing Broadway musicals and Hollywood films. Within ten years, he had choreographed the following big moneymakers: *On Your Toes* (boththe Broadway and the film versions), *I Married an Angel, Babes in Arms, The Boys from Syracuse, The Merry Widow, Rosalinda, Louisiana Purchase, Song of Norway,* and *Where’s Charley?*

Although he made the best of it, Balanchine knew he did not belong in musical comedy. When Serge Denham asked him to help rejuvenate the ailing Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1944, Balanchine enthusiastically agreed. For two years, he worked hard, creating new ballets and demanding the best from dancers whose craft had slipped from the strain of constant touring. He wrought a small miracle but never thought of staying permanently with the company. It was too commercial for his taste. Such was the fate of all companies then who depended on the box office for their livelihood.

The course of American classical ballet was changed forever in 1946 when Lincoln Kirstein came back from the war bursting with ideas for a fresh start in the ballet world. Neither he nor Balanchine wanted anything to do with commercial theatre and Kirstein's inheritance freed them from box-office considerations. They founded the Ballet Society whose purpose it was to encourage dance and theatre by the production of new works. Its first performance was given in the auditorium of the Central High School of Needle Trades on November 20, 1946 (Taper 1974:224). A far from auspicious venue, the audience that night was nonetheless treated to an extraordinary evening. It began with Ravel's *L'Enfant et !es Sorti!èges,* an opera in which the singers were offstage, while onstage the dancers interpreted the action. The second half was the premiere of *The Four Temperaments,* a ballet to music that Balanchine had commissioned from Hindemith.

Although trained in the Marinsky tradition, Balanchine, in his adopted homeland, developed a ballet very far from the Marinsky and from Marius Petipa, its most influential choreographer. The Russian style was and continues to be one based as much on legato as on allegro. Balanchine diminished the legato, emphasizing a density in the relationship between technique and music (Royce 1982:122). The importance of the Russian legato is clear in a commentary on Nureyev's version of *La Bayadere:* "The slowness of some sections are [sic] emphasized until they become as dramatic as speed, exploiting the tension of a long-held balance and poised, circling turn. The movements of head and torso are stressed, and the extended phrases ...nursed into a singing legato sustained through the whole work" (Bland 1976:90). In contrast we have the choreography of Balanchine: "There were no longer obviously main steps and their preparations: they blended into one dense stream of movement, performed to a quick tempo in a relatively short period of time" (Smakov 1981:186). The phrasing across the musical bar so typical of Fokine, the impulse preceding highlighted steps that characterized Petipa and Fokine, the contrast between light and dense movements typical of the Marinsky tradition and Vaganova's codification of that style--all are rare in Balanchine.

Balanchine created a style of ballet in which dance was both the medium and the message and dancers were the instruments. He made no compromises in the interest of box office, and neither did he worry about the ability of the general public to understand his work. In a sense, he did for classical ballet what Martha Graham did for modern dance--he created a form that was very much the exclusive property of the intellectual elite. Though it must be said that, with time, both Balanchine and Graham have become favorites of a broader audience.

By the end of the 1950's, classical ballet in America meant the occasional visiting companies, Balanchine choreography performed by the New York City Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre, the only American company that still did the classics. Then came the visits of the two great Russian companies--the Bolshoi in 1960 and the Kirov in 1961. The Bolshoi brought Galina Ulanova and Nicolai Fadeyechev in the full-length *Romeo and Juliet,* an artistic and dramatic sensation. With the Kirov, the West saw for the first time a corps with absolute purity of line and dancing of supreme grace and eloquence. The soloists, both male

and female, were simply the best in the world. American audiences were first stunned, then adoring, in much the same way that they had responded to Pavlova. Balanchine had claimed that his new style, based on athleticism and pure movement, was what the American public would understand. Clearly, however, Americans "understood" these Russian companies in some very fundamental way. Indeed, their reception was much more broadly based than that of Balanchine's New York City Ballet. But more was to come.

Beginning with Rudolf Nureyev in 1961, three of the greatest dancers of this century defected-- the second was Natalia Makarova in 1970, the third, Mikhail Baryshnikov in 1974. For the first time since Pavlova, ballet dancers were regarded as superstars. And these superstars had the kind of exposure that only

mass communication could bring (3). Even though only thirteen years had passed between Nureyev's and Baryshnikov's coming to the West, opportunities for being known instantly to millions of people had multiplied exponentially. And Baryshnikov was uniquely a star for his times.

Baryshnikov was made for movement; he is an absolute master of the dance, no matter what the genre might be. Although a dancer's dancer, he also appealed to the naive and the new to dance. We saw him first in the classical repertoire. His debut in New York on July 27, 1974, in fact, was in *Giselle* with Makarova. Most of the tickets had been sold because of Makarova but when people learned that Baryshnikov would be her partner, there was a stampede at the box office that broke through all the police lines. This was another first in the experience of the American ballet-going public. Anna Kisselgoff reviewed the performance for the *New York Times*: "The extraordinary difficulty of the steps he

executed...was evident. At the same time, while the virtuosity was visible, it appeared to be without effort. Above all, there was a consistency of classical style that will truly be Mr. Baryshnikov's own special contribution to male dancing in the West" (in Smakov 1981:109).

His repertoire over the next two years included the classical staples, many of them not terribly challenging for the male dancer, especially not a dancer of Baryshnikov's impeccable virtuosity. If audiences were astounded by his dancing in these roles, imagine the wonder of audiences who saw him in *Don Quixote* or *Le Corsaire* for the first time!

*Le Corsaire* was one of the high points in the film *Turning Point,* released in November 1977.

Baryshnikov's dancing makes the film one of the best ever made of ballet. It and he were box office hits. More importantly, it showed the American public a heterosexual male ballet dancer as confident offstage as on. While Pavlova inspired little girls, Baryshnikov made it possible for boys to believe that it might be a career for them.

Offstage, his attraction to Gelsey Kirkland, both personal and professional, eroded the partnership that Makarova had hoped to have. Kirkland, though American in her training, seemed to capture that

combination of flawless technique and internally motivated dancing that characterizes the Russian approach. She was a perfect partner for Baryshnikov and he for her.

With Kirkland and ABT, he danced *Nutcracker,* then made the TV special that we see every Christmas season. This was followed in rapid succession by other TV specials-Chorus *Line, Oklahoma,* and, with Liza Minelli, *Baryshnikov on Broadway.*

Not satisfied with a steady fare of the classical roles, he devoured unfamiliar styles and new genres, showing that he was more than simply a beautifully trained classical dancer. Early in his career here, he worked with Twyla Tharp, a somewhat irreverent and very witty choreographer. *Push Comes to Shove* was the first ballet she set for him, and his humour and comic timing are clear in his interpretation of her choreography. They have worked together on other ballets, one of which is a series of pieces to the songs of Frank Sinatra. *Sinatra Suite* is a superb example of bringing together classical discipline and the most popular and American of genres. Baryshnikov has worked with virtually every significant choreographer of the last twenty years--Eliot Feld, Paul Taylor, Jerome Robbins, Mark Morris, Merce Cunningham, and George Balanchine, among them.

Balanchine was the quintessential challenge for each of the Kirov dancers who came to the West.

He had been raised in the same tradition but had created a ballet that was different both in style and in technique. He had also choreographed more ballets than any of his contemporaries. Dancers who fled the Kirov because it offered them nothing in the way of challenge simply had to come to Balanchine sooner or later. Baryshnikov had confronted the stylistic diversity of choreographers like Feld, Taylor, and Tharp and mastered all of the demands. What intrigued him about Balanchine was less his style that was so different from the Kirov, but more the demands of the technique. For a long time, Baryshnikov had been elaborating the classical repertoire in order to make it technically more interesting for him. We see just one example in his performance in Frederick Ashton's *Les Patineurs* : "Baryshnikov embellished it like a bel-canto tenor, and, as so often happens, he made the choreography look as if he had invented or at the least inspired it. A now

famous Baryshnikovism, the split tour-jeté, looked right for the first time...and Baryshnikov produced the step as none of his imitators so far have done--coming out of a double air turn" (Croce 1977:113-114).

Baryshnikov began working in earnest on the Balanchine repertoire in 1978. In those works of Balanchine that were most like Petipa, Baryshnikov was wasted. Ballets such as *Harliquinade* trivialized the pathos of a *Petrouchka.* In those few ballets that showcased the male dancer, the demands of the technique on a dancer not raised in the Balanchine school bordered on crippling. Smakov speaks perceptively to this problem: "The breakneck speed with which the dense movements were to be performed in *Sympho1!J in* C or in *Donizetti Variations* precluded the classical goal of precision in executing each step. By virtue of his impeccable classical training, Baryshnikov was conditioned to work only this way. The strain on his muscles was so enormous that he would have to dance sloppily from the classical standpoint to keep up with the rhythm. But any kind of imprecision was beyond the ken of his usual muscular reactions. He couldn't help using the classical approach, which resulted in awkwardness" (1991:206).

Despite devoting himself totally to being the best instrument for Balanchine's choreography, Baryshnikov finally came to the same conclusion as Nureyev and Makarova--the Kirov training and Blaanchine's choreography were so different as to be irreconciliable.

Plunging into a totally unfamiliar genre, Baryshnikov made the film *White Nights* in which he plays a Russian ballet dancer who defected and now through accident is trapped in the Soviet Union. His "keeper" is Gregory Hines playing an American tap dancer who defected to the Soviet Union. The film is filled with the highest level of virtuoso dancing by both men.

Baryshnikov's ability to perform different dance genres from the inside-out, is extraordinary. Ron Field, the choreographer for *Baryshnikov on Broadwqy,* comments on this: [in an interview with the New York Times] "I'd worked with other male ballet dancers and it was like 'Get down, Danilova.' It never came out jazz or at ease...The dancers tend to present the insides of their thighs and also there's an attitude that ballet demands that makes the dancers, when they try to get jazzy, corny and like hep-cats. So I'm stretching Misha

in areas where he never dreamed he'd have to send messages--to his hips, his knees, and his shoulders. And he adores it! And he loves hearing himself dance, like in tap...Irealized there were no limits with Misha. I could really turn him into a Donald O'Conner or a Gene Kelly or a Ray Bolger. He has that facility. His body is not rigidly set in classical ballet, and he's able to send messages to his hips and chest and all--just like a Broadway dancer" (in Smakov 1981:231).

America and the world have taken Baryshnikov to their hearts. Like Pavlova, he is seen as a warm, open, modest, hardworking person who also happens to be one of this century's greatest dancers. While we have the examples of many superstars in a variety of fields who are known as much for their egos as for their art, Baryshnikov has from the beginning submerged his ego to the demands of dance. In his willingness to try all sorts of dance without demanding special choreography, he has lived his belief that dancers are instruments, no more, no less. This image of someone who believes that the craft, the discipline, the art is more important than the individual has had enormous appeal for the American public who, on the one hand,

want a performer to do things they can only imagine and which seem impossible, and, on the other, want that same performer to be human.

It was this special combination of supreme artistry and modesty that Pavlova and Baryshnikov share that made them both such a powerful force in shaping the American public's attitude toward classical ballet. They could make this centuries' old elite form meaningful and accessible to a public whose entire history as a people is shorter than the history of ballet. Much of their power to touch American audiences comes from their warm and honest nature and from their dedication as artists. Much comes too from the particular historical contexts into which they fit. For their times, each was known to a huge segment of the American public through a variety of means. Paradoxically, this ballerina and this premier danseur, Russian by birth and training, appealed to the American people for whom they held up the best of what was quintessentially American. Itwas an identity that most Americans might dream of but which they knew they would never achieve. Pavlova and Baryshnikov realized it for them.

NOTES

My teachers, Anatol Vilzak, Ludmilla Shollar, Anatol Oboukhov, Pierre Vladimirov, and Muriel Stuart passed on to me the rich heritage of the Kirov tradition. I am grateful for the care and wisdom with which they did so. It was Sol Hurok who gave me, a young and impoverished dancer, the chance to see many of these great performers by giving me his aisle seat at the old Met. Other kindnesses were provided by the staffs of the following libraries and collections: the Bibliothèque de L’Arsenal, the Bibliothèque de l'Ópera, and the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, Austin, and the Joseph Rous Paget-Fredericks collection at the Bancroft Library, the University of California, Berkeley. This paper was originally presented at the inaugural conference of the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, in 1998.

1. *Chopiniana* was the suite of dances choreographed by Michel Fokine to music of Chopin. The orchestration was by Glazounov. The premiere was February 10, 1907 at the Marinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg and was a benefit in memory of N.V. Gogol. In March of 1908, a second performance was given of a revised *Chopiniana* now called *Les Sylphides.* The orchestration this time was by Kellar and Glazounov. Pavlova performed in both versions. I am not sure what resemblance, if any, Clustine's arrangement had to either of the Fokine choreographies nor do I know how much of the music Clustine used was Chopin and how much was Glazounov.
2. Neither Nureyev nor Makarova fired the imagination of the American public in the way that Baryshnikov did. Nureyev spent very little time in the United States. He danced briefly with the De Cuevas Ballet in Marseilles, studied for a year with Erik Bruhn in Copenhagen, and then began a long partnership with Margot Fonteyn that, except for tours, kept him in England. At the end of his career, he was the Director of the ballet of the Paris Opera. He was aware that his was not a comfortable personality: "Each

time I try to go into society, it doesn't work. I do it like a performance and then I leave. I don't fit" (in Bland 1976).

Makarova came to the West in 1970. She danced with American Ballet Theatre for two years then left to sign on as a visiting ballerina with the major companies. Unlike Baryshnikov, Makarova did not explore dance outside the classical tradition (although she did dance the ballets of virtually every choreographer), neither did she make films. Marriage, a child, and choreography removed her still further from the public eye.

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