Pas de Deux:

Cold War Dance Tours and Franco-Soviet Cultural Interaction, 1953-1975

By

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Abstract

To understand cultural diplomacy between France and the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1975, this dissertation analyzes how Franco-Soviet ballet tours enabled cultural transformations despite Cold War divisions. I argue that dance tours became a vehicle of soft power, fueling cultural, diplomatic, and political changes in both countries in ways that sometimes eluded the control of the governments involved. The tours triggered debates about dance's role in national discourse and which groups could lay claim to national theaters, exposing preconceptions about which social, political, and ethnic groups were best suited for the stage. I also argue that Franco-Soviet dance tours brought to the surface and challenged assumptions about national ballet theaters' responsibility to embody gender norms and a country's dominant political ideology. Using French and Soviet archives, I contend that dance exchanges became a conduit by which millions of observers and participants engaged with Cold War politics. Through the exchange of dance troupes, teeming debates about egalitarianism, ideology, aesthetics, consumerism, and gender were placed on stage.

Focusing on the Opéra de Paris tours to the Soviet Union and tours by the Bolshoi, Kirov, and Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko companies to France, I explore the social, ideological, and diplomatic tensions that arose in debates about Franco-Soviet ballet tours. I also shed light on French communists' participation in Franco-Soviet dance diplomacy – contributions hampered by French government policies to remove the communists (specifically members of the Parti Communiste Français and Association France-URSS) from diplomatic influence in the mid-1950s. Investigating how Cold War ballet tours illuminated the shifting politics of the body and gender in both nations, this dissertation deconstructs the figures of the ballerina and the male dancer. I conclude with an analysis of folk-dance tours, which played contrasting political, ideological, and social roles in the French and Soviet contexts, even as both countries mobilized "folk" to bolster competing claims that their nations respected cultural diversity, tradition, and popular art forms. Altogether, this dissertation reveals how a wider public in both countries engaged in and made sense of renewed Franco-Soviet cultural contact during and after the Thaw years.

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Abbreviations

AFAA: Association Française d'Action Artistique

AFU: Association France-URSS

ALAP: Agence Littéraire et Artistique Parisienne

AN-P: Archives Nationales-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine

BMO: Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra

BNDF: Ballet National de Danses Françaises

BNF-Richelieu: Bibliothèque nationale de France-Richelieu

BNF-Tolbiac: Bibliothèque nationale de France-Tolbiac

CND: Le Centre National de la Danse

GARF: State Archive of the Russian Federation (Государственный архив Российской Федерации)

MAE: Centre des Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve

PCF: Parti Communiste Français

RGALI: Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Государственный архив литературы и искусства)

RTLN: Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux

TsGALI: Central State Archive of Literature and Art (Центральный государственный архив литературы и искусства)

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Introduction

Two years before any Soviet dance company set foot in France, French author Maurice Druon reported his impressions of Soviet ballet to a Parisian readership after a 1952 visit to Moscow.[1] While in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, Druon spent nearly every evening at the theater. Though he was not a communist, he proclaimed Soviet ballet to be the most impressive he had ever seen. He remarked upon the precise uniformity between dancers in the Bolshoi and Kirov ballet ensembles and the perfection of movement manifested by each – even non-leading – performer. In Soviet productions, coordination and unity within the company counted above any individual contribution – an approach mobilized to great effect in mass scenes. Just as astounding were the audience members in Moscow and Saint Petersburg theaters. Every night the opera seats were full, and not with the kind of people Druon had grown to expect: the spectators were made up of "all categories of society…workers, functionaries, soldiers, intellectuals."[2]

What is more, no one wore formal eveningwear, even for ballet premieres and galas. Instead, attendees sported somber, simple clothing and showed their appreciation through their steady focus on the stage and ten, sometimes up to fifteen, encores at each performance's end – far more than was typical in French theaters. Druon reserved his only critique for Soviet attire.

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[1] Although Druon had spent time in Moscow and his interview had appeared in the communist publication *France-URSS Magazine*, he did not identify as a communist, instead considering himself a Gaullist. The son of a Russian émigré who committed suicide when Druon was still a child, Druon was a former *resistant* who won the Prix Goncourt in 1948, then went on to become a member of the Académie Française and, later, the French Minister of Cultural Affairs from 1973-1974. In 2000, he published *La France aux ordres d'un cadavre*, castigating the French Communist Party for its subservience to the demands of the Soviet Communist Party since World War II, especially taking the PCF to task for obeying "a cadaver" for years after the Soviet Union's dissolution. Maurice Druon, *La France aux ordres d'un cadavre* (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 2000).

[2] Maurice Druon, interview with Jacques Sylvain, "Que nos deux capitales échangent ce qu'elles ont de parfait: Moscou ses ballets et Paris sa mode," *France-URSS*, June 1952, page 13.

He struggled to understand why a people who showed so much good taste on stage "manifested so little when it came to the art of fashion in real life." Given this situation, he wished that France and Moscow could organize an exchange, in which they share with one another the art forms in which they most excelled: "I would like to see the Bolshoi ballet, as well as the Russian folk dance troupes, come to Paris. And, in exchange, I would like to see our fine arts and creations, our fashion designers, our perfume-makers, our hair stylists, our jewelers, all our French masters of adornment, come to Moscow to 'perform.'"[3] In Druon's perspective, Soviet discipline and cohesion had taken ballet to new heights, but France remained unrivaled when it came to matters of aesthetics and good taste.

Although it apparently did not occur to this lover of the theater to suggest that Soviet dance companies be reciprocated with France's own Opéra de Paris ballet, Druon's notion of a bilateral exchange, featuring dance performances, between two cultural giants was already on the horizon. His commentary on Soviet ballet touched on themes that would become central to Cold War dance debates after 1954, when French and Soviet dancers and ballet companies began to perform in each other's capital cities with some regularity. Some of these tours were bilateral dance exchanges, as in 1958, when the Opéra de Paris ballet performed in Moscow at the same time that the Bolshoi ballet took the stage in Paris. In other cases, pairs and smaller groups of dancers toured separately or performed with the cast of the other country's national ballet troupe. In both countries, the sight of performers from across the "iron curtain" raised new questions about the democratization of theater, the role of popular art in high culture, and the relationship between aesthetics, ideology, and gender.

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[3] Druon, "Que nos deux capitales échangent," 13.

Examining Franco-Soviet dance tours and exchanges between 1954 and 1975, this dissertation addresses how French and Soviet citizens navigated the cultural, ideological, and geographic boundaries that defined their nations through the tumultuous twentieth century. Competition between France and the Soviet Union in the dance world was especially vibrant, since the two countries shared a common heritage, having together developed the tenets of classical and romantic ballet. Yet, for other reasons, too, dance had more to offer than other forms of cultural exchange. As Franco-Soviet dance tours unfolded, observers in both countries responded in ways that wove aesthetic taste with idealized notions of national identity with ideology, conversations that challenged the existing relationship between politics, egalitarianism, and dance in both nations. Despite its aristocratic associations, combatted by authorities in both nations, dance particularly lent itself to drawing in a wide range of voices on questions of ideology, art, and movement. These conversations demonstrated that dance, as the art of bodies in motion, became inextricable from Cold War discussions about mobility and political freedom. The link between mobility and freedom inspired new metaphors, such as the "leap to freedom" (or "bond de la liberté") reported throughout the Cold War years whenever a Soviet dancer defected.[4] Dancers' freedom to move on and offstage became symbolically inseparable from their political freedoms, which is part of how dance exchanges became front page news, especially in Western nations.

Beyond the realm of artistic discourse, these events also facilitated an economic confrontation between Soviet communism and French capitalism. When performers shopped during their tours, this engagement with consumer culture became politicized by local observers

[4] For example, see R.S., "Cette nuit aux Champs-Élysées 23 rappels ont salué le bond de la liberté de Rudolf Noureev," *L'Aurore*, 24-25 June 1961, 8.SW.351(1), BNF-Richelieu.

and the artists themselves. While Soviet critics dismissed France's reputation for unnecessary ornamentation as a symptom of bourgeois emasculation and irrationality, French journalists reported with glee on Soviet ballerinas' Parisian shopping frenzies, which became evidence of the superiority of France's refined brand of capitalism. Finally, as an art that required placing physical bodies onstage, dance introduced new opportunities for French and Soviet audience members to meet and observe real people from across the "iron curtain" for the first time. Performers' bodies, too, became politicized: onlookers assessed the masculinity and femininity of the visiting performers, often seeking explanations for the shape of ballerinas' and *danseurs*' bodies in the national ideology that produced them. Commentators in both countries investigated how capitalism and communism differently shaped dancers' physical aesthetic and movement vocabulary. For instance, stereotypes of muscular, industrious Soviet women informed French observers' interpretations of Soviet ballerina's bodies, while, to some Soviet writers, the fragile, bird-like appearance of French dancers raised doubts about whether capitalist France had cultivated a healthy population.

The case of Franco-Soviet dance exchanges, I argue, demonstrates that the Cold War was fought on cultural as well as military and political frontiers. Far from being confined to decisions made among diplomats, Cold War cultural battles engaged a wide array of people – from journalists, art critics, and performers, to audience members of national theaters. Discussions around dance tours provided a bridge between the two countries, but also revealed the fault lines of Cold War Franco-Soviet relations. As dance tours unfolded, contrasting ideas about aesthetics, gender ideology, the rights to speak and move freely, and the role of populist art in national theater houses came to define how contemporaries understood their nations' differences.

Despite the tensions and dissonances in the wake of Franco-Soviet dance tours, these events also demonstrate the porousness of Cold War boundaries. By analyzing the contradictions sparked by Franco-Soviet ballet exchanges, this dissertation examines the crossroads of dance, politics, gender, and consumer culture to untangle how the "iron curtain" was imagined and constructed by the French and Soviet populations. As the borders around the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc became newly traversable, cultural interaction facilitated by dance tours reverberated in both countries. Some changes unfolded at the diplomatic level.[5] Yet many other transformations resulting from these events would be missed by looking exclusively at diplomatic conversations. How Soviet performers' views changed after their first tourist and shopping experiences in France; French theater administrators' response to growing pressure to democratize ballet after public comparisons with Soviet treatment of opera halls; the ways that notions about men and women on stage changed or solidified after viewers caught their first look at a different model for gender representation on stage: all of these developments, and others examined in this dissertation, depend on putting diplomatic records in conversation with a wider range of voices, especially those found in newspapers, dance publications, memoirs, and theater archives. Understandings of the Cold War boundary between France and the Soviet Union formed through multidirectional interaction between the peoples of both nations, and dance tours became a crucible in which ideas about Franco-Soviet relations crystalized.

[5] For example, the increasing number of Franco-Soviet dance tours planned after 1954 and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs' centralization of French participation in dance tours with the Soviet Union during the mid-to-late 1950s.

Anti-Americanization and Cold War Franco-Soviet Diplomacy

Although Soviet commentators often depicted France as resting complacently in America's pocket, French perspectives reveal more ideological and political ambiguity than traditional East/West Cold War paradigms suggest. After devastating wartime losses followed by liberation from German occupiers, the influx of American dollars through Marshall Plan aid stoked fears of American economic and cultural domination. The Marshall Plan years saw the rise of anti-Americanization sentiment in France – a movement led by, though not limited to, the French Communist Party.[6] Beyond frustration about the recent American military presence in France and concern about the diplomatic and economic strings tied to American aid money, many French commentators and intellectuals feared the uncontrollable spread of a "culture-less" American way of life that accompanied unhampered commercialization. Proponents of this view feared that Coca-Cola would replace red wine; supermarkets would oust charming local boutiques; and American competitors would run French industries out of business. Indeed, future French Minister of Culture André Malraux publicly asserted in 1948 that America had no authentic culture, and that "American culture, once its European element [was] removed, [was] a field of technical knowledge more than it [was] an organic culture."[7] In a postwar order where

[6] France, though officially allied with the United States, had a contentious relationship with American culture and U.S. international affairs. The United States, symbolizing capitalist efficiency and prosperity, emerged after the war as the most influential player on the international stage, rivaled by the Soviet Union, which in turn represented an alternative system rooted in the Communist Party. This new reality required a repositioning of France in the global arena – no easy task, as French officials remained concerned about American economic, political, and cultural domination. Indeed, French President Charles de Gaulle would long begrudge the fact that he was excluded from negotiations at the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences, where Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt (and, after him, Truman) molded the fate of postwar Europe. Although French leadership was no friend of Stalin, it had to contend with the large and relatively popular French Communist Party, which received 28.6% of the vote in the 1946 legislative election.

[7] André Malraux cited by Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 47.

France – and Europe as a whole – appeared militarily and economically outmatched by two new superpowers, culture offered a space where France could still preserve its supremacy.[8]

French diplomats and Ministry of Culture officials prioritized extending French cultural influence, competing with both the Soviet Union and the United States to carve out a place for their nation in the Cold War world. This agenda helps explain why, in May 1954, France became the first Western nation to host a Soviet dance company after World War II.[9] Far from merely submitting to American demands, French officials took the lead on opening up cultural contact with the Soviet Union, hoping to gain an influential role in Cold War diplomatic relations. For their part, Soviet officials viewed furthering Franco-Soviet relations as a way to make ideological inroads in Western Europe, particularly since France (along with Italy) was home to one of Europe's most populous communist parties. Examining this period from the perspective of Franco-Soviet relations reveals how the Cold War played out differently in Western Europe, alongside the traditional American-Soviet framework.

French officials counted on dance to legitimize France's independence and supremacy to both American and Soviet publics. RTLN Administrator Georges Hirsch proclaimed that Opéra de Paris postwar tours would demonstrate that "France ha[d] regained its role as an educator." Dance held a special place in France's arsenal of diplomatic resources, substantiating its credentials as a civilized nation whose artistic accomplishments garnered international admiration and influence. Across the globe dance academies were unified by the French language, from which ballet terminologies got their names. Referencing the ascendant American

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[8] See Grace Allen, "Transnational Commercial Exchange and the Postwar Reconstruction of French National Identity, 1945-1967," PhD diss., (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2017).

[9] This tour was cancelled on the eve of the premiere after the defeat of French military forces at Dien Bien Phu, which preceded the collapse of French Indochina.

ballet companies of the postwar era, Hirsch had confidence that "French dancers, already having shaped the Danish school and the Russian school, [would] now guide the development of American dance."[10]

Historiography

This dissertation transcends a national framework while integrating a wide range of non-government actors who engaged with Franco-Soviet dance tours, revealing how dancers, audience members, and journalists participated in an international dialogue that developed during the Thaw. Since the earliest publications on Franco-Soviet relations in the 1960s, cultural connections "between peoples" (rather than only between states) have become a legitimate, though underexplored, avenue of inquiry.[11] My findings confirm that the notion of East-West difference demarcated by the "iron curtain" was never uncontested or perfectly coherent.[12] Thomas Gomart was among the first to demonstrate that the French public was not a passive bystander to Franco-Soviet relations, and that the French population's equivocal engagement with Soviet culture – contact enabled partly by diplomatic cultural exchanges – merits further

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[10] Correspondence from Georges Hirsch to French President Vincent Auriol, 21 October 1948, Series Opera.Arch.20, Folder 121, BMO.

[11] The first study on this topic, by Maxime Mourin (1967), posited that Franco-Soviet friendship was primarily strategic and limited to state-level interaction – indeed, Mourin argues that Franco-Soviet relations were never an interaction "between peoples." The field remained quiet on Franco-Soviet relations until Marie-Pierre Rey's 1991 study. Rey makes a convincing case for France's significant role in the process of détente – by tracing diplomatic relations between France and the USSR from 1964 to 1974, she argues that France was the first Western power to actively engage in rapprochement with the USSR. Though she includes a brief chapter on the diplomatic exchange of art and culture, Rey argues that Franco-Soviet cultural exchange was a failure, as the French responded with disinterest to Soviet art and film. Maxime Mourin, *Les Relations franco-soviètique (1917-1967)* (Paris: Payot, 1967) and Marie-Pierre Rey, *La Tentation du rapprochement: France et URSS à l'heure de la détente (1964-1974)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991).

[12] See Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

study. But Gomart underestimates the generative impact of Franco-Soviet cultural contact among the population outside diplomatic circles.[13] My approach provides a fresh look at 1950s-60s Franco-Soviet relations by unraveling how Cold War politics functioned at a grassroots level, in addition to looking at more traditional diplomatic channels. For this reason, I rely heavily on press sources and memoirs from both countries. While official propaganda and state representatives tended to insist on irreconcilable ideological and cultural differences dividing Western powers from the Soviet Union, an analysis of popular opinion reveals a different view on Cold War politics.

In the past, ballet has often been ignored among diplomatic historians as a peripheral topic with little consequences for political relations. Perhaps for this reason, only a small number of historians have examined dance in the Cold War.[14] Most of the work on Cold War dance has come from the field of Dance Studies. Naima Prevots's groundbreaking work on dance exchanges remained primarily concerned with the U.S. State Department's instrumentalization of dance for cultural diplomacy, offering little sense of how American tours altered the artistic landscape of countries they visited.[15] More recently, Clare Croft incisively portrayed how Cold War politics were brought to bear on dance aesthetics, gender norms, and national identity, without neglecting how dancers inserted their own critiques of American policy into

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[13] Thomas Gomart, *Double détente: les relations franco-soviétiques de 1958 à 1964* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003).

[14] One of the earliest and best-known examples is historian David Caute, who devoted a chapter of his 2003 study on Cold War culture to Soviet dance defections. David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[15] Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).

choreographic works performed abroad.[16] This scholarship, particularly Croft's bridging of state, artistic, and public actors, offered a strong foundation for my own examination of how intersections of ideology, art, gender, and nation shape the contours of boundaries and difference.

Finally, my research found that gender and the body were critical to how French and Soviet actors conceptualized difference across the East/West divide. Dance scholars Susan Leigh Foster and Ramsay Burt influenced my analysis of gender performativity and dance in Chapters Four and Five, informing my understanding of how gender constructs dialogued with the movement vocabulary assigned to male and female performers.[17] Combining a transnational approach with gender theory elucidates how Cold War boundaries were drawn along gendered lines. Ballet tours are particularly illustrative of multinational gender politics, in this case because both French and Soviet ballet critics paid special attention to how the other nation's dancers conformed to and contradicted norms for displaying male and female bodies on stage. This perspective reveals how postwar geopolitics and Cold War rhetoric were reiterated in the gendered bodies of touring dancers.

Mirroring scholarship on the Cold War in general, existing studies of dance diplomacy have focused overwhelmingly on the United States and the Soviet Union. After all, American-Soviet relations were the mainstage of Cold War politics. Although the first attempted Soviet ballet tour to the West took place in Paris (and was cancelled before it could begin), American

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[16] Clare Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[17] Susan Leigh Foster, "The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe," in *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture, and Power*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1-26. Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1996).

and Soviet dance tours also became regular fixtures of East-West cultural relations. Compared to the well-established French and Russian ballet schools, American ballet was in its infancy.[18] Beyond the work done on American-Soviet dance tours, other influential studies about French or Soviet ballet examine the art domestically, scrutinizing how governments leveraged theater houses to legitimize a national cultural identity.[19] Although looking more through a Soviet lens, Soviet historians have contributed helpful approaches to examining uneven and complex transnational cultural phenomena between France and the Soviet Union.[20]

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[18] Many people within and outside the world of dance scholarship credit the birth of American ballet to the work of Soviet émigré and "father of American ballet" George Balanchine and American Leonid Kirstein, who came together to found the New York City Ballet in 1948. The American Ballet Theatre, founded ten years earlier in 1939, was also the product of American-Russian collaboration between former Bolshoi dancer Mikhail Mordkin and American heiress Lucia Chase. Compared with the centuries-old Opéra de Paris and Mariinsky (later, the Kirov) ballet companies, the New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theater were fledgling dance troupes. Yet both American companies burst onto the international stage, becoming tools for American cultural diplomacy in the same way that French and Soviet national companies did for their respective nations. Indeed, in some cases, American ballet tours to France coincided with major Soviet cultural events in France, such as in 1958, when Bolshoi Company dancers got the opportunity to attend New York City Ballet performances at the Champs Elysées Theater in Paris during their tour to the same city. Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet* (New York: Random House, 2010), 456. Homans wrote one of the few multi-national histories of ballet that cover a wide time span, from Louis XIV's France through the late twentieth century. However, Homans has received criticism for her disregard for dance scholarship – what dance scholar Mark Franco calls "symptomatic of the anti-intellectualism that has long plagued American dance criticism – and for her teleological analysis that portrays ballet's development as building toward and peaking with Balanchine, which amounted to, in Franco's words, "just another pro-Balanchine tract masquerading as history." Mark Franko, Review of *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet*, by Jennifer Homans, *The Drama Review* 56, no. 2 (2012): 198-203. Other reviews of *Apollo's Angels* give more balanced assessments of the book's strengths and weaknesses, notably Sandra Noll Hammond, "Ballet Adieu?" Review of *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet*, by Jennifer Homans, *Dance Chronicle* 35, no. 2 (2012): 259-266. Challenging Homans's account of ballet culminating with Balanchine, dance historian Andrea Harris historicizes Balanchine, demonstrating how his contributions to American dance took place within a wider social, cultural, and political context that contributed both to the creation of modern ballet in the United States and narratives about Balanchine's place within this origin story. See: Andrea Harris, *Making Ballet American: Modernism Before and Beyond Balanchine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[19] Ilyana Karthas, *When Ballet Became French: Modern Ballet and the Cultural Politics of France, 1909-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015). Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

[20] See Michael David-Fox's "Understanding and Loving the New Russia: Mariia Kudasheva as Romain Rolland's Cultural Mediator," from *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), Paula Michaels, *Lamaze: An International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Katerina Clark, *Moscow: The Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

This transnational interpretation contributes a new understanding of French and Soviet political and cultural engagement during the Cold War. Though technically working in alliance with the United States, French diplomats hoped that France could be among the first Western countries to stage bilateral cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union. At the same time, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev aspired to find common ground with France, viewing France as a potential ally in Western Europe.[21] Officials in both countries were motivated to develop Franco-Soviet relations during the Cold War, making clear that the contentious American-Soviet relationship was not generalizable to all Western European nations' dealings with the Soviet Union. The transnational view also illuminates the ways that French and Soviet officials rallied their national dance companies for audiences across the "iron curtain," a process in which domestic and international politics intermingled and were brought to bear on cultural politics in both countries.

Sources and Outline of Dissertation

This dissertation uses a wide array of French and Russian source material culled from nine archives across France and Russia, including the theater archives from the Opéra de Paris, Bolshoi, and Kirov theaters, along with diplomatic records, performers' archives and memoirs, the press, and dance criticism. For the French perspective, I relied heavily on foreign affairs reports from the Centre des Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve (MAE), Opéra de Paris

[21] Khrushchev completed a successful visit to France in 1960, to much local fanfare. President Charles de Gaulle and Khrushchev shared suspicions of German reunification, and Khrushchev hoped to win over de Gaulle and gain his support leading up to the summit about Germany's fate. Khrushchev also described his high respect for the French president, whom he called "one of the most intelligent statements in the world, at least among bourgeois leaders." See William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004), 452.

records from the Archives Nationales-Pierrefitte-sur-Seine (AN-P) and the Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra (BMO), and print media archives from the Bibliothèque nationale de France-Richelieu (BNF-Richelieu). For the Soviet perspective, I primarily used Ministry of Culture documents from the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI, Moscow), supplemented by Kirov theater archives and foreign affairs records from the Central State Archive of Literature and Art (TsGALI, Saint Petersburg) and the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF, Moscow) respectively, along with digitized issues of Soviet newspapers *Izvestia*, *Pravda*, *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, *Sovetskaia Literatura*, *Ogonyok*, and *Literaturnaia Gazeta*.

The stark differences between the French and Soviet sources became a persistent challenge to this project. The French archival record on Franco-Soviet dance exchanges is larger and more accessible. Furthermore, French archival sources provide relatively more insights into the reasoning behind particular decisions and courses of action during these events, as do the more plentiful memoirs of individuals based in France who participated in dance tours. Archival collections from Soviet theaters and Goskonsert (the organization responsible for performance tours) are often missing parts of the correspondence. The authors of many letters did not go beyond bureaucratic necessity, so that the reader is left to guess at motivation. Memoirs help fill some of these gaps. To further complicate matters, the majority of Soviet performers who published memoirs were defectors who secured a book deal along with the international celebrity that accompanied their defections. In these memoirs, performers sought to justify their decisions to leave the Soviet Union and preserve their professional and artistic credentials – typically in a way antagonistic toward Soviet authorities. Soviet press censorship poses challenges to tracing changes in popular opinion, contributing to a false impression that reactions to Franco-Soviet

dance tours did not change over the course of two decades. Memoirs, written with the benefit of hindsight, offer only limited guidance on the cultural impact of the Opéra de Paris's visits to Moscow and Leningrad. Although I sought to give equal attention to the French and Soviet contexts, there remains an imbalance in favor of the tours' larger consequences within France that emerged from this imbalance in the sources.

Unwinding the entanglements between dance, consumer culture, gender, and politics, this dissertation probes questions that shed new light on the role of dance exchanges in the Cold War. How did France and the Soviet Union mobilize dance to align with prescribed political ideologies and promote new visions of their nation's status in the postwar era – and what challenges did they face in this endeavor? How was the course of Franco-Soviet dance diplomacy altered by contributors and participants outside of and in conversation with the governments involved? And finally, how did Franco-Soviet dance tours transform conceptions about dance's intended audience and the social groups the art was meant to serve?

Over the course of six chapters, this dissertation demonstrates how cultural transformations became possible despite the Cold War divide. Franco-Soviet dance tours altered the cultural, diplomatic, and political landscape of both countries during the early Cold War years. Because France and the Soviet Union were ideologically opposed, dance tours brought to the surface assumptions about dance's role in the nation and to whom the nation's ballet most belonged. Specifically, observers and tour participants revealed their assumptions about which social and ethnic groups and what kind of gender norms should be represented on stage, and to what extent dance should reflect the political ideology of the country that produced it.

When it came to the question of social diversity in the opera house, Soviet and French theater administrators were in agreement that national theaters should serve a wide social range

of spectators. However, with less control over the popular media than Soviet cultural leaders, French theater officials combatted the impression that the Opéra de Paris served only the wealthy elite – a grievance thrown in relief by the arrival of Soviet dance companies that made egalitarianism central to their identity. Chapter One examines the social and ideological tension that arose in debates about Franco-Soviet dance tours. These events reshaped preexisting conversations in both countries about political ideology, artistic elitism, and the democratization of ballet. I argue that Soviet ballet tours to France ultimately transformed domestic French cultural politics by informing the way that national theaters were democratized and decentralized in the 1960s and 1970s.

The French and Soviet Ministries of Foreign Affairs had their own aspirations for dance's primary purpose in the Cold War years, when they mobilized the art as a vehicle for expanding cultural influence. Chapter Two elucidates the tensions between diplomatic aspirations and the political and social predicaments posed by Cold War dance exchanges. I argue that, through journalists' fervent press coverage and the close surveillance of dancers' bodies that characterized these events, Franco-Soviet dance tours revealed contrasting definitions of freedom of the press and freedom of mobility – principles around which both sides compromised. Compounding the French government's challenges with controlling the narrative of Franco-Soviet dance tours was a third actor who sought to use dance for their own purposes: the French Communist Party (PCF). Chapter Three focuses on the French communists who initiated Franco-Soviet dance tours in the early postwar years and viewed the tours as a means to cultivate a friendly portrait of the Soviet Union within France. This chapter argues that, though a minoritarian group, French communists cultivated relationships with Soviet artists and politicians that allowed dance to become a key channel for Franco-Soviet cultural relations

throughout the Cold War – a contribution subsequently papered over by French government policies to remove the communists from diplomatic influence.

While different groups scrambled to wield dance's cultural power for their own political and ideological ends, journalists' and dance critics' responses to the tours demonstrated that ballet was also expected to represent normative gender performance. Chapters Four and Five analyze the figures of the ballerina and the male dancer respectively, exploring how Cold War dance exchanges illuminate the shifting politics of the body and gender in both nations. These chapters contend that the bodies of ballerinas and *danseurs* became a key site for negotiating power relations between France and the Soviet Union and constructing conceptions of European Cold War politics among a wide population within and outside diplomatic circles. When dancers' bodies diverged from gender norms for male and female bodies, observers drew on preexisting stereotypes and ideologies about the masculinizing effect of communism and the emasculating influence of capitalism. Rather than accept physical differences from their own artists as aesthetic differences, commentators in both countries attributed these distinctions to ideology – reinforcing the notion that dancers should embody, not deviate from, male and female gender norms.

Although French and Soviet theater officials respected the notion of making theater accessible to a socially diverse community in principle, their approaches to democratizing danced diverged when it came to folk performance. In the view of Soviet theater administrators, "folk" was a progressive, culturally rich genre that belonged on stage. By contrast, the French theater world struggled to accept the idea that folk could be anything but backward and culturally divisive, until the arrival of Soviet folk ensembles in 1955. Although folk performance figured prominently in Cold War dance tours, the genre's role in cultural diplomacy has received almost

no scholarly attention. Chapter Six argues that France and the Soviet Union mobilized their folk performance companies in international tours to launch competing claims that their nations cherished cultural diversity, populism, and "traditional" values. French biases against "folk" as provincial, and the genre's associations with Nazi- and Vichy-era projects supporting the creation of "folk" performance troupes, hindered the foundation of a national French folk troupe. These developments contributed to France's inability to compete with large, well-funded Soviet folk companies, despite French diplomats' repeated demands that France produce higher-quality folk companies throughout the Cold War era.

Together, these chapters show that debates over the identity of dance's audience and the art's limitations for gender, social, and ethnic representation challenged ideas about national opera houses' pedagogical and cultural responsibilities to the nation. As tour participants and local commentators mulled over these ideological, aesthetic, and gender differences, they reflected on the role of dance in their own cities and countries. Dance tours functioned as a corridor of change in the Paris, Moscow, and Leningrad theater worlds, exemplifying the resonating impact of developments in Franco-Soviet diplomacy during and after the Thaw (1953-1964) years. The "iron curtain" was never a stable, solid boundary, nor was it unquestioningly imposed on French and Soviet populations by their respective governments. Transnational ballet tours became a space for negotiation – a crucial channel through which millions of observers on both sides of the East-West divide engaged with and interpreted Cold War politics. Tracing the new encounters sparked by Franco-Soviet ballet tours, this dissertation reveals the making and unmaking of boundaries at the socio-cultural level, as well as the disruptive potential of bodies and ideas that cross borders.

Chapter One: Capitalist Decadence or Communist Decay?: Ballet, Democratization, and Cultural Heritage

Reconstructing French and Soviet theaters after World War II

In the early postwar years, French and Soviet theater administrators faced the task of rebuilding national theaters and mobilizing them under a new world order. The Opéra de Paris functioned throughout World War II, but its director, Jacques Rouché, operated under Vichy control. The Palais Garnier reopened to the public in August 1940, but to a new audience with a preponderance of German soldiers.[22] The works of Jewish composers were banned during the Occupation, and Rouché was pressured to fire the theater's thirty Jewish musicians.[23] Although many of the Opéra's biggest postwar dancers climbed to stardom during the war – such as Yvette Chauviré, Lycette Darsonval, and Janine Charrat – the ranks of male dancers were diminished by the demands of war. From 1941-1944, many male dancers could not take their annual placement exam, and the rosters simply listed them as "prisoners" or "mobilized."[24]

Once the war ended, the Opéra's Maître de Ballet Serge Lifar was brought before a purge committee and expelled from the theater, along with dancer Solange Schwartz, who had performed with Lifar in Vichy.[25] In protest against Lifar's dismissal, several of the Opéra's highest ranked dancers departed with him and joined the Ballets de Monte-Carlo. As the rest of France coped with the memory of Occupation and collaborationism, the Opéra leadership also confronted the task of reconstructing its artistic and cultural role in France after years of German

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[22] Nazi officials influenced the Opéra's repertoire under the Occupation, a time when Hitler's favorite composer, Richard Wagner, dominated France's national stages. Alan Riding, *And the Show Went On: Cultural Life in Nazi-occupied Paris* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 154, 157.

[23] Riding, *And the Show Went On*, 144, 156.

[24] Opéra de Paris exam rosters for 1941, 1942, and 1944, Series 19900035, Carton 55, AN.

[25] Ivor Guest, *Le Ballet de L'Opéra de Paris: Trois siècles d'histoire et de tradition*, (Paris: Flammarion, 2001), 184.

control and cooperation with Nazi officials. After the war, the administrator of the Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux[26] Georges Hirsch sought to restore the theater's dignity – and with it, the Opéra's reputation for entertainment that epitomized French achievement in the arts. Hirsch realized, however, that the public had grown accustomed to the sight of foreign uniforms in the opera house, as well as the theater's reduced wartime budget that produced performances falling short of pre-war standards. Hirsch charged himself with recovering the Opéra's lost esteem. He hoped, for example, that by hosting elegant galas twice a month, the Opera could "restore to our halls the luster of pre-war years, and gradually habituate the public to return to a mode of conduct that aligns with the Palais Garnier's splendor."[27]

As France worked to redefine itself in this new context, the Parisian opera house also struggled to regain its prominent position as figurehead of French culture. The Opéra administration confronted conceptions about the national opera houses' elitism and isolation from mainstream French society – a reputation that challenged the theaters' role as sanctuaries of French culture. It was no coincidence that, in the midst of this conflict, the French Ministry of Culture was born in 1959. The debate unfolding around the national opera houses echoed a broader conversation in French society and politics about who and what national culture represented – a discussion that amplified around ballet exchanges with the Soviet Union, events that attested to new possibilities for the role of culture within the nation.

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[26] The Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux was a French public institution that existed from 1939-1978. The organization offered a venue for dual management of the Opéra de Paris and the Opéra-Comique. The director of the RTLN handled financial and artistic matters for both national theaters.

[27] Correspondence from Georges Hirsch to the Préfet de la Seine Monsieur Verlomme, 16 October 1946, Series Opéra.Arch.20, Folder 117, BMO.

Both French and Soviet governments benefited from special state departments devoted to defining and promoting their national cultures.[28] In 1958, parliamentary deputy Pierre Leotard insisted on expanding the funding available to the French national ballet company, highlighting that France's reputation depended on maintaining its *corps de ballet*. Leotard reasoned, "we must not forget that it is always on ballet that we rely when France needs to honor famous visitors. Isn't it for the sake of prestige that the State must pay this elite company well?"[29] Shortly after its foundation in 1959, the French Ministry of Culture organized a meeting of state officials who managed any national performance groups who "would be called upon to carry out tours, especially abroad."[30] Such tours became part of a broad strategy to redefine and circulate the best of French culture at home and abroad. This endeavor, as Chapter Three attests, involved shutting non-state organizations, notably the French Communist Party, out of access to the planning of Franco-Soviet artistic exchanges.[31]

While the French Ministry of Culture emerged from the exigencies of recovering France's status in postwar Europe, centralized management of national culture was nothing new to the Soviet Union, whose Ministry of Culture was founded in 1936. In the 1930s, the regime coopted ballet, and other nineteenth century Russian literary and artistic productions, to leverage culture as evidence of the Soviet Union's legitimacy. In this project, the Bolshoi Theater became

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[28] The Soviet and French Ministries of Culture, in conjunction with each country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, played a central role in initiating and coordinating dance exchanges.

[29] Pierre de Léotard, "La Danse devant le Budget," *Cahiers de la Danse*, January 1958, 4.

[30] Correspondence from Secretary General of the Ministère d'État chargé des Affaires culturelles to A.M. Julien, 12 November 1959, Series 19900035, Carton 10, AN.

[31] See Chapter Three.

a jewel in the regime's cultural crown.[32] Specifically, classical dance became a tool to demonstrate that the Soviet Union had cultivated a well read, artistically engaged population. During the Great Purge of 1936-8, Soviet Party officials contemplated ways to revolutionize culture, replacing "bourgeois" traditions with communist norms of *kul'turnost'*, or "culturedness", which would permeate and unite all social groups. This civilizing mission within the Soviet Union sought to alter citizens in a variety of ways, encouraging appropriate personal hygiene, dress, private life, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to Marxism-Leninism.[33]

However, this was far from a seamless process. In 1936, *Pravda* published an anonymous editorial titled "Baletnaia fal'sh" ("Balletic Falsehood"), which eviscerated ballet as conservative, frivolous, and false in its portrayals of real life.[34] "Baletnaia fal'sh" set off an anti-formalism campaign in ballet, during which opportunities for experimentation were severely constrained and new ballets featured only limited classical dance vocabulary.[35] In early 1941, as the Germans marched toward Moscow, the Bolshoi Theater was temporarily uprooted to Kuybishev. The following fall, however, some dancers were called back to the Bolshoi Theater, tasked with providing a distraction for Muscovites anxious about an impending German invasion. The repertoire – it was ordered – must be classical ballets, not the contemporary works

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[32] Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 66.

[33] Catriona Kelly and Vadim Volkov, "Directed Desires: Kul'turnost' and Consumption," in *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution, 1881-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 295.

[34] Specifically, the author insisted that contemporary ballets incorporate folk themes by visiting the countryside and studying rural peoples, instead of depending on inauthentic folk motifs from nineteenth-century ballet. By this logic, authentic folk dance was considered Soviet, whereas mannered classical dance was not. "Formalism" was the genre assigned to any artwork that prioritized appearance or form over the piece's social purpose or ideological content. By the mid-1930s, "formalist" came to stand in for Western-influenced, modernist, or pessimistic artwork, in contrast with the realism and optimism found in folk and folk-inspired artistic traditions. See Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 60-61.

[35] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 60-63.

whose peasants and workers offered little to make audiences forget the war.[36] In contrast to the Opéra de Paris's loss of its artistic director after accusations of collaborationism and the exodus of lead dancers to Monte Carlo, the Bolshoi company's wartime tenacity became part of the company's proud patriotic legacy in the postwar period. Indeed, the troupe managed not just to survive but to stage two premieres – *Cinderella* (1945) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1946) – both written on classical themes and both of which became key additions to the Bolshoi repertoire after the war.[37] By the 1950s, despite pressure from the regime to "Sovietize" ballet, classical ballets like *Swan Lake* and *Romeo and Juliet* continued to dominate Soviet repertoires.[38]

After World War II, the Soviet Union had appeared to succeed economically and militarily, just as Stalin gained territory and exerted his political and ideological influence across Eastern Europe, creating the Eastern Bloc. Cultivating Soviet culture legitimized these accomplishments and demonstrated that the Soviet Union rivaled Western powers in every sphere. This cultural mission carried special importance, as in the West Russians were often stereotyped as exotic barbarians – a cliché that appeared justified to many Europeans as tales circulated about the rape of German women by Russian soldiers after Berlin fell to Soviet forces in April-May 1945.[39] The imperial art of ballet was implicated in this transformation of Russian

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[36] Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (London: 4th Estate, 2016), 311-313

[37] Both ballets were composed by Sergei Prokofiev, who had returned from emigration in 1927. *Romeo and Juliet* had first premiered at the Kirov Theater in 1940 but was new to the Bolshoi Theater in 1946. See Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential*, 319-329 and V. M. Krasovskaya, ed., *Sovetskii Baletnyi Teatr* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Iskusstvo, 1976), 137.

[38] Because balletic conservatism was often read as resistance to the regime, the Bolshoi and Kirov companies were pressured to waste time on planning for contemporary ballets that often never reached audiences. Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 95.

[39] See Atina Grossmann, "A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers," *October* 72 (1995), 60 and Atina Grossman, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

culture. The Party commissioned new ballets to educate the population and nurture an optimistic, patriotic attitude, providing working-class audiences with free tickets to encourage their attendance.[40] The Party also pressured choreographers to alter classical ballets – which due to their popularity remained in Soviet companies' repertoire throughout the postwar period – by adjusting their plotlines to correspond with Party values.[41] The Soviet Ministry of Culture presided over national theater houses long before the companies began to tour the West and carefully monitored balletic creations that would be performed abroad. In postwar decades, Soviet and French governments shared a keen interest in exerting centralized control over their national culture and the way their countries' artistic feats appeared to international audiences.

"Artistic Ambassadors": How Postwar Franco-Soviet Dance Exchanges Became Possible

Scholar Bernard Jeu observed in 1968 that the preponderance of dance exchanges compared with other Franco-Soviet cultural events resulted from the art's central role in both French and Soviet tradition, and the fact that classical dance found its origins in both nations.[42] As the two governments increasingly relied on dance tours to extend their cultural influence and political legitimacy, postwar dance tours far outnumbered those of prewar years. Tours were also facilitated after World War II by more frequent, less expensive air travel, which permitted transporting an entire dance company in a matter of hours.[43] From among both countries' artistic

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[40] Ezrahi, *The Swans of the Kremlin*, 15.

[41] Ezrahi, *The Swans of the Kremlin*, 113-114.

[42] Bernard Jeu, "La Coopération Culturelle Franco-Soviétique," *Revue Tiers Monde*, 9, 35-36 (1968), 905.

[43] Stéphanie Gonçalves, *Danser pendant la guerre froide, 1945-1968* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018), 68.

resources, ballet emerged as among the most effective for projecting cultural strength – perhaps because the art combined many aspects of creative production: musical composition and performance; the modeling and painting that constituted stage decorations; fashion and costume design; the literary source material that underpinned a ballet's plot; the technology required to accomplish stage effects; and the dance style itself. During Franco-Soviet dance tours, each of these arenas received careful analysis, which filtered performances through popular conceptions about ballet's role in society, the relationship between aesthetic and ideology, and – not least – heated Cold War rhetoric.

These debates engaged members of the public, artists in the dance world, and high-level diplomats and politicians, bringing together people at many levels of French and Soviet society. In the two decades after Stalin's death, France and the Soviet Union hosted each other's ballet performers – including full companies and pairs of dancers – about ten times each. As Chapter Six explains, Soviet ballet tours to France were far outnumbered by Soviet and Eastern Bloc folk tours, which came to France at about triple the rate of ballet tours. Beyond the relative frequency of Franco-Soviet Cold War dance tours, qualities intrinsic to the art of dance provoked conversations about politics and ideology in a way unlike other forms of cultural contact. Classical dance was forged during centuries-old intellectual exchange between France and Russia, and – because of this history – both countries considered the art foundational to their national culture. Dance exchanges were also particular because they attracted large audiences. Over the course of the Cold War, thousands of ticketholders in both countries saw the other nation's dancers.[44] Beyond that, many others read about the performances in local newspapers.

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[44] Thomas Gomart estimates that nearly four million people in France attended performances by Soviet artists from 1953 to 1968. Thomas Gomart, *Double Détente: les relations franco-soviétiques de 1958 à 1964* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003), 89, 407.

Ballet Companies	Folk Ensembles
1954: Blend of performers from the Bolshoi and Stanislavsky and Nemirovitch-Danchenko Company (CANCELLED on eve of the premiere)	1955: Moiseyev Company
1956: Stanislavsky and Nemirovitch-Danchenko Ballet Company	1957: Beryozka Company
October 1957-January 1958: Liane Daydé and Michel Renault	1957: Etorki Company
1958: Opéra de Paris Ballet	1957: Caucasian Dance Company
1958: Yvette Chauviré	1958: Dancers and Singers of the Volga Ensemble
1958: Soviet State Ballet Soloists Ensemble	
1958: Bolshoi Ballet Company	1959: Ukrainian Folk Ensemble
1960: Ludmilla Tcherina	1960: Song and Dance of the Soviet Army Ensemble
1960: Yvette Chauviré	
1960: Liane Daydé and Michel Renault	
1961: Claude Bessy and Attilio Labis	
1961: Kirov Ballet Company	
1962: Vladimir Bourmeister	1962: Moiseyev Company
1962: Maya Plisetskaya	
1962: Liane Daydé and Michel Renault	1963: Song and Dance of the Soviet Army Ensemble
1964: Maya Plisetskaya and Nicolas Fadeytchev	1964: Beryozka Company
1964: Stars of the Soviet Ballet Ensemble	
1965: Kirov Ballet Company	1965: Caucasian Dance Company
1965: Christiane Vlassy and Attilio Labis	1966: Song and Dance of the Soviet Flotilla
1967: Six Bolshoi dancers including Helena Riabinkina and Vladimir Roma	1966: Moiseyev Company
December 1969-January 1970: Opéra de Paris Ballet	1969: Ukrainian Song and Dance Ensemble
1971: Maya Plisetskaya	1971: Song and Dance of the Soviet Flotilla
1972: Bolshoi Ballet Company	1971: Moiseyev Company
1973: Maya Plisetskaya	
1975: The Young Ballet of Moscow	1974: Beryozka Company
1977: Opéra de Paris Ballet	
1977: Bolshoi Ballet Company	

Table 1: Franco-Soviet dance tours, 1954-1977. Blue indicates French companies or performers who traveled to Moscow, and red indicates Soviet companies or performers who traveled to France.

In 1945, there was a long diplomatic road to be traveled before Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges could become possible. After the devastation of the Second World War, both France and the Soviet Union undertook the challenge of rebuilding their national image in a world with new political, economic, military, and cultural parameters. As France recovered from years of German occupation, French officials recalibrated their nation's position in a context where Europe no longer reigned supreme. In the two decades after the war's end, France lost its grasp on many of its colonies, most notably Indochina, Tunisia, and Algeria, in prolonged violent and costly conflicts.[45]

The Soviet Union found itself in quite the opposite situation. For decades prior to World War II, the Soviet Union had struggled to establish its legitimacy on the world stage. Many onlookers abroad asserted that the Bolshevik Revolution could not sustain a lasting government, especially after centuries of Russian imperial rule. Only in 1933 – less than a decade before the start of World War II – was the Soviet Union officially recognized by the United States. Once the war began, the Soviet Union proved a powerful ally, Stalin's 1939 nonaggression pact with Adolf Hitler notwithstanding. Over twenty million Soviet people lost their lives in the war, and Soviet officials felt that their nation's sacrifices had been the price of forestalling the Nazi takeover of Europe – a loss that, Soviet officials felt, was never completely recognized nor compensated for during postwar negotiations with Britain, France, and the United States.[46]

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[45] Herman Lebovics, *Mona Lisa's Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French* Culture (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century* Europe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

[46] See Francine Hirsch, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg: A New History of the International Military Tribunal after World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Still, the immediate postwar years saw the pinnacle of the Soviet Union's international reputation. Communism had been legitimized as a political and ideological framework that produced a nation powerful enough to have defeated the largest threat of the twentieth century: Nazism. In the mid-to-late 1940s, communism's popularity mirrored that of the Soviet Union. The French and Italian communist parties enjoyed unprecedented success during these years. Yet outside the confines of the Cominform (1947-1956) – a resurrection of the old Comintern, which had connected communist parties around the world to party leadership in Moscow – the postwar Soviet Union worked toward improving its international status in relative isolation. French diplomats discussed goals for furthering relations with the Soviet Union but bemoaned that the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs would only agree to diplomatic events that furthered Soviet interests with no reciprocal benefit to France (e.g., agreeing to allow France to host Soviet performers, while not admitting French performers to tour in the Soviet Union). For this reason, French officials asserted, Soviet diplomatic events in the time of Stalin amounted to Soviet propaganda. The death of Stalin in March 1953 marked one of the most important turning points in twentieth-century European history. Although threats of nuclear war would loom large for decades afterward, 1954 brought possibilities for cultural, diplomatic, and economic collaboration to a degree not possible since World War II.

In this context of global power transitions and restoration, ballet emerged as a vital cultural and diplomatic tool to further Soviet and French influence. French and Soviet dance companies toured internationally to maintain their reputations as anchors and innovators in balletic tradition. The nations' dance troupes also carried political weight. Soviet ballet showed the world that the Soviet Union was a "civilized" nation capable of first-rate cultural productions. The French, on the other hand, showcased ballet to confirm their nation's cultural

preeminence as part of a larger project to assert France's global influence and counter cultural Americanization. Although individual dance companies stood to gain international prestige from tours abroad, in both France and the Soviet Union, the initiation of dance tours was primarily a top-down affair. As early as 1951, the French and Soviet ambassadors discussed the possibility of bringing a Soviet dance troupe – the Moiseyev company – to Paris. This idea was dismissed by French diplomats because Soviet officials had not yet agreed to receive a reciprocal French company and hosting the Moiseyev ensemble in Paris would "only serve the propaganda of communist organizations."[47]

French diplomatic officials declared that cultural exchanges with Moscow could only take place under complete reciprocity, with the condition that they remain "cultural and not propagandistic."[48] On the other hand, French diplomats reasoned, by inhibiting cultural contact with the Soviet Union, the French government only confirmed Soviet propaganda's claims of a "Western iron curtain,"[49] kept in place by a suspicious United States and its servile Western allies. Several years passed before, in the eyes of French diplomats, conditions of bilateralism could be met. With Nikita Khrushchev's rise to power came a key shift in Soviet foreign policy. Khrushchev appeared more open to bilateral cultural exchanges, alleviating French officials' longstanding concern that Franco-Soviet cultural relations would be unilateral and therefore could only serve Soviet ends. 1954 brought the first bilateral performance exchange between the two countries, when the Comédie Française theatrical ensemble performed in Moscow and a

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[47] Note on Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 18 June 1951, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

[48] Note on Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 18 June 1951, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

[49] Note on Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 18 June 1951, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

Soviet ballet ensemble came to Paris.[50] The following year, the Moiseyev Ensemble completed a tour in Paris to wide acclaim.

Building on this progress, French ambassadors began negotiations to establish a committee dedicated to streamlining Franco-Soviet cultural relations. The French Embassy staff clarified their motives for developing this relationship: access to the Soviet population offered an unprecedented opportunity to spread French influence and shape the fate of the Soviet Union. As one French Embassy report argued, "If, instead of passively enduring an expansion of contacts with the [Soviet Union], Western democracies take the initiative in increasing cultural activities in communist countries, they could – without any new risks – guide the exchanges to serve their own interests."[51] The United States and Britain had already created special government organizations devoted to coordinating relations with communist nations. French officials felt that, unless they followed suit, France risked falling behind in terms of influence and leaving itself susceptible to infiltration from "the East."[52]

French diplomats believed that culture held the key to enhancing France's position during the Cold War. By April 1956, French diplomatic officials had successfully created the Comité des Relations Est-Ouest, which, in its first year, enjoyed a budget of 56 million francs for organizing technical, academic, student, and cultural exchanges. Cultural exchanges received the largest slice of the budget at 23 million francs.[53] French ambassador to the Soviet Union Maurice

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[50] However, the Soviet ballet tour was cancelled on the eve of the premiere when French forces in Indochina were defeated in May 1954. For more details on the cancelled 1954 Soviet ballet tour, see Chapter Three.

[51] Memorandum for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 10 February 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

[52] Note to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 21 February 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

[53] Note to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 21 February 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE. The Comité's 56 million franc budget amounts to 419,677 Euros in 2021. (Converted using the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques Franc-Euro currency converter: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2417794).

Dejean asserted that the Soviet Union's new interest in cultural interaction with the West especially benefitted France, which enjoyed "a universally favorable bias in this domain."[54]

While talks over the creation of the Comité Est-Ouest were underway, French diplomats took steps toward creating a Franco-Soviet Commission Mixte, which would include both French and Soviet representatives. Regular meetings of this Commission, working in collaboration with the Comité Est-Ouest, would exert control over Franco-Soviet cultural relations, which until that point, according to one French official, had unfolded "with a degree of confusion."[55] Failing to form a separate Commission for France could also, French officials feared, contribute to Soviet representatives perceiving France as part of an amorphous "West," whose policies fell neatly in line with American demands. The French embassy sought to clarify and distinguish its relationship to the Soviet Union from that of the United States, and the Commission Mixte offered a means to this end.[56] Under the direction of the French General Director of Cultural and Technical Affairs Roger Seydoux and the Soviet president of the State Committee for Foreign Cultural Relations Yuri Zhukov, the Commission Mixte negotiated a series of cultural exchanges for 1958, including the first successful bilateral Franco-Soviet dance tours – only the first of many Franco-Soviet dance exchanges to follow throughout the Cold

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[54] Confidential report from Maurice Dejean at the French embassy in Moscow, 28 February 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE. In January 1964 it was made public that, with the help of a Russian dancer, Dejean had been caught in a "honey trap," a strategy used in Soviet espionage. The KGB blackmailed Dejean by threatening to expose evidence of his extramarital affair with a woman hired by the secret service. After this revelation, Dejean lost his position as French Ambassador to Moscow and was replaced by Philippe Baudet. Dejean maintained a close relationship with Charles de Gaulle but never recovered his professional reputation. Gomart, *Double Détente*, 41-44.

[55] Report by E. Manac'h for the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 7 September 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

[56] Note to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 21 February 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE. The Soviet Minister of Cultural Affairs Nikolai Mikhailov had himself suggested the creation of a Franco-Soviet Commission Mixte a few months prior, perhaps inspired by the recent successful foundation of a Belgian-Soviet Commission Mixte. E. Report by E. Manac'h for the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 7 September 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

War.[57] After the creation of the Commission Mixte, dance tours became a regular part of Franco-Soviet cultural relations for the remainder of the Cold War.[58]

Ballet featured prominently in both French and Soviet cultural heritage. For this reason, Franco-Soviet dance exchanges drew attention from ballet lovers, political commentators, dancers, diplomats, and journalists across the political spectrum, all of whom engaged in and made sense of Cold War cultural interaction. Through dance tours, the vernacular of ballet became entrenched in Cold War political and ideological debates about which country better provided – materially and culturally – for its people. Dance became a point around which debates on cultural politics and national identity flared. These discussions tapped into contested notions of which form of egalitarianism – communist or republican – had been most successful in French and Soviet national theaters. The two countries had different stakes in this competition. French commentators sought to demonstrate that their nation had recovered from its damaged status, attaining the cultural heights for which the country had been respected in pre-war years. Soviet cultural affairs officials, instead, employed dance tours to demonstrate that the Soviet Union

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[57] After significant delays produced by French outrage over the Soviet quelling of the Hungarian Revolution in October-November 1956, the Franco-Soviet Commission Mixte held its first meeting in September 1957. Bernard Jeu, "La Coopération Culturelle," 899.

[58] Many French dancers appeared in the Soviet Union after 1956, including: Liane Daydé and Michel Renault performed at the Bolshoi in 1957; the Opéra de Paris performed at the Bolshoi in 1958; in 1960, Yvette Chauviré and Yuli Algaroff performed in Moscow; in 1961, Claude Bessy and Attilio Labis performed in Leningrad, the latter returning with Claire Motte in 1964. In December 1969-January 1970, the Opéra de Paris performed at the Bolshoi theater. A bilateral company exchange between the Opéra de Paris and the Bolshoi had also been planned for 1965, but was cancelled by Minister of Culture André Malraux for budgetary reasons. At the same time, a number of Soviet companies performed in France, including: the Moiseyev company in 1955; the Stanislavsky company in 1956; the Beryozka ensemble and another Soviet folk company in 1957; in 1958, the Bolshoi company performed in Paris; in 1959, a Ukrainian folk company; the Singers and Dancers of the Soviet Army in 1960; the Kirov company in 1961; the Moiseyev company again in 1962; and, again, the Singers and Dancers of the Red Army in 1963; in December 1969-January 1970, the Bolshoi company performed in Paris. See Bernard Jeu, "La Coopération Culturelle," 905.

could complete its military and political victory by excelling in the cultural realm and outshining France – the birthplace of classical ballet – onstage.

This rivalry was infused with Cold War rhetoric, yet also inseparable from each country's domestic debates about the role of national culture and who should be served by and represented in national theater houses. In both countries, dance and Ministry of Culture professionals sought to modernize ballet in a way that would make it compatible with the contemporary French and Soviet nations. For French theater administrators, this project meant combatting ballet's elitism by removing the art from its ivory tower and allowing the art to reach wider audiences. To Soviet dance specialists, however, these meager attempts at broadening ballet's public were insufficient: modern dance needed not only to attract a socially diverse audience, but to make the theater a space where "the people" would feel like equal participants in the work carried out on national stages. For ballet's existence to be justified, the art's "trivial" elements – movement without meaning and excessively ornate costumes – had to be trimmed away in favor of "authentic," realistic costumes and characters.[59] With these different approaches to ballet aesthetics, the Opéra de Paris and leading Soviet ballet companies[60] represented alternative models for culture's role in a modern nation. Throughout the twenty years after the start of postwar Franco-Soviet dance tours, these events stoked French anxieties about their own limitations on democratizing ballet, a facet of French culture that remained mired in elitism, financially and socially inaccessible to many citizens.

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[59] Crucial to this understanding of "authenticity" was integrating popular dances and musical motifs into Soviet ballet, as will be examined below.

[60] This chapter deals primarily with the Bolshoi company, the Kirov company, and the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko company.

When the first Soviet company arrived in Paris in 1954, the Bolshoi ballet loomed as a powerful point of reference amidst fears that French ballet would not recover its prewar cultural prominence. French dance critics asserted that Soviet centralized planning provided dance companies with resources at a rate incomparable to their French counterparts. Soviet officials supposedly poured all requested resources into the treasured Bolshoi Theater, and the Soviet government had successfully attracted a broad yet discerning audience to its theaters. As one Opéra de Paris administrator explained just before the attempted Franco-Soviet theatrical exchange in 1954, "Soviet ballet is coming to Paris, and we need to ensure that the competition arising from this visit does not place us in a diminished position. We certainly do not have the ambition to request resources comparable to that of the Moscow opera. If our information is correct, this single theater is provided an unlimited line of credit, which amounts to practically ten times the credit allocated to our two Parisian opera stages." With only paltry funding compared to that of Soviet theaters, he suggested, French opera houses had "no chance to compete."[61] The fear of falling behind in cultural achievement motivated popular discontent with the Opéra de Paris administration, which received hundreds of letters from disgruntled audience members who bemoaned the fact that French ballet had fallen woefully short of its pre-war standards.[62] Even a decade after the first postwar Soviet dance tour to Paris, French diplomats battled Soviet reporters' claims that the French government no longer valued art and deprived its national theaters of necessary financial support, leaving Parisians with fewer resources for cultural edification.[63] This anxiety spurred on new plans for reforming the Opéra to meet

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[61] Report on the Opéra ballet, 31 March 1954, Series Opéra.Arch.20, Folder 124, BMO.

[62] See "Franco-Soviet Dance Exchanges and the Democratization of French Ballet" below.

[63] In 1966, the Parisian Théâtre de l'Ambigu closed. Shortly thereafter, a press release and an article published in *Sovetskaia Kul'tura* blamed the closing on excessively high taxes and the absence of official support. The article

demands for social equality and democratization of the arts – visions for which Soviet theaters provided a model for comparison.

In the postwar years, the Opéra de Paris struggled to rebuild itself anew amid fears that French theater had lost its role as the torchbearer of French culture. As one reporter stated, "A state theater has a prestigious role: it is the cultural barometer of the country." Only state investment, public engagement, and innovations at pace with modern life would "keep France in the [cultural] role it has always played: the first."[64] Administrators fretted that audiences were no longer so large or enthusiastic, and the theater's financial woes only compounded concerns that the Opéra would have to make compromises in the quality and quantity of new productions. Theater was at risk of becoming an antiquated and pretentious art that did not appeal to French youth; theater officials feared that, as this generation matured, the Opéra house would become obsolete. One proposed solution was to "democratize" French ballet by making the theater more accessible to all citizens through lower ticket prices and by implementing advertising campaigns that would attract more diverse audiences to the theater house. The arrival of Soviet ballet companies intensified the debate over what ballet should look like and to whom it belonged.

Soviet Party officials prided themselves on opening national theater house doors to all audiences, especially the working class. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Soviet theaters began offering concerts for factory workers and distributed free tickets to performances. Choreographer

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described the dilapidated state of the theater building and claimed that the theater could hardly afford to pay its actors. The theater, the article asserted, had been allowed to close by "a lack of interest on the part of the French government." French diplomats were vexed about Soviet newspapers' "habit" of claiming that "in capitalist regimes, the community does not care about theaters or artists." Correspondence from Philippe Baudet to Minister of Foreign Affairs Maurice Couve de Mureville, 8 December 1965, Series 554INVA, Carton 279, MAE.

[64] Jean Silvant, "La Saison de ballet: à propos de Giselle, ou faut-il 'rénover' les chefs-d'oeuvre?" *Toute la Danse*, October 1954.

Fedor Lopukhov understood dancers' discomfort and confusion when the Mariinsky[65] company first performed for this new audience in 1919. He recalled, "When the auditorium, which had been intended for the 'cream' of the capital's society, filled with workers and peasants in grey greatcoats, in leather jackets, in shawls – in work and war clothes, now and then even with rifles in their hands – everybody's heart began to beat anxiously…"[66] The imperial ballet company was rooted in aristocratic life and was built to serve the nobility. After the Revolution, the Communist Party repurposed ballet as a means to educate the proletariat and peasants through balletic art, which became a vessel for culture and – with mixed success – propaganda.[67]

French ballet companies faced a similar dilemma, although their need to adapt to new audiences grew out of the desire to remain relevant to modern French society rather than an abrupt shift in government policy. French classical ballet emerged during the reign of Louis XIV, who was himself a dancer. He structured his court around ballet by placing members of the nobility on stage and organizing theater seats according to rank – hierarchies that persist in many professional ballet companies today. By the twentieth century, however, ballet's monarchical and aristocratic heritage no longer translated into French republicanism.[68] French Opéra administrators grappled with recrafting ballet according to contemporary French values, without eliminating the cultural and artistic traditions intrinsic to balletic art. Could the Opéra attract new

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[65] The Mariinsky became the Kirov Company in 1934 after the assassination of Sergei Kirov.

[66] Fedor Lopukhov cited by Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 16.

[67] Although the Soviet Communist Party sponsored ballets about carefree life on the *kolkhoz*, triumphant Five Year Plans, and factory work, Soviet audiences manifested clear preferences for classical ballets like *Swan Lake* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (London: 4th Estate, 2016), 375.

[68] Ilyana Karthas, *When Ballet Became French: Modern Ballet and the Cultural Politics of France, 1909-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 26.

audiences without alienating its former audiences? Could dance be made accessible to lower-income viewers without diminishing the caché that a night at the Opéra had long carried? Soviet ballet offered an alternative model for how this could be achieved.

Franco-Soviet dance exchanges also opened up new concerns for Soviet cultural policy. In 1947, Soviet propagandist Andrei Zhdanov implemented his campaign against "servility before the West," which sought to minimize foreign influences in favor of strictly Russian accomplishments.[69] Khrushchev's rise to Party Secretary in 1953 marked a shift away from Zhdanovism. For the first time since the war, Soviet citizens gained access to Western cultural influence and began sending cultural emissaries to Western Europe and the United States. Official attitudes toward the West no longer reflected Stalinist rhetoric asserting the danger and inferiority of cultural heritages outside Soviet boundaries. Instead, Khrushchev claimed that art, history, and technology could be learned from the West. According to Khrushchev's approach, Soviet citizens' measured contact with Western Europe and other countries would empower them to digest, integrate, and eventually overtake foreign cultural accomplishments, technology, and standards of living.[70] Soviet conceptions of the "West" often flattened and obfuscated the diversity of European and American countries, but Soviet officials delineated between Western European and American cultures, which did not comprise exactly the same "West." Western Europe, especially France and Italy, offered civilization, history, and art, rooted in an ancient cultural legacy. Informed Soviet citizens could enrich themselves by studying and learning from

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[69] Anne E. Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad After Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 138.

[70] Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World,* 132.

these cultures. American culture, in contrast, was considered to be young and dangerous, shallowly based in unfettered consumer desire and decadence.[71]

For this reason, during the 1950s the Soviet government allowed Soviet travelers to visit Western Europe—although in small numbers and only after investigating each tourist's political reliability. Historian Anne Gorsuch examined how Soviet tourists – usually financially comfortable members of the Communist Party – were tasked with performing as worldly Soviet citizens while abroad, spreading knowledge about their home country just as they absorbed the West's cultural and technological accomplishments.[72] Bringing French ballet to Soviet stages offered a way to cultivate an educated population at home. Those unqualified or unable to travel abroad still had access to cultural enrichment, which would transform the Soviet people into more a cosmopolitan, modern citizenry, along the lines of Khrushchev's new approach to the Soviet Union's place in an increasingly global world. But where was the line between enlightened appreciation of French culture and criticism of Soviet society? Ballet was a realm in which both France and the Soviet Union claimed supremacy, leading Soviet dancers, diplomats, and journalists to interpret differences between the two ballet styles through a Cold War framework. When it came to dance, Soviet critiques suggested, socialism best served ballet. Through dance tours, Soviet officials sought to differentiate the Soviet Union culturally, just as they illustrated their country's openness to dialogue with the West — over which, in the ballet world at least, they declared their tradition superior.

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[71] Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World*, 140.

[72] Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World*, 116.

Franco-Soviet Dance Exchanges and the Democratization of French Ballet

Dance exchanges with the Soviet Union struck at and provoked new questions about the relationship between ballet, national identity, and inequality that were already underway in the early postwar years. From 1945-1975, the Paris Opéra administration received hundreds of letters from audience members, dance critics, and ballet-lovers poised to offer their opinions and complaints about French dance. Many letter writers were persuaded that the Opéra de Paris's productions represented the cultural wealth of the French nation, and that France's reputation depended on maintaining high-quality dance productions. Other letters expressed concern about how French productions appeared to foreigners who attended performances both in Paris and during the company's tours abroad. This correspondence with the opera administration demonstrated how audience members desired an active role in cultivating France's positive image. They also emphasized their right — as French citizens — to attend Opéra de Paris performances, no matter how opulent the venue.

The Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux's (RTLN) concerns about reviving French dance after World War II were mirrored in commentary from audience members and appreciators of French theater.[73] Because they felt deeply invested in how the theater represented French culture, members of the public were appalled when performances did not meet their standards, often citing the presence of foreigners in the theater to justify their outrage and humiliation. Performances in the Palais Garnier, in their view, unfolded under other nations' eyes through the many foreign audience members who flocked to the prestigious Paris opera house. For many who frequented the theater, the quality of Opéra productions reflected on the general state of

[73] The Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux was a French public institution that existed from 1939-1978. The organization offered a venue for dual management of the Opéra de Paris and the Opéra-Comique. The director of the RTLN handled financial and artistic matters for both national theaters.

French culture. Anxieties about falling behind intensified as dance tours became more frequent in the late 1950s. Madame Léon Margot wrote to the administrator, calling attention to the decline of the Paris Opéra — evidenced in part by the poor selection of productions in the repertoire. In 1957, stage manager Georges Hirsch had recently become administrator of the RTLN, and she expressed hope that Hirsch could prevent the decline of the Parisian theatrical arts. She wrote, "We, humiliated Frenchmen, have not seen the Opéra in first place for so long. We appreciate that you have given us great hope that it will, once again, go far."[74]

Letters to the administrator reflected a feeling that French ballet had not lived up to its traditional reputation, and that this degradation of French performing arts reflected on the nation as a whole. The Palais Garnier was also a popular tourist destination, and the number of foreign audience members escalated the stakes of Opéra performances. Monsieur Legendre attended a performance that, he felt, offered insufficient décor and mediocre acting. Writing to the Opéra administrator, he commented, "What publicity for the many foreigners [in the audience], and their remarks are not always complimentary…This is very distressing, believe me, to a heart that holds our French merits dear."[75] Foreign audience members' opinions of Paris Opéra performances mattered because tourists brought these judgments back to their home countries, either damaging or expanding French cultural prestige in turn. By writing to the Opéra administration, ordinary French people engaged in cultural diplomacy by articulating their ideals and taking the national theater to task when performances did not measure up to the standards expected of French dance.

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[74] Correspondence from Madame Léon Margot to the Director of the RTLN, 26 January 1957, Series 19930357, Carton 4, AN.

[75] Correspondence from Monsieur Legendre to the Director of the RTLN, 20 April 1962, Series 19930357, Carton 4, AN.

Soviet ballet loomed as a powerful point of reference amidst fears that French ballet would not recover from the war years. The sculptor Jacques Gestalder[76] wrote to the Opéra administrator to express his conviction that French classical dance was deteriorating. He remarked that most of the theater's best dancers had left the company, which had produced few artists of comparable quality to take their place. A new administrator of the Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux — Aman-Julien Maistre — had come to office in 1959, and in Gestalder's view, Maistre faced the task of restoring the theater to its past glory. As he explained "For years we have neglected a minimum level of artistic and poetic culture. How, then, to judge a ballet? Did you know that the Soviets have a baccalaureate-level culture?…I have declared insistently, having known the situation for many years, that only great artists and great writers can save the Opéra."[77] Those involved in the Paris ballet scene connected their anxieties about the decaying quality of Opéra performances with Cold War cultural competition. Gestalder suggested that if the Ballet de Paris could not produce star dancers and ballets worthy of the theater's past reputation of excellence, then France, through its national opera house, would fall behind the Soviet Union in cultural achievement.

But if the nation's opera houses safeguarded French cultural identity, what did it mean to be French in the nation's most prestigious theaters? Indeed, those who could afford expensive tickets for live entertainment likely did not represent the average French individual. The theater received countless letters from individuals who felt that a state-supported theater ought to be made accessible to all French citizens. Theater administrators combatted ballet's classed public

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[76] Jacques Gestalder was involved in the Paris art scene throughout the Cold War, completing sculptures of several Opera de Paris star dancers.

[77] Correspondence from Jacques Gestalder to the Director of the RTLN, 1 May 1959, Series 19930357, Carton 4, AN.

relations problem by seeking ways to broaden the Opéra's audience. French ballet faced a dilemma that echoed postwar French political and cultural life as a whole. Historian Marc Bloch claimed that France stagnated in part because the country clung steadfastly to old traditions and outdated methods of rule, placing age above merit to assign army and government posts.[78] During the postwar years, the Paris Opéra Ballet endeavored to remake itself to align with France's new cultural and political status quo. The Opéra struggled against popular impressions of ballet as dowdy, dull, and entertainment for the wealthy elderly who continued to dictate the standards for the nation's culture.[79] Opéra staff frequently bemoaned the lack of interest among French youth in ballet and lyrical performances and brainstormed initiatives that would attract younger audience members. Since the late 1940s, French theater officials spoke publicly about campaigns to "democratize" and "decentralize" the Opéra — initiatives that journalists and theater directors struggled to define.

Democratizing French theaters meant reducing ticket prices, attracting a more economically diverse audience, and offering reduced ticket prices for certain groups – particularly students.[80] To one cynic of these reforms, RTLN administrator René Nicoly explained that he "simply meant that Opéra belongs to everyone, and that I want to expand its audience, and we're trying to ensure that all classes of society are involved in this process."[81]

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[78] Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence written in 1940*, trans. Gerard Hopkins (New York: Norton, 1968), 161.

[79] Though she had worked her way to the top of the Opéra de Paris ballet hierarchy, dancer étoile Liane Daydé asserted that the Parisian public was prone to follow the opinions of "dance snobs" who considered themselves more informed than they truly were. Liane Daydé, interview by Léon Zitrone, "Liane Daydé ou la volonté de réussir," *Jours de France*, 1967, Liane Daydé's dossier, BMO.

[80] R. Geng, "Non, L'Opéra n'a pas vécu," *L'Alsace Mulhouse*, 22 April 1966, Opera.Presse.166, BMO.

[81] Correspondence between René Nicoly and the public, 27 October 1969, Series 19900035, Carton 54, AN.

With this initiative, theater officials countered accusations that the world of ballet remained an ivory tower, attainable only to wealthy people and Parisian artistic circles. Such reforms also fit within a larger project in postwar France to maintain high cultural achievement while making it accessible to all citizens of the Republic. The French Ministry of Culture worked with RTLN employees to shake off ballet's old-fashioned connotations. For the art to remain a centerpiece of national culture, it would have to serve a rejuvenated, youthful France: the Palais Garnier would need to entice a new audience into its halls.

Reports on these reforms at the Opéra de Paris incited skepticism about what "democratization" could mean for the quality of performances and doubts about whether the Opéra's plans were in earnest. One university student questioned theater administrators' motives, noting that it had become commonplace to assert that young people were simply not interested in going to the Opéra. In a letter to *Le Monde*, he argued that the RTLN administration had failed to make national theaters affordable for French youth, who sought out less pricey forms of entertainment. He explained, "Is the Opéra administration just afraid of not filling up [the theaters]? So then, why increase the price of orchestra seats from 34 to 80 francs?... Could it be because the Opéra management only knows, and only wants to know, one public: the snobs…."[82]

Other observers seemed resigned that "democratization" initiatives would inevitably fail because ballet was incompatible with mass culture. For example, Serge Lifar claimed that promoting ballet to a wider audience was a lost cause. He commented, "To suggest that we will create dance for the masses is simply ridiculous. The people have folk performances, but ballet

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[82] These ticket prices would be 62 and 145 Euros in 2021 (Converted using the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques Franc-Euro currency converter: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2417794). M.G. Liebert, "Autour de 'l'Opéra de quatr' milliards,': Un Versailles vide," *Le Monde*, 2 April 1966, Series Opera.Presse.1966, BMO.

will remain a lord's art."[83] The obstacle to attracting a broader audience was both financial and cultural. In 1965, contemporary sociologist René Kaes found that workers comprised only 5-6% of the theater-going population. 41% of workers interviewed indicated lack of free time as the primary constraint, whereas 35% stated that they had no interest in theater.[84] Outside the national theater houses, some members of the Parisian theatrical community believed the only solution was to create separate theaters devoted to the working class. To this end, actor-director Jean Vilar founded the Théâtre National Populaire (TNP) in 1951, aiming to provide a theatrical haven from bourgeois cultural domination, which in his view permeated the national theater houses.[85]

Democratization measures at the Opéra fit within a larger postwar strategy of extending the nation's art and culture to all citizens. Starting in 1958, Minister of Culture André Malraux encouraged reforms to make major creative works accessible to the largest number of French people in the republican spirit of egalitarianism. As philosopher Christian Godin noted, "While pedagogy in all of Europe had been gripped by revolutionary commitment to the Republic, art had been left to the elites." Malraux argued that each French child had just as much right to French theater, film, and artistic works as to the alphabet.[86] This plan shaped his approach to the Opéra de Paris, which was heavily encumbered with the stigma of pretention. In 1966, Malraux expressed his commitment to tending to the cultural "needs of the masses," notably through

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[83] Serge Lifar, cited in "Lifar voit encore l'Opéra malgré les Alpes", *Le Figaro*, 17 July 1970, 4.SW.3014, BNF-Richlieu. This attitude reflects a general bias in France toward "folk" performance, which was often dismissed as the unrefined work of amateurs with no place on theatrical stages. Also see Chapter Six.

[84] Bernard Dort, "Les 'Nouveaux Théâtres," *Les Temps Modernes*, April 1966, 1841, Series Opera.Presse.1966, BMO.

[85] Dort, "Les 'Nouveaux Théâtres,'" 1845.

[86] Christian Godin, "'La culture pour chacun:' une nouvelle politique culturelle?", *Cités* No. 45 (2011), 164.

maisons de la culture.[87] Members of the French Communist Party (PCF) publicly questioned Malraux's dedication to democratizing the theater, stoking tension between the PCF and the French Ministry of Culture about how national theaters could best meet the needs of the broader French population.

From the first Soviet ballet tours in 1954 and 1958, French journalists indicated that Soviet dance attracted more lower-class audience members than usual for a ballet performance. Evening ballets at the ostentatious Palais Garnier usually merited fine evening wear, yet those who attended the Soviet premiere were seemingly unaware of this norm — or perhaps, his observation suggests, they could not afford to adhere to it. Alongside clothing created by Paris's greatest fashion designers, reporters spotted dresses made of cheap fabric, presumably "cut by mom at home."[88] The Opéra's floor plan organized viewers according to ticket price, creating a hierarchy that facilitated identifying classed responses to Soviet performers. Journalist Philippe Bouvard, from the conservative *Figaro*, suggested that audience members in expensive orchestra seats were far less enthusiastic about the Soviet premiere than attendees in the cheap seats. As he observed, "Heat rises. It's a well-known fact. I confirmed it once again at the Opéra for the first performance of Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet: the orchestra remained cold, the first balcony was slightly lukewarm, in the second balcony there was a bit of movement, the third balcony surpassed the temperature of the human body, and in "heaven" [the uppermost level of seating],

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[87] "Malraux parle," *Le Guide du Concert et du Disque* no. 489, 15 October 1966, Series Opera.Presse.1966, BMO. Although Malraux publicly supported democratization of French theaters, he clashed with French communists over an issue they had long held dear: the development of popular art and theater. Communist representatives felt that, Malraux's lip service to supporting French culture notwithstanding, he had failed to allocate necessary financial support toward popular theaters in municipalities with Communist deputies. Henri Du Puy, "Malraux joue Malraux devant les députés," *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 1 October 1966, Series Opera.Presse.1966, BMO.

[88] J.L., "Le Ballet Soviétique à la conquête de Paris," May 1954, Opera.Presse.154, BMO.

they were going crazy."[89] He went on to add, with a hint of scandal, that he only saw a single person dressed in evening attire, and that this individual turned out to be an usher at the Opéra.[90]

Social confusion in the theater persisted even as Soviet companies appeared in Paris more regularly. During the 1972 Bolshoi tour in Paris, one cartoonist satirized the disparity between French ballet's traditional audience and the public attracted to visiting Soviet dancers. The cartoon (see Figure 1 below) portrayed a bejeweled elderly woman with pursed lips and opera glasses – clearly a frequent attendee of the Palais Garnier. Nose in the air, she comments to a fellow spectator, "It's a pity that [the Bolshoi dancers] are communists." The man reacts with a confused expression, as though the woman had missed the point and failed to understand the performance. Around her, audience members smile and watch intently, some even clasping their hands eagerly.[91] This portrayal of the audience suggests that Soviet tours attracted a distinctly new audience to ballet – at such performances, ballet's former aristocratic public became the minority.

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[89] Philippe Bouvard, "Ballet Bolchoï: accueil variable," *Figaro*, May 31, 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

[90] Philippe Bouvard, "Ballet Bolchoï: accueil variable."

[91] Piem, "Ballets du Bolchoï opéra," *Le Figaro*, 24 March 1972, 4.SW.6138, BNF-Richelieu.



Figure 1: "Dommage qu'ils soient communistes," *Le Figaro*, 24 March 1972, 4.SW.6138, BNF-Richelieu.

Concern about Soviet dance's peculiar audience took on both social and political dimensions. Some French observers supposed that Soviet ballet appealed especially to French people who were fascinated by, and perhaps devotees of, socialism. The Opéra even received letters from audience members who were appalled by the casual attire and rowdiness of the crowd at Soviet performances.[92] Soviet ballet exposed the fact that, in France, ballet's appeal continued to be rooted in upper-class society, long after the king's court – classical ballet's birthplace – ceased to exist. The arrival of a "socialist" ballet company that attracted interest among a broader French audience struck a nerve among ballet's upper-class devotees, creating social and political tensions within Paris and recalling the process by which, in the nineteenth century, the courtly art of ballet was supposedly made compatible with republican ideals.

[92] Correspondence from I. Bailly to RTLN administrator René Nicoly, 1970, Series 19900035, Carton 25, AN.

Even as some were bemused or vaguely annoyed by the mixed audience at Soviet ballet performances, frustrations about French ballet's exclusive audience provoked reactions from Parisians who could not afford theater tickets and resented that their taxes helped fund state-supported opera houses. After the Soviet tour in Paris from December 1969-January 1970, the Paris Opéra administration received letters protesting the fact that the Palais Garnier was exclusively a rich man's theater. One theater enthusiast denounced the "decadence" of the French Opéra, claiming that performances were "reserved for the rich, for those who are loaded with cash." She explains that she had long anticipated the start of ticket sales for the Bolshoi company's tour, but before she could visit the ticket booth, all the seats had been booked. She attributes this to the fact that wealthy people gained access to seats before ordinary buyers. To her, this injustice represented the degradation of France as a whole, noting that she had expected Nicoly to exercise his authority effectively, only to find that "in this case as in others, we find only cowardly, degenerate men…. Poor France, where can we go to find her?"[93]

One woman contested the very existence of the opera house as a symbol of inequality in France since although it was a state-sponsored theater, it was inaccessible to the nation's working population. She objected against those "who, in trying to preserve the Opéra, allow themselves to create four billion in debt while the government bleeds the French dry…. We're running ourselves ragged at work, and we're starving, but we still have to pay for the luxuries of the rich."[94] She decried the irony that working people paid taxes that helped support the national theaters even though ticket prices remained prohibitively expensive to many wage earners. Such

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[93] The RTLN Director's correspondence with the public, 14 January 1970, Series 19900035, Carton 54, AN.

[94] Correspondence between Madame Lassdoise and the RTLN Director, late 1969-early 1970, Series 19900035, Carton 54, AN.

protests suggested that French "high" culture should be made accessible to citizens of all income levels. On top of the ticket price for a seat in the Palais Garnier – costing as many francs as, according to one critic, a train ticket from Paris to Nice – audience members needed to own a coat and tie, or an evening gown. If the high price were not enough, other people "never stepped foot in the Opéra simply because they dare[d] not," fearing that they lacked the sophistication to appreciate "grand music."[95] While the French cultural and political elite received free invitations to exclusive performances and tickets for the Opéra's best seats, most French people faced financial and social obstacles to accessing national theaters. This disequilibrium appeared even starker after the arrival of Soviet troupes, who attracted a more socially diverse public.

Comparisons with Soviet ballet, which served elite and popular audiences alike, propped up claims that French ballet failed to fulfill its role as a national art representing the country. Referencing the Soviet example, José Atienza proclaimed that in "the age of sputniks," the time had come to remove dance from its ivory tower. Atienza argued, "Dance can become a popular art by favoring those who do not know about it – to the university, but also to the factory….It's all good and well to organize ballet premieres for an elegant audience of snobs, who, the next day, will ask for more invitations 'as a favor'; but, wouldn't it be better to organize premieres for another public – a sincere, new audience that would speak with enthusiasm to their friends and inspire them to buy their own tickets?"[96] French observers noticed that ballet had not shed its aristocratic affiliations, which clashed with postwar initiatives to democratize art and culture.

Journalists and dance critics also denounced dance's insulated upper-class audience and hoped that the popular interest in Soviet ballet would contribute to drawing a broader public to

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[95] "L'Opéra, Théâtre populaire?" *La Danse,* October-November 1956, 10.

[96] José Atienza, "La Belle Dormeuse," *Danse et Rythmes*, February 1958, 5.

dance performances even after the artists returned home. During Soviet dance tours, the theater attracted an amalgam of viewers: connoisseurs, ballet lovers, non-experts, and those who were curious but had no special interest in dance. Critic Jean Mayeur suspected that this "craze" had little to do with art, stemming instead from public's fascination with the performers from across the iron curtain. Still, Mayeur hoped that the enthusiasm around Soviet tours would "shatter the iron ring" surrounding choreographic art and spread interest in ballet across a new, wider public.[97] In this way, Soviet dance tours made shockwaves in the French theatrical community by kindling new aspirations that ballet could serve a population that better reflected the nation as a whole.

Amid Parisian debates on whether and how to bring more diverse social groups into the national theater houses, Soviet diplomats hoped their touring dance companies would achieve this end by holding part of their tour in a larger venue that, unlike the opulent Palais Garnier, would attract a "popular audience."[98] This practice began in 1958, when impresario Fernand Lumbroso requested on the Soviet ambassador's behalf that the Bolshoi company be permitted to perform twice at the Vélodrome d'Hiver (Vél d'Hiv), noting that "it would mean a great deal to the Soviet embassy if these performances could take place."[99] Although French ambassador Roger Seydoux articulated the French government's reservations about the financial viability of holding Soviet performances at Vél d'Hiv (at this time called the Palais des Sports de

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[97] Jean Mayeur, "Faire 'vivre' la Danse," *La Danse*, July 1956, 7.

[98] Correspondence from Lumbroso to A.M. Julien, 14 May 1960, Series Opéra.Arch.20, Carton 354, BMO.

[99] Correspondence from Lumbroso to RTLN administrator Georges Hirsch, 22 April 1958, Series Opéra.Arch.20, Folder 353(2), BMO.

Grenelle),[100] French officials ultimately agreed that tickets for the Palais Garnier performances had sold rapidly enough to warrant the additional performances. The French press offered bemused observations on the striking contrast between the elegant art of ballet and the new setting, which was typically reserved for sporting events. Journalist Olivier Merlin estimated that ten thousand people packed into the venue for the final Bolshoi performance, the audience of which resembled a "vast human protoplasm that, all the way up to the ceiling, was lost in cigarette smoke." Afterward, everyone filed out of the venue "filled with bliss" and yet "surrounded by hotdog and Danish sausage advertisements."[101]

Quirky though it may have been to attend a ballet in a "popular" venue, after 1958, this arrangement became the norm for visiting Soviet dance companies. During the Kirov tour in 1961, for example, the company performed at the Palais Garnier from May 11-30, 1961, and then performed at the Palais des Sports from June 1-14, 1961.[102] In negotiations over the 1969-1970 Franco-Soviet dance exchange, the Soviet Ministry of Culture requested that half of the Bolshoi company's performances be staged in a more accessible venue than the lavish Palais Garnier. French and Soviet diplomats agreed on the Palais des Sports, where tickets to see the Bolshoi would be sold in large numbers at an affordable price. They also planned for a

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[100] Correspondence from François Seydoux to M. Chabaud, 21 May 1958, Series Opéra.Arch.20, Folder 173, BMO. Vel d'Hiv is the same location where Parisian Jews were interned before being sent to Auschwitz during World War II. In August 1958, only a few months after the Soviet performances there, Vel d'Hiv was used as a retention site for Algerians in Paris. Jean-Luc Einaudi, "Octobre 1961, un massacre au cœur de Paris," *Hommes et migrations* 1175, no. 1 (April 1994): 35. Perhaps because of this traumatic history, Vel d'Hiv was demolished in 1959.

[101] Olivier Merlin, "Le Bolchoï au Palais des Sports," *Le Monde*, 19 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu. Another journalist recalled the Bolshoi's "*séances populaires*" at the Palais des Sports de Grenelle, which was "miraculously transformed into a performance hall" (see *Danse et Rythmes*, July-August 1958).

[102] Contract between the RTLN and the Société des Spectacles Lumbroso, 6 February 1961, Series Opéra.Arch.20, Folder 354, BMO.

supplemental advertising campaign geared toward a general audience.[103] Unlike the usual Opéra de Paris performances, Soviet ballet catered to working-class Frenchmen and women. This shift in emphasis changed the tone of the concert hall. According to French journalists, the ideological baggage of Soviet performances influenced the atmosphere and composition of the audience during Soviet tours.

Despite French Opéra officials' initial skepticism about the propriety of holding ballet performances in public auditoriums, by 1971 the Opéra de Paris itself had begun holding regular performances in popular venues, notably the Palais des Sports. As RTLN Administrator Daniel Lesur explained, "Performances given at the Palais des Sports provide the great advantage of attracting a new, and numerous, public: in this way, holding performances there serves artistic decentralization, to which our Minister [André Malraux] attaches so much importance."[104] The peculiar Soviet practice of requesting special performances for "the masses" had become a strategy for the French national theaters to reach a wider audience: exchanges with the Soviet Union had informed and shaped the French government's own initiatives to democratize art.

Critiquing the "Soviet Aristocracy": Ideology, Aesthetics, and French Responses to Soviet Ballet

Regardless of who filled the theater's seats, Soviet performances in Paris provoked separate debates about the impact of communism on the Soviet ballet aesthetic – and indeed, whether the visiting companies' dance style could be called "revolutionary" at all. Few French

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[103] Contract between the RTLN and the Société des Spectacles Lumbroso, 2 April 1969, Series 19900457, Carton 52, AN.

[104] Correspondence from Daniel Lesur to Fernand Lumbroso, 19 June 1971, Series 19900457, Carton 52, AN.

critics disputed that Soviet ballet performances were technically impressive, and French ballet lovers admired Soviet companies for their perfection and precision in the Russian classical tradition. The Russian school of ballet considered choreography crucial to advancing the plot. Soviet dance required a coherent storyline, as Party officials were suspicious of modernist productions without a clear interpretation.[105] The French also applauded Soviet artists for their acting abilities and the high quality of scenes that incorporated the whole ballet company, as opposed to French ballet, which placed more emphasis on star dancers. As a note written by Paris Opéra administrator explained after the Bolshoi's 1958 tour in France, "In terms of dancers' intrinsic qualities, when it comes to performing various steps and maneuvers, French ballet is superior. On the other hand, Soviet artists are better actors and prove themselves superior in ensemble performances."[106] Despite praise for the acting and technical skills of visiting Soviet companies, French observers also perceived flaws that, in their view, confirmed the negative consequences of communism: the visiting troupes lacked innovation and were doomed to stagnation, while dancers, by enjoying their position in the upper echelons of the Soviet social hierarchy, failed to live up to their own socialist credentials. These critiques left little doubt as to which country had produced superior dance companies: although the Soviet Union had emerged victorious from the war, France reigned supreme in the cultural realm. French observers implied that while communist political structures impeded the development of dance, Parisian theaters of the French Republic incorporated and moved beyond Russian traditions. Soviet dance tours to Paris offered French onlookers a new vocabulary with which to conceptualize and lay claim to

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[105] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 114.

[106] Report concerning Franco-Soviet cultural exchange between the Bolshoi and the Opéra de Paris, 10 September 1958, Series Opéra.Arch.20, Folder 173, BMO.

France's postwar cultural and political revival. Their nation's cultural accomplishments in ballet corroborated its political fortitude, which nurtured France's long history of intellectual and aesthetic talent: in the end, French republicanism better served both egalitarianism and artistic virtuosity than its socialist rival.

Soviet ballet companies did not use the common distinctions of "étoile" (star) and "first dancer" since such distinctions would be viewed as harmful to the company's collective spirit.[107] In practice, the hierarchy of Soviet ballet was vague, divided primarily between "soloist," "principal," and everyone else. The Paris Opéra administration picked up on the diminished role of lead dancers in the Soviet Union, noting, "The Soviet fashion is to use the entire ballet company, with the participation of soloists being relatively secondary. In contrast, in the French context, the role of soloists is crucial, and the corps de ballet serves to highlight the soloists."[108] Ostensible equality on the Bolshoi stage, however, was not mirrored in social reality. As French journalists remarked, Soviet ballet offered a form of social mobility, providing talented young men and women the possibility for a more comfortable life. Those who made the cut for prestigious Soviet dance academies – regardless of their social origins – gained access to an education, larger apartments, higher-quality food, cars, and country homes.[109] Dancers in the Soviet Union, many of whom became national celebrities, had climbed their way into the coveted elite and rarely criticized the Party regime. Although the Western press delighted in

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[107] Reporter Svetlana Ivanova claimed that the Bolshoi company's lack of étoiles impressed the French public because there was no difference in skill between the lead roles and "background performers" whose main role was to complement the étoiles. Instead, the Bolshoi offered "a united ensemble of performers, [comprising] main roles and the corps de ballet." Ivanova, "Balet Bol'shogo teatra SSSR v Parizhe," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 3 June 1958.

[108] Report concerning Franco-Soviet cultural exchange, 10 September 1958, BMO.

[109] Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (London: 4th Estate, 2016), 268.

cases of Soviet dancers defecting while touring abroad, considering the hundreds of dancers who traveled to the West on such tours, the defection rate was low.[110] The most fortunate dancers earned the opportunity to travel abroad on state-sponsored tours at a time when international travel was a carefully guarded privilege that few Soviet citizens received. Having benefitted from the regime, touring artists seldom overtly resisted it.[111]

By highlighting the pampered life of performers, French observers levied a critique against the Soviet system, under which citizens were supposed to possess economic and social parity with their peers. Although Soviet companies sought to eliminate visible signs of inequality on stage, French commentators contrasted this endeavor with dancers' off-stage lives, where the artists benefited from economic and social privileges in a society where most people faced material hardship. Playfully referring to the Soviet artists as emerging from the "Soviet aristocracy," one Parisian journalist described the lives of luxury accorded to the dancers of Russia's most famous opera house. Despite the Soviet Union's reputation for asceticism, Bolshoi performers were "coddled by their public" and "sumptuously provided for by the government," while "the artists' material and moral circumstances have always surprised and even incited envy among their foreign comrades."[112] The Bolshoi's most famous ballerinas received particular

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[110] There were nine Soviet dance defections to Western Europe and the United States between 1953 and 1980: Nora Kovach (1953), Istan Rabovsky (1953), Rudolf Nureyev (1961), Natalia Makarova (1970), Mikhail Baryshnikov (1974), Alexander Godunov (1979), Leonid Kozlov (1979), Valentina Kozlova (1979), and Sulamith Messerer (1980). Dancers Valery Panov and Elena Tchernichova left the Soviet Union by legally emigrating to Israel in the mid-1970s, bringing the total to a minimum of eleven. See Elena Tchernichova, *Dancing on Water: A Life in Ballet from the Kirov to the ABT* (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 2013), 118.

[111] See "Dancers Behaving Badly: Defiance and Defections" in Chapter Two.

[112] Bernard Feron, "La troupe du Bolchoï à Paris: Des personnalités de premier plans dans l'aristocratie soviétique," *Le Monde*, 29 May 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu. French dance reporters often mentioned the benefits granted to Soviet performers, who – officially, at least – received all the shoes, dance courses, costumes, and make-up they needed, on top of a higher salary than their French counterparts. Soviet dancers were also purported to receive sick or injury leave equal to their usual pay (unlike in France), two months of annual paid vacation in vacation homes supplied by the theater, unlimited use of free daycares, and after retirement, they continued to receive 50% of their salary. Jean Silvant, "Comment vivent les danseurs en U.R.S.S.," *Toute la Danse et la musique*, March 1956, 5.

scrutiny for having succumbed to extravagance. The French press followed Galina Ulanova's lifestyle closely, perhaps because she gained a reputation for her patriotism and defense of the Soviet regime.

Unlike many other Soviet ballerinas, Ulanova refused to wear French fashion, instead opting for Soviet clothing designed in French style. After observing Ulanova's suit, one journalist questioned the limits of "correct" communist behavior, noting with irony, "Madame Ulanova is part of the new Soviet elite. She has a car, a chauffeur, and a housekeeper. And yet, it is out of the question that she ransack our fashion houses."[113] Another member of the press reported that the Soviet government had provided Ulanova a large apartment with a garden in central Moscow, as well as the most recent model of the ZIS Soviet limousine, a telephone, a dacha (country home), and a hunting cabin that had formerly belonged to the Russian noble family.[114] Highlighting Ulanova's connection to an aristocratic family suggested that dancers like herself had replaced the old Russian nobility, enjoying many of its privileges and perpetuating former inequities that the new regime purported to have eradicated. Although dancers' state-appointed mission may have been to disseminate culture to the "masses," such critiques suggested, ballerinas remained far removed from the people they served.

Indeed, the ironic phrase "Soviet aristocracy" accentuated that social hierarchies were alive and well in the Soviet Union. Accusations of Soviet elitism and the pampering of Soviet dancers suggested that — in the eyes of French critics — the Soviet dance companies were not "communist" enough. The perception that Soviet theaters were behind the times fueled the

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[113] "Chez Maxim's, le 'cosaque' de la Oulanova," *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 3 January 1969, 4.SW.10883, BNF-Richelieu.

[114] "Voici la secrète Oulanova," *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 7 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

assumption that there was nothing revolutionary about their stage performances. In response to seeing the Kirov ballet company perform in Paris, journalist Patrick Thevenon contended that "Saint Petersburg became Leningrad, the Mariinsky Theater transformed into the Kirov Theater. And then? That's all. The revolution stopped once the artists entered the stage," resulting in the creation of what Thevenon dubbed "the most bourgeois ballet company in the world."[115] Regarding the Bolshoi's stage décor, French stage director André Boll marveled that "the most progressive people in the world cultivate the most bourgeois pictorial art that one can imagine."[116] While many commentators focused on the "bourgeois" character of Soviet performances, others emphasized the perpetuation of social hierarchies and an elite class around which revolved the Soviet dance world: neither the ballets nor the audience qualified as "revolutionary." One journalist argued, "In this country where the revolution disrupted everything, this sumptuous tsarist inheritance has been passed down without harm, and the new directors have tried to share with the popular masses the artistic sentiments which provide brilliant court spectacles to the privileged elite."[117] Such assertions often underappreciated the ways that Soviet dance had changed since before the revolution.

The French media consensus claimed that the Bolshevik revolution never reached the stage, producing a ballet style entrenched in the past. The blame for this stagnation was placed at the feet of the Communist Party. After the Bolshoi's first postwar performance in France, one journalist observed that the Bolshoi faced three options. She explained, the theater could "repeat

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[115] Patrick Thevenon, "Le ballet de Leningrad est le plus bourgeois du monde," *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 18 May 1961, Presse 142, BNF-Richelieu.

[116] André Boll cited in "La Critique," *Cahiers de la Danse* no. 8, May-June 1958, 48.

[117] André Pierre, "Les Ballets Russes à Paris," *Le Monde*, 30 April 1954.

itself, decay (and outright repetition is already a form of decay) or renew itself. But these admirable performances, all of which adhere to a particular style, have garnered our enthusiasm and yet we did not glimpse any seeds of renewal. We hope that these great artists of the Bolshoi carry this seed within them and that they will be given the freedom to foster it so that they can guide their art to new heights. But nothing that we have seen this year allows us to count on it."[118] Without creative input and condemned to repetition of the imperial Russian style and repertoire, ballet could only deteriorate. It was clear in French observers' eyes that Soviet politics hindered the art of Soviet ballet. In particular, French observers read the omission of Soviet-era ballets as a political and artistic failure. As one French journalist noted, "Although their repertoire is founded on the 'classics,' ballet writers also had to satisfy the regime, which demanded works capable of touching the spectator's soul with the beauty of socialist society. But in this area, the Moscow and Leningrad companies knew their greatest failure. In ballet, just as in theater, these various works were hardly performed at all."[119]

Both nations took pride in their national ballet companies and mobilized ballet as a tool for expressing national and cultural prestige during the Cold War, and Franco-Soviet dance exchanges offered an occasion to compare the world's two greatest ballets. Unsurprisingly, most French ballet critics resisted any notion that Soviet artists outshone their own dance companies. As one dance critic observed,

> It was really disappointing that the Bolshoi Theater claimed to offer an improved version of the dance style practiced by our own national ballet company. And our taste for pure virtuosity does not render the deeply artistic quality of Russian dancers insignificant. Without

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[118] Marie-Jean Beraud-Villars, "L'American Ballet Théâtre à l'heure de la confrontation," *Danse et Rythmes*, July-August 1958.

[119] Bernard Feron, "La troupe du Bolchoï à Paris."

> a doubt, these dancers are relics of a school that turns a blind eye to any discoveries made by a Fokine, a Nijinsky, or a Lifar, and they sacrifice all to cold, stringent academism.[120]

Such observations suggested that the Soviet Union had failed to safeguard its own balletic innovations – those of the Russian artists Fokine and Nijinsky, and the Ukrainian Lifar. Instead, it fell to France to incorporate and protect the contributions of these émigré artists while Soviet dance descended back through time, renouncing novelty. French culture carried ballet into the future, while its Soviet counterpart was stuck in the past. Although France had been severely battered by the war, it could be relied upon to shield tradition and produce great cultural works. By declaring Soviet dance's backwardness, these critics argued for their own nation's superior cultural development. That Soviet culture remained steeped in outmoded traditions offered evidence of France's secure position in the future, contributing ingenuity and creativity to postwar Europe.

Critics suggested that unrelenting adherence to the classical Russian dance style rendered even the most technically perfect performances lackluster. Talented performers could not fully express themselves without innovation and creativity, which French observers found lacking in Soviet performances. Because the Soviet regime inhibited originality, a French viewer experienced Soviet performances with the sensation of traveling back in time. As one journalist noted, "We have to be less impressed with [the Soviet ballets'] style, which is quite mannered, as often happens with Soviet artists who are still faithful to the Baroque turn-of-the-century."[121] Another observed, "We've gone 50 years back in time, but, in fact, it wasn't so unpleasant."[122]

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[120] "Au théâtre de l'Opéra, Le Ballet du Théâtre Bolchoï," *Le Figaro*, 2 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

[121] Claude Baignères, "Vladimir Vassiliev dans Don Quichotte," *Le Figaro*, 25 April 1969, 4.SW.6141, BNF-Richelieu.

[122] Steve Passeur, "Ballet du Bolchoï de Moscou à l'Opéra: Oulanova, étoile de la troupe soviétique reçoit, à 49 ans, la consécration de Paris," *L'Aurore*, 31 May 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

The latter comment suggests that although Soviet ballet carried nostalgic value, its time had already passed. By highlighting Soviet dance's backwardness, these critics argued for their own nation's superior cultural development.

French journalists' most ruthless attacks were reserved for Soviet décor and costumes, which were called dowdy, shabby, and downright ugly. The blandness of the décor corresponded to the lack of novelty and creativity in Soviet choreography. One journalist commented that the costumes and décor of a 1967 Soviet performance were "conventional to the point of being obsolete, showing us the dangers of not striving for renewal."[123] Another journalist went further, remarking, "Although we do not expect any avant-garde audaciousness from the Bolshoi, it's difficult not to be baffled by the hideousness of the costumes, and by the heaviness of the old-fashioned choreography…"[124] As one *Le Monde* reporter exclaimed, "Oh, the horrifying green of Don José's tunic, and the garish, multicolored, polka-dotted garments of the cigarette girls!"[125] Ballet critic Claude Baignères devoted an entire paragraph to one "outrageously outdated" Soviet dance number that he attended at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Seared in his memory were the dancers' costumes that featured a "gaudy green, paired with washed-out mauve and a pastel blue; let's forget about those weird undergarments that enclosed each dancer in a sort of shell, and the make-up that either blotted out their faces or melodramatically highlighted their profiles,

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[123] Pierre Moulaert, "Le Ballet de l'Opéra de Kiev," *La Dernière Heure*, 22 August 1967, 4.SW.6429, BNF-Richelieu.

[124] Colette Godard, "Maia Plissetskaia au Palais des Papes," *Le Monde*, 10 August 1971, Fol.SW.150, BNF-Richelieu.

[125] Henri Pierre, "A Moscou Maia Plissetskaya a déconcerté les habitués du Bolchoï dans 'Carmen,'" *La Tribune de Genève*, 8 May 1967, 4.SW.6137, BNF-Richelieu.

as in a horror film."[126] French observers made clear that in matters of fashion and the decorative arts, they reigned supreme.

Barely suppressing a judgmental tone, ballet critics expressed outrage over the unfashionable and outmoded Soviet costumes, even while praising the talents of Soviet dancers. The most positive feedback Soviet costume designers could expect from French audiences was an acknowledgement of improvement. During the Kirov ballet's tour to France in 1961, the company performed a new work finished in 1957 – an effort that French critics received with mild appreciation. Writer Dinah Maggie remarked with condescension, "We feel in this ballet an indisputable effort toward rejuvenation, in both the costumes and decors… as well as the choreography, and if our Western taste isn't blown away by them, we nonetheless can live with it, and appreciate the progress."[127] Such critiques of Soviet performances posed "East" against "West" and asserted that such differences were rooted in Soviet ideology, which inhibited progress in fashion, set design, and choreographic art.

Despite the infusion of Cold War politics in French reactions to Soviet ballet, French observers who explicitly acknowledged the politicization of dance held Soviet doctrine responsible for this trend, implying that "Westerners" viewed ballet as strictly apolitical. Barely masking his critique, one journalist suggested that the problems with Soviet ballet originated in the Party's instrumentalization of ballet for propaganda, which required reaching the largest audience possible at any artistic cost, as opposed to French ballet, which sought higher artistic ideals rather than base political gain. As he reflected, "For the rest of us decadent Westerners,

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[126] Claude Baignères, "Les Jeunes Solistes du Bolchoï," *Le Figaro*, 16 June 1970, 4.SW.6137, BNF-Richelieu.

[127] Dinah Maggie, "Nouveaux programmes du Ballet de Leningrad," *Combat*, 26 May 1961, Presse 142, BNF-Richelieu.

who go to performances for a distraction and for fun, and not for political prescriptions, we took immense pleasure in watching this corps de ballet and wonderful artists dance. We could, of course, outline our numerous reservations, and mock the very conventional décor and costumes, or we could wonder at the lack of choreographic originality and creativity." But, he explains, these shortcomings were to be expected, since Soviet dance was intended above all to cater "to the people, from the Ukrainian peasant coming to pay homage at Lenin's mausoleum, to the engineer, to the student fond of dance."[128] Tapping into debates raging inside Paris's own opera houses about the consequences of democratizing dance, this critic implied that ballet "for the masses" would necessarily require sacrifices in artistry. To some, dance geared toward popular audiences remained incompatible with genuine artistic accomplishment. Assessments of Soviet dance reverberated with and reframed arguments about the role of ballet and how Parisian theaters should be reformed to reflect France's postwar cultural identity. While many observers could agree that the Opéra de Paris had outmatched Soviet companies in the realms of fashion, decoration, and choreographic invention, they were less certain about the consequences of recasting ballet in a more egalitarian spirit. While the Soviet companies' wide public was admirable and financially enticing to French theater administrators, this development also altered the integrity of ballet itself. Soviet critics would argue, however, that dance's authenticity depended primarily on its resonance with a popular audience.

[128] Youra Bousquet, "Nous avons déjà applaudi…," *Rivarol*, 5 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

Socialist Ballet on a Global Stage: Soviet Critics Respond to Franco-Soviet Dance Exchanges

After the Bolshevik Revolution, Soviet theaters faced a paradigm shift as official policies repurposed ballet as a people's art, which Communist Party cultural workers mobilized to educate citizens on correct Soviet values and aesthetics. Ballet's new pedagogical role marked a stark departure from dance's traditional function as a leisure activity enjoyed by the nobility. For the past century, aristocrats had flocked to the opulent opera houses to watch the spectacle and be seen in lavish evening wear. After the Revolution, however, Soviet dance was intended to be accessible to the wider public, who would become cultured, sophisticated citizens through their engagement with classical dance. Soviet dancers and choreographers were encouraged to produce works that emerged from and spoke to "the people" rather than a small community of artistic connoisseurs. To attract broader audiences, Party officials offered free and discounted tickets to workers and pressured choreographers to incorporate folk dance elements into ballets, as a means of ensuring that dance represented popular art forms.[129] Because ballet served a pedagogical purpose, the Soviet Communist Party carefully watched over the country's national theaters and revised ballets to suit the Party's needs.[130] Part of this endeavor was the promotion

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[129]Although there are documented cases of Soviet theaters distributing tickets to workers and bringing in machinists and other workers to preview ballets, less is known about the composition of Soviet ballet's audience in the 1950s and 1960s. Neither Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential* nor Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, address the composition of the audience in Soviet theaters in the mid-twentieth century. Soviet primary sources from this period took for granted that the audience was socially diverse and that workers took great interest in theatrical art. It is clear that the audience in Soviet theaters appeared less "high class" to French visitors who attended dance performances in Moscow and Leningrad. *Le Monde* journalist J. Couvreur remarked that the Kirov audience's "disdain for elegance" was "astonishing" for a frequenter of Parisian theaters. He observed, "The audience – even on a Sunday, even at the Opera – is a popular audience, as though everyone walked straight out from the store, factory, or office with hands washed, hair and clothes brushed….But is it really necessary to wear a suit or a tuxedo, or a triple row of pearls to hear Tchaikovsky?" J. Couvreur, "À l'Opéra populaire," *Le Monde*, 14 August 1964, 4.SW.6145, BNF-Richelieu.

[130] Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (London: 4th Estate, 2016), 379. Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 30-66. Kristin Hamm, "'The Friendship of Peoples,' Soviet Ballet, Nationalities Policy, and the Artistic Media, 1953-1968," MA thesis, University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, 2009.

of balletic productions with realist themes and a coherent plotline that did not lend itself to misinterpretation. For ballet to instruct, the art required an unambiguous message that would resonate with the audience.

The ideal of "art for the people" remained central to Soviet ballet tours during the postwar period. The program for the 1954 Soviet ballet tour to Paris made clear to French readers that spectators were a crucial participant in ballet performances, breaking down the divide between audience member and performer. After egalitarian Soviet innovations, "ballet had become one of the public's favorite genres." Because of the "broad masses' attachment to ballet," the art had become "the heritage and pride of Soviet democracy."[131] This popular audience was crucial to making Russian ballet *Soviet*.

For this reason, a Soviet dancer's devotion to their audience superseded a performer's responsibility to modern aesthetic ideals. As ballerina Galina Ulanova explained, a Soviet dancer's first allegiance was to the audience rather than to an abstract artistic ideal. She elaborated, "Our primary goal is to dance the most perfect performances possible for our audience….What matters to each artist, whether they be a choreographer, decorator, star, or member of the corps de ballet, is to perform their role with integrity and sincerity."[132] Dancers framed themselves as civil servants rather than slaves to the caprices of artistic taste (unlike, such claims implied, dance companies in capitalist nations). In 1958, Ulanova addressed this by stating that the Bolshoi's primary duty was to cater to the interests of the Soviet public, who deserved to see productions that suited their tastes and interests. As she explained, "Our people

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[131] Program for the Official Performances of Soviet Ballet in Paris, May 1954, Carton 2238, 29.

[132] Galina Ulanova, interview by Georges Arout, "Une interview avec Oulanova," *Danse et Rythmes,* July-August 1958.

lived through terrible hardships during the war and expect performances to provide an opportunity to have fun and forget themselves, rather than revisit a daily life already familiar to them. I have attended some realist dance performances, several of which have a lot of merit, but I believe that such dances are the work of esthetes who are addressing a narrow circle of people rather than an enthusiastic crowd."[133]

With this response, Ulanova hints that modern, experimental dance was exclusive and alienating to the general population, who should be dancers' primary audience regardless of their artistic expertise. However, Ulanova's explanation that ballet ought to distract the audience from reality ran counter to the dictates of socialist realism. A term coined by Stalin in 1932, "socialist realism" was an aesthetic and literary style intended to "realistically" depict Soviet cultural, technological, industrial, and military achievements. After socialist realism was officially imposed by the Soviet Communist Party as the aesthetic requirement for all creations, artists were expected to emphasize optimism, heroism, hard work, and patriotism in their work.[134] Art that placed form before function (in the case of ballet, the plot) and the avant-garde were anathema to socialist realism. Following this set of ideals, pessimism, eroticism, and uncomfortable dissonance (especially in music) were eliminated from Soviet productions in the 1930s.[135]

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[133] Ulanova and Arout, "Une interview avec Oulanova."

[134] Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 38 and Mary Grace Swift, *The Art of the Dance in the U.S.S.R.* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 92. As Susan Reid points out, "socialist realism" took on different meanings as the genre was produced differently in the years after its introduction. The First Congress of Soviet Writers first defined socialist realism as an "'artistic method' requiring 'a true, historically concrete definition of reality in its revolutionary development.'" Though artists were theoretically united by this principle, the mission of a united socialist realism was blighted by conflicting orders, rivalry between artists, and logistical challenges. Susan E. Reid, "Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror: The *Industry of Socialism* Art Exposition, 1935-41," *The Russian Review* 60 (April 2001): 154-161.

[135] Swift, *The Art of the Dance in the U.S.S.R.*, 93.

Like all other art forms, ballet was transformed by the top-down implementation of socialist realism. Soviet officials pressured choreographers to create ballets that subscribed to the principles of socialist realism, which resulted in a new genre of dance called *dram-balet*. One subset of *dram-balet* was the "tractor ballet," which featured farmers on collective farms and factory workers toting gleaming tools. Soviet libretto authors also produced many "revolutionary" ballets about popular struggle for freedom from oppression.[136] These genres followed propagandistic plot lines that vaunted the successes of Soviet industry and culture.[137] During the mid-1930s, the Soviet ballet world was battered by an anti-formalism campaign, during which opportunities for innovation were limited and classical ballets discouraged. This anti-formalist fervor lost its edge during World War II, when Moscow party leaders viewed classical ballets as tools to alleviate Muscovites' fears of a German invasion.[138] By the early postwar years, Soviet audiences had grown accustomed to seeing *Cinderella* and *Romeo and Juliet* in national ballet theater repertoires.

Also contributing to the return of classical ballets was a shift in Soviet policy that accompanied the rise of Nikita Khrushchev, who sought to maintain stability in the Soviet Union by providing ordinary people with consumer goods, adequate housing, as well as time for and access to leisure activities. Although the Soviet government never stopped mediating

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[136] For example, *Stenka Razin*, *Carmagnole*, *Laurencia*, *The Flames of Paris* (about the French Revolution), *The Red Poppy*, *Serf Ballerina*, *Smerch*, *Red Whirlwind*, *Lilea*, *Prince-Lake*, *The Rising Dawn*, *In the Name of Love*, *Heart of the Hills*, *Last Ball*, *Tavria*, *Spartacus*, among others. See Swift, *The Art of the Dance in the U.S.S.R.*, 289.

[137] Another effect of socialist realist dictates in ballet was that set designers worked to create stages effects that were as realistic as possible. Technicians of the 1930s worked to create harsh winds, floods, and fire on stage, even at immense expense. At the same time, the work of abstract artists like Chagall and Kandinsky no longer had any place in set design. Swift, *The Art of the Dance in the U.S.S.R.*, 92-94.

[138] Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (London: 4th Estate, 2016), 311-313.

choreographic creations and attempting to leverage them for education, in the postwar era, popular taste shaped which productions appeared and remained in the repertoire. Indeed, the Party could request a certain number of propagandistic contemporary works, but they could not make people purchase tickets. Soviet audiences avoided formulaic *dram-balet*s in favor of the classics like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Giselle*, and *Swan Lake*, and choreographers dragged their feet on producing high-quality ballets on Soviet subjects.[139] Although this attempt to use ballet as a tool for propaganda had failed, this did not stop Soviet theaters from altering the plotlines of classical ballets to bring them in line with Soviet ideology. To conform to socialist realism's demand for narratives in which good unambiguously triumphed over evil, classical ballets with tragic endings were modified to end happily. *Swan Lake*'s love story, for example, originally concluded with betrayal and suicide, but in the 1950 Soviet version, Odette and Prince Siegfried lived happily ever after.[140]

After noting the predominance of classical works in the Soviet repertoire during tours, French observers viewed Soviet ballet's lack of contemporary ballets as a symptom of its decline. As critics noticed, Soviet dance tended to stick to the well-known classical repertoire dating from the late nineteenth century, rather than performing many twentieth-century works. Through interviews during Franco-Soviet dance exchanges, French journalists often inquired

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[139] This development does not mean that socialist realism ceased to influence ballet. Dance critics and theater administrators alike continued to emphasize socialist realist ideals in ballet in the 1950s. Dance critic Yuri Slonimsky describes ballet's history as driven by "the search for a positive hero through whom it would be possible to express one's attitude to reality." Yuri Slonimsky, "By Way of an Epilogue," in *The Bolshoi Theater Ballet Notes* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956).

[140] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 48. Although the enforcement of socialist realism was reduced during the Khrushchev years, the socialist realist approach to art continued to influence Soviet ballet during and after Khrushchev. Optimism became a political virtue, so theater censors were more likely to approve works with happy endings. At the time of this writing, the Bolshoi Theater performs Yuri Grigorovich's version (1969) of *Swan Lake* with a tragic ending, while the Mariinsky Theater has preserved Konstantin Sergeyev's version (1950), which has a happy ending.

about the dearth of new, modern dance productions in Soviet theaters. In response, Soviet dancers touted the value of established classical dance conventions, which had long been Soviet companies' strong suit. Vladimir Vasiliev responded to a question about contemporary works in Soviet theaters by emphasizing that more danger lay in careless experimentation than in preserving an already respected technique. He explained, "…I assure you that we are doing a lot of research on [innovating ballet.] Not at random, not haphazardly. To destroy a language as effective as classical dance to replace it with some kind of primitive movement, that's not the solution. Deception is so adept in all modern art that we must take all possible precautions."[141] French observers often attributed the lack of contemporary Soviet productions to the Party's suppression of creative freedom. Soviet dancers, however, claimed higher artistic ground by suggesting that the innovations of modern dance only increased the distance between capitalist ballet productions and "authentic" dance. While French dancers were reduced to performing a meaningless fraud in the guise of art on stage, in this view, Soviet companies safeguarded balletic traditions, preserving classical dance traditions "abandoned" by capitalist countries that valued novelty over art. As Kirov dancer Valery Panov recalled, "We had believed with all our hearts what had always been at the core of our education: that the Soviet ballet was the only 'true' one."[142]

This mentality appears in reviews of French performances that appeared in Moscow and Saint Petersburg during Franco-Soviet dance exchanges. Soviet reviews offered a blend of praise and criticism, but they reserved their harshest words for modernist productions. Commenting on

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[141] Vladimir Vasiliev, interview by Stéphan Ionesco, "Etoile du Bolchoï, le plus grand danseur du monde," *La Tribune de Genève*, 8 April 1972, 4.SW.6141, BNF-Richelieu.

[142] Valery Panov, *To Dance* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1978), 156.

a new piece choreographed by Maurice Béjart, one dance critic asserted, "Everyone must observe that this is not dance, but instead a series of movements from one pose to another, often amusingly devised — without fluidity which, in our view, is essential to genuine choreographic art."[143] Claiming authority to judge which movements can and cannot qualify as dance, this journalist asserted that some French productions fell short of this standard. To make matters worse, in her view, the choreography of Béjart's piece failed to convey the message provided in the concert program — a modernist tribute about a lonely individual in the midst of other solitary people. As she observed, "The choreography…in no way expresses the intended meaning. [This ballet] remains just what it is – a *divertissement*, and nothing more."[144] While French dance critics interpreted Parisian ballet productions as carving a path into the future, Soviet observers contended that modernist approaches to dance easily devolved toward futility. French modernist ballets provided an example of the perils of capitalist "art for art's sake." In reconstructing Russian ballet along Soviet lines, Party officials sought to eliminate ballet's "frivolous, false attitude toward life"[145] – a mendacity that continued to plague French dance.

Touring French companies could not guarantee positive reception in the USSR by sticking with classical ballets, however. The Opéra de Paris sparked some controversy by performing a version of *Coppélia* that had been "freshened up" by young choreographer Michel Descombey — an attempt called "ruinous for French ballet."[146] Ballet critic Roslavleva reviewed

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[143] Natalia Roslavleva, "Snova v moskve: gastroi baletnoi truppy "Grand-Opera," *Muzykal'naia Zhizn',* 1970, RGALI, f. 2966, op. 1, d. 33, l. 16.

[144] Roslavleva, "Snova v moskve."

[145] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 61.

[146] Roslavleva, "Snova v moskve."

the ballet's history: originally conceived and performed in Paris, the version that came to be considered "canon" was choreographed by Marius Petipa in Saint Petersburg during the late nineteenth century and is still the most frequently performed version today. According to Roslavleva, the Opéra de Paris's recent iteration of *Coppélia* indicated that "the Opéra de Paris's classical ballet repertoire is modest." The fact that Roslavleva had been accustomed to Soviet versions of this production made the French "renewal" all the more shocking, and from her point of view, the adjustments tainted the ballet's integrity. She was disappointed to see "saleswomen riding along in a trolley carrying fairground merchandise. Just as sad, indeed regrettable, was it to see the folk dance…transformed into a typical music hall presentation."[147] In Roslavleva's view, the preoccupation with commodities and superficiality had destroyed the Opéra de Paris's *Coppélia*. The sight of saleswomen preparing to haggle over their goods seemed completely at odds with the theatrical setting — such a base activity set to beautiful music offended the viewer.

Roslavleva bristled at the French company's decision to alter this scene because folk performance strengthened a production's ties to a popular audience and became a crucial part of maintaining socialist realism in Soviet ballet. First, folk dance represented a cultural artifact of the people and provided a path for recovering ballet from its courtly entanglements, assuring that the piece would speak the public's language. During the process of rebranding ballet for a popular audience, Soviet choreographers and cultural officials insisted that folk themes permeate their productions.[148] Secondly, folk motifs established a ballet's authenticity and realism. As Yuri Slonimsky observed, "The partitions separating [ballet and folk dance] were too numerous," a

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[147] Roslavleva, "Snova v moskve."

[148] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 61. For more on how the Soviet Union mobilized folk performance, see Chapter Six.

problem resolved by Soviet companies that depended on folk traditions for inspiration. Folklore, he explained, added "national color…[and] open[ed] up new horizons for the development of the art of dancing, making it verisimilar."[149] If folk themes bestowed verisimilitude, eliminating a folk dance from ballet meant replacing the people's choreography with an inauthentic or elitist art form. In this view, Soviet productions represented the French people even better than the Opéra de Paris could: Slonimsky identified the Basque dance in the Bolshoi ballet *Flame of Paris* (1932) as the production's "highlight:" "It is more than just a folk dance, it is a march, a hymn filled with intonations calling people to battle….a people that is still oppressed but already invincible."[150]

By the time Roslavleva watched the Opéra de Paris's *Coppélia*, accusations of French companies' ignorance of folklore and popular art forms were nothing new. After the first postwar Opéra de Paris ballet tour, choreographer Rostislav Zakharov questioned the company, "Why not enrich [your] national classical ballet with your native folk dances?" Zakharov explained that this friendly piece of advice, if implemented, would only contribute to the further development of French ballet.[151] To Soviet dance critics, incorporating folk dance into contemporary ballet performances meant constructing a dance style that would speak to "the people" rather than an exclusive artistic community. In this view, ballet only held value as long as it authentically met the cultural needs of a wider population. Thanks to Soviet innovations in dance, dance critic Yuri Slonimsky claimed, ballet had never been so "democratic" and "rebellious," producing works

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[149] Yuri Slonimsky, "By Way of an Epilogue," in *The Bolshoi Theater Ballet Notes* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956).

[150] Yuri Slonimsky, "The Ballet Repertoire," in *The Bolshoi Theater Ballet Notes* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956).

[151] Rostislav Zakharov, "Frantsuzskii balet v Moskve," *Pravda*, 20 June 1958, 6.

that not just represented "the people" but in which "the people…are in the foreground."[152] The French theater's removal or rejection of folk art from new productions, for this reason, demonstrated to Soviet ballet critics that French artistic values remained entrenched in superficiality and elitism – tragic side effects of a capitalist political and economic system. The wrong kind of modernity, in this view, had damaged French ballet's artistic integrity.

This philosophy behind ballet's purpose in society sharply contrasted with Soviet interpretations of French ballet, which viewed as being exclusively within the purview of elite artists and wealthy balletomanes. The artistic director of the Bolshoi Theater, Mikhail Chulaki, reasoned that Soviet dancers' superiority stemmed from their deep connection with "the masses." Speaking with a French journalist, Chulaki inquired, "Why do you want to impress the bourgeois with hollow, and sometimes pornographic, works? You risk losing the content, the value of the art." Instead, he asserted, "An artist should translate the feelings and thoughts of the people. His language should be accessible to all. Why would you think, 'There are the people, and I am the Messiah. If they don't understand me, it's because they are irreparably backward'? Our credo is the possibility to commune with the masses, and our success shows us that we are right."[153] If French critics failed to appreciate ballet's role as the avatar of a nation's popular culture, he suggested, they had misunderstood the purpose of art.

When it came to high ticket prices for ballet performances, Chulaki was in agreement with French theater goers and dance critics who railed against the Opéra's prohibitively expensive tickets. Creating ballet for a socially diverse population entailed making these

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[152] Slonimsky, "The Ballet Repertoire," in *The Bolshoi Theater Ballet Notes* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956).

[153] Patrice de Nussac, "'Le modernisme n'a pas sa place au Bolchoï,' dit son directeur M. Tchoulaki," *France Soir*, 3 January 1970, Series 554INVA, Carton 576, MAE.

performances affordable to wage-earning people. Chulaki pointed out that while tickets for the Opéra de Paris climbed to 120 francs (219 Euros today), Bolshoi Theater tickets in Moscow sold for between 60 kopecks and 3 rubles and 50 kopecks (between 4-15 francs).[154] As Chulaki was likely aware, French theater administrators struggled to redefine ballet for a wider audience. Although the Soviet Union appeared to be a relative success story in the democratization of theater, Soviet ballet's popular appeal was not so straightforward. Chulaki framed Soviet dance as emanating from the people, but in practice the regime intended ideas to flow in the opposite direction, by using ballet as a pedagogical tool for cultivating a population that was both patriotic and intellectually engaged.[155] We do not know the true composition of the audience at Bolshoi Theater productions. However, by the postwar years, the Bolshoi remained a prestigious institution that was typically frequented by the Communist Party elite and visiting foreign political and cultural leaders rather than "the masses" so often referenced in Soviet dance programs.[156]

Soviet observers felt that French critiques of Soviet stage décor and costumes emerged from the same Western preoccupation with trivial matters rather than artistic authenticity. Even while on tour, Soviet artists were prepared to defend their attire and stage decorations. In an interview, a French journalist questioned ballerina Galina Ulanova and her husband, Vadim Ryndin, about French observers' harsh criticisms pelted at Soviet fashion. Ryndin explained that Bolshoi productions were a collective effort, and that no single individual should shine more

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[154] de Nussac, "'Le modernisme n'a pas sa place au Bolchoï." 1970 Francs to 2021 Euros converted using the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques Franc-Euro currency converter: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2417794.

[155] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 69-70.

[156] William Taubman, *Khrushchev, The Man and his Era* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), 341, 501.

than the rest. With this in mind, the stage set and costumes were designed to serve dance, rather than the inverse: flashy costumes would only distract from dancers' technical and artistic work. He explained, "Our decorators seek to provide the most psychologically expressive productions, rather than a lovely variety of colors."[157] Achieving an "authentic" performance meant telling a story using movement, costumes, and decorations that the audience would recognize as faithful to the plot. Excessively ornate set design would only muddy the waters and inhibit ballet's central purpose as a conduit for storytelling. In this view, French dance sacrificed classical dance's service to the public for experimentation in modern dance.

If French productions featured more expensive, elaborate décor and costumes, Soviet critics implied, it was because French dance companies invested in producing a beautiful façade rather than authentically communicating with the public. An overemphasis on stage design implied that ballet ceased to be about dance. As Galina Ulanova explained, "Gratuitous exploits and dramatic effects do not interest us; they undermine our work and our audience would hold it against us."[158] Ulanova's assessment suggested that while dance companies under capitalism might put on a flashier show, Soviet productions provided more substance and virtuosity since they were not distracted by such shallow concerns as clothing and special effects. Beyond representing wasted effort and a distraction from the choreography, fashionable French ballet costumes also risked hampering the characters' authenticity. For instance, reviewers found the Opéra's portrayal of Esmeralda unconvincing because she did not portray the "national characteristics" expected of a Gypsy girl. Her costume recalled the work of contemporary French

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[157] Vadim Ryndin, interview by Georges Arout, "Une Interview avec Oulanova," *Danse et Rythmes,* July-August 1958.

[158] Galina Ulanova, interview by Georges Arout, "Une Interview avec Oulanova," *Danse et Rythmes,* July-August 1958.

fashion designers rather than the attire of an impoverished street dancer during the Middle Ages. As Roslavleva pointed out about Esmerelda's lack of verisimilitude, "Perhaps we should blame that costume — the only one who did not succeed is Yves Saint-Laurent."[159]

During the Cold War, it seemed, French and Soviet audiences could agree on at least one thing: aristocrats and wealthy, bourgeois men offered ideal fodder for comedy. Sumptuous costumes served their appropriate purpose: making fun of bourgeois and aristocratic degeneracy. During the Comédie-Française's 1954 tour to Moscow, Soviet journalists admired the way that French actors' and dancers' bright costumes, with high wigs and plumes of feathers, conveyed Molière's satirical critique of the French "haute bourgeoisie"[160] in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. To the Soviet audience, the artists' attire reflected the "absurdity," "vulgarity," and "tastelessness" of "aristocratic pretension," all the while respecting the style of the period. Actress Maria Babanova recalled the moment when Monsieur Jourdain ("the bourgeois") entered the stage covered in feathers and ribbons. His maid, Nicole, catches sight of him and is overcome by such a fit of laughter that she collapses onto the floor. In this moment, Babanova explains, "the audience applauded the common sense and good humor of the French people…, who had long mocked the ridiculous whims of arrogant, rich men."[161] Babanova's focus on the French company's bright, sumptuous costumes — though in this case intentionally farcical — recalls Soviet journalists' critiques of excessively ornate French costumes and set designs in Opéra productions. Their disdain for opulence erupted in both cases, but Soviet observers appreciated that in *Le Bourgeois*

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[159] Roslavleva, "Snova v moskve."

[160] M. Babanova, "Meshchanin vo dvorianstve," *Moskovskaia pravda*, April 1954, RGALI, f. 970, op. 21, d. 190, l. 37.

[161] M. Babanova, "Meshchanin vo dvorianstve."

gentilhomme, the French company was in on the joke. This incident highlighted a common trait in the discussions about French and Soviet theatrical arts: both traditions were steeped in aristocratic patronage and, in different ways, struggled with how to modernize the art without compromising its cultural preeminence.

Soviet spectators emphasized the historical ties between French and Soviet ballet when possible to demonstrate that Soviet dance had kept pace with, if not surpassed, French choreographic art. Soviet histories of ballet rightly trace classical ballet's origins in the court of Louis XIV but split from common Western narratives during the mid-twentieth century, when Soviet ballet came into full bloom. With the birth of the Soviet Union, Soviet critics claimed, their nation's ballet surpassed that of France and soon became a source of inspiration for decaying French ballet theaters.[162] After seeing the Comédie-Française perform during its 1954 tour to Moscow, Soviet journalists reflected that French national theaters' primary endeavor was to preserve seventeenth-century theatrical traditions — an appropriate task for the Opéra and Comédie-Française, in light of the current "decay of art in capitalist countries."[163]

Soviet onlookers opined that French ballet had declined in part because of France's increasingly uncultivated audience that demanded novelty over sophistication. In a capitalist nation where supply followed demand, French theaters were forced to accommodate an audience that no longer craved "real" art. As the author of the 1970 Opéra de Paris tour program

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[162] Soviet dance critic Yuri Slonimsky asserted that nineteenth-century French choreographers were inspired by "the squalor of life" in Paris to write about Romantic heroes who "refused to reconcile themselves with the world of cheap virtue and the cynic claim that money is all-powerful," motivating them to migrate to Russia. From that point, balletic innovation "started by the Western-European theater in the mid-19th century, was continued by the Russian Ballet." Yuri Slonimsky, "By Way of an Epilogue," in *The Bolshoi Theater Ballet Notes* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956).

[163] V. Matusevich, "Teatr frantsuzskoi Komedii," *Put' k pobede*,13 April 1954, RGALI, f. 970, op. 21, d. 190, l. 36.

explained, “New times demanded upgrading the content and form of ballet performances; in Western Europe at that time, many thought this theatrical genre was hopelessly outdated and that reviving it was impossible.”[164] By the time Soviet companies arrived on French soil, however, Bolshoi and Kirov artists could offer something quite different from the Opéra’s modernist experiments. Amid French ballet’s demise, Soviet dancers offered tangible proof that the art form was salvageable and could appeal to mass audiences. This narrative of cultural decay in the West explained why, according to Soviet journalists, 1950s French audiences could not wait to see Soviet ballet. The 1956 arrival of the Theater of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko allowed French audiences at last to “fulfill their deepest desire: to see Soviet ballet.”[165] Due to the mass enthusiasm for Soviet dance and culture, Soviet observers claimed, the French public struggled to find tickets, which — they proudly reported — sold out every day even though the theater seated 2,700 people. Even in the pouring rain, Parisians formed a line wrapping around *Théâtre du Châtelet*, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Soviet dancers as they exited the theater.[166]

In the eyes of Soviet journalists, appreciation of Soviet dance implied respect for the Soviet Union and its culture. The Soviet press sought to demonstrate that French interest in Soviet ballet was genuine and passionate. France — so proud of its own cultural status — still had something to learn from the Soviet Union. A few days after the Theater of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko’s premiere in Paris, the newspaper *Sovetskaia Kul’tura* declared:

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[164] E. Surits, Theater program for the Opéra de Paris in Moscow and Leningrad, December 1969-January 1970, RGALI, f. 2017, op. 4, d. 1058, l. 10.

[165] “Parizh radushno vstretil artistov sovetskogo baleta,” *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 9 June 1956, RGALI, f. 970, op. 13, d. 1013, l. 14.

[166] “Nam soobshchaiut po telefonu iz Parizha,” *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 21 June 1956, RGALI, f. 970, op. 13, d. 1013, l. 10.

"Parisian interest in this Soviet theater performance is irrefutable. This is yet another confirmation of the French public's deep desire to become better acquainted with the culture of Soviet countries."[167] Claiming to take little stock in the opinions of elitist art circles or ideologically driven politicians, Moscow dance critics insisted that, as a modern art created to serve the public, Soviet ballet attracted a wide swath of French men and women.[168] According to Russian journalists and ballet critics, prominent French dancers, too, relied on Soviet technique for inspiration. As dance critic Natalia Roslavleva observed of French choreographer Attilio Labis's new work, "It seems that not only in the nature of the choreography…but also in the inherent substance of Labis's first great work, he was influenced by the example of Soviet ballet."[169] To some Muscovite journalists, Franco-Soviet dance exchanges provided evidence that the days of French choreographers enlightening Russian dancers were long past: French choreographic creations were clearly shaped by Soviet methods, rather than the reverse.[170]

Franco-Soviet dance exchanges offered a means to confirm that Soviet cultural influence expanded during the postwar years. Having demonstrated military and political leadership through the cataclysm of World War II, Soviet officials encouraged an interpretation of dance exchanges that legitimized the communist regime's successful competition with France. France

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[167] "Nam soobshchaiut po telefonu iz Parizha."

[168] For example, see "Zarubezhnyi zritel' rukopleshchet sovetskomu iskusstvu," *Pravda*, 13 June 1958, 1; Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 36.

[169] Roslavleva, "Cnova v moskve."

[170] In Western Europe, the narrative was that French choreographers had created Russian ballet. As one reporter summarized, from the days of Peter the Great, "the cultural influence of France expanded. French is the language of the court; fashion, posture, and good etiquette, and even culinary art come from France….French ballet left its mark on Russian ballet throughout the nineteenth century and even in the twentieth century. It's because of this that *Gisèle*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker* are great testimonies to French ballet in Russia today." M.D., "Au Lycéum-club, Stella Bon parle de la danse en Russie," *La Tribune de Genève*, 20 March 1968, 4-SW-6429, BNF-Richelieu.

had historically been a great source of cultural inspiration and influence in Russia since the eighteenth century and through the nineteenth century, when celebrated French dancer Marius Petipa choreographed works such as *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker* at the Mariinsky Theater, fueling the golden age of Russian ballet. Soviet critics of French ballet suggested that, thanks to the Soviet Union's national art, cultural influence now flowed in the opposite direction: communist ballet had surpassed its Western ancestor.

Conclusion

In different ways, French and Soviet observers interpreted dance, and its intended audience, through the lens of ideology. Through dance exchanges, the vernacular of ballet became imbricated in Cold War political and ideological debates about which country better provided – materially and culturally – for its people. Dance became a center of debate about the role of culture in the modern nation. These discussions contested ideologies of egalitarianism and their relative effects on the masses. French ballet companies faced criticism in Soviet newspapers for "decadent" décor and shallow plotlines, while French audiences lamented that Soviet performances did not live up to their own democratic ideals, as artists enjoyed the privileges of the "Soviet aristocracy." Commentators on both sides argued that their nation had successfully adapted the aristocratic art to suit more socially diverse audiences, yet the friction between ballet's origins and its audience exposed anxieties in both countries about whether French and Soviet national ballet theaters truly lived up to these ideals.

Despite mutual critiques about how the other country had failed to democratize dance, both governments shared an interest in attracting a wider range of social groups to state-run theaters. Although French officials were initially motivated to engage in Franco-Soviet dance

exchanges as part of a program of postwar cultural recovery, Soviet ballet tours to France ultimately transformed domestic French cultural politics by informing the way that national theaters were democratized the mid-twentieth century. This influence manifested through the continued reliance on "popular" venues previously considered inappropriate for ballet and in renewed public pressure to lower ticket prices and make venues like the Palais Garnier more accessible to a wider range of spectators. In the next chapter, we will examine how Franco-Soviet dance tours unfolded outside of the theater house, spilling into streets, receptions, newspapers, and tourist destinations in unpredictable ways that sometimes challenged the participating governments' diplomatic goals.

Chapter Two: Dance Diplomacy on the Cold War Stage

From early diplomatic negotiations in 1953, ballet remained a centerpiece to Franco-Soviet cultural interaction. Nevertheless, Franco-Soviet cultural diplomacy encountered false starts throughout the Thaw period: for example, in 1954 and 1956, artistic exchanges were arranged, only to be abruptly cancelled in response to the French defeat in Indochina and the Hungarian Revolution. Franco-Soviet diplomatic relations hung from a gossamer thread. All the same, France carried out an unusually rigorous program of cultural exchange with the Soviet Union during the Thaw years. Impresario Fernand Lumbroso, who organized many of the Cold War Franco-Soviet dance exchanges, believed that "by the mid-to-late 1960s, France was the leading importer of Soviet performances and the leading exporter of foreign performances to the Soviet Union."[171] Historian Thomas Gomart estimates that nearly four million people in France attended performances by Soviet artists between 1953 and 1968.[172] The number of performances by Soviet companies in France during the Cold War is striking, given the political, financial, and diplomatic challenges that such events imposed.

Recent scholarship on Cold War dance tours has demonstrated that dance was a key tool for furthering cultural and ideological influence in the postwar period.[173] In particular, dance

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[171] Fernand Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacles* (Paris: Lieu Commun, 1991), 127. Analyses of cultural relations between the United States and the Soviet Union have dominated scholarship on dance diplomacy, shifting the focus to Franco-Soviet relations reveals a less monolithic story of East/West Cold War antagonism. Indeed, French diplomats, impresarios, and Opera administrators eagerly coordinated dance exchanges with the Soviet Union, which promised both profit and prestige. French audience members and journalists extolled the arrival of Soviet dancers, and Bolshoi ballet performances sold out, often weeks before the company's arrival, in spite of augmented ticket prices. This is not to say that Franco-Soviet dance exchanges lacked controversy, but the tours were broadly received as a step toward easing Cold War tensions.

[172] This includes Soviet performances in all French theaters, in and outside of Paris. See Thomas Gomart, *Double Détente: les relations franco-soviétiques de 1958 à 1964* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003), 89, 407.

[173] The first Cold War historian to consider dance exchanges at length was David Caute, who in 2003 published a colorful chapter tracing the stories of Soviet and Eastern Bloc dancers who made the "leap to freedom" by defecting

scholars Naima Prevots and Clare Croft investigated the crossroads of dance and diplomacy at a time when dance tours were little mentioned in Cold War scholarship. Prevots revealed how, under the leadership of President Eisenhower, the United States set up a cultural offensive that mobilized dance to fight communism by extending American artistic influence. As she shows, the U.S. government carefully selected and refined dance performances to be exported as representations of America abroad. Croft further developed our understanding of American dance diplomacy by shifting the focus from the U.S. State Department to dancers' embodied experiences of Cold War cultural exchanges. In so doing, she investigates how dancers navigated their role as international representatives of the United States, and the ways different performers challenged and promoted national identity as the central theme of their work.[174] Croft reminds us to interrogate the performances that unfolded beyond the stage — a touring dancer's body did not lose its representational power when a performer stopped dancing to attend receptions or go sightseeing.

Existing research on postwar dance tours has overwhelmingly focused on US-Soviet cultural relations. Most recently, historian Stéphanie Gonçalves has provided a study of Cold War dance exchanges based more firmly in Europe, shedding light on how the United Kingdom and France, in tandem with the United States and the Soviet Union, deployed dance for cultural diplomacy.[175] Thanks to the work of these scholars, we have a clear sense of why and how dance

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during the Cold War. David Caute, "The Ballet Dancer Defects," *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 468-505.

[174] Clare Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10.

[175] Stéphanie Gonçalves, *Danser pendant la guerre froide, 1945-1968* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018).

diplomacy was carried out by postwar governments – especially the United States and the Soviet Union. These studies traced how diplomats mobilized dance companies as implements of cultural and political influence.

This chapter contributes a new perspective to this historiography by shedding light on the tensions behind Franco-Soviet dance tours and the political and social predicaments that challenged these aspirations. The original aim of these events was to develop Franco-Soviet diplomacy and demonstrate each country's cultural supremacy. Soviet Ministry of Culture officials hoped that Khrushchev-era cultural exchanges with the West would demonstrate their nation's openness to international cooperation while confirming that along with political and military legitimacy, the Soviet Union had attained new cultural heights. In a 1959 speech, Minister of Culture Ekaterina Furtseva asserted that Soviet performances abroad would "force those [in the West] who had constructed the iron curtain…to begin the "painful" process of reassessing their policies….The broader our international cultural ties become, the brighter our progressive Soviet culture shines before the whole world."[176] The French used dance tours to demonstrate that their nation retained its position as a cultural educator and influencer, especially to counter the threat of Americanization. Tours with the Soviet Union enabled France to carve out an independent path for diplomacy with the Soviet Union, challenging claims that France had been subsumed into an antagonistic "West" guided by the United States.[177] Cultural and political

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[176] Ekaterina Furtseva, *Rech' na vneocherednom dvadtsat' pervom s"ezde KPSS* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1959), 17. At this same event, the Twenty-first Party Congress, Khrushchev announced that the Soviet Union had reached the "full and final construction of socialism" and introduced a Seven Year Plan that would complete the building of Soviet communism, mostly through technological innovation, new housing projects, and plans for more productive agriculture. William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 377 and 509. In addition to these goals, Furtseva asserted that the Seven Year Plan would create "growth in all facets of Soviet culture. It will increase not just material wealth, but also the spiritual wealth of our country." Furtseva, 18.

[177] Note to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 21 February 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

prestige was at stake during international dance tours, which is why representatives in both countries hoped for smoothly run performances without controversial offstage incidents.

As it turned out, however, dance tours posed many unexpected challenges to friendlier Franco-Soviet relations. Far from merely serving the interests of diplomacy, the tours created new tensions and sharpened the contrasts between communist and liberal democratic states. In this environment, the actions of dancers, reporters, and audience members proved particularly difficult to control. Tours were interpreted through the on- and off-stage movements of company performers and through the work of journalists who covered these events. In the interest of diplomacy, French and Soviet officials tolerated one another's drastically different press culture and seemingly incompatible rules for personal freedom. Through journalists' fervent press coverage and the close surveillance of dancers' bodies that characterized these events, Franco-Soviet dance tours revealed contrasting definitions of freedom of the press and freedom of mobility – principles around which both sides compromised.

French foreign affairs officials pressured Parisian journalists to moderate critiques of new Soviet dance companies and increased police presence around Soviet dancers to reduce the chance of defections, even in contradiction with principles of free speech and the right to request asylum freely. For the Soviet Union, the threat of defections, unfavorable press coverage, and "misbehaving" performers endangered the image of a cultivated and content Soviet population that dance tours were supposed to promote. As this chapter reveals, reciprocal ballet tours became an experimental space for negotiating renewed contact between Western nations and the Soviet Union during the Thaw. Freedoms of the press and mobility became central to these early Cold War encounters. Press coverage and dancers' individual decisions to move – or not move – became stages of unpredictability that exposed the fault lines of Franco-Soviet relations. At the

same time, however, political flash points such as defections and press controversies revealed the governments' commitment to diplomacy, as both sides made accommodations to their policies related to freedom of the press and freedom of mobility to continue developing dance diplomacy.

This chapter will first examine press narratives of Franco-Soviet dance tours in both countries and diplomatic debates that erupted around media practices. Next, I will investigate how authorities sought to mold dancers' behaviors and travel experiences abroad, concluding with an analysis of cases where these strictures on comportment failed. The French and Soviet governments viewed defections as the most disruptive form of misconduct. Discussions about the press and personal freedom converged on the subject of defections, which were at once personal, political, and journalistic affairs.

Mass Media and Controlling the Narrative on Franco-Soviet Dance Tours

Like the United States in the mid-1950s, the Soviet regime shifted its foreign policy toward a "people-to-people" approach by engaging a large body of ordinary citizens in international relations through tourism, cultural exchanges, friendship societies, and other organizations encouraging personal contacts between Soviet citizens and foreigners. In practice, membership and activities within these initiatives were heavily constrained, yet they were founded in the idea that, as historian Eleonory Gilburd explained, "the people, 'the masses' – not diplomats and governments – make history, including international history."[178] This approach to diplomacy required mobilizing Soviet culture to win the hearts and minds of the French people during Franco-Soviet dance tours. Soviet newspapers and official reports painted a picture in

[178] Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 38-39.

which their own companies garnered unrelenting praise from the French public, especially the most important demographics: young people, students, and workers. The French media's critiques were minimized, eliminated, or explained by the fact that French viewers had different (misplaced) values than their Soviet counterparts. Stories about French audiences that queued for hours to see Soviet ballet and stood for curtain call after curtain call served the narrative that Soviet culture had even attained a respected place in France – a nation distinguished by its cultural and artistic achievements.

Although the first Franco-Soviet dance exchange did not take place until 1958 (between the Opéra de Paris and the Bolshoi company), the two governments tested the waters by allowing 95 dancers from the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko dance company to spend one month performing in Paris during the summer of 1956. For the first time, Soviet performers and opera staff faced scrutiny from a public and media that was unmediated by the government. This tour occurred just five months after Khrushchev's secret speech (February 1956), at a time when the Soviet press enjoyed reinvigorated freedom to acknowledge the value of cultural exchange and contacts with the West. Soviet media reports about the 1956 Soviet dance tour balanced appreciation of Western sights and experiences with the need to praise Soviet accomplishments, emphasizing the company's relief and gratitude upon returning home. In the new political context of the Thaw, a Soviet tourist could travel abroad and acknowledge the beauty of French culture, but only if this experience enriched the traveler's contributions as an educated, refined member of the Soviet population.[179]

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[179] Anne Gorsuch, "Time Travelers: Soviet Tourists to Eastern Europe," in *Turizm: The Russian and Eastern European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 205-226.

The press offered no ambiguity about the motivation behind Soviet dancers' tour to France: the artists traveled out of duty to their country, not personal enjoyment. Soviet journalists highlighted that tours abroad were physically grueling and imposed the weighty responsibility of representing the nation abroad. One reporter explained that "those who took part in the trip knew very well what difficult and important tasks stood before them as representatives of Soviet balletic art."[180] The artists had to work with a French orchestra with whom they were unfamiliar, and had almost no time to rehearse or adjust to the stage's technical equipment. Moscow-based journalists described how dancers overcame these challenges in service to spreading Soviet culture abroad. Having succeeded in their mission by garnering approval from French critics, the dancers were "proud that they had successfully carried the banner of Soviet art abroad with dignity."[181] Soviet dance tours to Paris permitted Soviet artists access to large audiences of French citizens, whose approval opened up an ostensibly apolitical avenue for cultivating interest in and acceptance of the Soviet regime. Dancers became instruments for legitimizing the Soviet Union in Western Europe, and the Moscow press insisted that the Franco-Soviet relationship was fortified by the French public's applause for Soviet ballet. One journalist boasted that "Everywhere, the art of the Soviet people has been met with tremendous interest. Our cultural leaders have been given a warm welcome. There is no doubt that the expansion of cultural ties between the Soviet Union and France will contribute to enhancing friendship between our peoples."[182]

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[180] K. Ushakov, "Mesiats v Parizhe," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 6 August 1956, RGALI, f. 970, op. 13, d. 1013, l. 1.

[181] *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 16 July 1956, RGALI, f. 970, op. 13, d. 1013, l. 6.

[182] G. Poliakov, "V besede s nashim korrespondentom… Sovetskii balet edet v Parizh," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 17 April 1956, RGALI, f. 970, op. 13, d. 1013, l. 22.

To assess Soviet performers' success on French stages, Soviet officials involved in organizing dance exchanges carefully followed the Parisian press throughout the tour. Soviet embassy employees amassed French press clippings about the performances and mailed them back to Moscow. The Soviet media boasted that the nation's dancers had won the praise of all French newspapers, not only the Communist and left-leaning publications (such as *L'Humanité* and *Combat*), devoting a paragraph or two in each article to reciting laudatory observations by French journalists. According to Soviet journalists, the French press proclaimed that "the quality of Russian theater and dance is forever alive,"[183] remarking on the Soviet company's elegance, impeccable technique, and the seamless unity between soloists and the corps de ballet.[184] From the diverse body of French press sources, Soviet officials chose excerpts that best reflected their own values in a dance performance: physical strength and flexibility; coherence throughout the company, without excessive emphasis on soloists; convincing acting skills; and faithfulness to esteemed Russian dance traditions – rather ironically, considering that the daring *Ballets Russes* works for which Russian ballet was most known in France remained absent from Soviet troupes' repertoire.

The Soviet media emphasized that the dance company had won the audience that truly mattered: ordinary French theater-goers. Interviewed artists who took part in the tour described the large crowds huddled around the theater exits awaiting the Soviet performers, poised to request autographs, give flowers, and express their appreciation. Theater director Konstantin Ushakov recalled that "the greatest satisfaction we enjoyed was the way our performances were received by a wide circle of ordinary viewers, who gave us various signs of friendly

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[183] K. Ushakov, "Mesiats v Parizhe."

[184] "Vozvrashchenie iz Parizha," *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 17 July 1956, RGALI, f. 970, op. 13, d. 1013, l. 4.

consideration and sought to express feelings of the most sincere goodwill to the Soviet people."[185] Other participants appreciated Parisians' enthusiastic and outward expressions of admiration. Several Soviet journalists reported that each performance provoked shouts of "bravo" and "hurrah," and ballerina Eleonora Vlasova was surprised that, unlike the more reserved public to which she was accustomed, the audience yelled and stomped their feet in approval.[186] The French public cheered the artists, not necessarily the nation that sent them. Yet to Soviet observers, that the Bolshoi was "beloved by Parisians" became politicized and read as approval for the Soviet Union as a whole.[187] Through this reporting, journalists demonstrated to their readers that the nation's dance ambassadors had obtained international esteem not merely from Western politicians with dubious motives, but from regular French men and women. Parisians' praise for Soviet dance was especially valuable because Parisians were known to be a difficult audience, as residents of a cultural capital of the world.[188]

Soviet journalists contrasted praise from "ordinary people" with criticisms from a handful of French artistic elites who disparaged the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko company for outdated choreography, unattractive costumes, and lack of innovation. The Soviet media minimized negative statements from western dance critics, painting the commentators as culturally backward advocates of "formalism" – the worst artistic insult imaginable in the Soviet

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[185] K. Ushakov, "Mesiats v Parizhe."

[186] Eleonora Vlasova, "U nas v gostiakh, Podarok na vsiu zhizn'," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 20 July 1956, RGALI, f. 970, op. 13, d. 1013, l. 2.

[187] Soviet reporters often mentioned that ballet had furthered Soviet diplomatic interests by bringing the French and Soviet peoples closer together and garnering support for the Soviet Union by spreading "the rich cultural life of the Soviet people" abroad. For example, "Sovetskoe iskusstvo na stsenakh Parizha," *Izvestia*, 19 June 1958, 4 and G. Ratiani, "Sovetskie artisty za rubezhom," *Pravda*, 2 July 1958, 6.

[188] Vlasova, "U nas v gostiakh."

Union at this time.[189] *Vechernyaia Moskva* (Evening Moscow) explained to its readers that "along with these enthusiastic assessments and objective reviews, we also heard the hostile voices of advocators of "pure art", defenders of various formalist movements. It is interesting that these critical aesthetes were answered by their own French colleagues."[190] In other words, even some (apparently objective) French journalists disagreed with this assessment and interjected in defense of the Soviet company.

Although these critiques received little attention in the Soviet press, some journalists held up such comments as evidence of French artistic circles' poor taste and isolation from the wider public. Proponents of formalist style could not be expected to supply reasonable evaluations of a ballet performance, and hence their comments could safely be disregarded as an unfortunate side effect of capitalism. One journalist explained that "in France, as in other bourgeois countries of the West, a certain convention – inherent in [dance] – acquired an ugly, purely formalistic quality."[191] In the Soviet media, ideological differences between east and west discredited western observers' critiques and offered an explanation for aesthetic disparities between French and Soviet ballet styles.[192] French journalists praised many aspects of the Soviet company's performance, but their evaluation was hardly one of unrelenting applause. Whatever a small body of aesthetes might say, Soviet journalists maintained, the only audience of consequence – the

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[189] "Formalism" was the label assigned to any artwork that prioritized appearance or form over the piece's social purpose or ideological content. By the mid-1930s, "formalist" came to stand in for Western-influenced, modernist, or pessimistic artwork, in contrast with the realism and optimism found in folk and folk-inspired artistic traditions. See Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 60-61.

[190] K. Ushakov, "Mesiats v Parizhe."

[191] L. Tsvetaeva, "Nam soobshchaiut po telefonu," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 12 July 1956, RGALI, f. 970, op. 13, d. 1013, l. 7.

[192] Also see Chapter One.

French public – commended the visiting dancers' performance. In this view, "formalist" Parisian art critics were not ideologically equipped to appreciate Soviet ballet, so their criticism could be safely disregarded, since "formalist art…suits the taste of a small group of aesthetic critics and theater snobs," and no one else.[193]

Soviet media coverage of Franco-Soviet dance exchanges overwhelmingly focused on positive reception in the French press and among French viewers. Articles also devoted some space to discussing which balletic works were presented and to comparing French and Soviet dance traditions. Unlike Soviet dancers' memoirs, Soviet journalists said little about dancers' sightseeing and tourist activities in Paris. Theater director Ushakov briefly mentioned the highlights of their itinerary: visits to the Louvre, Versailles, Fontainebleau, the Rodin Museum, the Conciergerie, and Notre Dame de Paris. Their "greatest interest", however, was reserved for Parisian theaters, especially the renowned Grand Opera (Palais Garnier).[194] One Moscow newspaper's reporting stood out for its relatively rich detail – provided via interview with dancer Eleonora Vlasova – on the visiting dancers' impressions of Paris. Vlasova recalled, "I will remember Paris forever, it is indelible. Its architecture, its monuments, its streets filled with cars and people… all this is fascinating….On the streets, life boils and boils, people are enthusiastic, talking loudly and gesticulating." Vlasova grew up in a world where Paris had been only an idea, completely inaccessible. And yet, because she had long dreamed of visiting Paris, and experienced the city in films and books, Paris felt almost familiar to her. She explained, "You know, the whole time that I was in Paris, I had a feeling as if I had been here long ago, as a child,

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[193] L. Tsvetaeva, "Nam soobshchaiut po telefonu."

[194] K. Ushakov, "Mesiats v Parizhe."

and vaguely recognized forgotten places."[195] Vlasova's language is similar to that of other Soviet artists and authors for whom Paris became a "memory" before they had ever been there. Through postcards and prints of French art, and late 1950s reprints of nineteenth century French literature (especially Hugo, Dumas, Balzac, Zola, and Flaubert), many Soviet people perceived Paris an icon of culture and civilization.[196]

Although dancers were discouraged from speaking casually with French people, Vlasova treasured the memory of sitting in a Montmartre café with Parisian artists and journalists, everyone joking, laughing, and proposing toasts. She appreciated tasting French cuisine such as onion soup and salads – perhaps the only meals she could try while maintaining a dancer's strict dieting regimen. Backstage, as well as in restaurants and shops, the French treated her kindly and smiled, some even having learned the Russian greeting "Zdravstvuitie." Some Parisians recognized the Soviet dancers on the street and welcomed them with friendly faces. She was surprised that her French colleagues brought friends and relatives into the Opéra corridors to introduce them to the Soviet company. Everyone she met was politely curious about the Soviet Union, asking questions about what it was like to work, dance, and live *à la soviétique*.[197] The *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* (Komsomol Truth) interviewer asked Vlasova to name the most valuable souvenir that the dancer had brought back from Paris. Vlasova responded that although she had brought back a small model of the Eiffel tower and a few other trinkets, her most precious souvenir was "the respect of the Parisian audience," which she considered to be "a

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[195] Vlasova, "U nas v gostiakh."

[196] Idealization of the city sometimes contributed to disappointment after arrival in Paris. Art historian Mikhail German visited Paris in the 1960s and only one week into his trip was afflicted by an "eternal, hopeless, insatiable nostalgia" for Paris, which "evaded [him]…even while [he] was there." Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die*, 278-291.

[197] Vlasova, "U nas v gostiakh."

lifelong gift."[198] Vlasova's account stands out in the Soviet press because she highlights her prolonged interactions with French people in a variety of unmediated environments – in the theater, on the streets, in shops, and in cafés. Her reflections are also unusual for the way she describes Paris as a long sought-after, yet elusive, locale. The publication of this interview suggested new possibilities for how Western cities could be portrayed in the Soviet media – as friendly, bustling, and culturally rich tourist destinations. Nevertheless, the article on Vlasova remained exceptional, as most reports on Franco-Soviet dance exchanges completely avoided discussing dancers' sightseeing and socializing. Shopping, though it held a large place in dancers' own accounts, was completely absent in the Soviet press.

If Soviet journalists acknowledged artists' interactions with French dancers, such meetings were usually limited to receptions, dance studios, onstage, and other professional contexts. Journalists explained that French artists sought out their Soviet colleagues in order to learn from them. Director Ushakov claimed that often French choreographers, ballet masters, and famous Opéra de Paris artists attended Soviet rehearsals and studio training sessions with the goal of closely studying the principles of Soviet ballet.[199] Ushakov also remarked with pride that well-known ballet director the Marquis de Cuevas interrupted his dance company's tour to bring the troupe to Paris so that his artists could become acquainted with visiting company's technique and "take a few lessons from the Soviet masters."[200] For their part, the Soviet artists expressed interest in French productions by attending plays and ballets at the Opéra and the Comédie Française, but there was little overt indication that the sharing of knowledge flowed from west to

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[198] Vlasova, "U nas v gostiakh."

[199] K. Ushakov, "Mesiats v Parizhe."

[200] K. Ushakov, "Mesiats v Parizhe."

east. Attending Serge Lifar's "Chopiniana" at the Opéra de Paris only convinced correspondent L. Tsvetaeva of Soviet ballet's superiority. In Tsvetaeva's view, the Opéra production featured "a lifeless succession of figures and drawings that left the audience with a feeling of emptiness."[201] While European dancers rearranged their schedules to learn from their Soviet colleagues, such reports implied, Soviet participants rejected western dance styles.

However much the artists appreciated tours to France, the Soviet press asserted that no aspect of the trip was so fulfilling as the return home. In the Thaw context, new possibilities had opened up, as the very presence of Soviet performers in France demonstrated. However, the Soviet regime only approved travel for citizens who could be trusted to avoid political controversy and represent the country with dignity. Soviet tourists could observe and admire Western architecture, sculpture, painting, and theater, but the purpose of their travels lay in the return trip. Their newly gained insights and experiences would contribute to building a more sophisticated and cultured Soviet citizenry. The Soviet government had long struggled against deep-seated anxiety that Russians were perceived by other Europeans as boorish and uneducated; allowing Soviet citizens to travel in the 1950s and 1960s presented a solution to this problem.[202] Sending individuals who could be counted on to behave and use good manners demonstrated to foreigners that Soviet people did not suit the stereotype of Russian brutishness. Dancers played an especially large role in this project, as ballet was traditionally the art of courtesy and grace – values exemplified by the dancers themselves. Soviet dancers also offered a domestic model for

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[201] L. Tsvetaeva, "Nam soobshchaiut po telefonu."

[202] Anne Gorsuch, "Time Travelers: Soviet Tourists to Eastern Europe," 205-226.

behavior, and newspaper stories about their journeys abroad provided an example of what to expect and how to think about travel to the West.[203]

Enriching as travel abroad might be, Soviet tourists were expected to look forward to returning home and leave no doubt about which country reigned supreme. It is no surprise that the most direct comments about the joys of coming home came from the Soviet theater director, Konstantin Ushakov. As the foremost authority managing the company abroad, Ushakov would seek to legitimize the tour by highlighting its successes in interviews and persuading his superiors that the trip had gone without a hitch. Speaking for the dancers, he claimed that the company was happy to say goodbye to Western Europe, since leaving meant returning home. As he explained after flying back from Paris, "Nothing compares to the feeling of crossing our national border again, when we found ourselves in the land of our beloved Motherland once more."[204] Another journalist explained the company's longing for home by citing poet Vladimir Mayakovsky's "Farewell." In an interview with *Vechernyaia Moskva*, Ushakov explained that the company had made many new friends in Paris and regretted having to part from them. Yet the article concluded with Mayakovsky's words: "I would want to live and die in Paris/ If there were not such a place as Moscow."[205] By emphasizing the excitement of coming home after traveling abroad, official narratives about Franco-Soviet dance tours suggest to readers that returning to the Soviet Union should be as satisfying as touring Western cities. These reports provided readers instruction on the correct way to conceptualize tourism when some Soviet citizens began

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[203] Also see Chapter Four on how the narrative around Soviet ballerinas balanced patriotic duty with the privilege of traveling.

[204] K. Ushakov, "Mesiats v Parizhe."

[205] "Sovetskii balet vernulsia iz Parizha," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 17 July 1956, RGALI, f. 970, op. 13, d. 1013, l. 3.

to travel abroad for the first time. Statements about the joy of returning home also provided assurance to the many readers who could not travel: Soviet dancers had traveled west yet remained eager to see Moscow once again. Although France had become accessible to Soviet citizens, in other words, the travelers' loyalty to the Soviet Union remained steadfast.

If the Soviet Communist Party maintained careful control over the nation's press organs, the same could not be said of the French government's relationship with Parisian media. French newspapers depended on subsidies from the French government,[206] and the state respected the freedom of information, meaning that politicians and diplomats could not intervene to alter commentary on French or Soviet dance performances.[207] Franco-Soviet dance tours were covered by over a dozen French newspapers across the political spectrum, from the conservative *Le Figaro* to the more mainstream *Le Monde* to left-leaning publications like *Libération* and *L'Humanité*. Soviet newspapers were organized similarly to their Western counterparts – under subheadings dedicated to particular themes, such as sports, culture, political developments, with

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[206] Clyde Thogmartin, *The National Daily Press of France* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1998). The practice dates at least back to the French Revolution, when the Committee of Public Safety granted subsidies to newspapers that published "correct" political opinions (38). State press subsidies continued to varying degrees through the nineteenth century. Mid-twentieth-century French leaders hoped that state sponsorship of the press – *all* press organs – would reduce corruption and increase pluralism in the media. This support goes even to "erotic" and "violent" publications, with the requirements that the periodical be registered as legal press businesses (as of an 1881 law), that the publication must be purchased (not given away freely), and that advertising be limited to two-thirds of the space available in their magazine or newspaper. Throughout the long history of French press subsidies, critics voiced suspicion that subsidies may intimidate or manipulate the press into following the government's whims. Scholar of the French press Clyde Thogmartin argues that there is little evidence that subsidies brought journalists in line with official narratives (325-331). In the 1990s, the financially struggling Communist newspaper *L'Humanité*, received support from the PCF and individual donors, along with 5 million francs in government aid while maintaining its reputation as a reliable critic of the French government (247). French newspapers continue to depend on state support to a larger extent than in most democracies. Although the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, and Italy also subsidize their nation's newspapers, in 1990 France spent more on press subsidies than any of these countries except Italy (325).

[207] However, this did not prevent the French government from influencing French media coverage in certain cases. Most notably, around this time coverage of the Algerian War (1954-1962) was censored through the seizure of journals that printed "unacceptable" claims. See Martin Harrison, "Government and Press in France during the Algerian War," *The American Political Science Review* 58, no. 2 (1964): 273-285.

journalists specializing in a given topic, but in several ways Soviet papers functioned differently from French ones. Soviet newspapers reported a much larger circulation than did French publications, though the former tended to have fewer pages (usually no more than twelve per issue), fewer images, and less flashy headlines than the latter.

These differences stemmed from the managerial seat of Soviet news, which was controlled by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.[208] Although the Soviet press experienced moments of relatively relaxed censorship – such as during Khrushchev's rise to power and during the Glasnost' in the 1980s – the Party never relinquished control over the nation's media. Throughout the Cold War, two of the most prominent newspapers, *Izvestia* ("The News") and *Pravda* ("The Truth"), remained news organs of the Communist Party, though the joke went that no news could be found in *The Truth* and no truth could be found in *The News*. With few exceptions, the two papers' reporting mirrored each other.[209] Embassies from both countries employed staff tasked with tracking local press coverage about any events related to their home country – especially an occasion as high-profile as a ballet company tour. With the onset of cultural exchanges between France and the Soviet Union, the two systems of journalism clashed. As officials on both sides became aware, the French and Soviet governments had starkly different perspectives on the use and role of the national press.

Though press censorship could be an asset for controlling the narrative around dance exchanges in the Soviet Union, the coverage of foreign journalists was woefully out of Soviet

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[208] Thomas Wolfe *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 5-6.

[209] Catherine Evthuhov and Richard Stites, *A History of Russia Since 1800: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 424. One exception to this mirroring occurred in December 1954, when a textual dual played out in the two newspapers during the power struggle between Georgi Malenkov (who controlled *Izvestia*) and Nikita Khrushchev (who controlled *Pravda*).

diplomats' grasp. When Soviet officials agreed to send performers to a non-communist nation, they exposed Soviet artists to the free press for the first time. The Soviet Union's international reputation was at stake in French assessments of Soviet performances, and yet the Soviet Union had no control over what French journalists published. To French diplomats, Soviet cultural affairs staff appeared to have a difficult time understanding that the French government exerted little influence over the nation's journalists. When French journalists published stories that displeased Soviet officials, the latter found themselves in the awkward position of asking their French colleagues to intervene by scolding the journalist or pressuring the newspaper to "correct" its story. In one case, the Soviet cultural attaché complained to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs that French performances in the Soviet Union were not receiving enough media coverage in France. The French Minister responded that he, too, regretted this tendency on the part of Parisian journalists to write little about France's tours abroad. An internal note on the matter explained that the French Embassy in Moscow should be notified about this concern, so that the Embassy's press attaché would prioritize more coverage of French artistic events within the Soviet Union.[210]

Other press disputes, however, proved more difficult to resolve. For instance, after a Georgian folk ensemble's 1958 tour in southern France, the Soviet Embassy noticed some negative press coverage about the company. A few days after the article appeared, Soviet Ministry of Cultural Affairs representative V. Zhdan set up a meeting with Roger Seydoux at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the problem. Zhdan insisted that the recent *Paris-Presse* article had "distorted the facts" about the Georgian artists and appeared to be "a ploy to

[210] Report from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 7 November 1966, Series 554INVA, Carton 264, MAE.

diminish the success of Soviet artists by any means."[211] Seydoux responded that he had not heard anything about the *Paris-Presse* criticism, and that he could not recall a single critique of the Georgian ensemble. Seydoux insisted that the piece was the work of a "very insignificant chronicler" who had little power to change the French public's opinion. These claims did not completely pacify Zhdan, who asserted that, upon the signing of contracts for cultural exchanges, both countries bore a responsibility to pay attention "even to the private attempts of different French newspapers to belittle the success of Soviet artists with absurd inventions." He also warned Seydoux that it was not in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs' best interest to "leave [our] artists with an unpleasant aftertaste" after their tour in France, especially as this negative impression could jeopardize future tours by Soviet performance ensembles.

The uneven levels of control that French and Soviet leaders exercised over their journalists produced a misunderstanding about what negative press coverage meant between the two parties. Zhdan insisted that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs take concrete measures to "protect [Soviet] artists from unreasonable and clearly deliberate acts" by the French press. Seydoux asserted the difficulty of influencing the independent French press and emphasized that the *Paris-Presse* article had likely already been forgotten. Still, he agreed to bring the matter to the attention of the *Paris-Presse* editorial board – even though, he insisted, the paper had little influence on French political or cultural life.[212] Despite protections of freedom of the press promised by the French constitution, Seydoux pacified his Soviet colleagues by agreeing to

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[211] Minutes from a conversation between V.N. Zhdan and General Director of Cultural and Technical Affairs Roger Seydoux, 17 February 1958, GARF, f. R9518, op. 1, d. 276, l. 91

[212] Minutes from a conversation between V.N. Zhdan and General Director of Cultural and Technical Affairs Roger Seydoux, 17 February 1958, GARF, f. R9518, op. 1, d. 276, l. 91.

interfere in the work of French journalists.[213] To Soviet officials, negative commentary by private French journalists appeared to reflect the French government's disrespect – especially if French officials did nothing to suppress derisive remarks about visiting Soviet artists. Perhaps this perspective stemmed from a different understanding of public speech; in the Soviet press, an opinion was unlikely to be published unless it conformed with the CPSU's current worldview. During Nikita Khrushchev's 1959 visit to the United States, the premier accused President Eisenhower of arranging for protestors to accost him in Los Angeles. When his American escort questioned this assumption, Khrushchev explained that in the Soviet Union, the protestors would only have acted upon his order.[214] During dance tours, misunderstandings about the meaning of negative press coverage revealed differences between French and Soviet politics. Though art was supposed to have no political boundaries, Soviet diplomats perceived aesthetic critiques as political, which contributed to, rather than relieved, diplomatic tensions.

The French, for their part, admitted their low expectations for the degree of press coverage their performers would receive in Soviet papers. Diplomats declared their primary goal for cultural exchanges to be disseminating French art among the Soviet population. They considered the Soviet press more a reflection of official dictates on art and culture than a genuine reflection of popular opinion on the French artists.[215] During bilateral French and Soviet dance company exchanges – as in 1958 and 1969 – Soviet newspapers devoted much more space to the

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[213] This correspondence was found in a Russian archive, GARF. I was not able to find any evidence of this incident in the MAE archive, so there is unfortunately no confirmation that Seydoux followed through speaking to *Paris-Presse*.

[214] Peter Carlson, *K Blows Top: A Cold War Comic Interlude, Starring Nikita Khrushchev, America's Most Unlikely Tourist* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009), 165.

[215] Correspondence from Ambassador Roger Seydoux to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Maurice Schumann, 11 February 1970, Series 554INVA, Carton 554, MAE.

Bolshoi troupe's activities and its reception in Paris than on the French company's stay in Moscow. French diplomats observed that Soviet reports gave readers the impression that the Bolshoi's tour was "the musical event of the year in Paris." The articles proclaimed the tour's "total success" as part of a "flattering portrait" in which "nuances were rare," in the French ambassador's view.[216] However, Soviet journalists did not always disregard Parisian critics. Of the Soviet ensembles, the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko ballet company faced the most hostility from some French writers, who eviscerated the troupe for its dowdy costumes and antiquated dance style.

As for Soviet papers' coverage of French dancers, the articles tended to be brief and matter of fact.[217] Soviet newspapers like *Pravda* and *Izvestia* were often mouthpieces for the perspective of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Their articles conveyed to readers the "correct" interpretations of domestic and international events. Although French diplomats hoped that Opéra de Paris performers would warm the Soviet public to French culture and thereby France in general, Soviet newspapers foregrounded the Bolshoi's success in Paris and leveraged France's concurrent colonial conflicts to frame the Opéra de Paris's arrival in a negative light for Soviet readers. Although it is hard to say how much this press coverage swayed readers, it is clear that the Soviet media's minimal and often vague reporting on French tours in the Soviet

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[216] Correspondence from French Ambassador Roger Seydoux to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Maurice Schumann, 16 February 1970, Series 554INVA, Carton 576, MAE.

[217] For deeper analysis of the content of Soviet aesthetic critiques of French ballet, see Chapter One. Soviet journalists' and dance critics' ideological criticisms of French dance were reiterated in more subtle ways through article placement, which is discussed here.

Union starkly contrasted with the more complimentary memoirs of Soviet dancers who participated in these tours.[218]

During the 1958 ballet exchange, leading Soviet newspapers *Izvestia* and *Pravda* reported on the Bolshoi Theater ballet's tour abroad without even mentioning the reciprocal performances by French artists, slated to arrive only a few days later.[219] The day after the Opéra de Paris ballet touched down in Moscow, news of their arrival was folded into coverage of other dance tours, including the Bolshoi ballet's Parisian tour, a Georgian folk company's tour in Italy, and a Lithuanian folk ensemble's tour in Romania.[220] In Parisian media, the reverse tendency manifested, with French journalists devoting *more* space to Soviet dance and the tourist excursions of Soviet performers. The French company primarily appeared in French newspapers in a brief statement announcing that the artists had left for the Soviet Union to represent France abroad, and in follow-up pieces describing the artists' experiences in Moscow, along with some mention of Soviet audiences' warm reception of the ensemble.

In contrast to the front page placement granted to the Bolshoi's Parisian premiere in some French newspapers, reporting on the Opéra de Paris's premiere performance in Moscow was tucked into a tiny article on the last page of *Pravda*. The article provided the tour dates, outlined the company's repertoire, listed Soviet political figures who attended the premiere, and stated

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[218] The perspectives of Soviet dancers will be examined further below. Many Soviet dancers' memoirs were published either after the dissolution of the Soviet Union or after the dancer had defected to a Western nation. Memoirs of dancers who remained in the Soviet Union – and necessarily published through a Soviet press company – tell a story correlating to that appearing in Soviet newspapers, with heavy emphasis on the achievements of and developments in Soviet dance. Some dancers in this latter group produced memoirs that entirely evaded the topic of foreign tours, even if they had performed abroad.

[219] "Zarubezhnye gastroli Bol'shogo teatra," *Pravda*, 22 May 1958, 4; "K gastroliam Bol'shogo teatra SSSR v Evrope," *Izvestia*, 25 May 1958, 3.

[220] "Iskusstvo sblizhaet narody," *Pravda*, 26 May 1958, 4.

that the audience "warmly received" their guests.[221] *Izvestia*'s coverage of the Opéra de Paris ballet's premiere also appeared on the publication's last page and was similarly terse.[222] Readers seeking more detailed coverage of the Opéra de Paris's premiere would need to consult *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, a publication devoted to culture.[223] Though the tour remained relegated to the paper's last page, the journalist included a few more details about the French artists, including the names of star performers and vague descriptions of their offstage activities such as, "Yesterday our guests relaxed. They became acquainted with Moscow."[224] Yet even in this instance where the French company received more attention, the story was placed directly beside another – over twice as long – about the Bolshoi ballet's successes in Paris.[225] French diplomatic staff in Moscow, employed to clip and collate these articles for their colleagues in France, had to accept these subtle suggestions to Soviet readers that the Opéra de Paris ballet tour was considered less newsworthy than the Bolshoi's accomplishments abroad.[226]

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[221] TASS, "Pervoe vystuplenie parizhskogo baleta v Moskve," *Pravda*, 2 June 1958, 4.

[222] "Gastroli parizhskogo baleta," *Izvestia*, 3 June 1958, 4.

[223] For a more detailed discussion of how the Soviet press responded to the aesthetics, style, and technique of the Opéra de Paris ballet performances, see Chapter One.

[224] "Balet 'Grand-Opera' v Moskve," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 3 June 1958, 4.

[225] "Balet 'Grand-Opera' v Moskve," and "Balet Bol'shogo teatra v Parizhe," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 3 June 1958, 4. The article about the Opéra de Paris Ballet measured 227 words, whereas the article about the Bolshoi's tour in Paris comprised 679 words.

[226] French diplomats hoped that, despite what Soviet newspapers published (or did not publish) about French ballet tours abroad, audience members in Saint Petersburg and Moscow would come away from Opéra de Paris performances with a higher opinion of France. Even in the late 1960s, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff accepted Soviet newspapers as the opinion of the Communist Party and looked for other signs that the Opéra de Paris had won over the public. For example, after a 1969 Opéra de Paris tour in Moscow, French Ambassador Roger Seydoux asserted that an avant-garde ballet "literally excited the public, even to the point that some people claimed to have detected…the start of a *manifestation*." Although this ballet appeared to make the largest impression on the audience, Seydoux explained, "the [Soviet] press, held to respect official orders…hardly mentioned this performance." French cultural and foreign relations staff did not consider the Soviet press to be a reliable index for public opinion and instead measured reception by the audience's responses to French performances. Correspondence from Ambassador Roger Seydoux to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Maurice Schumann, 11 February 1970, Series 554INVA, Carton 554, MAE.

Parisian officials who viewed the cut-and-pasted clippings would not have noticed, however, the context in which these articles appeared on the page. Strategic placement of news about the French tours became a common way to critique France in an oblique way. Reports about Franco-Soviet dance tours tended to be placed next to and between much larger reports about political upheavals within France. To the consternation of French diplomats, the performance exchanges of 1954 and 1958 took place as France entered into major political crises involving its colonies. In May 1954, just as Soviet performers prepared to take the stage in Paris, the Viet Minh overtook French forces at Dien Bien Phu, a defeat that culminated in the liberation of Indochina from French control. In 1958, Soviet dancers had just returned for another Parisian tour when yet another crisis struck France: the May 1958 Crisis, when a right-wing military coup in Algeria attempted to prevent France's withdrawal from Algeria (fearing the same result as in 1954 Indochina). To quell this instability and prevent further political upheaval, the acting French president and parliament approved the return to power of Charles de Gaulle – a move that included the foundation of the Fifth French Republic and the creation of a new constitution that granted strong executive powers to the president.[227]

During both tours, reporting about the Franco-Soviet dance exchange appeared alongside flashier titles about the disintegration of France's empire. In 1954, mentions of the Soviet tour in France were overshadowed on the newspaper page by headlines announcing that "the fall of Dien Bien Phu had shattered the [French government's] position" and articles that described an atmosphere of crisis and panic throughout French leadership.[228] The French government

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[227] Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 282.

[228] TASS, "Padenie D'en-B'en-Fu pokolebalo pozitsii pravitel'stva Lan'elia," *Pravda* 12 May 1954, 4.

subsequently cancelled the imminent Soviet ballet tour in Paris, out of concern that the appearance of communist performers on France's national stage would only fuel more controversy.[229] To the relief of French diplomats, Soviet journalists did not editorialize about this decision, instead focusing on reprinting French observers' own critiques of the tour cancellation.[230] Other news coverage, only inches away from coverage of the ballet tour, eliminated any doubt about the Soviet Union's attitude on France's loss of Indochina. Informed by direct communication with Vietnamese forces, one report on the "Indochinese question" described the inhumane actions of the "imperialist aggressors," who brutalized and murdered prisoners of war and even unarmed civilians.[231] In another instance, coverage of the cancelled Soviet premiere appeared one column over from a long article accusing French authorities of dragging their feet on evacuating Indochina because they feared public outrage once the severe injuries of French soldiers became known. Soviet journalists variously described French officials as enemies of "the truth," "opponents of the restoration of peace in Indochina," and players of "a dishonest game that caused the legitimate indignation among all honest people."[232]

The events of 1958 similarly lent themselves to discrediting the French government to Soviet readers, even as the Soviet Union engaged in cultural exchange with France. Articles devoted to the arrival of the Opéra de Paris ballet in Moscow appeared near others about French imperial aggressions in Tunisia (which had been independent since 1956) and African nations'

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[229] For more details about this incident, see Chapter Three.

[230] For example: TASS, "K prebyvaniiu sovetskikh artistov vo Frantsii," *Izvestia*, 12 May 1954, 4.

[231] TASS, "Zaiavlenie verkhovnogo komandovaniia v'etnamskoi narodnoi armii o polozhenii ranenykh voennoplennykh v Dien-Bien-Fu," *Izvestia*, 12 May 1954, 4.

[232] Yu. Zhukov and I. Plyshevskii, "Pochemu frantsuzskie vlasti sryvaiut evakuatsiiu iz D'en-B'en-Fu" and TASS, "Frantsuzskaia obshchestvennost' protestuet protiv zapreshcheniia vystuplenii sovetskikh artistov," *Pravda*, 18 May 1954, 4.

struggle against French colonialism.[233] Throughout the summer of 1958, the Franco-Soviet dance exchange was once again eclipsed in the Soviet press by the political instability in a running series in both *Pravda* and *Izvestia* called "The Situation in France," which always appeared on the same page as smaller pieces about the dance exchange.[234] Throughout the month of June, as the dance exchange unfolded, France's colonial dilemmas outshone the country's artistic contributions. According to Soviet papers, the events in Algeria and the subsequent turmoil within France proved that "French colonialists [desired] to preserve their domination at any cost and [did] not want to reach a peaceful resolution to the Algerian problem." At the same time, one Soviet journalist opined, "It [was] clear that without withdrawal, [France would] not be able to resolve its domestic difficulties, or its many international problems."[235] Whatever Soviet readers might think about French ballet, newspaper editors emphasized that France's domestic and international strife was a self-made problem produced by greedy imperialism.[236] For those who could not enter the Bolshoi Theater's halls, reporting on the Opéra de Paris's graceful onstage performances was countered by surrounding portraits of French bloodlust, corruption, and avarice.

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[233] O. Orestov, "Afrika v bor'be protiv kolonializma," TASS, "V Tunise ob"iavleno chrezvychainoe polozhenie," and "Iskusstvo sblizhaet narody," *Pravda*, 26 May 1958, 4.

[234] For example, S. Zykov, «Polozhenie vo Frantsii" and "Gastroli artistov GABT v Parizhe," *Izvestia*, 1 June 1958, 5; G. Patiani, "Polozhenie vo Frantsii" and TASS, "Triumf Bol'shogo teatra v Parizhe," *Pravda*, 3 June 1958, 6; G. Patiani, "Polozhenie vo Frantsii" and "Segodnia v teatrakh Moskvy," *Pravda*, 4 June 1958, 6.

[235] S. Zykov, "Poezdka de Gollia v Alzhir," *Izvestia*, 5 June 1958, 3. Pravda Correspondent, "Voina v Alzhire prodolzhaetsia," *Pravda*, 17 June 1958, 6.

[236] Through the remainder of the tour, similar coverage appeared decrying the "bourgeois Parisian newspapers'" biased portrayal of the Algerian conflict, in which the "struggling Algerian people" were dismissed as part of a "nationalist uprising." Recalling the press coverage after Dien Bien Phu, Soviet journalists also denounced French imperialists' brutal treatment and murder of "Algerian patriots." Pravda Correspondent, "Voina v Alzhire prodolzhaetsia," *Pravda*, 17 June 1958, 6.

Postwar Franco-Soviet dance tours revealed the contrasting role of the press in France and the Soviet Union. In France, journalists and editors selected stories based on which topics were likely to attract the widest readership. As suggested by rapid ticket sales throughout the Soviet tour in France, Parisians were eager to learn about their Soviet guests. Newspapers across the political spectrum were enthralled not just with the Bolshoi dancers' performances, but their demeanor, clothing, and engagement with the Parisian cityscape. Considering the interest in the Bolshoi's visit among ballet lovers and ordinary people alike, it is unsurprising that the Bolshoi's visits received far more coverage in French papers than did the Opéra de Paris's Moscow performances. After all, the Opéra de Paris ballet already figured prominently in French cultural life and made regular appearances in Parisian newspapers.

Mobilizing the press to shape public perceptions during dance exchanges was not a one-way street. French journalists, too, aggravated Soviet officials with biting criticisms, references to artistic oppression in the Soviet Union, and insinuations that communist ideology had held back Soviet art. On the one hand, Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials sometimes complained to French ambassadors about "unfair" Parisian press coverage, pressing French officials to compromise on national deals about freedom of the press by putting pressure on journalists who excoriated Soviet performances. On the other hand, French diplomats grumbled about the Soviet media's lopsided preference for the Soviet side of dance exchanges yet made no complaints, hoping that Soviet audiences would see beyond this scanty reporting. Both sides had to accommodate a degree of uncertainty about how the other nation's media portrayed these high-profile events and compromise on their usual policies around media culture. Dance exchanges also opened up both countries to contentious disputes about another form of expression: personal mobility.

To allay fears of controversy and diplomatic fallout, French and Soviet officials took measures to guide dancers' experiences of and exposure to their host country. The Soviet Union took more steps (such as hiring KGB agents to escort artists) to constrain the movement of its dancers abroad, but dance exchanges required both countries to accommodate contrasting definitions of an individual's freedom to move freely. Dancers did not always follow prescribed rules, but – almost every time – the possibility of misbehavior was worth the risk: hundreds of dancers flowed across Cold War boundaries and successfully returned to their home country, having furthered their nation's international cultural presence. Occasionally, however, the two countries' contrasting approaches to personal mobility erupted when a Soviet dancer decided not to go home. Defections became flash points in Cold War history precisely because of how these "leaps to freedom" struck at the intersection of two political systems with markedly different notions of what the freedom to move across boundaries meant. The Western press played a crucial role in sensationalizing and promoting defections to support narratives about Soviet political and artistic oppression.

Tourism in Motion: Culture Shock and Cold War Politics

Despite the large amount of international press coverage devoted to defections, the majority of visitors from the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc returned home. During their time abroad, dancers spent the majority of their time rehearsing or performing. Their offstage activities were, in theory, controlled by the host government, whose officials established a list of acceptable tourist activities geared toward the visiting company's interests and toward providing positive impressions of French or Soviet culture. French dancers in the Soviet Union were attended by Soviet escorts who kept an eye on their charges, and Soviet performers in France

were accompanied by chaperones who enforced rules of comportment. At the same time, the host country had far from absolute control over artists' activities, even if local officials did determine most of the tourist agenda. Yet performers had their own motivations for seeking international tours: for both French and Soviet dancers, tours across the Cold War divide entailed rare travel experiences, professional caché, and coveted networking opportunities.

Analyzing these close encounters during Franco-Soviet dance exchanges sheds light on how a wide array of actors participated in and made sense of Cold War politics. Although dance tours were organized by French and Soviet diplomats, their execution demanded the involvement of many non-government representatives: opera employees and administrators from both countries, Western impresarios, event planners, journalists, and catering staff. Affordable air travel and the Thaw's onset opened up new questions about the implications of allowing Cold War relations to be mediated through such unofficial channels. At a moment when governments turned increasingly toward "people-to-people" diplomacy to advance their nation's agenda, personal contacts made possible by Franco-Soviet dance tours exposed ideological and cultural differences that ran counter to the tours' diplomatic goals.[237] The cultural and political fissures encountered by tour participants often unfolded on an individual level while performers explored a foreign city, confronted culture shock, and tested the limits of proper comportment as representatives of their nation abroad.

Dancers' experiences across Cold War divides were often more ambivalent than Soviet and French diplomats suggested. Through these interactions, participants realized that the "iron curtain" was not just a physical boundary, but also a cultural construct. As one journalist

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[237] See Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 113.

remarked, although they had arrived in Paris, Soviet dancers brought along "their very own portable iron curtain" to keep ideological boundaries in place.[238] Both governments sought to shape visiting dancers' experiences of the host city. During dance tours, performers explored the host city's landscape, shopped for souvenirs, and tasted the host country's cuisine, offering a rare opportunity for French and Soviet citizens to glimpse lives and cities that had seemed unreachable for decades. But Soviet dancers came to Paris not only to see, but to be seen. If French observers picked apart every aspect of Soviet companies' onstage performances, they were equally interested in how their Soviet visitors behaved as tourists. For instance, to French observers, a Soviet ballerina's decision to purchase a French coat was itself a symbol of détente.[239] Cold War barriers were negotiated in many arenas, from food, clothing, and luxury items to transnational social contacts that only became possible in the mid-1950s.

Soviet dancers' first sight upon arrival in Paris was typically the Orly airport tarmac, flush with the press, bouquets of flowers, and French dancers waiting to greet the Soviet artists.[240] For the 1958 dance exchange, France ballerina Liane Daydé even brought along her dog, Roméo, who quickly won over the legendary Galina Ulanova.[241] The 150 dancers, theater administrators, artists, and technical staff disembarked from the Tupolev aircraft, which departed several hours later to Moscow with 108 members of the Opéra de Paris ballet company on board.[242] Shortly after their arrival, Soviet dancers were shuttled to a large reception organized

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[238] Thierry Nolin, "Le secret des danseurs du Bolchoï: Les Conserves," *Paris-Soir*, 9 January 1970.

[239] See Chapter Four.

[240] Report for the Board of Directors of the Association Française d'Action Artistique, 10 November 1958, Series 544INVA, Carton 570, MAE.

[241] M.T., "Échange de ballets," *Paris Journal*, 26 May 1958.

[242] Correspondence from Opera director Georges Hirsch to Director of the AFAA Philippe Erlanger, 4 May 1958, Series Opera.Arch.20, Folder 353(2), BMO.

by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to welcome the ensemble. The Ministry had set aside over 804,000 francs[243] for the event and invited six hundred people, including Opéra staff, representatives from both the Soviet and French embassies, and about 150 ballet dancers.[244] This was only the first of many receptions held throughout the Soviet company's tour in Paris, with the goal of "putting foreign artists in contact with other artists and theater specialists."[245] At these receptions, French and Soviet dancers had the opportunity to socialize and form friendships that were renewed during future exchanges.

[243] 14,670 Euros in 2021 (Converted using the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques Franc-Euro currency converter: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2417794).

[244] Report for the Board of Directors of the Association Française d'Action Artistique, 10 November 1958, MAE.

[245] Report by C. Fradet, 20 March 1958, Series 554INVA, Carton 570, MAE.



Figure 2: Olga Lepeshinskaya, Michel Renault, Galina Ulanova, Sergei Vinogradov, and Liane Daydé with Roméo the dog. "Échange de ballets," *Paris Journal*, 26 May 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

Bolshoi dancers spent about three weeks in Paris during the 1958 dance exchange, but most days were booked with rehearsals and performances. Out of the company's 22 days in Paris, only two days were reserved for rest.[246] Despite this rigorous performance schedule, the troupe experienced a whirlwind of tourist activities, which were organized and financed by the Opéra de Paris. After spending a few days dedicated exclusively to rehearsals, Bolshoi dancers split their remaining time between tourist excursions, social outings, and performances. French officials did not set formal limits on where the Soviet company could go during their stay in

[246] List of rehearsals and performances planned for the Soviet artists at the Opéra, 10 January 1958, Series 554INVA, Carton 570, MAE.

Paris, but some departments within the French government received Soviet cultural representatives with a degree of suspicion. Officials from the Défense Nationale requested that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provide an itinerary detailing the activities of any visitors from the Eastern bloc and Soviet Union, including members of the Bolshoi company. Ministry administrator F. Gobin pushed back against this request, stating that visitors to France were free to go where they liked, and that in any case, it would be difficult to give specific information. Besides, he explained, "a visit to the Louvre or to Chambord cannot involve a breach of important military secrets."[247]

If French authorities were ambivalent about tracing the Soviet performers' every move, the dancers were still braced for schemes to prevent them from returning home. Although the French press spun the artists' fascination with Parisian culture to their own advantage, Soviet dancers reflected that, to their surprise, no one seemed interested in persuading them to defect. During pre-departure meetings, the Soviet company had been cautioned against foreigners who might apply subterfuge or even kidnapping to detain the artists. After this preparation, some members of the company were surprised that no foreigners emerged from the shadows to lure them into betraying their country. As Elena Tchernichova remembered, "we found to our disappointment that no one was chasing us – no one at all."[248]

For their part, French diplomats and theater administrators carefully filled the company's free time with tourist activities that highlighted French cultural accomplishments. On their first scheduled rest day, the Soviet company spent the entire day at Versailles. They were greeted

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[247] Note from F. Gobin to Philippe Erlanger, 11 March 1957, Series 554INVA, Carton 570, MAE.

[248] Tchernichova, *Dancing on Water: A Life in Ballet, From the Kirov to the ABT* (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 2013), 119.

with a reception, after which they toured the chateau's apartments, enjoyed lunch at a local restaurant, and explored the surrounding grounds, including Marie Antoinette's hamlet. This busy day concluded with dinner on the Seine aboard a Bateau-Mouche riverboat. Toward the end of their stay, they climbed onto buses and spent a full day in Fontainebleau.[249] Much to the amusement of French observers, the members of the company took out little notebooks, taking note of everything they saw and asking detailed questions, like "what kind of wood is this floor made of?" Journalists noticed that the dancers kept their cameras ready and seemed to photograph every little thing – including the French landscape as seen from buses.[250] Several dancers mentioned their love of Montmartre; dancer Olga Lepeshinskaya boasted that she managed to visit Montmartre four times during the company's first three weeks in Paris. Raisa Struchkova remembered strolling through Paris until two o'clock in the morning, when they climbed up to see the Sacré Coeur Basilica. The dancers were so exhausted after walking all day that, to make the descent less painful, they did *cabrioles* (a type of leaping jump in ballet) all the way back down the hill, overtaking confused passersby struggling to process the sight of a tourist group gracefully leaping down the hill from Sacré-Coeur.[251]

For performers who had an evening available, the Opéra staff provided tickets to performances at Paris's most celebrated theaters. For the most part, the dancers attended uncontroversial performances, such as the Opéra-Comique's rendition of an eighteenth-century

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[249] The RTLN's plan for the Bolshoi company's leisure activities, September 1958, Series 554INVA, Carton 570, MAE.

[250] Claude Ledoux, "Après 15 jours de succès triomphal à l'Opéra de Paris, j'ai vu un danseur du Bolchoï Ballet lire en cachette le 'Courrier du Cœur,'" *France Soir*, 19 June 1958.

[251] Claude Ledoux, "Après 15 jours."

Italian opera, or a ballet at the Comédie-Française.[252] One possible exception to this was the Folies-Bergère, to which the Opéra offered tickets on three different evenings during the 1958 Soviet tour. In flashy and erotic Folies-Bergère acts, women danced in bedazzled leotards with plumes of feathers in their headpieces – a sight that Communist Party standards would declare a symbol of capitalist decadence.[253] Opéra officials likely did not intend to provoke by prominently featuring the Folies on the Bolshoi's itinerary, but Maya Plisetskaya recalled her embarrassment when she was approached by and photographed with two Folies-Bergère dancers while her Soviet interpreter grumbled about the scandalous circumstances.[254] Coincidentally, the American Ballet Theater happened to be on tour at the Champs-Elysées theater, providing Soviet dancers a glimpse at their American competition. Soviet artists also received tickets to what was likely their first Disney film: *Fantasia*. The film was a logical choice for a Soviet dance company, since it featured music by Russian composers Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Modest Mussorgsky, and Igor Stravinsky.

The Bolshoi ballet company's agenda included must-see tourist attractions. The company visited the Eiffel Tower, Les Invalides, the Tuileries, the Châtelet-Les Halles neighborhood, Notre Dame cathedral, and the Hôtel de Ville. They strolled through the Île Saint Louis and spent the evening in the Bois de Boulogne. They climbed to all three levels of the Eiffel tower and

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[252] The RTLN's plan for the Bolshoi company's leisure activities, September 1958, Series 554INVA, Carton 570, MAE.

[253] Peter Carlson, *K Blows Top: A Cold War Comic Interlude, Starring Nikita Khrushchev, America's Most Unlikely Tourist* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009), 163. Premier Nikita Khrushchev witnessed a similar sight in 1959, when during his tour of the United States, he attended the filming of *Can-Can* with Frank Sinatra and Shirley MacLaine. The film was set in Montmartre, in a Parisian music hall much like the Folies-Bergère. Khrushchev denounced *Can-Can* as a pornographic symbol of American decadence. Though it is unclear whether the Soviet troop expressed an equally negative reaction to the Folies-Bergère, the company was likely shocked by the Folies, which displayed more flesh and glitter than anything that appeared on Soviet stages.

[254] Maya Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 227.

toured the Rodin Museum, the Panthéon, and the Musée Grévin. Apart from these classic monuments to French history and culture, Soviet dancers were always treated to a few Parisian sites with a revolutionary past, including the grave of Communist and novelist Henri Barbusse, the Place de la Bastille, and the Communards' Wall in the Père Lachaise cemetery, where visiting Soviet performers often laid flowers.[255]

Like an evening at the Folies-Bergère, Soviet dancers' first exposure to the West was overwhelming. Several Soviet artists remembered walking down Parisian streets, struck by the variety of colors and sounds; in comparison to Paris, Moscow and Leningrad seemed dreary and homogenous. Ballerina Natalia Makarova recalled feeling like "Alice in Wonderland," observing that "Western life seemed…more intense, opulent, and diverse than Soviet realities."[256] When Kirov dancer Rudolf Nureyev illicitly explored Paris with French dancers Claire Motte and Attilio Labis, he noticed that "the people on the streets looked so interesting and so different from our drab Russian crowds", partly because they "had a hint of decadence, a lack of solid purpose."[257] Dancers also mentioned being scandalized by the sight of couples kissing in the middle of the street.[258] It was not unusual for Soviet company members to report feeling nauseous, overstimulated, and exhausted during their first tour abroad. After the sight of so much prosperity, Kirov artist Valery Panov reasoned, "their nervous systems needed time to adjust."[259]

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[255] Report on the Moiseyev Company Tour to Paris, September-December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 38.

[256] Natalia Makarova, *A Dance Autobiography* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 85.

[257] Rudolf Nureyev, *Nureyev: An Autobiography with Pictures by Richard Avedon, Michael Peto, Anthony Crickmay, and others* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1963), 105.

[258] Claude Ledoux, "Après 15 jours."

[259] Valery Panov, *To Dance* (New York: Random House, 1978), 209.

Dancer Alla Osipenko never considered defecting from the Soviet Union, but returned home pondering the "alien, almost cinematic unreality" of her experiences in France.[260] After Rudolf Nureyev's 1961 defection in Paris, journalists asserted that, Nureyev had "chosen freedom: the freedom to go shopping in peace."[261] Stories like these, especially those drawn from the memoirs of dancers who later defected, are likely exaggerated, but they reflect the idea (exploited by many French journalists) that the sight of French shops and boutiques brought on a destabilizing explosion of consumer desire in visitors from communist countries.[262]

For the most part, however, the dancers' daily activities passed without incident. A hotel clerk reported that the Soviet company was very quiet and polite, nothing like the "circus" that accompanied American tourists. In the evening, he explained, the dancers watched television and dined on canned preserves brought from Russia rather than going out to restaurants.[263] To save money for shopping, nearly the whole company brought suitcases packed with Russian food: sardines, dehydrated soup, and other canned goods. Elena Tchernichova recalled that after each performance, dancers retreated to the hotel and started cooking in their rooms. The dancers organized a schedule and took turns cooking to prevent straining the hotel's electrical supply, but occasionally the fuses would short circuit and the dancers flooded into the halls, grumbling that

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[260] Joel Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko: Beauty and Resistance in Soviet Ballet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 66.

[261] "Ils choisissent la liberté," *France Soir*, 28 May 1967, 4.SW.952, BNF-Richelieu.

[262] Women were viewed as especially susceptible to the temptation to buy extravagant and unnecessary items, placing shopping above professional interests. For example, the plans for Soviet ballerina Maya Plisetskaya's newsworthy tour in Paris were summed up with: "On the agenda: shopping and visiting the great couturiers," with no mention of which dances Plisetskaya would be performing. "L'étoile du Bolchoï à Zizi: 'Je t'aime,'" *France Soir*, 1 April 1972, 4.SW.6057, BNF-Richelieu. Also see Claude Ledoux, "Après 15 jours" and Thierry Nolin, "Le secret des danseurs du Bolchoï." For more details about Soviet ballerinas' shopping habits during Franco-Soviet dance tours, see Chapter Four.

[263] Thierry Nolin, "Le secret des danseurs du Bolchoï."

they would have to rework the cooking schedule.[264] Their *per diem* was intended to cover their day-to-day personal needs, but access to such a variety of French goods was too precious for the money to be wasted on meals. Soviet authorities were not thrilled to find that dancers spent their money this way; back home, ballerinas were particularly criticized for spending money on fashionable Parisian suits and dresses during tours.[265]

Outside their hotel rooms, dancers consumed Paris by recording the sights in photographs, dining in fancy restaurants like Maxim's, perusing French magazines and books, shopping, and moving through the city streets. French officials crafted this itinerary with Cold War diplomacy in mind. Soviet visitors experienced the best cultural, historical, and artistic experiences that Paris could offer, returning home to share their positive impressions of the city. Since dance exchanges were reciprocal, a warm reception of Soviet visitors would ensure like treatment of French artists during their stay in the Soviet Union. While Soviet critics bemoaned the decadence of French ballet costumes and décor, Soviet dancers received the elite tourist treatment, though such experiences smacked of capitalist indulgence. Visiting performers saw the best of Paris, which perhaps only confirmed their preexisting notions about the "decadent West." Though few were inclined to express their admiration of French culture unreservedly, the Soviet artists clearly appreciated the coveted opportunity to visit Paris.

Soviet dancers' reactions to their first Parisian experiences are difficult to generalize – even more so because their access to future travel opportunities depended on providing restrained assessments of life abroad. Cold War politics weighed heavily on these "dancing

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[264] Tchernichova, *Dancing on Water,* 119. See also: Valery Panov, *To Dance*, 209. Maya Plisetskaya claimed that, toward the end of tours, some Soviet dancers resorted to eating dog and cat food, noting, "You felt very strong after animal food." Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 207.

[265] Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 169-170.

diplomats," and excessively effulgent descriptions of French art and society implied criticisms of Soviet culture. Some touring performers achieved a balanced narrative by highlighting Parisians' own critiques about French culture, which allowed the dancer to indirectly challenge aspects of France without showing ingratitude to their hosts. In a report about his company's 1955 tour to Paris, Igor Moiseyev spent two paragraphs lauding French gothic architecture but abruptly concluded his praise by describing an interaction with his French chauffeur, who suggested that all was not well in contemporary French culture. On that particular day, Moiseyev had visited an unnamed tourist attraction that he did not enjoy. Moiseyev recalled that the chauffeur's face darkened as he exclaimed, "Yes, unfortunately commerce is eating away at our art. We are not always guided by our own tastes, but instead think about what gentlemen tourists will say, and tourists do not always have good taste. Our past…gives us more aesthetic satisfaction than our present."[266] The chauffeur's implication that capitalism had destroyed contemporary French art – though not an unheard of assertion in France – suited Soviet assessments suspiciously well. Whether or not the exchange occurred as Moiseyev reported, the anecdote suggested the limits of Moiseyev's appreciation for French culture.

Similar recollections served to demonstrate that, however impressive French accomplishments may have been, the Soviet Union could rival or even surpass these feats. A fluent speaker of French, Moiseyev remembered his encounter with a gentleman in the Louvre. He asked the man where to find the Impressionist collection and received the response that the Impressionists were not well represented at the Louvre. To see the French Impressionists, the man retorted, Moiseyev would have to visit America. Moiseyev challenged the man's claim by

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[266] Report by Igor Moiseyev on the Moiseyev Company Tour to Paris, September-December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 59.

reciting a long list of Impressionist painters whose work he had already seen. The man then assumed that, in that case, Moiseyev must have been extremely well traveled, since "there is hardly a country outside America where so many paintings could be concentrated." Moiseyev insisted that he saw all of these artists in his own home country and began naming specific works as a hint to the gentleman, who then exclaimed that Moiseyev had to be Soviet! "Did you really manage better than we did to keep such a rich collection of Impressionists? And we were told that you did not know French art. How much we lose from not communicating with you."[267] Though Moiseyev was in the midst of appreciating one of France's most prestigious artistic institutions, his experience there only confirmed the superiority of Soviet culture.

While Soviet performers experienced their first visits to Montmartre, the Louvre, Champs-Elysées shops, and Parisian cafés, across the European continent French dancers got their first glimpse of Soviet cities. Though travel to Russia would have seemed unattainable to many French people, French dancers spoke less about their tourist activities in the Soviet Union than did their Russian counterparts. Russian archival sources do not provide much description of French dancers' tourist and shopping activities while abroad, nor how the Soviet government curated the artists' experiences during the tour. A few French dancers who toured the Soviet Union discussed these trips in memoirs and press interviews, offering insight into their own perspectives about their first steps onto Soviet territory but little information about what Soviet officials hoped to gain by welcoming a French company.

Impresario Lumbroso recalled that, during the Thaw, practically all Paris-based performers sought to tour in the Soviet Union. He was tasked with reminding them that the

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[267] Report by Igor Moiseyev on the Moiseyev Company Tour to Paris, September-December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 59.

Soviet Union remained a police state and that visits even to large Russian cities involved emotional and physical challenges not found in other tour destinations.[268] Despite these anticipated hardships, the Soviet regime encouraged the development of a tourist industry in the 1950s, tailoring travel experiences to perceived needs and desires of Western visitors.[269] Consequently, experiences that French dancers may have taken to be indicative of life in the Soviet Union were likely exceptional. To memorialize trips to the Soviet Union, dancers snapped photos of themselves holding challenging dance poses in front of famous Russian landmarks, including the Kremlin, GUM (Gosudarstvennyi universal'nyi magazin, a large department store in Moscow), Saint Basil's Cathedral, and the Bolshoi theater. French newspapers featured these photographs afterward, praising the French stars that "conquered" Soviet audiences. The dancers got access to special *Beryozka* stores, which serviced foreigners only and exclusively accepted foreign currency as payment.[270] While Soviet dancers stocked up on clothing and trinkets during tours to the west, French dancers also did their fair share of shopping while abroad.

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[268] Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacles*, 149. Even beyond company tours, Paris's star dancers competed for the opportunity to perform in the Soviet Union. The luckiest among them earned the opportunity to take a solo tour to the Soviet Union, appearing on multiple stages across the country. For example, in 1958, dancers Michel Renault and Liane Daydé performed in Moscow and the Soviet Union, while in 1961, Attilio Labis and Claude Bessy performed in six different cities, including Kiev and Tbilisi. Sending one or two French dancers abroad offered a cheaper alternative to showcasing French dance abroad.

[269] Shawn Salmon, "Marketing Socialism: Inturist in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s," in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 186-204.

[270] Véra Boccadoro, *Pointes à la ligne: Une chorégraphe française au Bolchoï* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 55.



Figure 3: Opéra de Paris dancers seated around the Tsar Cannon at the Kremlin. Album produced about the 1958 Opéra de Paris tour to Moscow, 1958, Series 554INVA, Carton 570.

Though the dancers had money to spend, opportunities for shopping in Moscow were not as plentiful as expected.[271] As the 1958 exchange drew to a close, the Opéra director puzzled over what to do with the many rubles left over from the dancers' personal spending funds, concerned that the company would be forced to exchange the funds after returning to Paris.[272] He does not mention why dancers used less spending money than expected. It is possible that the artists, constrained by their performance schedule, had little time to shop for fur coats and souvenirs. Furthermore, the linguistic barrier may have made shopping a daunting task. Indeed,

[271] During the 1970 tour, dancers collected 12 rubles each day for personal spending. Correspondence from La Société des Spectacles Lumbroso to Pierre Mallarte, 3 November 1969, Series 554INVA, Carton 554, MAE.

[272] Correspondence from RTLN Director to Director of External Finance, 9 June 1958, Series Opera.Arch.20, Folder 173, BMO.

as Shawn Salmon demonstrated, many tourists from capitalist nations coped with what they perceived to be rude reception in shops, while others judged Soviet goods to be of poor quality or in short supply.[273] Yet some dancers believed souvenirs were worth the extra effort. The French journalist who interviewed Yvette Chauviré at home on the day after her flight back from Moscow described the "wilderness of souvenirs" bursting from the dancer's partially unpacked suitcases. Chauviré tore open packages to reveal folk dolls, a lacquer candy dish, and a roll of paper tied with a red ribbon, on which Soviet composer Leonid Feygin had written a bit of sheet music for Chauviré.[274] She explained, "my colleagues made fun of me when they saw all the dolls, knickknacks, and artwork – some of which were horribly heavy and cumbersome – that I had crammed into my trunks. 'You're crazy!' They said to me, 'You'll never make it home with all that!'"[275]

Unlike the Soviet artists who saved money by preparing meals in their hotel rooms, the French company relied on the hotel restaurant, which – according to one dancer – was "meagerly furnished." Ballerina Claude Bessy recalled that every meal featured a large jar of caviar. After fifteen days of gorging herself on caviar, Bessy developed a sudden "allergic reaction" and was flown back to France in the middle of the tour.[276] French artists enjoyed a series of dinners and performances that enabled dancers to forge new transnational friendships and professional relationships with their Soviet colleagues. In 1958, for instance, the Opéra company attended a

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[273] Salmon, "Marketing Socialism," 201.

[274] François Guillot de Rode, "Giselle a retrouvé Paris après avoir conquis Moscou", *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 19 July 1958, Yvette Chauviré's dossier, BMO.

[275] Yvette Chauviré, *Je suis une ballerine*, (Paris: Éditions du Conquistador, 1961), 34-35.

[276] Claude Bessy, *La danse pour passion*, (Paris: JC Lattès, 2004), 107.

performance of *Swan Lake* at the Stanislavsky theater in Moscow, afterward joining some Soviet artists for dinner at the theater's restaurant.[277] Though some dancers mentioned the feeling of being under surveillance, there are no known cases of performers getting into trouble with the local authorities.[278]

For the Opéra artists who toured in the 1950s and 1960s, performances in the Soviet Union carried prestige in part because so few Western dancers had traveled there. Star performers were allured by the prospect of spreading their already international reputation into the Soviet republics. The artists described walking through the Bolshoi Theater's doors as a rite of passage. Dancer Michel Renault recalled that he "was very emotional as [he] crossed the threshold of this theater, which is so often talked about and which, in Paris, was something elusive."[279] For her part, Yvette Chauviré described the 1958 tour to Moscow and Leningrad as "the crowning achievement" of her career.[280]

To the dancers involved, travel across Cold War divides was a career-making opportunity that could bear fruit in the form of new connections with Soviet dancers and immersion into the Russian ballet school technique. French artists, many of whom trained with Russian émigrés residing in Paris, placed high value on the Russian dance school and were enticed by the possibility of perfecting this technique in its country of origin. Claude Bessy was struck by the

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[277] Boccadoro, *Pointes à la Ligne*, 59.

[278] Ballerina Claude Bessy recalled the time that, shortly after hanging up the phone at the Hotel Moskva after a conversation with her mother, she encountered one of the company's assigned translators, who repeated almost word-for-word parts of the conversation Bessy had just finished. Bessy reasoned, "we were of course all wiretapped, the Cold War required it." Bessy, *La danse pour passion*, 107.

[279] Michel Renault, "Mon voyage en U.R.S.S.," *Danse et Rythmes*, February 1958.

[280] Yvette Chauviré, interview by François Guillot de Rode, "Yvette Chauviré: 'Le succès? Mieux! C'est une réponse que m'a donnée le public russe,'" *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 19 July 1958, Yvette Chauviré's dossier, BMO.

differences between Opéra de Paris and Bolshoi academy courses, the latter of which incorporated challenging jumping exercises that "demonstrated the supremacy of the Soviets." The classes also included rapid *fouettés* combined with *dégagés* in second position, an exercise common in the Russian dance school, but strenuous for the French visitors.[281] Bessy left the Soviet Union with a lasting memory of these "accursed *fouettés*" at the Bolshoi.[282] Opéra ballerina Liane Daydé remarked that "the Russians" had a technical advantage. She described her own style as "a little bit stuffy" before she traveled to the Soviet Union. Her new encounters with Soviet performers like Maya Plisetskaya taught her techniques that changed her performance style, particularly "how to use her arms" so that she danced with her whole body, "from the tips of her toes to the ends of [her] hair."[283] The artists' experiences made clear that Cold War dance tours served many purposes beyond the patriotic duty to further French or Soviet cultural influence.

The inaccessibility of Soviet stages rendered tours to Moscow and Saint Petersburg more alluring, and dancers who traveled to the Soviet Union relished recounting their amusing and "exotic" experiences of the communist world. Even before traveling eastward, ballerina Yvette Chauviré felt acquainted with the east through certain orientalist ballets, such as *Istar* (1924) and *La Péri* (1843). *Istar* traces the story of the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar, while *La Péri* tells the

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[281] In a *fouetté*, the leg is raised and rapidly whipped outward in a circular motion to the side. In a *dégagé*, the dancer's foot slides outward and upward, off the floor in a pointed position. This move can be performed to the front, side, or back. See Gretchen Ward Warren, *Classical Ballet Technique* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1989), 94-5, 194-5.

[282] Claude Bessy, *La danse pour passion*, 106.

[283] Liane Daydé, interview by Léon Zitrone, "Liane Daydé ou la volonté de réussir," *Jours de France*, 1967, Liane Daydé's dossier, BMO.

tale of a Persian sultan who falls in love with an ephemeral fairy.[284] Both were choreographed by Frenchmen, offering only an exoticized and idealized portrayal of a generalized "East" from a Western European perspective.[285] The Soviet Union was a different kind of "east," though just as mysterious. As Chauviré explained, "As the Russian proverb goes, 'birds do not know any boundaries.' Artists are like [birds]. But, also like [birds], they have a predilection for certain places where they will land more readily. For me, Russia was a place like this."[286] Ballet dancers were supposed to be light, mobile, and ephemeral; travel to a faraway land with cultural, political, and geographic boundaries that remained insurmountable to many regular tourists played into the impression of dancers' otherworldliness.

Further serving the notion of dancers' exceptional ability to cross boundaries, touring French dancers discovered that Cold War divisions were more permeable than they had imagined. In memoirs and interviews, dancers recalled earning the admiration of Soviet and Eastern Bloc audience members – a feat that, to the artists, signaled how culture had transcended Cold War divides. Chauviré's first performance in 1957 Berlin elicited 30 curtain calls. She retreated to her dressing room but was approached by the director, who informed her that a group of fans were waiting to meet her. He said, "Come quickly, they need you!...You're crossing the iron curtain through the back door."[287] This interaction implied that physically broaching the

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[284] Yvette Chauviré, *Je suis une ballerine*, 75-6. There are several other orientalist ballets that would have introduced Western audiences to "the east", such as *La Bayadère* (1877) and *Shéhérazade* (1888).

[285] Russian musical and ballet productions, too, portrayed an orientalized "East." See Richard Taruskin, "Entoiling the Falconet," in *Defining Russian Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 152-185.

[286] Yvette Chauviré, interview by François Guillot de Rode, "Yvette Chauviré."

[287] Chauviré, *Je suis une ballerine*, 101.

geographic boundary into the Eastern Bloc was an incomplete crossing: traversing the border meant resonating with people on the other side and gaining their recognition.

French dancers were stunned by Russians' veneration of the ballerina, who possessed an almost sacred quality in the Soviet Union. When the French company left the theater after a performance, Yvette Chauviré recalled, a large crowd awaited to offer a few words in French, grasp the artists' hands, and accompany the dancers to their hotel. Some admirers threw lilacs, peonies, and other flowers at the artists' feet as they walked. For Chauviré, such gestures spoke louder than the diplomatic negotiations that enabled her presence in Moscow. As she explained, "This trail of flowers thrown under our feet transcends 'government' problems, this is a 'people' with a noble soul."[288] In the midst of Franco-Soviet artistic exchange, French dancers implied, Soviet audiences gained an appreciation for French dance that exceeded Cold War politics.

To make sense of Soviet artists and audience members enthusiasm for dance, several French performers evoked the "Slavic soul," which possessed an inherent appreciation for any masterful artist, regardless of ideological considerations. At the same time, French dancers reflected that communism had pushed larger numbers of Soviet citizens into movie theaters and concert halls: art offered a precious refuge from everyday monotony and grueling work schedules. Without the many "distractions" of Western life (night clubs, discotheques, cabarets, and brothels) Russians flocked to the ballet, which provided the added benefit of "enriching the soul."[289] The Cold War isolation of the Soviet Union prior to 1954 had intensified the mysterious exoticism of Russia, but orientalist pronouncements about the "Slavic soul" tapped into preexisting notions about a distant and culturally rich people who remained unmistakably "other"

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[288] Yvette Chauviré, interview by François Guillot de Rode, "Yvette Chauviré."

[289] Boccadoro, *Pointes à la Ligne*, 49.

from Western Europeans. Since few French dancers enjoyed frank or prolonged conversations with their Soviet counterparts, many relied on this trope to comprehend the generosity and enthusiasm manifested by their Soviet hosts. These tropes of Soviet exoticism and rigid discipline would reappear in press coverage of Soviet defectors, whose resistance to an oppressive communist system made headlines – even in cases where politics had little to do with their decision to defect. In Cold War discourse, mobility became a metaphor for artistic and individual freedom.[290]

Dancers Behaving Badly: Defiance and Defections

For many who lived through the Cold War, a dancer's "leap to freedom" became a memorable and poignant symbol of Cold War culture wars. Although Cold War dance defections remain the focus of many films, press articles, and novels, their political and cultural significance is often taken for granted.[291] Western journalists tended to portray defections as the natural result of prolonged political and artistic oppression, after which the artists mustered the courage to break free from their ideological bounds – not to mention from KGB agents who accompanied touring troupes. Defections became powerful symbols of the Cold War because they struck at a key difference between communist and liberal democratic regimes: mobility. These events also exposed the unpredictability of performance exchanges, which required sending hundreds of artists across the Cold War divide. Time and time again, however, the Soviet Union continued

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[290] Cited by Endy in *Cold War Holidays*, 118.

[291] Films include Ralph Fiennes's *The White Crow* (2019), Paweł Pawlikowski's *Cold War* (2018), Taylor Hackford's *White Nights* (1985), Richard Curson Smith's *Rudolf Nureyev: Dance to Freedom* (2015). For novels focused on dance defections, see: Maggie Shipstead, *Astonish Me* (New York: Vintage Books, 2015), Colum McCann, *Dancer* (New York: Picador, 2015), Daphne Kalotay, *Russian Winter* (London: Arrow Books, 2012).

sending performers abroad despite the risk of defections, implementing measures to reduce dancers' opportunities to break from the company. Defections, however, were not only a problem for the Soviet Union. Though French journalists often lauded artists' defections as "leaps to freedom," these highly publicized events created diplomatic challenges for the Soviet and French governments alike. In both countries, diplomats, theater administrators, and journalists hoped for a successful tour – defined not only by well-attended, well-reviewed performances, but by a minimum of public relations debacles. For this reason, French and Soviet officials took measures to reduce the number of defections that took place during official cultural exchanges.

Before Soviet dancers set foot on an airplane, the Soviet government granted permission for them to travel abroad. Being a member of a touring dance company – indeed, even being a famous soloist – did not imply automatic permission for international travel, which was reserved for Soviet citizens who could be relied upon to faithfully represent the nation to Western audiences. Prima ballerina Maya Plisetskaya was forbidden from traveling abroad even during the peak of her career, because her father had been executed during the Great Purge.[292] On the other hand, dancers who toured internationally were not necessarily devoted communists. Although some Soviet dancers leaned on Party membership to bolster their career, dancers – unlike many professionals – were not usually expected to join the Communist Party. Indeed, it was possible to have a successful career in the most prestigious Soviet dance companies without ever joining the Party. Ballet was the Soviet Union's national art, and by the 1950s and 1960s, political indifference could be trumped by sufficient skill on stage. Kirov dancer Elena

[292] Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 49.

Tchernichova supposed that "ballet dancers had usually been able to get away with non-involvement because they were presumed to spend their time in the clouds, dreaming of sugarplums."[293]

Soviet theater directors and Goskonsert officials took measures to prevent misbehavior before performers left the Soviet Union. Every artist was subject to investigation, the results of which were drawn up in a report: Did she know any foreign languages? Did she have any foreign friends or relatives – and if so, who and where? Is she a member of the Soviet Communist Party? Had the performer, or any of her relatives, been interned during the Great Patriotic War? The report included a list of the individual's past travels and a summary about their close family members, including their birthdate, occupation, address, and any red flags.[294] Knowledge of a foreign language suggested that a performer would be capable of going out without the guidance of an escort, while relatives abroad also posed a risk, because the artist would have somewhere to flee in the event of a defection. Stalin had been mistrustful of former POWs, believing that they must have collaborated with the Germans to survive. Yet even two decades after Stalin's passing, some former POWs and their families could not erase the taint of this suspicion, which could become an impediment to travel abroad.[295] Investigators were also interested in touring artists'

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[293] Tchernichova, *Dancing on Water*, 115.

[294] These questions were still part of the standard procedure for investigating dancers who toured abroad in the 1970s. Out of roughly two hundred pre-travel reports that I looked at, not a single performer had relatives abroad. See pre-travel reports for Kirov ballet tours to Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Mongolia, Sweden, and Denmark, 1970-1971, TsGALI, f. 337, op. 7, d. 225 and pre-travel reports for Kirov ballet tours to Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Egypt, Yugoslavia, the GDR, 1972-1973, TsGALI, f. 337, op. 7, d. 268.

[295] Miriam Dobson, "POWs and Purge Victims: Attitudes Towards Party Rehabilitation, 1956-57," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 86, no. 2 (2008): 328-45.

marital status, as married performers were believed to be less likely to defect and leave their spouses behind in the Soviet Union.[296]

After passing the investigation, all members of a touring ballet company attended a meeting where company administrators laid out strict rules of conduct. Dancers were forbidden from purchasing certain items. They were also instructed to go out only in small groups — no fewer than five people — and never to accept invitations to private residences.[297] The artists were ordered not to socialize with French dancers outside scheduled events, which unfolded under close supervision.[298] Several dancers recalled that, because of what they had been told about the capitalist West, they expected to be inundated with demands and tricks encouraging them to betray their country.

Although a thorough search of Soviet archives about dance tours with France unveiled no cohesive record of behavior regulations for artists who traveled abroad, such a document does exist from a pre-tour briefing of Soviet circus performers, who traveled to France in 1960. The Soviet state circus (Soyuzgostisirk) tour was organized by the same French impresarios that arranged dance tours with the Soviet Union in both directions – Fernand Lumbroso and Georges Soria. Before departing for France, the circus performers were required to attach their signature

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[296] Because her parents had been arrested during the Great Purge (during which time her father was executed), Maya Plisetskaya was never granted permission to travel abroad until 1959. Plisetskaya was allowed to leave the country to tour in the U.S. after making a personal plea to Nikita Khrushchev. Part of Plisetskaya's argument was that, since her 1958 marriage to composer Rodion Shchedrin, she had learned to behave and would never abandon her husband and her country. Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (London: 4th Estate, 2016), 344. Plisetskaya also recounts this humbling appeal to Khrushchev in her memoir. After she returned from the tour, Khrushchev praised her: "Good girl, coming back. Not making me look like a fool. You didn't let me down." Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 193 and 246.

[297] Unfortunately, Tchernichova does not specify which items the performers were not allowed to buy, but dancers were certainly forbidden from buying items with the purpose of reselling them on the black market – though this practice seems to have been relatively common among touring artists. Tchernichova, *Dancing on Water*, 119 and Julie Kavanagh, *Nureyev: The Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 128.

[298] Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko*, 97.

to the following terms, which align with the pre-departure rules laid out for Soviet ballet companies in dancers' memoirs:

> "We, the undersigned workers of the Soviet circus being sent to France to conduct a tour, assume the following obligations: 1. All performances in the cities of France will be well-organized and carried out at a high ideological and artistic level. 2. We will behave ourselves with the dignity and honor intrinsic to a Soviet person. 3. To help my friends at work, regardless of his official title or artistic genre, guided by the principle: "One for all and all for one." 4. Strictly and consistently follow all instructions and orders from group leaders. 5. In private life, we will be modest, deter our comrades from bad behavior, and will not drink alcoholic beverages."[299]

It is notable that only one of the five directives addressed the quality of the company's performance, the rest being preoccupied with the entertainers' conduct and their interactions with French hosts. Performers who toured outside the Soviet Union were reminded that their behavior reflected on their country as a whole, Westerners would look for weakness of character as symptoms of failure in the communist experiment. The same measures had been taken in preparation for the troupe's 1958 tour, after which the Soviet tour organizer filed a report including a section on "discipline," recounting performers' behavior while abroad. He explained that "in moral and political terms," the entertainers' behavior was satisfactory, and that the company's "educational work" helped to prevent any undesirable incidents or breaches of discipline.[300] After the same circus company's 1960 tour in France, the troupe's director A. Tsaritsyn reflected on the high moral comportment of the performers, due in part to the fact that "the necessary measures were taken to prevent the penetration of anti-Soviet literature and the possibility of any provocations by anti-Soviet, reactionary elements."[301]

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[299] Pre-travel agreement signed by members of the Moscow Circus, September-October 1960, RGALI, f. 2499, op. 1, d. 654, l. 3.

[300] L. Asanov, Report on the tour by artists of the Soviet circus in France, May 1958, RGALI, f. 2499, op. 1, d. 545, l. 3, 20.

[301] A. Tsaritsyn, Report about the tour of the Soviet circus in France, 1960, RGALI, f. 2499, op. 1, d. 633, l. 2.

Soviet ballet performers would have faced similar scrutiny on and after their tours to France. Such restrictions offered a way to keep the iron curtain in place even as a cultural exchange unfolded. Soviet escorts, including some members of the KGB, accompanied the troupe throughout the tour. Guards were posted at the hotel exits to keep an eye out for performers trying to sneak out at night. Most of their tourist activities were conducted on buses where the performers could be counted and safely contained, and their reading material was restricted.[302] Artists were instructed to explore the city in groups, which helped the escorts keep tabs on everyone, since some dancers were KGB informants.[303] Still, keeping a grasp on more than a hundred adults in a foreign country proved impossible. Dancers found ways to stay out late and elude supervision. During the 1961 Kirov ballet tour, dancer Alla Osipenko admitted to sneaking out for a date with French dancer Attilio Labis, who at the time was engaged to ballerina Christine Vlassi.[304]

At the opening gala for the same tour, dancer Rudolf Nureyev immediately recognized Labis, and his partner Claire Motte, from when the pair had previously attended the Russian company's classes during the tour.[305] Building on these connections enabled by the 1958 dance exchange, Motte invited Nureyev to join her and other Parisian dancers for dinner at ballerina Claude Bessy's apartment. Nureyev responded that he would "never get permission" to go, but the French artists pressed him to at least try asking his company director, Konstantin Sergeyev.

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[302] Nureyev, *An Autobiography*, 15.

[303] Kavanagh, 127.

[304] Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko*, 98.

[305] Kavanagh, *Nureyev*, 116. Nureyev, *Nureyev: An Autobiography*, 104.

As a group, the dancers approached and made the request. Sergeyev responded that "it's not permitted," but agreed to make an exception if Nureyev could find another Kirov performer to accompany him to the soirée.[306] It was not long before Nureyev stopped requesting approval to go out and dropped the required chaperone; he openly expressed annoyance with the company's rules and exclaimed that he felt physically and artistically smothered.[307] Nureyev exhibited an unusual degree of defiance for the rules, but other Soviet performers recalled benefitting from his shenanigans: the company's KGB escorts were so busy tracking him that they had no time to watch the other performers, who snuck away to shop and explore the city independently.[308]

For most foreign tourists, Paris carried a reputation of scandalous erotic delights. Soviet company members were strongly discouraged from visiting nightclubs or areas of town known for prostitution – most famously, the Place Pigalle. Although Soviet accounts about dance tours often emphasize that dancers were escorted and had limited possibilities for independent sightseeing, some dancers admit that they found ways to elude supervision. They could leave the hotel in the required group of five or more, and then branch off to explore the city in their own way. During her 1956 visit to Paris, Kirov dancer Alla Osipenko stole some free time by sneaking out in the middle of a performance by Maurice Béjart's dance company, though she was seated in front of a KGB escort.[309] Through a mutual connection, Osipenko became acquainted with French dancer Michel Renault, who escorted her around the city in his car.

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[306] Kavanagh, *Nureyev*, 118.

[307] Kavanagh, *Nureyev*, 120, 125.

[308] Kavanagh, *Nureyev*, 127.

[309] Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko*, 98.

During their night out on the town, Osipenko witnessed her first nightclub striptease and was shocked by drag performers, whose beauty she found puzzling and disorienting.[310]

Like Osipenko, many Soviet dancers embraced the opportunity to access new experiences and social contacts in France. Their forbidden exploits were usually not politically motivated, nor framed in Cold War terms. Regardless of their motivations, members of the company who disobeyed the prescribed rules risked being sent home early, as happened to several Soviet dancers throughout the Cold War. For instance, one performer was caught after purchasing forty shirts in Paris to sell on the black market at home and was banned from future international tours.[311] Indeed, it was only after weeks of illicit gallivanting in Paris that Nureyev learned that he would be returned to Moscow early (while the rest of the company continued on to London), after which he famously defected in 1961.[312] Other dancers, such as Maya Plisetskaya and Valery Panov, were prevented from traveling abroad for decades because of their politically suspect connections.[313]

The Soviet government could forbid dancers from purchasing certain items while abroad, but travel itself was a commodity. In the capitalist West, tourism was a privilege made possible by growing wealth, political stability, and leisure time. During the Khrushchev era, Party officials sought to provide the Soviet population with higher quality goods, apartments, vacation

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[310] Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko*, 64.

[311] Kavanagh, *Nureyev*, 128.

[312] Nureyev, *Nureyev: An Autobiography*, 17-18.

[313] Plisetskaya's parents had both been arrested, and her father executed, during the Great Purge of 1936-8, whereas Panov was the target of anti-Semitic abuse. Certain other performers and KBG officers viewed him as "a potential traitor waiting for his chance to sell out Russia to his Semitic brothers." The persecution got worse when Panov was recalled to Moscow during a tour to New York City. FBI agents approached Panov to ask whether he needed help – which he declined. After this incident, Panov was not permitted to tour abroad. Panov, *To Dance*, 138-9, 171 and Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 142-3.

time, and opportunities to travel abroad.[314] Since travel became a leisure activity that indicated a country's political and economic success, the Soviet government enhanced its legitimacy by providing some citizens the freedom to travel abroad for the first time. The presence of Soviet performers abroad conveyed a similar message of openness, prosperity, and peaceful coexistence. Despite the restrictions on touring artists' behavior, the Party could not control travelers' observations and experiences abroad, nor the conclusions they might draw when comparing capitalism with communism. Parisian journalists latched onto defections and other "bad behavior" by Soviet performers in the West because these events highlighted divergent definitions of personal freedom between the Soviet Union and the host nation.[315]

French observers were fascinated by the restrictions placed on Soviet performers, and defections became sensational symbols of the complete rejection of restraints on mobility. After Nureyev's defection, his face filled French magazines and newspapers, alongside stories about his harrowing "leap to freedom." The Western press referred to him as "the Russian dancer who chose freedom,"[316] "the dancer who chose the West," "the Russian dancer who fled to freedom," "the runaway Russian ballet star," and a "rebel from Russia" whose defection became a "Soviet loss, Parisian gain."[317] The right-leaning press particularly capitalized on his decision. His defection made the front page of *Le Figaro*, where journalist Roland Merlin explained that Nureyev would have been punished by his Soviet escorts for the "crime" of displaying

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[314] Anne Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism At Home and Abroad After Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15.

[315] For more examples of how Parisian journalists depicted Soviet dancers' experiences of France (especially shopping and French fashion), see Chapter Four.

[316] Rudolf Nureyev press file, 1961, CND.

[317] Maurice Tassart, "Soviet Loss, Parisian Gain," [No Title], 3 July 1961, Rudolf Nureyev press file, CND.

"excessive independence" by spending time with his French friends after performances. As his Soviet guards sought to force him onto a plane to Moscow, Merlin wrote, the dancer spun away "in a pirouette" into the arms of French police while crying, "I want to be free, I want to be free."[318] In the year after his defection, Western newspapers filled in details from Nureyev's past that made his "escape" all the more remarkable to readers: a childhood so impoverished that his mother carried him to school because his family could not afford shoes;[319] his unlikely transition from Bashkir folk dancing in his village to the Leningrad Ballet School; and his enduring disdain for bureaucracy and conformity.[320]

Prior to Nureyev's defection, the dancer had appeared a handful of times in major Soviet newspapers, which portrayed him as a rising star in the Kirov company. Two years before the Kirov's Paris tour, an *Izvestia* journalist applauded the young dancer's success, but cautioned him against resting on his laurels: "[This is his] first lead role and first success. To reinforce this [success,] he will have to work even harder… Collaboration between talent and hard work always leads to victory!"[321] Prior to his defection, Nureyev also appeared in Soviet reporting about the 1961 tour for the fact that French papers had dubbed him the Kirov's "man in space,"

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[318] Roland Merlin, "Au Bourget, Variation imprévue au ballet Russe, Rudolf Noureev, étoile de la troupe de Kirov choisit la liberté," *Le Figaro*, 18 June 1961, Rudolf Nureyev press file, CND.

[319] "Nureyev," *Daily Express*, 13 December 1962, Rudolf Nureyev press file, CND.

[320] Anne Sharpley, "The extraordinary Nureyev: Poverty and Politics Didn't Stop Him Dancing Where and When He Wanted," *The Evening Standard*, 11 December 1962, Rudolf Nureyev press file, CND.

[321] Yu. Nekhoroshev, "Tantsuet Rudol'f Nureev," *Izvestia*, 16 August 1959, 4. For other early Soviet articles mentioning Nureyev, see: G. Kremshevskaya, "Estafeta priniata iz ruk masterov," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 4 July 1959; Andrei Novikov, "Triumf VII Vsemirnogo: Do novykh vstrech, druz'ia," *Izvestia*, 5 August 1959, 1; TASS, "Zamechatel'nyi balet," *Pravda*, 4; and TASS, "Leningradskii balet vyekhal v Parizh," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura,* 13 May 1961, 4 (which announced the company's Parisian tour and highlighted Nureyev's participation).

because of his high leaps.[322] After his defection, however, Nureyev was wiped from the pages of the Soviet press. *Izvestia*, *Pravda*, and *Sovetskaia Kul'tura* published articles tracing the remainder of the company's tour in London, but Nureyev's name no longer appeared in the list of notable cast members.[323] There is no indication in French or Soviet diplomatic records that Soviet embassy staff asked French theater or Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff to intervene after an artist's defection, including that of Nureyev.[324]

Nureyev ceased to exist in the Soviet press until 1963, when former Opéra de Paris artistic director Serge Lifar sat for an interview about Nureyev with *Paris Jour*, which ran under the headline "He Loves No One and Betrays Everyone." Lifar claimed that Nureyev became a star only "because of his defection," and that his classical dance technique had made no progress since leaving the Kirov company. Worse, Lifar claimed, Nureyev was "unstable, hysterical, and vain," a narcissist whose defection had no political or artistic significance. Instead, the act was merely the volatile behavior of "a kid who revolted against discipline, which is necessary in every sector of art."[325] By reprinting Lifar's interview, *Izvestia* made the Soviet media's first public acknowledgement of what Nureyev had done. In an introduction to Lifar's commentary,

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[322] This comment is likely also a reference to Yuri Gagarin, who had become the first man in space in April 1961, shortly before the Kirov's Parisian tour. Yu. Malashev, "Triumf Leningradtsev," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*," 20 May 1961, 4.

[323] I. Filippov, "'Oni pokorili nashi serdtsa,'" *Pravda*, 17 July 1961, 4.

[324] This should not be taken to mean that Soviet authorities did not attempt to bring Nureyev back to the Soviet Union after his defection. Back home, the KGB interviewed Nureyev's friends and family members, some of whom received death threats. The KGB also ordered Nureyev's mother and other close relations to call or write to Nureyev and convince him to return. Kavanagh, *Nureyev*, 158-9. The KGB's investigation on Nureyev was filed under "Traitor Number 50888," and colleagues in the Kirov company were encouraged to testify to his lack of character. When all efforts to bring Nureyev back failed, the dancer was declared guilty of high treason in absentia in 1962. Kavanagh, 185, 246.

[325] Serge Lifar, "Lifar: Noureev n'aime personne et trahit tout le monde," *Paris Jour*, 2 April 1963, Rudolf Nureyev press file, CND.

the journalist revealed that Nureyev (whose name was misspelled) had "betrayed Soviet art and his country" by remaining in Paris during a Kirov company tour. He had since cultivated a "scandalous fame" attributable to his "vile role" as a "turncoat." Lifar's interview was offered as testimony to the decline of Nureyev's reputation in the West – a development precipitated by the dancer's moral failures and his shortcomings as a performer.[326] Of course, it helped that these critiques came from a French citizen – though Lifar himself had permanently left the Soviet Union in the 1920s and was likely disgruntled that Nureyev had joined the Royal Ballet in London rather than the Opéra de Paris.[327] The Soviet media's silence about other dancer defections – such as those of Natalia Makarova, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Alexander Godunov – suggests that Nureyev's defection was only acknowledged because these harsh words of criticism came from a Parisian.[328] In the narrative offered by the Soviet press, Nureyev's decision to defect grew not out of political conviction or discontentment with the Soviet system, but out of his low character, which had since infected every area of his life. Depoliticizing Nureyev's "leap to freedom" recast the story to draw attention away from the dancer's desire to move freely. In this view, instead of flouting constant surveillance and physical constraints, the dancer simply lacked the discipline to do anything productive with his life. His flaws were personal, not ideological, and therefore he did not represent a larger trend in the experiences of Soviet travelers to the West.

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[326] "Ne liubit nikogo i predaet vsekh," *Izvestia*, 9 April 1963, page 4. For more on press coverage of Nureyev, see David Caute, "The Ballet Dancer Defects," 494.

[327] Caute, "The Ballet Dancer Defects," 494.

[328] In major Soviet press organs, including *Izvestia*, *Pravda*, *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, *Ogonyok*, *Sovetskoe Iskusstvo*, and *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, none of the following dancer defectors were mentioned in the years of or following their defections: Nora Kovach (1953), Istan Rabovsky (1953), Natalia Makarova (1970), Mikhail Baryshnikov (1974), Alexander Godunov (1979), Leonid and Valentina Kozlov (1979), and Sulamith Messerer (1980).

The 1961 defection of Rudolf Nureyev is sometimes called the "first" Cold War performer defection. His sensational escape has since been the subject of films, novels, and a ballet. Within France's first year of détente with the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, French diplomats realized that defections and similar "incidents" posed a risk to French relations with communist countries. French diplomats were eager to organize cultural exchanges with Eastern Bloc nations as soon as such events became possible. French cultural officials asserted that, even if Eastern European performances were unlikely to make a "profound echo" among Parisian audiences, "the presence of French troupes in countries beyond the iron curtain constitute[d] a means of resuming contact with the West [among] populations in the East."[329] In other words, the diplomatic motivation for cultural exchanges with countries across the Cold War divide had less to do with hosting successful performances by Soviet and Eastern European companies than with ensuring a warm reception of French art in those nations.

In fact, although defecting Soviet dancers received the most publicity, several performers from Eastern Bloc countries defected in Paris well before Nureyev. These early dance tours convinced French diplomats that "visits to Paris by Eastern European companies [were] conducive to provoking mishaps."[330] In November 1954, the Polish Masowsze dance company was performing in Paris when a female dancer from the troupe, Krystyna Bujnowska, "chose freedom." The following year a Romanian dance company comprising 130 performers and technicians were performing in Paris when one artist decided to "imitate [the Polish dancer's]

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[329] Report on the arrival in France of performance troupes from popular democracies, 29 January 1955, Series 208Q0, Carton 200, MAE.

[330] Report by François Seydoux, 29 January 1955, Series 208Q0, Carton 200, MAE.

example."[331] After these two defections, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs felt pressure from both the Polish and Romanian governments to control the political and social context around tours from Eastern Europe to minimize the number of "incidents." The Romanian folk dance tour was arranged as part of an agreement to normalize relations between France and Romania, which unfolded in the midst of French negotiations to secure the liberation of five French prisoners being held in communist Romania. The accord included provisions for economic collaboration, an exchange of military attachés between the two countries, and a formal promise from Romanian diplomats that the French prisoners would be released.[332] Anticipating that political repercussions from the tour could influence negotiations to free the prisoners, the French ambassador in Bucharest sent a telegram home, requesting to be updated on any encounters between the French police and the visiting artists.[333]

Although the French public received the Romanian dancers warmly, the brief tour to Paris was plagued by conflict. The first incident was a case of defection: a violin player for the company, Mr. Rozsa, managed to sneak away from the company's guards and requested asylum in France. The Romanian embassy quickly became involved, sending the Chargé d'Affaires to the precinct where Rozsa was being held. The diplomat demanded that the musician be released to the Romanian Embassy's custody, insisting that Rozsa was just a troublemaker who had been walking around without his identity papers. The French police sternly resisted these demands,

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[331] Note by François Seydoux, 29 January 1955, Series 208Q0, Carton 200, MAE. Also see: United States Department of State, *The Department of State Bulletin* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 999.

[332] Telegram from French embassy in Bucharest to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 April 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 572, MAE.

[333] Telegram from French embassy in Bucharest to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 February 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 572, MAE.

leaving the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to handle the diplomatic fallout.[334] The day after Rozsa's defection, the company was approached by Alexander Constantinesco – a Romanian émigré – who sought access to members of the troupe whom he had known in Romania. French diplomatic staff determined that Constantinesco was "without a doubt" motivated "to encourage [the artists] to join the dissidence movement." The company's guards sprang into action and the encounter culminated in a fistfight. A few days later, Constantinesco filed a lawsuit in French civil court against a company dancer (Nicolas Vlad) and the company's administrator (Constantin Chivescu) for "assault and injury." Vlad and Chivescu hired a lawyer and countered with their own lawsuit against Constantinesco for unlawful entry and assault.[335] Still in the spirit of reconciliation with Romanian officials, the French government decided to allow Vlad and Chivescu to return home without facing legal proceedings.[336]

Nevertheless, French authorities did not escape criticism in the communist press, which asserted that an attack by a "legionnaire gangster" like Constantinesco would never have occurred without sponsorship from the French government. At the very least, an *Union de la Jeunesse* article intimated, French officials had helped the offender by failing to provide sufficient security.[337] During the tour's final days, the Romanian company's performance was

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[334] Telegram from François Seydoux to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 January 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 572, MAE.

[335] "L'enquête judiciaire sur les incidents du ballet roumain à deux inculpations," *Le Monde*, 3 February 1955.

[336] Telegram from French embassy in Bucharest to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 February 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 572, MAE.

[337] Telegram from French embassy in Bucharest to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 February 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 572, MAE. *Union de la Jeunesse* was the publication for L'Union de la Jeunesse Républicaine de France, a communist youth organization. For more information about this organization, see Guillaume Quashie-Vauclin, *L'Union de la Jeunesse Républicaine de France (1945-1956): entre organisation de masse de jeunesse et mouvement d'avant-garde communiste* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2009).

interrupted by a group of protesters, who were seized and thrown out by other, indignant audience members.[338] Diplomatic reports also discuss complaints by the Romanian ambassador that the dancers were accosted by protesters, notably Romanian émigrés, who managed to gain access to the halls of the hotel where the dancers resided in Paris.[339] The Romanian press claimed that the many incidents and "provocations" experienced by the touring company were enabled by the "unusual freedom of movement given to fascist provocateurs who act[ed] as they [saw] fit in the French capital, which [had] a reputation for being the capital of culture and of the struggle for respect of human dignity and the inviolability of personhood."[340]

Clashes between Romanian émigrés in Paris and the visiting company, pressure from communists within France, and potential defections from performers themselves placed the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a difficult position – especially considering that the tour had been motivated by the need to appease Romanian officials. As diplomat François Seydoux explained, "although [Romanian ambassador] Dranceanu's version of the facts evoke[d] numerous and serious reservations, it would be unfortunate if the Romanian government should find within them a pretext to further delay the release of our prisoners."[341] Back in Bucharest, the French ambassador was alarmed by Romanian press reports claiming that the troupe had borne witness to the miserable conditions of life in Paris. Romanian journalists also reported that upon

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[338] Telegram from French embassy in Bucharest to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 February 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 572, MAE.

[339] Correspondence from French Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Préfet de Police, 21 January 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 572, MAE.

[340] Telegram from French embassy in Bucharest to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 January 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 572, MAE.

[341] Telegram from French embassy in Bucharest to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 January 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 572, MAE.

leaving France, the performers were subjected to one-on-one interrogations by French police about whether the dancers truly wished to return to Romania and were plied with offers allowing them to remain in France.[342]

French journalists were happy to exploit defections from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as victories for Western liberalism, but for French diplomatic officials, defections and similarly provocative incidents posed a serious challenge to the development of diplomatic and cultural relations across Cold War boundaries. These first tentative performance exchanges revealed the political challenges provoked by transporting hundreds of people across the so-called "iron curtain." The Polish and Romanian dance tours made clear that dance exchanges placed diplomats in the tricky situation of maintaining good relations with the country from which the company came while respecting France's protections for asylum-seekers.[343] Reflecting on the tensions between diplomacy and French human rights laws, Seydoux emphasized that nothing could be done about visiting performers who requested asylum in France, but that, "one way or another," the behavior of Eastern European and Soviet émigrés must be reined in during tours by companies from communist nations.

In the mid-1950s, France was home to a number of Eastern European émigrés who, Polish and Hungarian officials claimed, encouraged their compatriots to defect. Though anyone had the right to request asylum in France, "whenever an agreement is made for a tour in France

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[342] Telegram from French embassy in Bucharest to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 February 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 572, MAE.

[343] The right to asylum became entrenched in French law in the postwar period, when refugees and stateless persons flooded Europe in the aftermath of World War II. A 1954 amendment to the French constitution specified that "Anyone persecuted because of his activities in the cause of freedom shall be entitled to the right of asylum within the territories of the Republic." Today, this amendment remains as Article 53-1 in the French constitution (adopted September 1958), https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/connaissance/constitution.asp.

by artistic ensembles or sports teams, …French authorities must prioritize implementing all means necessary to prevent incidents, whichever side may provoke them."[344] In particular, French cultural affairs officials insisted in 1955 that for forthcoming tours from Eastern Europe, French authorities prepare to guard against "excesses" by the Eastern European émigré community in Paris and increase police presence around the troupe during the company's time in France. The new measures were pressing, as Paris was expected to host a Hungarian folk troupe only a few days after the Seydoux's note was written.[345] Even after months of organizing the first postwar Eastern European and Soviet company tours to France, the human factor proved difficult to account for in an exchange between countries with drastically different understandings of freedom of mobility. Notwithstanding enthusiastic reports on defections in the Western press, these events were viewed by French diplomats as running counter to the nation's diplomatic interests, the primary goal of which was to expand France's influence beyond the Cold War divide. Far from encouraging "leaps to freedom," the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs enhanced police measures around Soviet and Eastern European artists to reduce the chance of defections.

There are no known cases of French performers "defecting" to the Soviet Union. On a few occasions, however, French dancers took actions that would have been interpreted as defections had they been Soviet artists in the West. The prestige of Soviet dance, and the learning opportunities offered by close contact with Soviet performers, were enough to lure a

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[344] Report on the arrival in France of performance troupes from popular democracies, 29 January 1955, Series 208Q0, Carton 200, MAE.

[345] Although the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not have the authority to increase police presence during visits by Soviet and Eastern Bloc dance companies, Seydoux reported that "it will be very important to call this issue to the attention of the relevant authorities" to put these measures into place. Report on the arrival in France of performance troupes from popular democracies, 29 January 1955, Series 208Q0, Carton 200, MAE.

few French performers to prolong their stays in the Soviet Union. One such dancer was Véra Boccadoro, who became the only French dancer from the Opéra de Paris to spend most of her career in the Soviet Union. Boccadoro pinpointed the Moiseyev ensemble's 1955 tour to Paris as the moment when she decided that she belonged in Russia. It helped that, as the child of a Russian émigré who fled during the 1917 Revolution, she spoke Russian fluently. She insisted that ideology had nothing to do with her decision, explaining that after attending the Moiseyev's performance, she "was more and more attracted to Russia. To [her], the Soviet Union did not mean anything, it was Russia that [she] loved."[346] The following year, when the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko ballet company toured Paris, she befriended Soviet ballerinas Eleonora Vlasova and Alla Osipenko, and company director Vladimir Bourmeister. Boccadoro maintained these newfound friendships by exchanging letters with Soviet performers until, in 1957, she enrolled in the Bolshoi dance academy in Moscow.[347]

The archival record suggests a more complex narrative of her career trajectory than the one provided in Boccadoro's memoir. According to letters between Boccadoro and the R.T.L.N, in the fall of 1957 the dancer requested that the Opéra de Paris administration grant her time off for health reasons, after she contracted a severe case of the Asiatic flu while in the Soviet Union. Her illness supposedly caused her to miss her flight home, during which time her Soviet visa expired and her plane ticket became invalid. After delaying her return for several more months because doctors feared a relapse in her condition, Véra requested a six-month medical leave during which time – her memoir's timeline makes clear – she had already begun attending courses at the Bolshoi dance academy. During the summer of 1958, shortly after the Opéra de

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[346] Boccadoro, *Pointes à la ligne*, 34.

[347] Boccadoro, *Pointes à la ligne*, 37-38.

Paris ballet's tour to Moscow, Véra submitted her final resignation to the Opéra for the reason that she was engaged and "going to be married soon," though she remained a student at the Bolshoi. At the time, Véra had not yet met her first husband, whom she would marry eight years later. In 1965, Véra attempted, to no avail, to regain her employment at the Opéra de Paris; the RTLN administrator asserted that creating a position for her was not financially feasible.[348] Through the Cold War years, her employment at the Bolshoi helped French performers, who – before departing for tours in Moscow – were instructed to rely on her if they had questions or needed clarifications during their stay in the Soviet Union.[349] During Franco-Soviet dance tours, Boccadoro often served as a translator, being one of the few dancers who were fluent in both French and Russian.[350]

Boccadoro later became a choreographer and *maître de ballet* at the Bolshoi, remaining in the Soviet Union (and after 1991, Russia) for nearly forty years. She described the challenging adjustment to life in the Soviet Union: having to visit the *Beryozka* shop for foreigners to buy items that would be commonplace in Paris; enduring the feeling of frequent surveillance; and living a continent away from her family who still resided in France. She coped by focusing on

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[348] Correspondence between Véra Boccadoro and the R.T.L.N. Administration, 1957-1965, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN.

[349] Correspondence from impresario Albert Sarfati to AFAA director Philippe Erlanger, 17 February 1961, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

[350] Communication challenges were a regular feature of Franco-Soviet dance tours. Soviet choreographer Vladimir Bourmeister's 1960 visit to Paris provides some idea of how French and Soviet artists worked together on performances. Bourmeister had been sent to France to choreograph and direct his version of *Swan Lake*, with decorations and costumes designed by Russian émigré painter Dmitri Bouchene. Bourmeister had little knowledge of French, which complicated the task of directing French dancers and technicians. In his stage notes for *Swan Lake*, Bourmeister indicated the star dancers' French names, with the Cyrillic equivalent alongside to help him with pronunciation. He kept notes about the dancers to help him keep track, labelling Claude Bessy "the tall one" and Alexander Kalioujny "the Russian one" (See: Vladimir Bourmeister's notebook, November-December 1960, RGALI, f. 3069, op. 1, d. 10). Claude Bessy remembers collaborations like this one succeeding through a combination of gestures and French words drawn from the vocabulary of academic dance, which "remained in our language throughout the world" (See: Bessy, *La Danse pour passion*, 108).

her art and strictly staying out of politics.[351] She recalled feeling that Parisian journalists regarded her with suspicion and hostility, but French diplomatic officials regularly worked with Boccadoro and did not consider her decision to leave a betrayal of her home country.[352] Indeed, when President Charles de Gaulle met Boccadoro during his 1966 visit to Moscow, he applauded her for "bringing honor to France" abroad.[353] Nor, even in the midst of highly publicized defections by Soviet performers, did the Soviet press make much of a French dancer's decision to build her career in Moscow instead of Paris. The scant news article about Boccadoro typically called her a choreographer or a ballet master without mentioning her nationality; one journalist simply described her as "a French woman living in Moscow."[354] Throughout her career, the dancer traveled freely between France and the Soviet Union. She seemed almost impervious to Cold War boundaries, partly because her ability to return "home" to France at any time made her decision to reside abroad seem less like a defection. Instead, French officials framed her career path as one that served French diplomacy by furthering artistic relations between France and the Soviet Union.[355]

Around the same time that Boccadoro left for the Soviet Union, Yvette Chauviré, a prima ballerina from the Opéra de Paris risked losing her job to appear in solo performances in the

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[351] Boccadoro, *Pointes à la ligne*, 84.

[352] Boccadoro, *Pointes à la ligne*, 224.

[353] Boccadoro, *Pointes à la ligne*, 129.

[354] "Torzhestvo tantsa," *Nedelia*, 11 June 1973, 9. Also see: Mikh. Dolgopolov, "Bol'shoi teatr: plany, gastroli," *Izvestia*, 29 April 1974, 4; V. Klimenko, "Torzhestvo muz," *Izvestia*, 23 September 1975, 3.

[355] It was in this spirit that, several years after her return to France, she was appointed Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur at a ceremony attended by both French and former Soviet diplomatic officials. Boccadoro returned to France in 1993. She does not state the reason for her return to Paris, but she suggests that the death of her mother (who had moved to reside with her in Moscow) was a factor in this decision. Boccadoro, *Pointes à la ligne*, 223-4.

Soviet Union. Chauviré had flown to Moscow with the Opéra de Paris company during the 1958 Franco-Soviet ballet exchange. In late June, the ensemble was slated to return home, but Chauviré had other ideas. A few days before the company's Aeroflot flight back to Paris, the theater administrator Georges Hirsch received a telegram from Chauviré that stated simply: "Official invitations, artistic obligations will hold me back in the Soviet Union. I'll be back to Paris by July 6."[356] Hirsch immediately responded that her plans to stay were impossible, as Chauviré was slated to perform at the Palais Garnier on July 1st. He reminded her that the posters advertising her appearance had already been hung. For good measure, Hirsch also sent a telegram to the Soviet Ministry of Culture, asking for their assurance that she would be sent home with the rest of the company, as well as to the French Ambassador in Moscow, Maurice Dejean, who was asked to "intervene to ensure that she would return as expected."[357]

The following day, the cultural counselor of the French embassy responded to Hirsch, informing him that a contract for Chauviré's additional tours to Kiev and Leningrad had already been signed and that "the dancer would return on July 6."[358] At this point, Hirsch threatened to terminate the ballerina's employment contract at the Opéra for an unlawful breach of contract.[359] Apparently unphased, the dancer sent Hirsch another telegram from "your devoted Chauviré," requesting that he grant permission for her prolonged stay in the Soviet Union. Her note was accompanied by a message from a Goskonsert official, expressing his "astonishment" at Hirsch's

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[356] Telegram from Yvette Chauviré to Georges Hirsch, 22 June 1958, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN.

[357] Telegram from Georges Hirsch to Yvette Chauviré, 23 June 1958, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN; Telegram from Georges Hirsch to the Soviet Minister of Culture, 23 June 1958, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN.

[358] Telegram from Marcel Girard to Georges Hirsch, 24 June 1958, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN.

[359] Telegram from Georges Hirsch to Marcel Girard, 25 June 1958, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN.

demands that Chauviré be barred from appearing when the contracts had already been signed and the performances announced to the Kiev and Leningrad publics.[360] In retort, Hirsch conveyed his own "astonishment" that Goskonsert representatives implied that he had ever agreed to these supplementary performances when he had most definitely not.[361]

Having already missed the flight home with the rest of her company, Chauviré sent one final telegram that laid the matter to rest: "I'll be home on July 7."[362] Despite Hirsch's threats, she received only a slap on the wrist after returning home. She was not fired from the Opéra; the only consequence for her unexpectedly prolonged stay was that Hirsch placed her in fewer performances for the remainder of the Opéra's July schedule, which translated into a reduction of the dancer's pay for that month. After reducing Chauviré's number of onstage appearances, Hirsch considered the matter settled but chided her, writing, "I am shocked that you thought that you could put us in this embarrassing situation after we brought you with the Opéra, on costs covered by the Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux – a trip in which your participation reflected the esteem in which we hold you."[363]

Later, Chauviré defended herself by claiming that, at the time, she had believed that she did not have any obligations in Paris before July 7th. She took pride in remaining behind for a special tour while the rest of the company returned home, even if her decision made Hirsch "mad with rage" to the point that the French ambassador in Moscow had to intervene to slow down

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[360] Telegram from Yvette Chauviré to Georges Hirsch, 27 June 1958, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN; Telegram from Goskonsert to Georges Hirsch, 28 June 1958, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN.

[361] Telegram from Georges Hirsch to Goskonsert, 30 June 1958, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN.

[362] Telegram from Yvette Chauviré to Georges Hirsch, 1 July 1958, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN.

[363] Letter from Georges Hirsch to Yvette Chauviré, 2 July 1958, Series 19900035, Carton 81, AN.

Hirsch's avalanche of telegrams that were "bothering everyone."[364] That Chauviré risked her career to perform in additional Soviet cities suggests the caché of performing beyond the Cold War divide, where few Western dancers had the opportunity to perform. Her story also provides a counterexample to the case of Soviet dancers who failed to return home after dance company tours. Chauviré's actions were a flagrant rejection of her French employer's demands. She broke with the rest of her company and intentionally missed her flight home, mirroring the circumstances of many Soviet defectors. And yet, unlike Soviet "dancer defects," Chauviré was relatively free to change her schedule with impunity.[365] Her consequences were professional, not political, and contemporaries interpreted her decision as merely the behavior of a headstrong prima ballerina who craved the spotlight.

Defections, and the controversy around them, were the expression of a central tension brought to the surface during Cold War dance tours: the two countries' divergent definitions of the right to personal mobility. France allowed its citizens to travel freely, including to the Soviet Union. French officials prided themselves on France's right to asylum, which allowed foreign individuals facing persecution to find refuge in France. France was known as a staunch proponent of the 1951 Geneva Convention, particularly because of its liberal policies toward refugees and for its protections of individual rights – despite the concurrent colonial violence unfolding in Indochina and Algeria.[366] This position became central to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs' vision of France, especially as the nation became a leader in projects for

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[364] Yvette Chauviré, *Autobiographie* (Strasbourg: Le Quai éditions, 1997), 88.

[365] David Caute uses the term "dancer defects" to describe the Soviet dancers who defected during the Cold War years. See: Caute, "The Ballet Dancer Defects," in *The Dancer Defects*, 467-505.

[366] Press and Information Service of the French Embassy in the United States (New York: French Embassy, 1979), 70.

European integration, such as the Common Market (1957). Although a few French performers moved to the Soviet Union or prolonged their stay there after official tours, French authorities did not face the same negative press coverage that communist regimes did after defections because French performers were not politically censured for their travel decisions. By maintaining an image of openness and support for individuals' mobility across borders, the French government appeared immune to ideological assaults in cases where its citizens voluntarily ventured beyond the Cold War divide.

The Soviet Union, by contrast, had reluctantly opened its doors after nearly a decade of postwar isolationism. Only Soviet citizens who had received permission could travel abroad, and this privilege could be withdrawn at any moment – as often occurred for dancers who flouted the rules of comportment during international tours. These differing philosophies on personal mobility came to the fore during Franco-Soviet dance tours, especially because the art of dance depended on physicality and free movement – as demonstrated by the frequent "leap to freedom" metaphor evoked during defections. Although Western journalists portrayed defections as evidence for France's protections of individual freedom and its position on the "right" side of the Cold War, French officials implemented measures to reduce the chance of Soviet defections in the interest of diplomacy. For their part, Soviet authorities also compromised on their policies regarding personal mobility by tolerating the risks presented by dancers' uncontrollable whims and the way their behaviors were spun in the local press. Dance tours revealed that, when transporting hundreds of performers across the border, no quantity of KGB escorts or social pressure could keep the dancers in check. Despite the challenges posed by exposing its dance companies to more expansive definitions of personal mobility, Soviet officials judged these obstacles worth the risk.

Conclusion

During the expansion of Soviet cultural relations with the West in the 1950s, dance became a vital tool for diplomacy. This was especially true in the Soviet Union's relationship with France, because the two countries had a long history of balletic collaboration. But dance – with its physicality, the large number of performers it required, and newsworthiness to a wide range of journalists and dance critics – also posed hazards to the agendas of both governments involved. Despite the risks, both French and Soviet authorities made accommodations for the precariousness of what dancers said and did during their time abroad, and how journalists portrayed these actions.

Tensions and disagreements spiraled around the issue of press coverage during Franco-Soviet dance tours, but both sides adapted their interpretations of the media's role in the nation to suit their diplomatic interests. Soviet journalists chose not to overtly criticize the French government or Opéra performers, instead finding subtle ways to undermine France's status in Soviet readers' eyes by publishing primarily short, matter-of-fact pieces that were overshadowed by articles about the Bolshoi's triumphs abroad. Journalists also mobilized the press by placing coverage about French ballet tours in the Soviet Union next to longer pieces about French colonial tyranny and domestic political chaos. By the same token, though French diplomatic staff complained internally about the Soviet media's sparse coverage of French dance tours in the Soviet Union, they chose not to react. They took for granted that official press organs were not reliable indexes for popular interest and hoped that French performances touched Soviet audiences to a degree not reflected in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. When Soviet officials complained about the vagaries of the Parisian press, French diplomatic staff even went so far as to agree to speak with certain publications about their troublesome critiques of Soviet performers – though

laws protecting freedom of the press in France prevented any such admonishments from carrying much bite.

Policies around freedom of mobility faced similar challenges when hundreds of performers began crossing the Franco-Soviet frontier in the 1950s. Soviet authorities began allowing its performers to tour abroad, mediating the risks by conducting background checks on prospective travelers and sending escorts along to keep an eye on the company. Still, as dancers' rebellious activities demonstrated, these measures were not sufficient to prevent embarrassing situations. Indeed, the very fact that so many rules and barriers constrained Soviet artists during their French tours became a subject of intrigue to Parisian dancers and journalists. The most extreme of these embarrassments were defections, which emerged at the constellation of conflicts between the freedoms of press and mobility. Instead of decreasing the number of Soviet dance tours abroad or pressing French authorities to act, Soviet officials erased defectors from the public eye and continued sending performers abroad. In the rare case that defectors were publicly acknowledged, they were painted as unstable and erratic individuals with personal – not political – motivations for betraying their country. As defectors shot to fame and celebrity in the West, defections appeared to be a coup for Western governments. But French diplomatic officials did not interpret them as such. Instead, French authorities fretted that defections could jeopardize Franco-Soviet diplomacy and implemented measures to reduce the chance of future defections, though this decision grated against visions of postwar France as a protector of freedom and the right to asylum.

For Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials in both countries, the opportunity to cultivate a positive image among audiences abroad and develop an independent path for France-Soviet relations – apart from American influence – warranted concessions. Rather than becoming facile

diplomatic tools, however, dance tours exposed unexpected frictions between the two countries, particularly around freedoms of press and mobility – and the way the governments involved interpreted these freedoms differently. During controversial flashpoints, such as Nureyev's defection or the 1954 cancelation of the Soviet premiere in Paris, these concepts burst into the open and indelibly shaped how Franco-Soviet cultural relations were portrayed in both countries. Far from being simple tools for diplomacy, the high profile and interpersonal nature of dance tours introduced volatility and demanded that both governments accommodate even on guiding national policies in order to make diplomatic inroads.

Examining dance diplomacy from its most unpredictable angles also exposes the diverse ways that non-government actors contributed to public portrayals of Cold War Franco-Soviet dance tours. Though French and Soviet officials proffered their own narratives of what dance tours meant to their nation, this analysis reveals the multifaceted motivations of other participants: journalists seeking an enticing story; dancers looking to advance their career, travel the world, connect with international colleagues, or even rebuild their lives abroad; theater directors hoping to attain profit and prestige for their company with minimal political fuss. The driving force for these individuals could often be integrated with their governments' goals, or otherwise managed in the interest of cultural diplomacy. The next chapter will build on this complex web of actors that propelled Franco-Soviet dance tours forward, focusing on an organization whose motivations were deemed irreconcilable with that of the French government: the French Communist Party.

Chapter Three: Farewell, Fellow Traveler: The French Communists and Franco-Soviet Dance Exchanges

In the spring of 1951, a new play premiered in Moscow at the Komsomol Theater. *Paris, Rue Stalingrad* depicted Paris under German occupation: ordinary French families living in fear of arrest or separation from their loved ones, a plight exacerbated by the arrival of American GIs who "liberated" France by ravaging the country they were supposed to save. The cast list was peopled with artists and workers, sympathetic "positive heroes" who struggled to preserve their humanity against American occupiers, who viewed France as a pawn against Soviet power. Although the French characters were not overtly called communists, a French diplomatic report observed that "their rooms [were] decorated with portraits of Stalin and Maurice Thorez, and they read little more than *L'Humanité*."[367]

The piece concluded with all of Paris congregating and singing "La Marseillaise" around a fictional labor activist, to whom France owed its liberation from American political and military domination. Between two stanzas of the anthem, the activist reverently shouted General Stalin's name three times, while a *gavroche* waved a tricolor flag over the scene. This play vexed French embassy staff, who worried that the piece would "leave audiences with the impression that the people of France have great devotion toward the Soviet Union and toward the person of Stalin…."[368] Only a few years prior, the Communist Party had seen its greatest electoral victory

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[367] Correspondence from Ambassador Yves Chataigneau to Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman, 4 April 1951, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE. Thorez led the PCF from 1932 to 1964. He briefly served in the French army during the early months of World War II before deserting in October 1939 to Moscow, where he lived for five years. See Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 213 and Claude Pennetier, "Maurice Thorez," in *Le Maîtron,* 2021, accessed 27 July 2021, https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article24000.

[368] Correspondence from Ambassador Yves Chataigneau to Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman, 4 April 1951, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

in French history, so moderate and right-leaning officials in Paris had good reason to be concerned about the influence of this radical political party. The idea that France contained any individuals matching the portrayal depicted in *Paris, Rue Stalingrad* would have been a matter of anxiety and embarrassment to France's volatile ruling coalitions of the early 1950s.[369] This play also reflected the real concern that, thanks in part to Marshall Plan funding, American chain companies might bankrupt French small businessowners.[370] After hearing about this production, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff debated ways to counter any misconception among the Soviet public that the French were avowed proponents of Stalin and steadfastly on the Soviet side of the budding Cold War conflict.

The small body of literature on Cold War dance tours has done little to complicate the stark ideological and cultural divide between the (communist) East and the (liberal democratic) West. This stems partly from the fact that the most prominent texts on this subject focus on American-Soviet diplomacy.[371] Soviet cultural relations with Western nations began to recover

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[369] Prominent members of these coalitions included the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO), the Popular Republican Movement (MRP), the National Centre of Independents and Peasants, and the Radical Party. These parties offered alternatives to Charles de Gaulle's leadership (represented by the Rally of the French People (RFP) in the late 1940s and early 1950s) and the French Communist Party. In the 1956 legislative election, a new far-right party entered the scene and secured 52 seats in the legislature. The movement's leader, Pierre Poujade, was a small shopkeeper who got his start by joining with other shop owners to organize a tax revolt in the town of Saint-Ceré. Originally, Poujadism was a populist movement that resisted taxes and modernization, but as the party gained momentum, it became increasingly nationalist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic. The Poujadist Union et Fraternité Française's successful elections in 1956 preceded the party's downfall; after the party's failures of leadership, many of its deputies abandoned ship for more established conservative parties. See: Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, Robert Zaretsky, *France and its Empire Since 1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 260-1.

[370] Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, Robert Zaretsky, *France and its Empire Since 1870*, 261.

[371] For example, the foundational work done by Naima Prevots (*Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University, 1998), Clare Croft (*Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), and Victoria Geduld ("Dance Diplomacy: Martha Graham and the Strange Commodity of Cold-War Cultural Exchange in Asia, 1955 and 1974," *Dance Chronicle* 33 (2010): 44-81). Stephanie Gonçalves was the first to publish on Franco-Soviet dance tours with *Danser pendant la guerre froide, 1945-1968* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018), but the French Communist Party and its role in Franco-Soviet relations do not figure prominently in her study.

in the mid-1950s, just as suspected communists and communist sympathizers in the United States were blacklisted and publicly censured. In the early postwar years, American communists had little power to participate in American-Soviet cultural events. The State Department tasked touring American dance companies with curbing the international success of the Soviet Bolshoi and Moiseyev companies, and for this reason American dancers with leftist affiliations often found themselves barred from international tours.[372]

In contrast with the American context, after World War II French communists cultivated a central role for themselves as mediators between French and Soviet worlds. This power was well within their grasp, as support for communism in France attained unprecedented levels, bolstered by the Soviet Union's wartime success. Taking advantage of this influence, French communist organizations promoted Soviet culture in France by diffusing Soviet publications, staging exhibitions, and inviting Soviet academics and performers to Paris. During the years before official exchanges became possible, French communists provided interested French citizens with a tenuous, propaganda-laden line to all things Soviet, including content about illustrious Bolshoi dancers. After Stalin's death in 1953, the French and Soviet governments began to organize official, bilateral cultural exchanges. Although the French Communist Party remained prominent until the 1970s, the French government took calculated action to remove the Party's sway over cultural relations with the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s. Hindering the PCF's ability to conduct informal diplomacy with Moscow proved a tricky process, as Soviet cultural officials had developed trusted relationships with French communist leaders and fellow

[372] Prevots, *Dance for Export*, 4.

travelers. The case of dance tours demonstrates one way that French communists leveraged dance to meet ideological and political goals.

An ostensibly apolitical form of expression, ballet leant itself to be recast and coopted by French and Soviet leaders alike. For example, French cultural officials hesitated to refuse requests by communist organizations to bring Soviet dancers to Paris because dance had no obvious political message. As cultural relations normalized between the two countries, however, cultural events became more politicized. Controversy sprang not so much from the performances themselves, but from events that cropped up as tours unfolded: press debates, last-minute cancellations, spectacular defections, and the sudden accessibility of dancers from beyond the Cold War divide. French communists furthered their own agenda by using dance in the postwar era, and their position has thus far been overlooked.[373] By contrast, this chapter reveals French communists' role in this dialogue, illuminating an understudied perspective on Franco-Soviet dance tours and cultural relations more broadly.[374] My approach reveals that communists, though a minoritarian group, set the stage for postwar Franco-Soviet dance tours – before the government moved to reduce their influence over diplomacy with the Soviet Union.

In the early postwar years, French communists had good reason to feel optimistic about their political fortunes. The Parti Communiste Français (PCF) sailed on the widespread appreciation for the Soviet sacrifices that culminated with a German defeat in World War II. The

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[373] The only existing book that covers French dance tours during the Cold War only briefly mentions the communists' fervent disapproval of the French government's decision to cancel the 1954 Soviet ballet tour in Paris. Stéphanie Gonçalves, *Danser pendant la guerre froide*, 106. One chapter of this book is devoted to Franco-Soviet dance exchanges: "La première tournée de ballet soviétique à Paris (mai 1954)."

[374] After drafting this chapter, I discovered that Faye Bartram makes a similar argument about the AFU's role in cultivating Franco-Soviet cultural relations via film exchanges in the mid-1950s. Together, our studies demonstrate how, in the years after Stalin's death, the AFU turned to culture to enhance the Soviet Union's image abroad and hold sway over Franco-Soviet diplomacy. Faye Bartram, "35mm Bridges: Cultural Relations and Film Exchange between France and the Soviet Union, 1945 to 1972," PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2017.

PCF's own contribution to this victory was confirmed by communists' conspicuous presence in the French Resistance, which led party members to call themselves "*le parti des 75,000 fusillés*."[375] The Soviet Union seemed a nobler victor than the American troops who lingered on French territory after pushing out Nazi forces: in September 1944, 61% of Parisians interviewed asserted that the Soviet Union brought about the Nazi defeat, as opposed to 29% who credited the United States. Soviet propaganda successfully promoted the image of a Soviet Union that was powerful, democratic, and effective in the fight against social injustice.[376] Many French people felt that such a model could help shape postwar Europe for the better, which translated into the PCF's largest electoral victory in history. In November 1946, the PCF won the plurality of seats in the first legislative assembly of the Fourth Republic, receiving almost 30% of the vote.[377] After joining a coalition in a government headed by Charles de Gaulle, the PCF struggled to maintain its conflicting loyalties to France (nationalism) and the Soviet Union (internationalism) alike.[378]

Partly because of the PCF's own shortcomings and partly due to Soviet encroachment in Eastern Europe, by the mid-1950s the communists were often disregarded in the French polity. With the consolidation of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union's first successful atomic bomb test in 1949, the Soviet Union cut an increasingly menacing figure. At the same time, the communist leadership of the late 1940s was perceived to have reneged on its pre-election

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[375] "The party of 75,000 gunned down people." Philip Nord, *After the Deportation: Memory Battles in Postwar France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 15.

[376] Stéphane Courtois and Marc Lazar, *Histoire du Parti communiste français* (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1995), 218. The remaining 12% believed that Great Britain had contributed most to defeating Germany.

[377] Stéphane Courtois and Marc Lazar, *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, 230.

[378] Marc Lazar, *Le communisme: une passion française* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 78. The PCF ruled in a tripartite coalition with the French Section of the Worker's International and the Popular Republican Movement (1944-1947).

promises and to have tacitly approved of colonial repression, rather than following through with its rhetoric of liberation for imperial subjects.[379] The PCF also found a formidable opponent in the rising influence of de Gaulle, who viewed the PCF as representing the interests of a foreign power rather than of France.[380] Welfare programs like *Sécurité sociale* further curbed the PCF's allure by providing benefits like a limited workweek, pensions, and paid vacation.[381] The beginning of rapid economic growth in the mid-1950s brought stability and comfort to more French families, stemming the tide of political radicalization. In 1956 the PCF was dealt a serious blow by the brutal Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution, which led many French communists to seek out a socialism that was not dictated from Moscow. It did not help the Party's popularity that its longtime leader, Maurice Thorez, unyieldingly followed Stalinist dictates and strongarmed the PCF into a reliable satellite of Soviet influence until his death in 1964.[382] Still, the PCF performed well in legislative elections throughout the 1960s and 1970s,

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[379] The PCF had declared its support for the French Union established by the Fourth Republic's constitution. So as not to contradict Soviet rhetoric had been historically anti-imperialist, the PCF recognized the colonial territories' right to separate from France, yet at the same time discouraged them from doing so. Even while the PCF participated in the leading coalition, the French government continued to take repressive action against colonial rebels in Indochina and Madagascar in the late 1940s – sometimes in the interests of Soviet diplomacy. See: Irwin M. Wall, *French Communism in the Era of Stalin: The Quest for Unity and Integration, 1945-1962* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 54.

[380] In 1947, de Gaulle created the Rally of the French People (RPF) party and insisted that only the RPF could meet the challenge of the communist party in France. By the late 1940s, the PCF and RPF both received a large slice of votes, but neither managed to garner an absolute majority in the government. Maurice Vaïsse, "De Gaulle et la guerre froide (1946-1953)" in *La France en guerre froide: Nouvelles questions* (Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2015), 68-69.

[381] Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 219-220 and Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 167-8.

[382] See Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 213.

until 1981, when the Socialist Party's success drew votes away from the PCF, newly deprived of half its legislative seats.[383]

France offers an especially helpful case study for understanding the messy "in between" realms of Cold War relations. The classic narrative that poses East and West in stark opposition is, of course, not the whole story. Recent scholarship on the Cold War has worked toward both expanding historical actors beyond diplomats and statesmen and complicating the idea that one side – usually the U.S. or the Soviet Union – bore more responsibility for causing and perpetuating the Cold War.[384] This chapter showcases French communists' active role in cultural relations with the Soviet Union, and how the French government's actions contributed to creating a narrative of Cold War political and ideological opposition by curtailing communists' influence over Franco-Soviet interaction.

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[383] Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, Robert Zaretsky, *France and its Empire Since 1870*, 346. Despite the gradual decline in PCF membership through the 1950s, at times French Party members numbered in the hundreds of thousands, with a peak number of 907,785 Party cards delivered in December 1947. It is important to note that "cards delivered" is not an exact estimate of Party membership, which was always less than the number of cards delivered. For example, the estimated Party membership for 1954 was estimated to be less than 340,000, but the official "cards delivered" figure was 506,250. Thereafter, card deliveries ranged between 400,000 and 800,000 into the 1960s. See Annie Kriegel, *The French Communists: Profile of a People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 32-34.

[384] For recent work on the cultural Cold War, see : Kiril Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition during the Early Cold War, 1945-1958* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016); Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1998); Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Penny M. von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War*; Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, eds, *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004); Simo Mikkonen and Pekka Suutari, eds, *Music, Art, and Diplomacy: East-West Cultural Interactions and the Cold War* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2020). For recent work challenging a diametric interpretation of the Cold War, see: Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (New York: Basic Books, 2019); Carole K. Fink, *Cold War: An International History* (Boulder: Routledge, 2018); Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Melissa Feinberg, *Curtain of Lies: The Battle over Truth in Stalinist Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

French Communists, Fellow Travelers, and Postwar Franco-Soviet Cultural Relations

In postwar France, the first sign of cultural contact with the Soviet Union came in the form of a Soviet violinist, David Oistrakh. The idea for this tour came not from the French or Soviet governments, but from impresario Georges Soria – a journalist and longtime member of the PCF. Soria called another Paris-based impresario, Fernand Lumbroso, to pitch his plan to bring Oistrakh to Paris in June 1953. Lumbroso responded that he had never heard of Oistrakh but agreed to help. To everyone's surprise, Oistrakh's concert sold out in just a few hours.[385] Together, Lumbroso and Soria coordinated the burgeoning number of Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges carried out after Stalin's death.[386] At this point, it was clear that Soviet performances would sell, offering a lucrative opportunity for impresarios like Lumbroso and Soria. The following year, the pair organized the first Franco-Soviet theater exchange – for which performances rapidly sold out. In 1954, it was rumored that tickets to see "the most famous and least familiar *corps de ballet* in the world" sold for over 7,000 francs on the Parisian black market.[387]

Between 1954 and 1958, Soria and Lumbroso (in collaboration with the French and Soviet governments) organized six more full-company tours and one reciprocal ballet company exchange. In 1957, French and Soviet officials formalized this rapprochement by signing a

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[385] Fernand Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacles* (Paris: Lieu commun, 1991), 92.

[386] Thomas Gomart, *Double Détente: les relations franco-soviétiques de 1958-1964* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003), 85.

[387] Jean Laurent, "Le ballet Soviétique à la conquête de Paris," *Dimanche Matin*, 9 Mai 1954, R.Supp.4219(1), BNF-Richelieu. Although Laurent refers to the visiting Soviet troupe as a unified company, the 1954 Soviet tour featured a combination of dancers from the Bolshoi and Nemirovich-Danchenko theaters. The Bolshoi was undoubtedly the more famous of the two. 7,000 old francs is equivalent to 159 Euros in 2021. (Converted using the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques Franc-Euro currency converter: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2417794.)

bilateral cultural declaration that laid the groundwork for future artistic exchanges, strictly on the basis of reciprocity.[388] Cold War dance tours would not have been possible without private impresarios, who made cultural exchange their business. Their foremost concern was to identify a profitable performance that would sell the maximum number of tickets in the host country. David Oistrakh's tour had confirmed that Parisians were eager to see even lesser-known Soviet acts. After successfully arranging Oistrakh's tour, Fernand Lumbroso and Georges Soria became the first impresarios willing to work with the Soviet Union and continued to be at the forefront of Franco-Soviet performance tours through the 1970s.

As an intellectual and member of the PCF since the age of nineteen, Soria was eager to develop contacts with the Soviet Union at the earliest opportunity. Born in Tunis in 1914, he started his journalistic career by covering the Spanish Civil War. During World War II, he traveled to Mexico and the United States, eventually making his way to the Soviet Union.[389] While residing in Moscow, Soria met his future wife, networked with Russian artists and intellectuals, and learned to speak Russian fluently.[390] His linguistic ability and personal contacts with Moscow's artistic community placed him in a privileged position to organize Franco-Soviet artistic exchanges after Stalin's death. In collaboration with writer Louis Aragon and painter Jean Lurçat (both members of the PCF), Soria created the Agence Littéraire et Artistique Parisienne

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[388] Report on cultural exchanges and the flow of people between France and the USSR, 14 June 1957, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE. Also see: Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 69.

[389] During his time in Spain, Soria likely also worked as an NKVD agent. Claude Pennetier, "Georges Soria," in *Le Maîtron,* 2021, accessed 27 July 2021, https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article131448.

[390] Thomas Gomart, *Double Détente*, 85.

(ALAP) in 1953. Aragon, Lurçat, and Soria hoped their new organization would "develop a bridge between East and West at the height of the Cold War."[391]

Like Soria, the Jewish-Italian Lumbroso had roots in Tunisia, but his family relocated to Alexandria, Egypt before Fernand's birth in 1911.[392] When Lumbroso was thirteen, they resettled in Paris, where he completed his education.[393] In 1952, he founded the business that would become Spectacles Lumbroso, which – in tandem with Soria's ALAP – would organize many Franco-Soviet artistic tours throughout the Cold War. Lumbroso's younger sister Odette, an adept businesswoman and theater enthusiast, served as the company's CEO – initially for bureaucratic reasons, since Odette had been born in France, whereas Fernand was not yet a French citizen.[394] Although Lumbroso had been a member of the Communist Youth, as an adult he became disillusioned with "comrade Stalin" and left the Party, though he never stopped collaborating with French communists and Soviet cultural representatives for the purpose of organizing cultural exchanges.[395] By 1961, French diplomat Maurice Dejean described Lumbroso as the "impresario of the most important French performances in the Soviet Union," highlighting the businessman's record of successful negotiations with Goskonsert and the Soviet Minister of Culture, Yekaterina Furtseva.[396]

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[391] André Thomazo, interview by Thomas Gomart, *Double Détente*, 84.

[392] Fernand Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacles*, 15.

[393] Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacles*, 18-21.

[394] Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacles*, 88.

[395] Lumbroso does not specify exactly when he left the Communist Party, but we know that he left prior to 1935 (when he would have been around 24 years old). Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacle*, 35. Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacle*, 35.

[396] Telegram from French Ambassador to Moscow Maurice Dejean to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 May 1961, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE. Founded in 1956, Goskonsert (Gosudarstvennoe kontsertnoe ob"edinenie SSSR, or State Concert Association of the USSR) was the branch of the Soviet government responsible

Lumbroso and Soria's interest in Soviet entertainment and willingness to work with Russian officials placed them at the forefront of Franco-Soviet artistic exchanges. When French and Soviet diplomats proposed a dance tour, these France-based impresarios were often the first to speak with officials in both countries. Leveraging their connections in both governments, the pair negotiated the price, dates, duration, and venue of dance tours. These rigorous deliberations demanded tact, bilingualism, and cultural savvy. Lumbroso recalled flying to Moscow to organize the 1956 tour of the Stanislavsky ballet to Paris. Upon arrival, he was greeted with a table replete with *zakuski* including caviar, smoked salmon, and liver pâté, followed by a hot meal of shashlik and chicken Kiev. Wine and vodka flowed throughout the evening, fueled by toasts to friendship and the development of friendly relations between France and the Soviet Union. Following the meal were days of exhausting negotiations, which concluded with the signing of contracts.[397] All the while, Lumbroso corresponded closely with the director of the Association Française d'Action Artistique (AFAA), Philippe Erlanger, to ensure that the requirements of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs were met.[398]

In addition to the practical need for Lumbroso and Soria's linguistic and social network, impresarios built a cushion between French and Soviet officials at a time when associating with the Soviet government remained taboo. The pair's past and contemporaneous involvement with the PCF did not alleviate accusations of espionage that stemmed from frequent trips to Moscow

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for organizing Soviet cultural events abroad. Events in its purview included concerts, competitions, screenings, festivals, and conferences.

[397] Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacles*, 107.

[398] Lumbroso also worked closely with French Communist André Thomazo, who became the assistant director of the Agence littérare et artistique Parisienne pour les échanges culturels (ALAP) in 1962. Together, they organized tours of the Moiseyev Ensemble, the Kirov and Bolshoi companies, the Red Army Ensemble, and the Moscow Circus to France. Marc Giovaninetti, "André Thomazo," in *Le Maîtron,* 2016, accessed 27 July 2021, https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article182653.

required to assess Soviet performance companies and plan tours. As a foreign national in France, Lumbroso found himself in the impossible position of balancing loyalty to the French nation with maintaining his contacts in Moscow that were essential to his business and yet delayed his ability to receive French citizenship. Even after decades of living and working in Paris and collaborating with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lumbroso struggled to acquire citizenship because of his Moscow contacts. Before attaining citizenship in 1975, for decades the impresario had to regularly renew his French *carte de séjour*, which often involved prolonged interrogation at the French Préfecture de Police about his relationship to the Soviet Embassy. Even after his receipt of citizenship, Lumbroso contended that, in the eyes of many French officials, he remained a man with Soviet connections.[399] His work with Soviet entertainers posed challenges when he attempted to organize tours involving American companies. In one attempted negotiation with Columbia Concert, the organization's president told him simply: "The arguments of a man who works with Moscow do not interest me."[400] Despite the suspicion incurred by Lumbroso and Soria's Soviet ties, the impresarios remained instrumental to Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges through the 1970s. Indeed, their foray into communism had opened up earlier, more privileged access to Soviet leaders and paved the way for relationships with artists, politicians, and diplomats across Cold War boundaries.

Lumbroso and Soria shared their intermediary role with individuals motivated by ideological rather than financial concerns. During the peak of communism's popularity in France, French communists set up organizations devoted to expanding ties between French and Soviet people. Created in 1945, the Association France-URSS (AFU) served the goal of bringing

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[399] Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacles*, 154-7.

[400] Cited by Lumbroso, *Mémoires d'un homme de spectacles*, 110.

the two countries closer together through athletic, academic, economic, and cultural exchanges.[401] During the PCF's heyday in 1947, the AFU enjoyed a membership of around 257,000; by 1961 that number had dropped to 50,000.[402] Although the organization was heavily influenced by French Communists, its leaders (including communists Louis Aragon and Fernand Grenier) sought to attract socialists and Gaullists to its fold, so as to increase its legitimacy as a purveyor of Franco-Soviet friendship.[403]

Nevertheless, the AFU's agenda was clearly dominated by its communist leaders. During the years before Stalin's death, communist-sponsored friendship organizations facilitated the only form of cultural interaction possible between France and the Soviet Union. Soviet diplomat Vladimir Erofeev observed that until the mid-1950s, "There really were no – or at least, almost no – cultural relations between France and the Soviet Union….More accurately, there was no channel for systematic commitment [to develop this relationship]."[404] Franco-Soviet cultural events that did take place before 1953-4 – however politically lopsided – unfolded under the sponsorship of French communists and fellow travelers. For instance, the AFU organized celebrations in French cities commemorating the anniversary of the October Revolution, the victory at Stalingrad, and other landmark moments in Soviet history. The society also pushed – with surprising success – to bestow the name "Stalingrad" on streets and squares (more than forty, according to one report) around France. The AFU arranged cinema nights, radio

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[401] The Association France-URSS was preceded in the prewar period by the Association des Amis de L'URSS (1932-1939), which was headed by Fernand Grenier. Yves Le Maner, "Fernand Grenier," in *Le Maîtron,* 2019, accessed 27 July 2021, https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article24320.

[402] Thomas Gomart, *Double Détente,* 101-102.

[403] In 1962, the national committee of the AFU included 47 communists, 34 politically unaffiliated members, 7 progressives, 8 socialists, and 3 Gaullists (99 members total). Thomas Gomart, *Double Détente,* 105-107.

[404] Vladimir Erofeev, *Diplomat* (Moscow: Zebra E, 2005), 251.

broadcasts, musical and dance concerts, conferences, and exhibits related to Soviet culture.[405] Reaching beyond France's boundaries, the society also advertised tourist trips to the Soviet Union to its French membership and organized visits of Soviet delegations to Paris. Erofeev reflected that even in the years characterized by little-to-no official Franco-Soviet cultural relations, the AFU made an "invaluable contribution to the development of social and cultural contact" between the two countries.[406]

Individual communists and fellow travelers, too, did their part to bring Soviet culture to France. The French poet and novelist Louis Aragon, director of *Les Lettres françaises* and husband of Russian Jewish writer Elsa Triolet, facilitated the translation and publication in France of Soviet authors, some of whom he knew personally from his travels to the Soviet Union.[407] Another influential French leader and communist, Fernand Grenier, helped found the AFU and became editor of *France-URSS* (after 1960, *France-URSS Magazine*).[408] Although limited in scope and clearly biased in favor of the Soviet Union, the magazine was one of few

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[405] Report on Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 15 February 1952, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE. The report does not list which cities memorialized Stalingrad. At the time of writing, there remained squares, streets, parks, and metro stops named after Stalingrad in many French cities (Paris, Reims, Rennes, Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille, Limoges, Nantes, Nice, Dijon, Cannes, Toulon, Tours, Le Mans, Toulouse, Grenoble and the smaller towns of Nemours, Roanne, Voiron, Suresnes, Albi, Seclin, Mâcon, Neuilly-sur-Marne, Saint-Denis, Bobigny, Vannes, La Seyne-sur-Mer, Saint-Brieuc, Saint-Nazaire, Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray).

[406] Vladimir Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 259.

[407] Vladimir Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 298. After the Khrushchev's Secret Speech and the suppression of the Hungarian Uprising in 1956, Aragon began to publicly criticize Stalinism and Soviet oppression in Eastern Europe. Regardless of his misgivings, Aragon never left the PCF. Elsa Triolet wrote in Russian as well as in French, becoming the first woman to receive the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 1945 for a short story collection, *Le premier accroc coûte 200 francs*. "3 juillet 1945, Elsa Triolet reçoit le prix Goncourt," *Institut national de l'audiovisuel*, 00:40, 2 July 2020, https://www.ina.fr/contenus-editoriaux/articles-editoriaux/3-juillet-1945-elsa-triolet-recoit-le-prix-goncourt/, accessed 28 July 2021.

[408] In 1951, Grenier published a hagiography of Joseph Stalin entitled *Au pays de Staline* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1951).

publications devoted to Soviet society and culture that was accessible to French audiences.[409] It included stories and articles by Soviet authors, travel accounts by French tourists to the Soviet Union, and news related to Franco-Soviet events. The magazine's journalists lauded Soviet accomplishments in science, technology, sports, and gender equality, while ignoring unsavory topics such as Soviet oppression and political corruption. This bias frustrated French officials, who remarked upon the power of publications like *France-URSS Magazine* to shape opinions of readers in France while Soviet censorship eliminated any chance to counteract misconceptions about France in the Soviet Union. Despite initial efforts to warm up Franco-Soviet relations in the early 1950s, French diplomats were certain that any request to publish articles "of documentary nature" on French society in Soviet publications would be refused outright – notwithstanding Soviet authorities' assertions of a "Western iron curtain" imposed by the U.S. and Europe alone.[410]

However much the French government struggled against this communist connection, the political and personal relationship between Soviet officials and communists in France indelibly shaped Franco-Soviet dance tours during the Cold War. French communists were empowered by their close relationship with the Soviet Embassy, where they took advantage of connections that facilitated ad hoc Franco-Soviet diplomacy. Soviet ambassador Sergei Vinogradov was known for working closely with French communist leaders to establish common goals and strategies for

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[409] For the April 1954 issue, for instance, the publication boasted 108,000 copies printed, compared with about 95,000 copies printed of the September 1955 issue. The June 1956 issue claimed 130,000 copies printed. Sometime in 1956, the magazine editorial board stopped providing the number of issues printed. According to the list published in the magazine's front inner cover, in the mid-1950s the magazine was sold at newsstands in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Lille, Bordeaux, and Toulouse. Based on the magazine's own print numbers, Soviet diplomat Vladimir Erofeev's claim that *France-URSS Magazine* printed a monthly circulation of "a few hundred thousand" copies seems to be an exaggeration. Vladimir Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 261. Other Soviet publications published for international readers include: *Soviet Union*, *Sputnik*, *Les Nouvelles de Moscou*, and *Soviet Life*.

[410] Note on Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 18 June 1951, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

the development of Franco-Soviet relations.[411] To Erofeev, this connection with local communists was logical because Soviet diplomats – being themselves communists – "considered communists friends" from the start. This friendship bore concrete results: the Soviet Embassy "constantly received necessary assistance [from French communists] for conducting political, community, and cultural events."[412] In exchange, Soviet embassy staff worked to "unite the Left" in France and, as a necessary part of this endeavor, supported the PCF – though Erofeev insisted that Soviet embassy workers never did anything that would "justify allegations that they interfered in the internal affairs of the country."[413]

For those curious about Soviet culture in a France whose government was mistrustful of cultural events masquerading for communist propaganda, the AFU provided coveted access and a glimpse across Cold War divides. When the association organized a Soviet cultural event, *France-URSS Magazine* offered a platform for advertising and drawing in new subscribers. Performance exchanges were featured prominently in *France-URSS Magazine*, particularly before such events were streamlined into bilateral, government-sponsored cultural exchanges. In May 1954 – the month of the much-anticipated Soviet ballet tour in Paris – nearly the entirety of that month's issue was devoted to dance. We know little about the magazine's readers, but most

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[411] Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 273.

[412] Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 272, 277.

[413] Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 274. Erofeev's language about "uniting the left" refers to the Khrushchev-era Soviet foreign policy initiative to support the creation of a center-left government in France whose existence would depend on the participation of the PCF, giving French communists more control over political leadership in the country. This policy approach worked in tandem with Khrushchev's language of peaceful coexistence: that is, working with, rather than against, Western leaders, especially those on the left. Theoretically, collaborating with non-communists undermined the dream of a worldwide worker's revolution. In Khrushchev's view, however, using less antagonistic rhetoric and policy would encourage more trade across Cold War boundaries and present a gentler image of Soviet power throughout the world, especially in the Global South. See Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), 348 and Gomart, *Double Détente*, 224.

of them were likely members of France-URSS. The May 1954 issue suggests that the editorial board believed – or hoped – that many balletomanes figured among the magazine's subscribers. AFU journalists emphatically argued for expanding cultural relations between France and the Soviet Union and proposed dance as a fruitful path forward. Contributors to *France-URSS Magazine* mused that French admirers of Soviet ballet would be unified in a metaphorical audience with a new reverence for Soviet art after concluding that "a country capable of creating such elite [artists] deserves our most congenial consideration."[414]

Beyond their potential for attracting large audiences, dance tours mattered to communist commentators because of dance's prominent place in Franco-Soviet history. Much as the arrival of Soviet performers signaled a new development in Cold War cultural relations, AFU writers framed this event as a continuation of a well-worn, shared dance heritage. One article celebrated that "the arrival of the Soviet ballet continue[d] a century of exchange between dancers" of the two countries.[415] Other reporters reminded readers that the tenets of classical ballet had developed from a dialectical relationship between France and the Soviet Union. Even in the twentieth century, French vocabulary remained inseparable from the Soviet dance profession, while French dancers sought after the renowned discipline and impeccable technique of their Soviet counterparts. The Moscow-based Division for French Science and Culture, which cultivated a relationship with AFU leaders, reflected the Franco-Soviet dance connection: out of the Division's eleven board members, three – Yuri Zavadsky, Galina Ulanova, and Igor Moiseyev – were members of Moscow's dance community.[416] Capitalizing on this shared

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[414] Weill Hallé, "Hommages aux Ballets de Moscou," *France-URSS*, May 1954.

[415] Georges Leon, "De Petipa à Oulanova, en passant par Diaguilev," *France-URSS*, May 1954.

[416] The board comprised thinkers, painters, writers, and theater staff, including journalist Y. Zhukov, actor (and husband of Galina Ulanova) Y. Zavadsky, jurist E. Korovin, biochemist A. Kursanov, dancer and choreographer I.

balletic past and their social ties to prominent Russian dancers, French communists aspired to revive the dance exchanges of days past.[417]

The AFU's insistence on the centrality of dance for developing Franco-Soviet relations was echoed in the opinions of Soviet embassy workers. In his memoir, Soviet diplomat Erofeev pinpointed the start of dance exchanges as the "decisive breakthrough in Franco-Soviet cultural relations" that "changed the entire social and political atmosphere in [France]."[418] French communists and their Soviet interlocutors alike proclaimed that France and the Soviet Union could be united by the language of dance. But, as it turned out, this language could not be spoken freely – even in democratic France. Early Franco-Soviet dance tours raised debates regarding who had ownership of French dance and French stages. Through their media and programming, French communists staked their claim on dance and other cultural events with the Soviet Union, much to the consternation of French diplomatic officials.

May 1954: The Battle of Dien Bien Phu and the Soviet Ballet's Cancelled Premiere in Paris

After Stalin's death in March 1953, French and Soviet cultural representatives wasted little time before organizing the first postwar bilateral theatrical exchange. France would send its celebrated Comédie Française to Moscow in March 1954, while the Soviet Union would reciprocate by flying a blend of dancers from the Bolshoi and Stanislavsky companies to Paris

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Moiseyev, painter M. Saryan, scholar N. Sidorova, physicist D. Skobeltsyn, dancer G. Ulanova, writer I. Ehrenburg, and film director S. Yutkevitch. Transcription of "Creation of the Division for Friends of French Science and Culture in VOKS" from Soviet newspaper *Trud*, 4 April 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

[417] In the 1950s, for example, ballet dancers graced the cover of *France-URSS* in May 1954, October 1955, February 1956, July 1956, and June 1957.

[418] Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 255.

the following May. It is unclear why French officials decided on the Comédie Française rather than Paris's own Opéra de Paris ballet, though they were likely concerned about invoking direct comparisons that would be unfavorable toward the Opéra before having had the opportunity to analyze Soviet ballet in person. After all, as American State Department officials reasoned after deciding not to send the American Ballet Theater to Russia in 1957, "bringing ballet to Russia is like bringing a report card" to an international audience.[419] The Soviet dancers arrived on April 30, with ample time for rehearsals before their May 8th premiere. Diplomats and journalists alike marveled at the symbolic importance of the company's presence on French soil. French spectators received the company with curiosity and anticipation. The dancers provided a concrete face for a hitherto abstract Soviet rival, materializing like, as one French journalist described, "an extraordinary and peaceful delegation that fell from the sky."[420] The ticket sales spilled into the black market in the frenzy to witness a momentous event in dance. Ballet lovers abroad flocked to France to see "the most celebrated and least familiar *corps de ballet* in the world."[421]

The few dancers whose fame had transcended Cold War boundaries retained an elusive quality, and this glamour alone was enough to make tickets sell. For French audiences, Soviet people would cease to be an abstract notion and would become "real men and real women."[422] The Soviet company's first tour to Paris was more than an introduction to art from beyond the East-West divide: the tour provided Western audiences a first look at living, breathing Soviet

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[419] Cited by Geduld, "Dancing Diplomacy," 67.

[420] Henri Marque, "L'Affaire des Ballets Soviétiques," *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 13 May 1954, Opera.Presse.1954, BMO.

[421] Jean Laurent, "Le ballet Soviétique à la conquête de Paris," *Dimanche Matin*, 9 Mai 1954, Opera.Presse.1954, BMO.

[422] Claude Roy, "La dernière répétition des Ballets Soviétiques," *L'Humanité-Dimanche*, 9 May 1954, R.Supp.4219 I, BNF-Richelieu.

performers. Even for Parisians with little interest in dance, the tour was a historic event. Planning had transpired in fits and starts, which only increased excitement for the Soviet company's arrival. The previous year, the French press reported that French and Soviet officials were in talks to organize a Soviet dance tour in Paris, but the negotiations faltered in May 1953 when an agreement could not be reached.[423] *Le Figaro* declared, "The curtain came down on the first act."[424] Reporting on plans for the 1954 tour, journalists did not dare hope for success. Newspaper reports of the tour did not bother to hide journalists' skepticism. An *Arts* headline preceding the tour proclaimed, "Here are the Soviet ballets that you will (maybe) see in Paris."[425] The long-anticipated arrival of Soviet dancers heralded the development of Franco-Soviet cultural ties – proof that the French ambassador in Moscow, Louis Joxe, and the Soviet ambassador to Paris, Sergei Vinogradov, had unlocked the "'open sesame' of the iron curtain."[426]

On the other side of the globe, however, the French colony of Indochina was embroiled in a violent conflict with military forces directly supported by the Soviet Union.[427] Ho Chi Minh had become the leader of Indochina's fight for independence in 1939, uniting the anti-colonial

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[423] The primary obstacle to reaching an agreement was that Soviet Foreign Affairs staff had tasked two (unspecified) representatives to organize the tour on their behalf. The reason for this decision is unknown, but French journalists speculated that it was "because the Soviets [did] not want to take the first step and expose themselves to a rebuff." French Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials insisted that official representatives from both countries must collaborate to plan the tour and refused to work with unofficial intermediaries. Jean-François Devey, "Les Ballets Russes: Décision demain au Quai d'Orsay sur le visa d'entrée," *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 7 May 1953, 8.SW.2244, BNF-Richelieu.

[424] "Les Ballets de Moscou: négociations suspendues," *Le Figaro*, 21 May 1953, 8.SW.2244, BNF-Richelieu.

[425] "Voici ce que sont les ballets soviétiques que vous verrez (peut-être) à Paris," *Arts*, 21 January 1954, 8.SW.2244, BNF-Richelieu.

[426] Henry Magnan, "Quand les artistes soviétiques prennent gout aux délices bourgeoises," *Carrefour*, 7 April 1954, R.Supp.4219 I, BNF-Richelieu.

[427] James Waite, *The End of the First Indochina War: A Global History* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 27.

movement under the Viet Minh in 1941.[428] After World War II, Ho Chi Minh entered negotiations with France and the United States for Vietnamese independence – a process interrupted in 1946 by France's renewed attempts to regain control of the colony, unleashing heavy bombings in Haïphong that killed 6,000 civilians. The war in Indochina had dragged on for eight years.[429] French forces' position had become desperate just as Soviet dancers poised to take the stage in France's national opera house in May 1954. The French military surrendered on May 7 – one day before the Soviet ballet company's May 8th premiere in Paris.[430] News of the French defeat shocked the metropole, which was in the midst of reconciliation with another communist rival – the Soviet Union. In the battle, 3,000 French troops and 20,000 to 30,000 Viet Minh lost their lives. In the wake of this humiliating defeat, French Président du Conseil des ministres français Joseph Laniel had less than a day to decide whether the Soviet show would go on.[431] On May 7 the Soviet company performed their dress rehearsal at the Palais Garnier, where press and high-profile audience members shuffled in (by invitation only) to catch a glimpse of the first Soviet ballet spectacle at a national theater since before World War II. During the tour,

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[428] During his youth, Ho spent time in Paris, where he attended university and became a founding member of the PCF. After returning home, he entwined Marxist anti-imperialism with Vietnamese nationalism to construct a forceful campaign for independence in Indochina. Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, *France and Its Empire,* 273.

[429] To avoid stirring the rancor of the war-weary *métropole* population, the French government deployed colonial troops, the Foreign Legion, and career military soldiers. Most of France's population – preoccupied with regaining stability after the war – was apathetic toward the conflict in Indochina, which enabled the government to continue fighting without fear of popular resistance. Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, *France and Its Empire*, 274.

[430] This chapter of hostilities in Vietnam drew to a close in July 1954, when newly elected Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France signed the Geneva Accords, which officially conceded France's Indochinese colony and created four new countries: Laos, Cambodia, South Vietnam, and North Vietnam. Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, *France and Its Empire*, 276.

[431] The Président du Conseil des ministers français was the head of the French government. Since the creation of the French Fifth Republic (1958-), this position has been called Premier ministre (Prime Minister).

attendees would have the opportunity to buy a brochure on Soviet ballet, distributed by the Soviet Embassy. French diplomatic officials approved the brochures before the tour, determining that although the document presented "mediocre photographs" and "banal," "poorly edited," and "very Soviet" text, the brochures were clearly identifiable as Soviet handiwork, and therefore did not pose any problems to French interests.[432]

By the next day, news about the loss of Dien Bien Phu had reached Paris. Instead of hosting the Soviet premiere, all state-supported theaters were closed for a day of national mourning. On the morning of May 9 the day's scheduled performance was still on the books, but that afternoon, Laniel announced that the Soviet ballet's tour would be suspended *sine die*, until further notice.[433] The government feared violent protests that could erupt were communist performers permitted to perform on a French national stage after the loss of French soldiers at Dien Bien Phu. Laniel faced the difficult task of receiving Soviet ambassador Sergei Vinogradov to explain the cancellation. Laniel emphasized that the measures were intended to safeguard the security of the Soviet company and that allowing the performances could entail consequences that would further jeopardize Franco-Soviet relations. Vinogradov reacted with astonishment and "a bit of a temper." French diplomats were instructed to highlight that the French government, too, lamented the circumstances that required cancelling the Soviet tour, and that France earnestly desired further development of Franco-Soviet cultural relations.[434]

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[432] Telegram from Louis Joxe, 30 April 1954, Series 554INVA, Carton 570, MAE.

[433] That the tour was cancelled on May 9 – Victory Day – would have added insult to injury. Victory Day, making the Soviet taking of Berlin, was one of the Soviet Union's most important holidays.

[434] Telegram from French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Louis Joxe at French Embassy in Moscow, 11 May 1954, Series 554INVA, Carton 570, MAE.

Soviet officials reacted to Laniel's decision with restrained indignation. On May 12, the Soviet media broke the news to the Soviet public.[435] A TASS[436] press release reported that the French government had called off the tour and accentuated the French public's resentment and disappointment at losing the opportunity to see Soviet ballet. Soviet newspapers did not attack the cancellation, instead allowing French reports and opinion articles to speak for themselves. *Izvestia* and *Pravda* reported that the French communist newspaper *L'Humanité* had received countless letters protesting the decision and that the Opéra director, Maurice Lehmann, had himself expressed regret about the government's decision. Soviet papers also publicized the consternation and sympathy of French ballet dancers who disagreed with their leaders. Commenting on the tour's cancellation, prima ballerina Lycette Darsonval reflected, "I am incredibly disappointed. I was so looking forward to the opportunity to applaud these artists."[437] *Literaturnaia Gazeta* described more dissenting French voices, including 250 railroad workers who marched against the French Council of Ministers, and students from the University of Paris who held an assembly protesting the decision.[438]

Even beyond Soviet-friendly circles, suppressing the Soviet ballet tour was thought to contradict the principle of reciprocity on which early Franco-Soviet artistic exchanges were founded. Sending the dancers home without performing was a breach of contract and evidence that France did not respect its agreements. Politics was one matter; failure to properly host

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[435] The delay in reporting was strategic, most likely so that the tour cancellation would not distract from Victory Day (May 9) celebrations and news coverage.

[436] The Telegraph Agency of the USSR, which was the central agency for distributing news to all Soviet publications and media outlets.

[437] TASS, "K prebyvaniiu sovetskikh artistov vo Frantsii," *Izvestia*, 12 May 1954, 4; TASS, "K prebyvaniiu sovetskikh artistov vo Frantsii," *Pravda*, 12 May 1954, 4.

[438] "Golos froitsuzskoi [sic] intellitentsii: po stranitsam frantsuzskikh gazet," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 15 May 1954, 1.

visiting artists was quite another. Journalist Henri Marque summarized these critiques, explaining, "Dien Bien Phu was already well underway when the French actors left for Moscow. The inalienable laws of hospitality and keeping one's word must be shielded from unfortunate events."[439] The novelist and future French Minister of Culture (1973-74) Maurice Druon published an apology letter to ballerina Galina Ulanova shortly after the tour was called off. He had visited Moscow in 1952 and anticipated reliving the Bolshoi ballets he had attended during this trip. He assured readers that the Parisian public was eager to see the Soviet company perform and that French audiences were as aggrieved by the cancellation as the visiting dancers themselves.[440] Druon explained, "Those who have decided to prevent you from dancing are fools, and their political thinking is in line with this foolishness. They do not know that great artists are always messengers of peace, or if they do realize this, they undoubtedly are afraid of this message."[441] For some critics, it was a short leap from condemning Laniel's decision to disputing the political legitimacy of a French government that devalued artistic expression. Though anti-communist sentiment, and fears of anti-communist upheaval, had motivated the

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[439] Henri Marque, "L'Affaire des Ballets Soviétiques," *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 13 May 1954, Opera.Presse.1954, BMO.

[440] Despite the announcement, about three hundred ticketholders had showed up for the premiere performance. They were met with closed gates and a small placard reading, "By decision of the government, the Soviet ballet's performances have been cancelled." The cancellation created a public relations nightmare for the Opéra staff, who faced a crowd of disgruntled ticketholders. Over 10,000 tickets for the Soviet tour had been sold, and all of these required reimbursement. Once it became clear that the show would not go on, the disgruntled crowd raised concerns about potential unrest and were promptly dispersed by the police who had been carefully monitoring the situation. Some would-be audience members gathered in front of the Hotel Commodore, hoping to catch at least a glimpse of the performers and show support. The company's director, Mikhail Chulaki, emerged, and the crowd presented him with a basket of red roses. "La Oulanova a esquissé un pas de danse dans la salle de bal de Trianon," *Libération*, 10 Mai 1954, Opera.Presse.1954, BMO.

[441] Maurice Druon, "Lettre à mademoiselle Galina Ulanova," *Défense de la Paix*, June 1954, 52-53, C Pièce 58, BNF-Richelieu.

French government to shut down the performances, other Parisians asserted that art was apolitical and should be safeguarded from the vagaries of politics.

French communists joined these critics to denounce the cancellation, but in their view, art remained inseparable from politics. For this reason, commentators from the Party accused Laniel's administration of using the events in Indochina to mask a politically motivated attack on Soviet ballet. *L'Humanité* had carefully followed the dancers' activities from the first day of their arrival and reported widespread disgruntlement about the government's "unjustifiable measure" that contradicted French traditions of artistic freedom.[442] Specifically, forbidding the ballet tour insulted the Soviet people, who had so generously hosted the Comédie Française earlier that year. Despite this injustice, the journalist pointed out that the Soviet artists bore this affront nobly: "They are not the losing ones in this affair, in the realms of honor, dignity, and intelligence. The French, on the other hand…"[443] Communist publications underscored how the French government's decision had failed to serve both diplomacy and the French people. After all, the Parisian public had expressed its support for Soviet ballet by rapidly buying up seats, driving up ticket prices on the black market, and lining up in defiance after the theater doors were closed. By sending the Soviet performers home, the French government had failed on both domestic and international fronts.

The government had ejected the Soviet company after signing a contract with a full understanding of the situation in Indochina. This behavior, one communist journalist claimed, was not only "arbitrary" but the mark of a "frivolous," "cowardly," "negligent," and "dishonest"

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[442] "Une mesure injustifiable: Le gouvernement 'ajourne' les représentations des ballets soviétiques à l'Opéra de Paris," *Humanité*, 11 May 1954.

[443] "61 Millions et la Face," *Lettres Françaises*, 13 May 1954, R.Supp.4219 II, BNF-Richelieu.

government whose actions rose to the level of an "abuse of power."[444] Another *L'Humanité* article contrasted the administration's mishandling of the tour with the constructive work of the AFU. Unlike reticent French officials, the latter organization had "consistently welcomed" the expansion of Franco-Soviet cultural relations, to which its members were "proud to have contributed" before Laniel's decision had thwarted the "laborious progress toward mutual comprehension" between France and the Soviet Union.[445]

These dissenting voices were joined by that of the *Union progressiste* – a political party formed in 1950.[446] On the surface, the UP appeared separate from the PCF; UP representatives rallied for a leftist Party that worked with, rather than against, the Communist Party.[447] However, the political alignment of the UP's deputies to the National Assembly belied the party's close affiliation with the PCF: Pierre Cot, Pierre Meunier, and Emmanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie – all known communists – were elected to represent the UP in 1951.[448] After the Soviet dance tour was cancelled, the UP joined the chorus of communist voices protesting the move. Representatives of the UP asserted that Laniel's decision exposed the defects of France's government, with serious implications for France's diplomacy with other nations. Their statement pulled no punches, calling upon themselves to "alert Republicans about fascist threats

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[444] "61 Millions et la Face," *Lettres Françaises*, 13 May 1954.

[445] "Ce n'est pas la tradition française," *Humanité*, 11 May 1954.

[446] The Union Progressiste was formed by consolidating the Union of Progressive Republicans, the Union of Progressive Christians, and the Unified Socialist Party.

[447] At the first national conference for the Union progressiste, speaker Pierre Cot explained the necessity for the UP as follows: "There should be a group of people alongside, and not against, the Communist Party, who wish to get out of the rut we're in, who – understanding the decadence of the capitalist regime – will organize and act." See Serge Berstein, Robert Frank, Sabine Jansen, and Nicolas Werth., *Rapport de la Commission d'historiens constituée pour examiner la nature des relations de Pierre Cot avec les autorités soviétiques* (Paris : B & Cie, 1995), 65.

[448] Pierre Cot was also a member of France-URSS. Stéphane Courtois and Marc Lazar, *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, 293, 227.

that have manifested repeatedly during these last few weeks and which the heinous ban of Soviet ballet has proven further." The UP blamed Laniel's decision on government corruption via "blackmail by certain henchmen, operated by the Minister of the Interior, [which] risks to seriously disrupt our cultural relations and perhaps even our political relationship with a great nation…."[449] This assessment implied that communists and fellow travelers who had constructed avenues for Franco-Soviet friendship had done so more effectively, before the French government took the reins and "disrupted" this amicable relationship.

The PCF and its allies were not exclusively peopled by outsiders. Communism's postwar success in France meant that the Party had been impossible for intellectuals and artists to ignore. The recent memory of fascism drew French intellectuals to communism which, despite its flaws, provided a convenient "anti-fascism."[450] Still others perceived a false choice between communism and fascism, leading those who might otherwise criticize the PCF to tolerate its rigid hierarchy and anti-intellectualism. Furthermore, as Tony Judt pointed out, Soviet communism appeared exciting and "exotic" to Western intellectuals precisely during the Stalinist regime's most brutal years (the Great Purges of 1936-1938 and again from the war's end until the Hungarian Revolution (1944-1956)).[451]

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[449] "Une protestation de l'Union progressiste," *Libération*, 15 May 1954, R.Supp.4219(2), BMO.

[450] For more on postwar French intellectuals' attraction to communism see Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), Jeannine Verdés-Leroux, *Au service du parti: le parti communiste, les intellectuels et la culture, 1944-1956* (Paris: Fayard Minuit, 1983), Jeannine Verdés-Leroux, *Le réveil des somnambules: le Parti communiste, les intellectuels et la culture, 1956-1985* (Paris: Fayard, 1987).

[451] As Judt explained, "Writers, professors, artists, teachers, and journalists frequently admired Stalin not in spite of his faults, but *because* of them. It was when he was murdering people on an industrial scale, when the show trials were displaying Soviet Communism at its most theatrically macabre, that men and women beyond Stalin's grasp were most seduced by the man and his cult." Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York : The Penguin Press, 2005), 216.

After Laniel's cancellation of the 1954 Soviet tour, some of France's most famous communists and fellow travelers emerged from the woodwork to decry the government's decision. Their condemnations were published in French communist publications and recirculated in Soviet newspapers. These critical voices included that of Pablo Picasso, who joined the PCF in 1944 and remained a member until his death.[452] After the tour's postponement – even before the event was scrapped – Picasso insisted on the sanctity of art and interpreted the government's decision as a political attack on artistic expression. "The 'postponement' was so incomprehensible that I have thought ever since that it was a mistake," he fumed. "Should it be the case that, to our horror, the first attack on one people's right to dance for another was carried out in Paris?"[453]

Picasso's stance was bolstered by the ardent protests of Jean-Paul Sartre, who weighed in about a week after the tour was called off. Like Picasso, Sartre was drawn to communism during the Nazi occupation of France. During the war, he began publishing in communist media, such as *Les Lettres Françaises* and *Action*, but he exhibited reluctant allegiance to the PCF – perhaps because he noticed the Party's antipathy to dissenting viewpoints.[454] Although Sartre never officially joined the Party, he became a member of France-URSS in the early 1950s, at a time when French communists were readapting to the outsider position they had occupied before World War II.[455] By 1954, Sartre was accustomed to following the Party line. In an article

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[452] Although Picasso preserved his party membership, he distanced himself from the Party after Maurice Thorez's death in 1964.

[453] Pablo Picasso, "61 Millions et la face," *Lettres françaises*, 13 May 1954, 1; "Golos froitsuzskoi [sic] intellitentsii: po stranitsam frantsuzskikh gazet," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 15 May 1954, 1.

[454] M. Adereth, "Sartre and Communism," *Journal of European Studies* 17, no. 1 (1987): 4.

[455] M. Adereth suggests that Sartre deepened his commitment to the PCF at this time "not in spite of its isolation but because of it." The Party's recent support for North Korea in the Korean War, and its criticism of French membership in NATO, contributed to its alienation in French politics. It is worth nothing that Sartre had a

entitled "The Scapegoats," Sartre insisted that the French government provided no reasonable grounds for cancelling the tour and only axed the tour to punish the Soviet Union for France's own colonial misdeeds.[456] After ruminating on the ministerial infighting and popular unrest leading up to this decision, Sartre reflected, "And why go to so much trouble? Why make this into a production? Wouldn't it be better to let Ulanova dance? Ah! It's because they needed a scapegoat. Our government is desperate: all the ministers who have taken power have lived under the illusion that the war in Indochina would be lost by their successors." Looking for someone to blame, Sartre claimed, the current government cancelled the Soviet performances to direct public outrage toward Moscow and "persuade public opinion that the Soviet authorities [were] responsible."[457] Of course, the vocal reactions of French communists were not only about ballet: the cancellation also offered an opportunity for members of the PCF and France-URSS to underscore their opposition to the "imperialist" war in Indochina.

The Soviet press reprinted Picasso and Sartre's reactions, providing evidence to Soviet readers that the French literary and artistic elite appreciated Soviet art and reviled the government's choice to circumvent the tour by disguising ideological motivations under an obligation to prevent political unrest after Dien Bien Phu. The position of respected French intellectuals and artists embodied the voice of the nation's elite circles, which the Soviet press

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tumultuous relationship with the PCF: during the war, Party members accused him of being a "spy" after he had been released from a German concentration camp; in the late 1940s, Sartre worked with the PCF while openly criticizing the Party hierarchy and certain policy stances; after the suppressed Hungarian Revolution in 1956, Sartre publicly broke with the PCF and its Soviet ties, stating that "True socialism is not separable from the real practices of real men…the socialism in the name of which Soviet soldiers fired on the masses in Hungary – I do not know it, I cannot even conceive of it: it was not made for men, nor by them…" See: M. Adereth, "Sartre and Communism," Journal of European Studies 17, no. 1 (1987): 11-15.

[456] "Frantsuzskaia obshchestvennost' protestuet protiv zapreshcheniia vystuplenii sovetskikh artistov," *Pravda*, 18 May 1954, 4; Jean-Paul Sartre, "Les Boucs émissaires," *Libération*, 17 May 1954.

[457] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Les Boucs émissaires," *Libération*, 17 May 1954.

supplemented with examples of popular scorn for the cancellation. The magazine *Ogonyok* demonstrated Parisians' objections by printing a photo of ticket holders lined up outside the Palais Garnier (see Figure 4 below).[458] Framing the story around French citizens' negative commentary permitted Soviet publications to indirectly denounce the French government's choice to send the Soviet performers home without compromising Franco-Soviet diplomatic relations. As Soviet officials would have been aware, the French Embassy in Moscow carefully monitored the press coverage after the tour was called off. In summaries of the Soviet media's response sent back to France, ambassador Joxe explained that Soviet newspapers "have not encouraged [readers] toward an ungenerous point of view and…refrain from blaming the government." He concluded that the relatively tame press coverage suggested that "the Soviets have decided not to make a political incident out of the affair."[459]



Figure 4: Crowds in front of the Palais Garnier before the cancelled Soviet ballet premiere.
Ogonyok, 21 May 1954, 23.

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[458] "Proshchaias' s sovetskimi zriteliami," *Ogonyok*, 21 May 1954, 23.

[459] Telegram from Louis Joxe to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 May 1954, Series 554INVA, Carton 570, MAE.

However tactfully the Soviet press covered the subject, diverse communists and fellow travelers leveraged the cancelled 1954 tour to argue that the current French government lacked the tact, coherence, and respect for culture to carry out diplomacy with the Soviet Union. Their comments reflected the ongoing struggle for control and influence over cultural relations across Cold War boundaries. Although French communists had previously critiqued their government for prioritizing imperial ambitions over peaceful relations with the Soviet Union, after the Soviet dancers were sent home, their protestations reached a new pitch. The choice between friendly artistic exchange and imperial conquest had never been so apparent, and – in the communists' eyes – French officials had chosen tyranny over peace. The political key of this critique provoked anti-communist journalists who resented the communists' revitalized publicity after the tour's cancellation. Usually relegated to communist publications such as *L'Humanité*, *Les Lettres Françaises*, and *France-URSS Magazine*, communists found their opinions reproduced and referenced in more mainstream publications, such as *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, *L'Aurore*, and *Le Monde*.

The grievances of "neutral" journalists and French communist writers were interpreted differently. The former had anticipated the opportunity to appreciate Russian dance and could not be faulted for their disappointment; the latter were accused of disloyalty to the French nation and to Western European ideals promoting freedom of mind and body. Right-wing journalist Thierry Maulnier observed that Parisian ballet lovers across the political spectrum had protested Laniel's decision, reasoning that "since the wine had been poured, it must be drunk": the Comédie Française had already performed in Moscow, hence the Soviet company must complete its Paris tour. Maulnier could understand this sentiment. The reactions of communists and fellow

travelers, by contrast, exceeded all reasonable bounds. Jean-Paul Sartre's response, he noted, was shocking not because of its criticism, but because of its "vehemence, the furious heat of its protestations, going so far in search of vigor that it descends into vulgarity." Maulnier accused Sartre of only portraying one side of the story, willfully ignoring the Soviet Union's wartime alliance with Hitler and its postwar expansion across Eastern Europe, conjuring the image of a "reasonable Soviet" instead. In opponents' view, communists saw only the best of the Soviet Union and the worst of France, in an indefensible betrayal of their home country. For this reason, their reproval of the French government's decision could be dismissed as mere propaganda that served the interests of a different, quite menacing nation. After all, French officials had had little real choice about the unfortunate dismissal of Soviet dancers. To Maulnier, Laniel's call was justified because the French government "could not lend itself to an artistic exchange where political intent – put into play through every possible means of Soviet propaganda against the European Defense Community – had become clear."[460]

Despite French communists' insistence that their government had bungled the 1954 Soviet tour, the incident did little to leverage the Party's position in France-Soviet cultural relations. If anything, the event created opportunities for French foreign affairs officials to clarify their renewed authority over the country's rapport with the Soviet Union. After the tour's cancellation and the public outcry that followed, a representative of the AFU, vice president of France-URSS Weill Hallé, requested permission for the AFU to invite another Soviet dance troupe – the Beryozka company – to Paris. Implying that the association was better equipped than the French government to manage the next tour, Hallé posed prodding questions about the

[460] Thierry Maulnier, "Sans réserve," *Figaro*, 20 May 1954, R.Supp.4219(2), BMO.

government's mishandling of the 1954 tour – a debacle that, he suggested, could permanently damage Franco-Soviet cultural relations. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff viewed Hallé's inquiry as an opportunity to set the record straight and underscore the futility of any such further requests on behalf of the AFU. An official from the Direction Générale Politique at the Ministry insisted that – contrary to Hallé's insinuation – the tour's cancellation had not interrupted exchanges with the Soviet Union. In fact, the official countered, plans for a Franco-Soviet cinema exchange were already on the books. As to Hallé's request about sponsoring another Soviet dance company, there could be no question of allowing the AFU to organize such an event. The French Department of Cultural Relations had already contacted the Soviet Embassy to convey that a Beryozka tour could only be organized by the French government.[461] In other words, the matter was closed. Though the association may have proposed the tour to begin with initially, the AFU found itself shut out of plans for the tour's execution. Several years later in June 1957, the Beryozka company traveled to Paris for a government-organized tour at the Théâtre des Nations.

Hallé's letter enabled the French government to cement the AFU's position vis-à-vis Soviet affairs by laying out the new status quo: "There is a need to inform the Association France-URSS that the French government itself intends to maintain control of cultural relations between France and the Soviet Union." If the AFU hoped to develop its own cultural program, the association could do so, but "should not count on the government's support" in this endeavor. An internal note on the letter reported that, following a broader trend in the PCF, the AFU had curtailed its overtly political tone in favor of cultural initiatives.[462] This shift in the PCF's policy

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[461] Note for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Cabinet, 4 November 1954, Series 208Q0, Carton 200, MAE.

[462] Note for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Cabinet, 4 November 1954, Series 208Q0, Carton 200, MAE.

is mirrored in the Soviet Embassy's decision to prioritize cultural tactics in the mid-1950s, when embassy staff in Paris began to "attach more importance to cultural relations with France" after many years of "viewing this sphere of activities as tertiary."[463] The best prophylactic against the organization's interference in Franco-Soviet cultural affairs, the internal note explained, was for the French government to reinforce and leverage its own program of cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union.[464] This approach succeeded with Soviet officials, who became leery that unofficial tours would encounter obstacles resulting in embarrassment and lost profits. In talks negotiating the 1955 Moiseyev Company tour to Paris, the Soviet Embassy specified that their diplomats would only consider making plans for the event *after* the French government made an official invitation to the Soviet government. As Soviet diplomats reasoned, the need to formalize dance tours became more imperative after the Soviet ballet company's unfortunate and abrupt departure from Paris the previous year.[465] Although the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs had for years struggled with the PCF for control over Franco-Soviet cultural events, to Soviet embassy staff the failed 1954 tour appeared to be proof that even official exchanges carried no promise of success and demanded more assurance that the French government would not bungle the next Soviet performance in Paris. Rather than undermining the French government's new authority over cultural relations with the Soviet Union (as the French communists had suggested), however, debates around the cancelled 1954 Soviet tour drove home a new order of operations. From then on, French officials would initiate, approve, and conduct cultural exchanges; the AFU could make requests and suggestions, but any independent cultural events required government

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[463] Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 250.

[464] Note for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Cabinet, 4 November 1954, Series 208Q0, Carton 200, MAE.

[465] Note for the French Minister of Cultural Relations, 24 March 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 579, MAE.

approval, which was often denied to communist organizations. After 1954, the French government took concrete steps to hamper the communists' command of Franco-Soviet cultural diplomacy by creating committees, strengthening personal relationships with Soviet embassy staff, and penalizing those who did not follow official parameters for cultural events between the two countries.

Seizing the Means of Franco-Soviet Cultural Exchange

Throughout the early and mid-1950s, concerned reports circulated in the French Embassy citing the meddlesome Association France-URSS. Foreign Affairs officials noted with exasperation that the communist-led organization conducted Soviet cultural events in "too unilateral" a fashion, giving the impression of facilitating Franco-Soviet friendship while advancing Soviet interests in France. More troubling still, their efforts yielded results: one report credited the organization with popularizing Soviet music among French people, particularly after an AFU-sponsored Shostakovich music festival in December 1948. Perhaps most concerning of all was that the organization promoted personal contacts between well-known representatives of French and Soviet culture, notably by organizing visits of key Soviet and French artists, writers, thinkers, musicians, and architects to the other country. In the opinion of French foreign affairs staff, however, these "exchanges" had little to offer French interests, especially since the number of postwar *French* artistic events in Moscow remained effectively at "zero" in early 1952.[466]

[466] French Ministry of Foreign Affairs report on Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 15 February 1952, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE. The report specifically mentions the visits of Louis Aragon (author), Elsa Triolet (author), Irène Joliot Curie (chemist and politician), Pierre Rouquès (surgeon), Max Jayle (medical doctor), and Jacques Nicolle (scientist) in the Soviet Union and the visits of Constantin Simonov (author and editor of *Novyi Mir*), Ilya Ehrenburg (journalist and author), Ilya Zbarsky (head of Lenin's Mausoleum), and Vladimir Engelgardt (biochemist).

For example, French diplomatic staff lamented that communist groups organized trips by French visitors to the Soviet Union only to demand that, in the spirit of reciprocity, Soviet delegations invited by "their political co-religionaries" be granted visas to France. Because these visits took place under the auspices of Soviet representatives and French communists, the trips masqueraded as "cultural exchange," but little served French interests.[467] These "exchanges," French diplomats explained, only benefited communist propaganda because "French visitors come home celebrating the splendors of the Soviet Union, [while] Soviet travelers go home feeling pity about the misery that reigns in France."[468] In other words, French officials feared that even ostensibly reciprocal tourist exchanges may merely further the Cominform's agenda – rather than the cause of French diplomacy – when such events were orchestrated by the PCF and its affiliates.[469]

It is unsurprising that, where possible, Soviet foreign affairs staff seemed to prefer cooperating with the AFU over French diplomats. Even when conveying openness to official cultural exchanges, Soviet officials emphasized their investment in the AFU's work, which was already familiar to Soviet cultural leaders. The president of the AFU met personally with Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov, confirming the organization's semi-official

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[467] Optimistic travelogues written by French visitors of the Soviet Union exemplify this problem. See Sophie Cœuré, *Cousu de fil rouge: Voyages des intellectuels français en Union Soviétique* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2012); Rachel Mazuy, *Croire plutôt que voir?: Voyages en Russie Soviétique (1919-1939)* (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 2002); Léon Zitrone, *Vous parle de L'U.R.S.S.: interviews libres en Union Soviétique* (Paris: del Duca, 1960).

[468] Report on Soviet propaganda during cultural exchanges and the problem of delegation exchanges, 14 January 1952, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

[469] The Cominform was the official body unifying international communists with those of the Soviet Union from 1947 to 1956. The Cominform replaced the Comintern (1919-1943), which was dissolved during World War II, when the Soviet Union and Western allies unified against Germany.

status.[470] Given the close relationship between Soviet cultural officials in the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) and the AFU, the French ambassador to Moscow, Maurice Dejean feared that little could be done to prevent new exchanges arranged between the two organizations.[471] French diplomatic staff were embittered by the fact that the French government had little control over forms of exchange that depended on personal relationships with communists, especially because they perceived PCF-organized events as providing a platform to showcase Soviet cultural accomplishments.

When these cultural exchanges were bilateral, in the view of French diplomats, participants came away with the impression that the Soviet Union had attained a superior way of life and higher artistic excellence. Another obstacle to reciprocity, French diplomats bemoaned, was that there was no Soviet equivalent to the AFU and that Moscow had hosted no French artistic or cultural events since World War II. It seemed to French officials that the AFU's only role was to "help infiltrate France with Soviet culture, that is to say the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and to welcome into Russia the precursors or disciples of Engels, Marx, Lenin, and Stalin." In this so-called "exchange," one diplomatic report noted, "The Soviet Union risks nothing – but what about France?"[472] The society's connections with the Soviet government, and its freedom from the caution exercised by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, enabled the

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[470] Report from the French Ambassador in Moscow to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11 May 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

[471] Report from the French Ambassador in Moscow to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11 May 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE. Founded in 1925, VOKS (Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoi sviazi s zagranitsei, or All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) was a branch of the Soviet government devoted to fostering Soviet culture abroad by putting Soviet artists, intellectuals, athletes, scientists, and others in contact with their foreign colleagues. In 1958, VOKS was replaced by the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Contacts (SSOD).

[472] Note on Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 15 February 1952, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

AFU to organize events that would otherwise have been impossible during the Stalin years. However unilateral the AFU's Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges were, they could not have occurred under the aegis of the French government, whose diplomats demanded reciprocity to ensure equal influence across the Cold War divide.

Having become aware of this alternative and politically motivated route for Franco-Soviet cultural contact, in the early 1950s the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs laid out some solutions to tighten control over relations with the Soviet Union. First, the Ministry would deny visa requests for Soviet delegations when visits were organized by the Communist Party and its affiliates. Visas for Soviet visitors could only be granted once French embassy staff determined that their stay would serve culture rather than propaganda. To this end, intermediaries for such exchanges must be French and "chosen with care." French embassy officials also judged that the communist quasi-monopoly on cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union could be subverted if the Ministry encouraged private individuals who were non-communists to apply for Soviet visas. These visa requests, if refused, would be reported and could be mobilized to demonstrate a Soviet disinclination toward genuine, "apolitical" cultural exchange with the West. If – by surprise – a visa request by a non-communist French person were accepted, French diplomats planned to "make best use of the possibilities that would be offered" in that event.[473]

After Stalin's death in March 1953, French diplomats' goal of organizing reciprocal Franco-Soviet cultural events became attainable. When the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs conveyed interest in coordinating bilateral exchanges with the French government, this window of opportunity allowed the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to stifle the PCF's influence over

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[473] Report on Soviet propaganda during cultural exchanges and the problem of delegation exchanges, 14 January 1952, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

cultural exchanges between the two countries for the remainder of the Cold War years. The AFU could no longer claim near exclusivity in its relations with Moscow, and the society's events began to compete with – and were eventually eclipsed by – those sponsored by the government. Closer cooperation between the French and Soviet governments also facilitated large-scale tours that required approval of hundreds of visas – including full company performances, such as the Comédie Française and Soviet ballet exchange of 1954.

The French government's new role as the primary arbiter of Franco-Soviet cultural relations did not materialize overnight. Contacts between the two countries grew in number in the mid-1950s, but French diplomats continued reporting concern that France was at a disadvantage in its cultural initiatives with the Soviet Union. Even as cultural exchange became an accepted means to enhance détente, French officials reflected that such events primarily served to "facilitate a [Soviet] policy of infiltration in the West."[474] Despite this drawback, French diplomats determined that France should continue to develop cultural relations with the Soviet Union for several reasons. Even limited cultural contact with Soviet peoples could have a profound impact on public opinion. Diplomats also considered that quashing Franco-Soviet cultural interaction would suggest a "lack of confidence" in democracy and its ability to withstand free competition with other cultures and economic systems. As a democracy, France could not unequivocally prevent private individuals (and organizations, such as the AFU) from

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[474] Report on cultural exchanges and the flow of people between France and the USSR, 14 June 1957, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE. The word "détente" began appearing in French Ministry of Foreign Affairs correspondence and reports in the months after Stalin's death. For instance, as one report from October 1953 explained, "The idea for [this trip to the USSR by a delegation of the Union Nationale des Étudiants de France] was introduced a few months ago, during the sunny days of 'détente (les beaux jours de la 'détente.')'" This usage, referring to aspirations for or periods of friendlier cultural and political relations between France and the Soviet Union, continued into the 1960s and 1970s. Correspondence from French Chargé d'Affaires in the Soviet Union Jean Le Roy to Minister of Foreign Affairs Georges Bidault, 22 October 1953, Series 208Q0, Carton 199, MAE.

making contact with the Soviet Union. As one note explained, "The structure of the democracy that we hold dear allows any citizen to go freely to the Soviet Union." As had become evident in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs's grievances with the AFU, obstructing official exchange with the Soviet Union would only "result in a lack of control, and this contact would be to the sole benefit of the Soviets," creating a situation in which the French government had little sway over Franco-Soviet cultural diplomacy.[475] To prevent French communists and fellow travelers from seizing exclusive command over France's image in the Soviet Union – and vice versa – France needed to act as an engaged participant in détente, led by a government that was an active rather than passive player in diplomatic relations with communist nations.

In May 1956, the French Prime Minister Guy Mollet and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Christian Pineau, traveled to Moscow and signed a Franco-Soviet cultural declaration. This document formalized the two countries' intention to establish reciprocal cultural relations, specifying that the intermediaries for new exchanges must be each country's "most representative and qualified" organization tasked with managing cultural diplomacy.[476] Because the AFU had been a primary conduit for Franco-Soviet cultural events since World War II, the language of this document raised questions about whether the French department assigned to cultural relations – the Department of Cultural and Technical Affairs in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs – could convince Soviet interlocuters of its authority. Indeed, in the early stages of Franco-Soviet Cold War diplomacy, Soviet diplomats may have been more familiar with AFU

[475] Report on cultural exchanges and the flow of people between France and the USSR, 14 June 1957, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

[476] Report on cultural exchanges and the flow of people between France and the USSR, 14 June 1957, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

representatives than with high-ranking French diplomats.[477] But it was unacceptable that the French government should continue to share influence over Soviet affairs with the communist-led AFU.[478] To dispel any confusion, French officials created a new organization responsible for leading East-West interaction – an interministerial committee known as the Comité Est-Ouest. This committee created a platform for collaboration between several French ministries touched by Cold War cultural exchanges.[479]

The creation of the Comité Est-Ouest did not immediately solve the French government's dilemma. After all, the French communists had personal connections, familiarity with the Russian language, and experience on their side. Furthermore, Soviet officials had their own, changing bureaucratic apparatus that gradually adapted to France's new process for cultural conduct with the Soviet Union. In 1956, a group of influential Soviet figures, including choreographer Igor Moiseyev and writer Ilya Ehrenburg, formed the Division for French Science and Culture. At the time, there already existed an institutional framework for developing Franco-Soviet relations: since its creation in 1925, VOKS had been the leading Soviet organization for facilitating cultural ties abroad, but it had failed to adapt to Cold War conditions. It was with VOKS's somewhat antiquated framework – and a long history of Franco-Russian mutual

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[477] Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 262.

[478] As one Ministry report noted, "it would be difficult indeed to admit that the Soviet Union can rely on two contracting parties (the Department of Cultural Relations and this or that organization like the Association France-URSS). Only the Department of Cultural and Technical Affairs is entitled to conduct exchanges with the Soviet Union." Report on cultural exchanges and the flow of people between France and the USSR, 14 June 1957, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

[479] The committee comprised delegates from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Economic Council, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and the Ministry of Defense, with the goal of centralizing the flow of information and developing French influence in the Eastern Bloc according to agreed-upon objectives. The Comité Est-Ouest also benefitted from its own budget to help the committee achieve its established goals. Report from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 July 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

influence – in mind that Ehrenburg justified the creation of yet another organization, the URSS-France Association (UFA), in 1958.[480] The AFU was, at last, joined by a Soviet sister organization whose absence perturbed French diplomats in the early 1950s.

From the early years of the AFU and UFA, the organizations' political and diplomatic position was somewhat ambiguous. After all, both France and the Soviet Union already had ambassadorial staff responsible for diplomatic relations with other countries. Although the lines between official diplomacy and independent organization appeared clear on paper, in practice they became blurred when the French government eschewed negotiations with Soviet officials when a bilateral cultural arrangement could not be reached, leaving French communists to monopolize this relationship for their own political and cultural ends (which often amounted to the same thing).[481] On the Soviet side, the UFA's position was even more ambiguous because the organization was made responsible for enforcing the terms of a Franco-Soviet diplomatic agreement signed in 1957.[482] In other words, the Soviet friendship society would serve as a conduit to official French diplomatic contacts *and* to its analogous friendship association, the AFU.[483] French diplomats decried the nebulous role of this new Soviet organization: Was the

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[480] Thomas Gomart, *Double Détente,* 105. As Gomart points out, the creation of the URSS-France Association was not only a matter of VOKS's "aging structure" – the new organization was developed to serve Soviet political interests, which increasingly sought to influence foreign audiences by prioritizing cultural influence in the postwar period.

[481] Prior to Stalin's death in March 1953, French and Soviet diplomatic officials could not agree upon terms for bilateral cultural exchanges. Embassy officials in both countries blamed the other side for this failure to reach an agreement to renew Franco-Soviet cultural relations. For example, see: Report on Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 15 February 1952, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

[482] Signed in October 1957 by General Director of Cultural and Technical Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Roger Seydoux and the President of the State Committee for the Council of Ministers for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries G. Zhukov, this agreement laid the foundation for developing Franco-Soviet cultural relations during the Cold War. See Gomart, *Double Détente*, 105 and 202.

[483] Thomas Gomart, *Double Détente*, 105.

Division for French Science and Culture, created just months after the Comité Est-Ouest, meant to be an analogous organization? Or was it, as French diplomat Étienne Manac'h suspected, another communist tentacle that would be "the Soviet version of the Association France-URSS," grasping for new opportunities to serve propaganda and Soviet political bias?[484]

The French government needed a means to clarify the muddied waters kicked up by politically motivated unofficial organizations behaving as foreign relations departments. The foundation of the Comité Est-Ouest streamlined exchanges with the East and simplified the process of undermining the AFU's cultural initiatives. As a matter of course, submitted visa applications came first to the desk of France's Ministry of the Interior. After the Comité Est-Ouest's creation, the Ministry of the Interior directed visa requests from Soviet and communist nations to the Comité before making a decision.[485] This change in policy led to the delay and cancellation of Soviet visitors' visas.[486]

French diplomats also took the reins of Franco-Soviet diplomacy by tackling the root of the problem: friendship between Soviet cultural and diplomatic officials and PCF leaders. French officials coaxed their Soviet colleagues to use official channels – rather than non-governmental

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[484] Correspondence from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the French Ambassador in Moscow, 28 April 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

[485] At the Comité Est-Ouest's 26 April 1956 meeting, it was agreed that any visa requests related to Eastern Europe received by the participating Ministries would be referred directly to the Comité. See: Report on the meeting of the Interministerial Committee on East-West Exchanges, 26 April 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

[486] For example, less than a year after the Comité's foundation, the Ministry of the Interior received applications for short-term visas for seven Soviet mountaineers. Before responding to the application, the Ministry of the Interior forwarded the documents to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informing the latter that the Soviet climbers had been invited by the AFU. Referencing the Comité Est-Ouest's new directives, the letter requested more information about how visa applications submitted under the AFU's sponsorship should be treated: rejected outright, or taken on a case-by-case basis? During the ensuing delay – about a month after the initial submission – the mountaineers cancelled their application for an unspecified reason, explaining that they would visit France at a later date. Correspondence from the French Minister of the Interior to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 14 September 1957, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

organizations – for Soviet cultural events in France. In April 1956, just as the AFU played host to a Soviet political delegation, Manac'h got word that the association had solicited permission from the French Ministry of Finances to escort their visitors through the Imprimerie Nationale. Reluctant to respond without more information, the Ministry had forwarded the request to Manac'h, who met with the Soviet ambassador Erofeev to discuss the matter further. Manac'h explained that the French authorities had no qualms with the Soviet delegation visiting the Imprimerie Nationale, but that such a visit could not take place under the tutelage of the AFU.[487] Manac'h reasoned, "It would be unfortunate if a Soviet delegation, comprised of government representatives, were brought into official institutions by an organization as patently biased as the Association France-URSS."[488] Instead, the delegation could only conduct this visit under the sponsorship of France's Cultural Relations department. Regarding future cultural events, Manac'h insisted that Erofeev and other Soviet authorities relay their plans through official institutions, as no support would be provided for any (AFU-sponsored) activities that "extend beyond the frame of honest reciprocity and that have political or partisan elements." Erofeev accepted this request without objections and agreed to relay the new protocol to the Soviet Embassy.[489] From this point, the Comité Est-Ouest would be kept informed about any Soviet visitors connected with unofficial intermediary organizations, especially the AFU.

After the creation of the Comité Est-Ouest, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs's stricter visa policy was brought to bear on the AFU's attempts at dance diplomacy. The AFU chafed against the new boundaries imposed on communist-sponsored Franco-Soviet cultural events and

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[487] Report on the conditions of Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 13 April 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

[488] Report on the conditions of Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 13 April 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

[489] Report on the conditions of Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 13 April 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

sometimes managed to bring Soviet artists to Paris. Nevertheless, the organization's successful and failed dealings with Soviet representatives increasingly became fodder in the French government's initiative to undermine communists' role in cultural affairs between the two countries. In July 1956 the AFU invited seventeen Soviet performers to tour 22 French cities and towns.[490] In keeping with dance's role as a channel for Franco-Soviet friendship, the front and back covers of that month's *France-URSS Magazine* were devoted to images and advertisements for Soviet dance, boasting a monthlong variety tour by a troupe of Soviet dancers, singers, and musicians specially invited by the AFU.[491] In this case, applications were submitted to the correct French authorities, who granted the visas.

Yet, the tour did not go off without a hitch: just a few days after the troupe's premiere at the Alhambra Theater in Paris, a concerned note circulated at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On opening night, two hosts of the event – likely connected to the AFU – took the stage and delivered derisive remarks that reflected poorly on the French government. The speakers claimed that the troupe had struggled to acquire the appropriate visas and implied that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs's incompetence was to blame. The hosts painted an embarrassing portrait of how France treated its foreign guests, claiming that the artists' arrival was organized only at the last minute, and that as a result, the troupe had had to perform without time to eat, rest, or rehearse. One speaker went so far as to conclude that, in light of these issues, there was good reason to "get rid of" certain French government organizations, most notably the Visa

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[490] The towns visited on this tour included: Paris (Arènes de Lutèce), Ivry, Nanterre, Argenteuil, Aulnay-sous-Bois, Roubaix, Douai, Valenciennes, Lyon, Grenoble, Toulon, Nice, Marseille, Avignon, Alès, Nîmes, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Bayonne, Périgueux, La Baule, and an unspecified town in the Allier region. "Le Music-Hall de Moscou," *France-URSS Magazine*, July 1956.

[491] "Le Music-Hall de Moscou," *France-URSS Magazine*, July 1956.

Department. The ongoing power struggle between the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the AFU was dragged out onto the Alhambra stage before an audience.[492] Though the tour continued as planned, French officials met with Soviet diplomats to rectify the false impressions seeded by "allusions that [did] not correspond to accurate facts."[493] These discussions with Soviet representatives likely included a tacit discouragement from conducting any future cultural events with the AFU to prevent more misunderstandings that could inhibit the countries' diplomatic missions.

The following year, the AFU attempted to organize a series of concerts by Soviet performers in France, which culminated in what French officials dubbed the "France-URSS incident." To French diplomats' consternation, the Ministry only learned of this event upon receipt of visa applications for the Soviet dancers – with no prerequisite request from the AFU. To make matters worse, during the AFU leaders' negotiations with Soviet officials, tensions flared and cultural relations between the two nations "started to slip." As a result, the Ministry did not grant the visas, leaving the AFU the unenviable task of explaining to the Soviet Embassy why the project had failed – all after the performance hall had been booked and tickets sold. The diplomat reporting this incident smugly observed, "It is now up to the Soviet officials to decide what they think about [the Association France-URSS]." It was noted that, after this affair was resolved with the intervention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Soviet Embassy

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[492] After catching wind of these comments, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs scheduled a meeting with the Soviet Embassy to repair the damage, documenting the facts and asserting that French authorities had processed the application with remarkable haste, so blame for any delays must lie with the tour's private organizers (i.e. the AFU and its associates). According to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the initial visa request had been submitted on July 3 and was referred that same day to the Ministry of the Interior, after which notice of approval had been telegraphed on July 9.

[493] Report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 July 1956, Series 208Q0, Carton 228, MAE.

representative assured that all future plans would be cleared with the French Cultural Relations Division to prevent a similar bungle.[494] The AFU's failures to conduct effective diplomacy, French officials hoped, would speak for themselves.

French dance tours to the Soviet Union met similar obstacles when the proper channels were not followed. For instance, tensions flared when, in 1958, the Soviet Embassy invited star dancer Lycette Darsonval to perform in Moscow without informing the proper department in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The councilor to the Soviet ambassador, M. Zhdan, got involved when Opéra administrator Georges Hirsch refused to approve Darsonval's tour. Philippe Erlanger only learned of the tour when Zhdan brought the matter to his attention. Because the proper channels were not followed, Erlanger explained, the matter was out of his hands: "The Department could only get involved if the Soviet Embassy officially referred the matter" to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hirsch's verdict would remain unchallenged unless Zhdan and his associates respected the new method for conducting cultural exchanges, which eliminated unofficial intermediaries.[495] The tour was later re-organized according to proper channels and was completed successfully.

Of course, this strategy against the Association France-URSS was applied to other forms of exchange as well. In 1955, the association submitted requests under the name "Centre Culturel de France-URSS" – perhaps in the hopes that Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of the Interior bureaucrats would look more kindly on this new title. However, when the "new" organization requested permission to invite a group of doctors from the Soviet Academy of

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[494] Report on the Incident France-URSS, 6 April 1957, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

[495] Minutes from meeting between M. Erlanger and M. Zhdan, 20 October 1958, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

Medicine to France, French cultural relations officials responded that they saw no problem with inviting Soviet scientists to France – but that such an invitation should not come from a "political or para-political organization."[496]

While the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs broadened relations with the Soviet Union, its staff worked to sideline and delegitimize the AFU as an agent of cultural, political, or economic contact. Dance and performance tours constituted a key facet of the AFU's cultural policy, and the impresarios who organized Franco-Soviet dance tours depended on their own histories with the PCF to facilitate such events. As domestic communists lost the authority to organize dance tours, dance diplomacy joined the arsenal of cultural weapons to be deployed as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saw fit. In the process, French diplomats pushed communist voices out of the conversation and tightened control over representations of France among Soviet people. The renewed interest in strengthening France's bonds with communist nations had the somewhat paradoxical consequence of diminishing the AFU's power to carry out its own cultural events; by the late 1950s, the French communists' role in facilitating cultural ties between the two nations was reduced, though not eliminated entirely.

The AFU remained a steadfast presence in the audience and at events organized for Franco-Soviet dance tours, though they had lost the power to organize these tours themselves. Post-tour Soviet reports often mention the close friendships kindled between touring Soviet artists and AFU members, who hosted performers at receptions in Paris.[497] In 1955, the Moiseyev ensemble tour to Paris was coordinated through official channels, but the AFU still

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[496] Report to the Director of Cultural Relations on the Congress on Infantile Pneumo-phtistology, 23 February 1955, Series 208Q0, Carton 200, MAE.

[497] Correspondence from tour director L. Asanov to the Soviet Minister of Culture N. Mikhailov, 20 May 1958, RGALI, f. 2499, op. 1, d. 545, l. 2.

found a role to play. The association received permission from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to organize a special matinée performance by the Moiseyev geared toward students and workers, with very reduced ticket prices (ranging from 300-900 francs instead of the usual 2000 francs).[498] The only condition, to which the AFU agreed, was that no political party would be mentioned, no additional words would be spoken, and the performance would, in every respect, be identical to the other scheduled performances.[499] In this way, even if behind the scenes, French communists sought ways to remain active participants in Franco-Soviet cultural diplomacy.

After all, as French embassy staff discovered, there was no substitute for strong personal relationships when it came to organizing complex and expensive events. The French government continued to depend on Georges Soria and Fernand Lumbroso to leverage their communist contacts and make Franco-Soviet dance tours possible. A decade after the Battle of Dien Bien Phu and the cancelled Soviet tour in Paris, French diplomats fumed about how the well-connected impresarios prevented the government from maintaining complete control over Franco-Soviet cultural relations. One diplomat complained about the "quasi monopoly on business with Goskonsert enjoyed by M. Soria because of his political connections." By encouraging French theater directors to maintain direct correspondence with Goskonsert instead of working through Soria, foreign affairs officials hoped to undermine this monopoly, but they still requested ongoing support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to "cut out M. Soria

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[498] The reduced prices ranged from 6,82 to 20,47 Euros in 2021; the regular price amounted to 45,49 Euros in 2021 (Converted using the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques Franc-Euro currency converter: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2417794).

[499] This matinée took place at the Palais de Chaillot. Report on the "Ballets Moisseiev" to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 17 October 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 579, MAE.

entirely."[500] By the late 1960s, Soria's ALAP and Lumbroso's Spectacles Lumbroso had together coordinated 80% of Franco-Soviet artistic exchanges, and they remained the dominant organizers of Franco-Soviet performance tours into the 1970s.[501]

Conclusion

The French communists' fleeting role in Franco-Soviet cultural interaction in the 1940s-50s defies narratives of the Cold War that neatly pose East against West. After the war's end, the PCF and fellow travelers made their mark on Franco-Soviet cultural relations by organizing events, inviting Soviet personalities to France, and facilitating personal contacts between the two countries. The PCF's initiatives were, of course, biased and deeply influenced by Party politics in Moscow. However, these early postwar initiatives demonstrated the possibilities for dance as a conduit of cultural exchange and encouraged French Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials to turn to dance for Franco-Soviet diplomacy. Even before dance became a key channel of Franco-Soviet diplomacy, the communists and fellow travelers prioritized dance in their own cultural projects with the Soviet Union and in affiliated publications. Dancers and theater officials figured prominently in corresponding Soviet friendship organizations, supplying French communists with the connections to send invitations to dancers and dance companies – even after the scope of their authority evaporated. Official dance tours still required the contributions of impresarios, whose history with the Communist Party had forged their contacts with Soviet

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[500] Report on Franco-Soviet cultural and technical relations, 30 January 1964, Series 554INVA, Carton 370, MAE.

[501] The remaining 20% of Franco-Soviet artistic exchanges were organized by the AFAA, the agency attached to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and through which the AFU would also initiate Franco-Soviet cultural events. Marie-Pierre Rey, *La Tentation du rapprochement: France et URSS à l'heure de la détente (1964-1974)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991), 297.

performers, directors, and choreographers – bonds that made impresarios invaluable to Franco-Soviet dance exchanges from the 1950s into the 1970s. These relationships, along with the impresarios' familiarity with the Russian language and theater scene gained from trips to Moscow, prepared Fernand Lumbroso and Georges Soria to build careers on Cold War dance diplomacy – though they paid the price personally and professionally for their Soviet ties.

Finally, French Communists continued to shape dance tours after the mid-1950s in more subtle ways. Their requests to invite Soviet dance companies to France sometimes inspired officially sponsored dance tours, as we saw in the case of the Beryozka company. As a dance exchange or tour unfolded, journalists from communist publications, such as *L'Humanité* and *France-URSS Magazine*, enjoyed less restricted access to Soviet performers and were more likely to have journalists on the ground during French tours to the Soviet Union. For instance, the only published photograph of the Opéra de Paris ballet company off the stage in Moscow during their 1958 tour was taken by a *L'Humanité* correspondent (see Figure 5 below).[502] The French communists and fellow travelers may have lost the power to shape Franco-Soviet cultural relations in any official capacity, but they retained the personal connections and access on which cultural relations often depended. Its members continued to host receptions for Soviet visitors – including the Bolshoi, Kirov, Moiseyev, and Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko companies during their tours to Paris. These soirées allowed French communists to renew and maintain their connections with Soviet personalities, even after the government constricted the group's power to independently host Soviet invitees.

[502] The photograph caption provides no photo credit, but it accompanies an article with the byline "G.L."



G. L.

Tandis que le Bolchoï répétait salle Garnier, voici le corps de ballet de l'Opéra de Paris en promenade, hier, sur la place Rouge.

Figure 5: The Opéra de Paris Ballet on Red Square. *L'Humanité*, 30 May 1958, 2.

Chapter Four: 'Our Giselle is Muscular!': Femininity and Cultural Diplomacy

The first postwar dance exchanges between France and the Soviet Union – both of which counted ballet among their most prized cultural heritages – demanded that the events become a competition. As the faces of the entire ballet profession, ballerinas found themselves at the front lines of cultural and diplomatic combat. The confrontation could be summed up as a battle between ballerinas. Indeed, one French journalist announced: "This is the most prestigious and most placid of duels: the Opéra de Paris against the Bolshoi! One stage against another! To put it plainly: Chauviré against Ulanova; Daydé against Lepeshinskaya; Tallchief against Plisetskaya."[503] Debates among journalists and dance critics reveal how Franco-Soviet dance exchanges marked the collision of contrasting constructions of gender. The ballerina offered an ideal purveyor of cultural influence, exerting diplomatic soft power, packaged within beauty, grace, and strength that masqueraded as fragility.

Because of her centrality in both the art of ballet and in popular conceptions of femininity, the ballerina's body became a key cultural battleground during Cold War Franco-Soviet dance tours. On tours, the dancers came face-to-face with the host nation's politicians, informing notions of Soviet and French culture on the international arena through performances and personal interactions with local leaders. Parisian press accounts of ballerinas' travels reminded readers that the dancers had performed for "all publics, all races, all religions," insisting on French ballet's universality just as the nation's political and colonial influence were in decline. Playwright Jean Silvant explained that Opéra de Paris dancers became "winged

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[503] Claude-Henry Leconte, « Plateau contre plateau ; étoile pour étoile, » *Combat*, 10 May 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

messengers of glory," working through the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to spread French culture throughout the world.[504] Similarly, Soviet dancers and journalists portrayed their nation's ballerinas as duty-bound to represent the nation to international audiences.[505] As figureheads of an art posited to be universal and requiring no translation, ballerinas were called upon to represent a vision of cultural sophistication and appropriate femininity. The ballerina offers an example of how Cold War ideological differences were articulated through conceptions of gender – in ways that became inseparable from perceptions of dance aesthetic and individual dancers' bodies.

This chapter examines the figure of the touring ballerina, who embodied contrasting conceptions of femininity in the French and Soviet contexts. In France, the ballerina became a commercialized feminine figure, promoted in women's magazines and advertisements as an accessible model for young women. French dancers forged relationships with haute couture designers, perfume companies, and high-end furniture brands, cultivating personas that were inextricable from the products they sold. Domestically and on international tours, French ballerinas promoted a model of womanhood fulfilled by the promise of middle-class affluence in the midst of decolonization. In the postwar Soviet Union, on the other hand, the ballerina represented women's labor, patriotism, and artistic virtuosity. Rather than being marketed as an attainable prototype for any woman, the Soviet ballerina was the model public servant. Any

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[504] Jean Silvant, "Grace aux 'Affaires étrangères,'" *Opéra 'Spécial-Danse'* no. 5, 16-19, February 1970, Liane Daydé dossier, BMO. Individually or with the Opéra de Paris ballet company, French ballerinas performed in the Soviet Union, Japan, China, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, India, Iran, Egypt, Algeria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Iceland, Finland, Peru, Colombia, Panama, and many others throughout the 1950s-70s. Star dancer Liane Daydé alone boasted having performed in 5 continents, across fifty-two countries at the height of her career.

[505] Galina Ulanova, "The Making of a Ballerina," in *The Bolshoi Ballet Story* ed. Y. Bocharnikova, M. Gabovich, G. Ulanova, and Y. Slonimsky (New York: Heller and Heller, 1959), 82.

place that fashion and cosmetics might have had in her identity were occupied by self-sacrificing discipline and commitment to the Soviet public. Although she held the public eye, she was expected not to relish the spotlight. After the start of Franco-Soviet dance tours during the Thaw, observers in both countries made sense of differences between East and West, a dialogue that revealed diverging understandings of women's roles on stage and the relationship between femininity, the body, and consumer culture.

The ballerina in France

In 1959, one Parisian dance enthusiast wrote to the *Danse et Rythmes* editorial board. As an admirer of the female dancers in particular, after one evening's performance he waited outside the theater exit to catch a glimpse of the ballerinas and request an autograph. But once the dancers emerged, he explained, "I was disappointed by inelegant and unfeminine way that they were dressed."[506] To Louis R., the performers' everyday street clothes and makeup appeared in contradiction with their onstage roles as innocent maids and dainty fowl. Ballerinas' appeal stemmed from their portrayal of femininity incarnate, yet their offstage lives came into contention with the ideal that the dancers helped promote. However celebrated a dancer might become, on stage she transformed into Giselle, Odile, or Juliette. Although ballerinas contributed their own musicality and interpretation to each role, the possibility for individual expression was minimal.

[506] Louis R., "Répondons à quelques lettres," *Danse et Rythmes*, March 1959, 12. The tensions between ballerinas' onstage and offstage lives will be explored further below.

Histories of French ballet consider the nineteenth century a period of feminization, when men left the stages and were replaced by female dancers *en travesti.*[507] Historian Ilyana Karthas suggested that the influence of the revolutionary *Ballets Russes* contributed to a revival of the male dancer in French ballet during the early twentieth century. To Karthas, this development culminated with former *Ballet Russes* dancer Serge Lifar's 1930 arrival as Ballet Master at the Opéra de Paris.[508] As my fourth chapter demonstrates, however, the male dancer continued to be an object of derision, anxiety, and embarrassment in mid-twentieth century France, especially upon the arrival of Soviet dancers who appeared more virile by comparison. Both in popular culture and on stage, the ballerina dominated the profession in twentieth century France. Female dancers appeared in advertisements and celebrity lifestyle articles in popular French magazines, just as they provided the subject matter for popular media, such as the television series *L'Âge Heureux* (1966) and many fiction books – especially romance novels.[509] Ballerinas enjoyed more name recognition than their male counterparts, which is why the dance autobiography genre of

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[507] Ilyana Karthas, *When Ballet Became French: Modern Ballet and the Cultural Politics of France, 1909-1939* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); Lenard Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer: bodies, spectacle, sexualities* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007); Lynn Garafola, "The Travesty Dancer in Nineteenth-Century Ballet," *Dance Research Journal* 17/18 (1985): 35-40.

[508] Karthas, *When Ballet Became French,* 261.

[509] Examples of postwar French novels that incorporate ballerinas into their plot include: *La danseuse et l'amour* by Michèle Arnéguy (Paris: J. Tallandier, 1956), *Le secret de la danseuse* by Jean Normand (Paris: Les Éditions Chantecler, 1946), *La danseuse pourpre* by Henry Musnik (Paris: Éditions S.T.A.E.L., 1949), *Langelot et la danseuse* by Lieutenant X (Paris: Hachette, 1972), *Hélène, ballerine* by Linda Gray (Paris: Hachette, 1964), *En chaussons de ballerine* by Arielle Arno (Paris: Éditions du Scorpion, 1963), *Destin de ballerine: roman d'amour* by Pieyre Fabrice (Paris: Ferenczi, 1957), *La Ballerine de Majorque* by Paul-Jacques Bonzon (Paris: Hachette, 1956), *Ballerine de la peur* by Claire Goll (Paris: Éd. Emile-Paul, 1971), *La danseuse, le pilote et le poète* by Stani (Paris: Vivien, 1955), *La Danseuse écartelée* by Charles de Richter (Paris: Éditions La Bruyère, 1948), *Danseuse aux cheveux d'or* by A. Prêle (Paris: Ferenczi, 1956), *La danseuse de Saïgon* by Léo Gestelys (Paris: Ferenczi, 1954), *Jenny danseuse* by Anny Lorn (Paris: J. Ferenczi, 1949), *Catherine la danseuse* by Michèle Manceaux (Paris: F. Nathan, 1966), *La Danseuse au guépard* by Max-André Dazergues (Paris: Éditions de Savoie, 1946).

the 1950s and 1960s is dominated by women.[510] Memoirs by male dancers, who carried less celebrity status, may have been less likely to sell. In contrast to other professions, the pay of principal female performers at the Opéra de Paris rivalled or even surpassed that of male dancers. In 1958, the best-paid dancer in the company by far was Yvette Chauviré, who earned 100,000 francs[511] per performance – nearly twice that of her male dance partner Michel Renault, who received 64,420 francs[512] per performance. The second (Liane Daydé) and third (Marjorie Tallchief) highest ranked female dancers were each paid 53,675 francs[513] per performance, compared with their male counterparts, Georges Skibine and Pieter Van Dyck who were paid 53,675 francs[514] and 42,940 francs per performance respectively.[515] Lower ranked members of the ballet company were paid according to position – *grand sujet*, *petit sujet*, *coryphée*, first and second *quadrille* – rather than sex. Although star female dancers typically worked under the authority of male choreographers, artistic directors, and opera administrators, ballerinas were at the center of the dance profession and public perceptions thereof. Women's virtuosity in dance

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[510] Memoirs from French female star dancers of the 1950s-60s include: Claude Bessy, *La Danse pour passion* (Paris: JC Lattès, 2004), *Leçon de danse* (Paris: Pré-aux-clercs, 2005), and *Danseuse étoile* (Paris: Hachette, 1977) (for children); Irène Lidova, *Ma Vie avec la danse* (Paris: Éditions Plume, 1992); Yvette Chauvire, *Autobiographie* (Strasbourg: Le Quai, 1997) and *Je suis une ballerine* (Paris: Éditions du Conquistador, 1961); Véra Boccadoro, *Pointes à la ligne: une chorégraphe française au Bolchoï* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006); Lycette Darsonval, *Ma vie sur les pointes* (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1988) and. Zizi Jeanmaire, *Et le souvenir que je garde au cœur* (Paris: Bel air classiques, 2008). The only French male dancer from this era to publish a memoir in France was Serge Lifar, *Ma Vie: From Kiev to Kiev, an autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1970).

[511] 1,824,68 Euros in 2021 (Converted using the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques Franc-Euro currency converter: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2417794).

[512] 1,175.46 Euros in 2021 (Converted using the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques Franc-Euro currency converter: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2417794).

[513] 979.40 Euros in 2021 (Converted using the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques Franc-Euro currency converter: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2417794).

[514] 783.52 Euros in 2021 (Converted using the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques Franc-Euro currency converter: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2417794).

[515] Budget reports for 1958 tour, Series Opera.Arch.20, Folder 353(a), BMO.

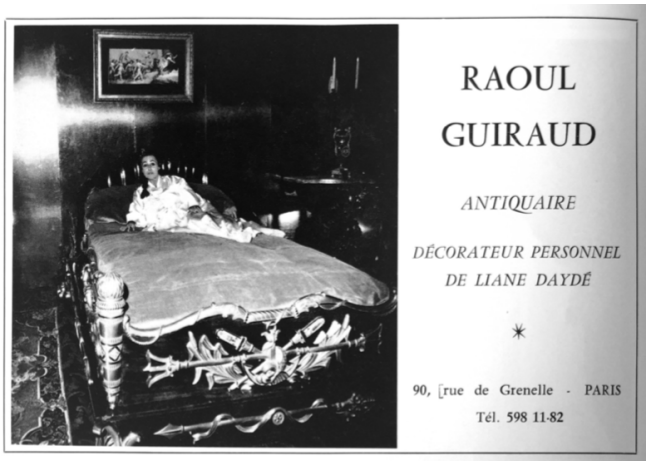
was more accepted than in other art forms – perhaps because as the art became eroticized in the nineteenth century, the male dancer was disparaged, and the ballerina revered. As a result of this shift, female performers often replaced *danseurs* in male roles.



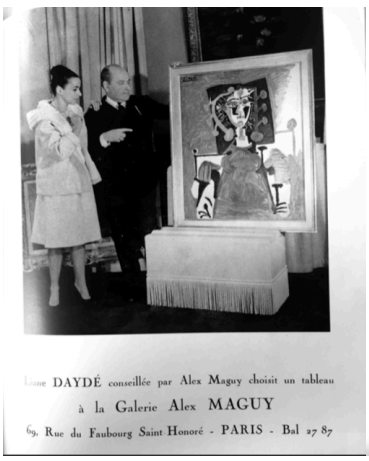
Figure 6 : Yvette Chauviré in a perfume advertisement. Opéra de Paris album (1960), 10, WNN-482, BNF-Richelieu.



Figure 7 : Claude Bessy modeling. *Jours de France*, 1959, Dossier d'Artiste Claude Bessy, BMO.







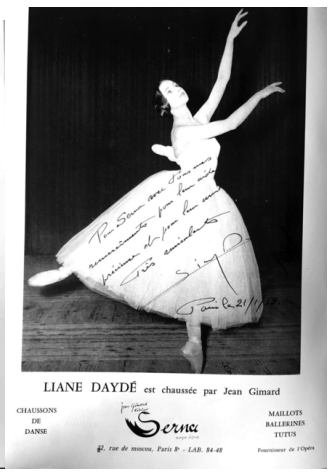


Figure 8: Liane Daydé in advertisements for an interior decorator, silverware, an art gallery, and ballet slippers Opéra de Paris album, 1966, Dossier d'Artiste Liane Daydé, BMO.

A ballerina's success depended upon her ability to represent femininity on stage. Dance critics agreed that ballerinas must train their bodies and develop strength – but female dancers had to strike a delicate balance between building muscle and maintaining a fragile, delicate aesthetic. As one critic explained, "to become a good ballerina, one must have the power of an athlete. In a woman, this power must be developed gradually so as not to compromise harmony and physical beauty."[516] To this end, French dancers often renounced food, relaxation, and good health to progress in their profession. Self-denial was viewed to be part and parcel of the occupation, particularly for dancers who could be berated and fired for even minute weight gain. As dance critic Olivier Merlin explained, French ballerinas had been consumed by "this asceticism [that] chases from dancers' hearts all that is not their art, eliminating the joys of life, leisure, rest, love, maternity, the supreme art of simply being happy. [This idea] has practically become common law at our Opéra…"[517] Traditional gender roles and the domestic ideal appeared less accessible to female dancers – a trend bemoaned by French journalists as preventing female performers from reaching their full feminine potential.

Unlike women in other professions, ballerinas were allowed, even encouraged, to put their careers first – before their health, family, or private life. At the same time, ballerinas were celebrities whose personal lives were newsworthy. Journalists struggled to make sense of ballerinas' straddling of professional and domestic worlds. Although they enacted traditionally feminine tropes onstage, such women eschewed marriage, or decided not to have children. They spent their days traveling or training and had little time to devote to housekeeping. However

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[516] "Jia Ruskaya a créé la plus moderne École de Danse," *Toute la Danse et la musique*, 10, February 1958.

[517] Oliver Merlin, "Maïa Plisetskaïa, c'est le feu slave," *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 9 January 1964, 4.SW.200, BNF-Richelieu.

effective a tool the French ballerina's discursive body may have been for international diplomacy and cultural outreach, Parisian journalists' observations revealed the limitations of a ballerina's onstage fiction of weightless perfection.

French observers sought to understand a dancer's "life as a woman" (vie de femme) and the way a ballerina's personal life influenced her performance. To many art lovers at home and abroad, Yvette Chauviré embodied the feminine balletic ideal onstage. Audience members appreciated her grace, beauty, discipline, and elegance, which comprised a femininity that precluded any presence of sexuality. As one journalist explained, "a ballerina, like angels, does not have a gender."[518] In April 1967, Chauviré turned fifty years old and remained unmarried – a status that appeared contradictory to journalists who asked about her "vie de femme" and love life. One interviewer remarked upon Chauviré's "tiny shoes" and observed as the dancer sat "at her dressing table, facing the mirror sitting upright, with her legs prettily crossed. She offers me her satin-like face, recalling that of 'Giselle', and hair done up in a headband, like that of 'Coppélia.'" Chauviré's appearance and mannerisms, in the journalist's view, sat uneasily with Chauviré's claim that "a classical dancer is not a woman."[519] Chauviré's insistence that she was "wedded to dance" was quite exceptional for French ballerinas at the time, and she did eventually marry painter and set designer Constantine Nepo. Similarly, star dancer Josette Amiel's unmarried status was in apparent contrast with the persona of Giselle. On stage, Amiel portrayed Giselle as dying for the sake of love, yet her celibacy provoked one interviewer to ask,

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[518] "Une danseuse, comme les anges, n'a pas de sexe." Odile Grand, "Yvette Chauviré: une danseuse classique n'est pas une femme," *L'Aurore*, 1 November 1967, Yvette Chauviré dossier, BMO.

[519] Odile Grand, "Yvette Chauviré: une danseuse classique n'est pas une femme."

"Are you indifferent to men?" – to which Amiel politely responded in the negative.[520] Such questions reveal observers' skepticism that a woman could be physically strong and professionally successful while subscribing to the feminine ideal that ballerinas portrayed on stage.

Female artists who married did not escape inquiries about balancing their personal lives with work. Dancer Liane Daydé insisted that ballerinas have the right to nurture a "vie de femme" apart from their work. She explained, "The fact that I'm married, and that I'm a mother, has been for me a deep source of enrichment. Why wouldn't a dancer, whether she's a star or not, have the right to live like any other woman? This life is not necessarily incompatible with my career. It's just a matter or foresight and organization. Without a doubt, there is a myth that needs to be destroyed: that of the spinster star….It seems to me that [this idea is] quite…French!"[521] Daydé's frustration grew out of persisting skepticism that ballerinas could maintain feminine roles on and offstage, just as her statements confirm traditional norms of women's work in the domestic sphere. At the same time, photographs of Daydé tending to her son in full performance attire suggested that, even while at home, Daydé could not completely shed her professional life (see Figures 9 and 10 below).

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[520] Léon Zitrone, "Josette Amiel: une danseuse reste une élève toute sa vie," *Jours de France*, 2 September 1967, Josette Amiel dossier, BMO.

[521] Liane Daydé in interview with Jean Silvant, "La Jeunesse et l'Expérience," *Opéra 'Spécial-Danse'* no. 5, 22-23, February 1970, Liane Daydé dossier, BMO.



Figure 9: "Liane Daydé 'pas de deux,' pour les deux ans d'Alain," *Parisien Libéré*, 22 January 1965, Liane Daydé dossier, BMO.



Figure 10: Daydé at home with her son Alain, R. Ch. Galoin, ed. Liane Daydé album (Creil: Nouvelles éditions touristiques et artistiques, 1966), Liane Daydé dossier, BMO.

Successes and unhappy events in a dancer's "vie de femme" influenced interpretations of a ballerina's artistic work. During her tours to Paris, Bolshoi soloist Ekaterina Maximova's artistry became defined by her private life. In the French press, Maximova's artistic identity became inseparable from her marriage to Bolshoi principal dancer Vladimir Vasiliev. During the couple's tours to Paris, journalists followed the couple on walks along the Seine and to dinner on

the first level of the Eiffel Tower. Maximova's tiny frame challenged misconceptions about bulky Soviet women. To Parisian onlookers, Maximova appeared "exquisitely feminine," with her petite body and "small, silvery voice." Most of all, however, observers were struck by the couple's perfect harmony, which extended beyond the stage. Jacqueline Cartier noted that Maximova was "[Vasiliev]'s other half in every way…as accustomed to his smallest reflexes as he is to her own. With him, she is part of the most moving couple's performance on stage."[522] Maximova's marriage to another star dancer prevented dance critics from viewing her performance independently from that of her husband: her role was to be his perfect other half, with movements that stemmed directly from their romance. The couple never had children, but Maximova's miscarriage became entangled with her art. The dancer's personal tragedy informed narratives about her artistic persona. Cartier claimed that after the miscarriage, Maximova "had never been more touching in *Giselle*. The challenges of womanhood gave the artist an unparalleled depth of interpretation."[523] Maximova's marriage and presumed desire to become a mother rendered her artistic achievement legible to observers, who claimed that the ballerina's "vie de femme" helped explain her success. On stage, the ballerina was venerated, but her achievements were also subsumed into her inescapable womanhood. It is no surprise that male dancers did not face the same piercing inquiries about their marital status or domestic life and were instead permitted to stand on their own merits.

Some ballerinas embraced traditional roles as mothers and homemakers, while others openly asserted their identity as unmarried women devoted to the profession. However, neither

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[522] Jacqueline Cartier, "Blessé, Vladimir Vassiliev pourra-t-il danser ce soir?", *France-Soir*, 23 March 1977, 4.SW.6141, BNF-Richelieu.

[523] Jacqueline Cartier, "Blessé, Vladimir Vassiliev pourra-t-il danser ce soir?"

group was exempt from the feminine ideal that the dancers themselves had reinforced. During the postwar period, ballerinas were vital agents for disseminating a sophisticated, gentle, – yet strong – vision of France abroad. They traveled, created, trained for long hours, and built impressive careers. And yet, no matter their accomplishments or service to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the dancers could not escape the same demand: "Tell us about your life as a woman."[524]



Figure 11: Domestic scenes of Paulette Dynalix playing with her godchildren and knitting. "Journée d'une danseuse: Paulette Dynalix est un éclat de rire," *La Danse,* March 1956, Paulette Dynalix dossier, BMO.

[524] For examples of press articles exploring ballerinas' domestic lives, see: "Chez vous…Liane Daydé," *Figaro*, 4 June 1962, Liane Daydé dossier, BMO; Michel Brodsy and Christian Bretagne, "Liane Daydé: Comment une étoile naît au ciel de la danse," *Point de Vue*, 16 September 1954, Liane Daydé dossier, BMO; Marcel Mithois, "Claude Bessy: grand ballet de l'élégance," *Jours de France*, 1959, Claude Bessy dossier, BMO; "La Mode: Métamorphoses," n.d., Claude Bessy dossier, BMO; Louis Baudouin, "Claude Bessy: Je préfère ma maison de campagne aux somptueuses villas de Hollywood," *Tele Magazine*, 20-26 September 1959, Claude Bessy dossier, BMO; Léon Zitrone, "Claude Bessy: un magnifique exemple de volonté," *Jours de France*, 1967, Claude Bessy dossier, BMO; "La Belle au Bois Dormant défriche le parc de son château," *Le Parisien*, 12 August 1971, Claude Bessy dossier, BMO; Josette Amiel, "Oisive journée d'une danseuse," *Musica*, November 1957, Josette Amiel dossier, BMO; Cyril Saint-Nizier, "Journée d'une danseuse: Paulette Dynalix est un éclat de rire," *La Danse*, March 1956, Paulette Dynalix dossier, BMO; "Mademoiselle Dynalix: Petite Bourgeois et Grand Sujet," n.d., Paulette Dynalix dossier, BMO; "Les demoiselles du corps de ballet," n.d., Paulette Dynalix dossier, BMO; J. Bloch-Morhange, "Cette gosse à Poulbot qui se donnait en spectacle sur les trottoirs de la Butte c'est Lycette Darsonval," *Paris Presse*, 20 March 1948, Lycette Darsonval dossier, BMO. See Figures 11-14.

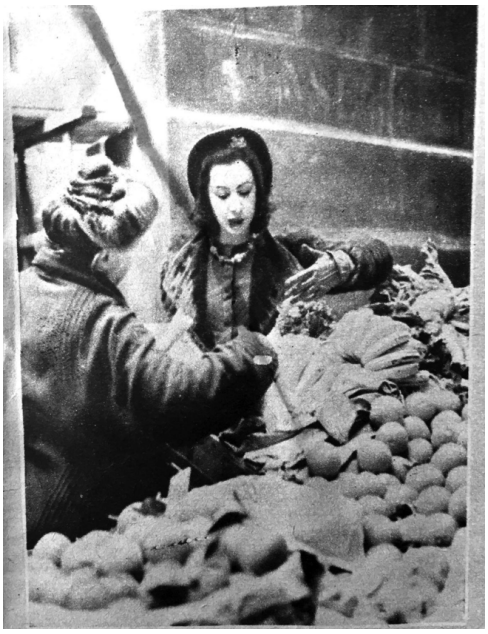


Figure 12: Paulette Dynalix at the market, “Les demoiselles du corps de ballet,” n.d., Paulette Dynalix dossier, BMO.



Figure 13: Josette Amiel in the kitchen. Josette Amiel, “Oisive journée d’une danseuse,” *Musica*, November 1957, Josette Amiel dossier, BMO.

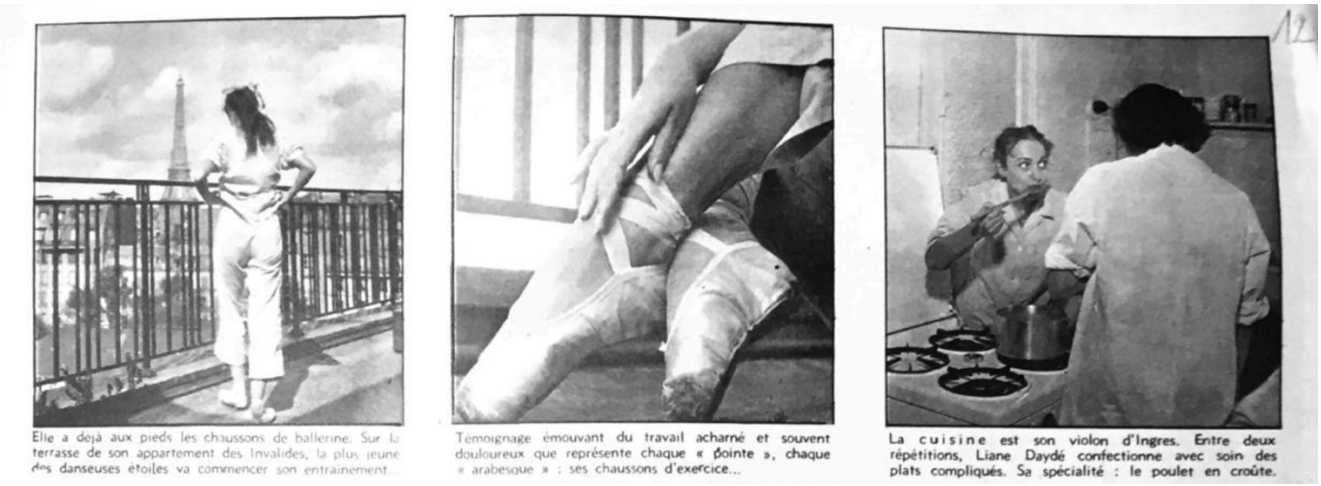


Figure 14: Liane Daydé at home. Michel Brodsky and Christian Bretagne, "Comment une étoile naît au ciel de la danse," *Point de Vue*, 16 September 1954, Liane Daydé dossier, BNF-Richelieu.

The figure of the ballerina and her influence spread beyond the dance profession and was not confined to performances on foreign stages. Ordinary women within the metropole were inspired – or perhaps discouraged – by this ideal. French female dancers frequently doubled as fashion models and appeared in magazine advertisements for products geared toward ordinary French women – from clothing, home décor, and jewelry to ballet shoes, tights, and dance lessons. Yvette Chauviré promoted Crêpe de Chine perfume, appearing in promotional photographs dressed in her Black Swan costume while embracing the bottle (Figure 6), while Liane Daydé posed for images advertising silverware, furniture, clothing, and art galleries. Opéra dancer Claude Bessy appeared on magazine covers, modeled for fashion designers and starred in magazine spreads that walked the reader through her application of cosmetics before a performance. As demonstrated in these cases, female dancers helped market products for the home and for women, suggesting to readers that purchasing from these brands would cultivate a domestic space worthy even of a ballerina.

Dancers and women's magazines alike touted ballet's efficacy for cultivating femininity in women and young girls. In an article promoting her own dance company, one French ballet

instructor explained that, with the right dance professor, a young girl would benefit from "healthy muscular development and would have a more graceful gait, acquiring a more feminine manner and more robust health."[525] Middle class families embraced this ideal by placing their daughters in ballet classes in the hope that proper instruction, even if it likely would not lead to stardom, would instill "feminine" mannerisms and an attractive figure. The commercialization of the ballerina in advertisements for dance courses, clothing, and home goods suggested to readers that a dancer's physique, feminine elegance, and opulent lifestyle could also be theirs.

For young girls still in the course of development, dance publications asserted that ballet courses would ensure "normal womanhood in the future and a healthy constitution."[526] This endeavor was not only for the child's sake – the preservation of the link between the feminine ideal and real women's bodies lay in the balance. One dance editorial insisted that parents enroll their daughters in ballet classes even though their children were unlikely to become professionals, because "tomorrow [your daughters] will be women – women who should represent grace and physical beauty and, above all, they are called to be mothers to a new generation that we hope will be strong and healthy."[527] In this view, the gendered nature of dance instruction entailed both domestic and international implications: ballet's shaping of girls and women was "not a luxury nor a frivolity, but a foremost necessity for the culture of the people and a nation's prestige."[528] In arguments for ballet's crucial contributions to the French nation, the art played a dual purpose by cultivating healthy, feminine women and articulating French

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[525] José Atienza, "Editorial," *Danse et Rythmes*, March 1959, 3, 8.Jow.942, BNF-Richelieu.

[526] Hilda, "Entre Nous," *Danse et Rythmes*, April 1960, 12.

[527] José Atienza, "Editorial," *Danse et Rythmes*, March 1959, 3.

[528] Hilda, "Entre Nous."

cultural prestige. This connection between ideal femininity and France's international reputation raised the stakes of French ballet performances abroad, when the nation's women were placed in the spotlight before foreign audiences. The ballerina became a lightning rod for shifting concepts of physical culture for women because ballerinas balanced the scales between athleticism and femininity. For this reason, ballet was marketed to middle-class French women as an activity that would impart grace, elegant posture, health, and the all-important feminine silhouette. Postwar discourses about ballet offer a clear example of how notions of femininity became instrumental to safeguarding French national identity domestically and internationally.

In French popular culture, the ballerina attained the feminine ideal in no small part through her physique and the discipline required to keep a "good" figure. Women's magazines and self-improvement guides insisted that women who fastidiously maintained well-sculpted bodies would enjoy not only physical benefits, but also life-transforming emotional and mental benefits. Physical culture blended with conceptions of women's place in a modern and youthful postwar France as beautiful, young, and svelte wives and mothers. Exhorting their female readership to stay trim even as they aged, one self-improvement guide asserted that a woman who did not maintain her body was doomed to "read in her loved one's eyes that he compares her unfavorably to a well-built woman" and leave her children longing for a mother who is "young and joyful, taking part in her child's games rather than reprimanding them."[529]

This guide, entitled *It's Up To You To Be Young and Beautiful: Physical Culture for Today's Woman*, exemplifies the way that the feminine balletic ideal shaped women's physical

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[529] Marcelle Auclair, *Il dépend de vous d'être jeune et belle*, ed. Louis Faurobert (Paris: Les Éditions Sfelt, 1948), 2-3. Also see Kelly Colvin, "Looks," in *Gender and French Identity after the Second World War, 1944-1954: Engendering Frenchness* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 83-108 and Sarah Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution: Gender and Family Life in Postwar France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017),158-159.

culture in postwar France. The guide provided exercises and exhortations intended to help readers become fit, energetic wives and mothers. The booklet's photographs are the work of Serge Lido, whose specialty was documenting ballet. Any large ballet production demanded his presence, including the performances of visiting Soviet companies. He also photographed the most celebrated Soviet and French soloists.[530] In addition to enlisting contributions from a dance photographer, the booklet's content demonstrates clear influence from ballet. Each section focused on different body parts – the neck, the arms and shoulders, the legs, the hands and feet, and the torso – accompanied by nude photographs depicting an ideal body. Although the model is not identified, there is a good chance that she is a dancer, in light of Lido's specialization in dance.

Many of her poses evoke balletic movements, such as the introductory photograph for the "neck" section, in which the model's head is turned with *épaulement*, looking over her right shoulder. In the "legs" section, the model's long legs are shown supported by feet raised in *relevé*, while another illustration features a woman stretched into an *arabesque*.[531] The guide also teaches an exercise called "la danseuse" (the dancer), encouraging the reader to point her feet and take little steps with straight legs to build strong feet.[532] In addition to strategies for creating strength and muscle tone, the guide emphasized the importance of good posture. An elongated,

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[530]Active as a dance photographer from 1929 to the mid-1970s, Serge Lido photographed hundreds of ballet dancers, including Yvette Chauviré, Christiane Vlassi, Claude Bessy, Nina Vyroubova, Janine Charrat, Josette Amiel, Léonide Massine, Liane Daydé, Ludmilla Tcherina, Michel Renault, Bronislava Nijinska, Natalia Makarova, Maya Plisetskaya, Ekaterina Maximova, Vladimir Vassiliev, Natalia Bessmertnova, and Yuri Soloviev.

[531] Faurobert, ed., *Il dépend de vous d'être jeune et belle*, 20. An *epaulement* is turning the head to the side, looking out over the shoulder. A *relevé* is when a dancer rises by raising the heels off the floor. In an *arabesque*, the dancer tilts forward and raises one leg backward and up in an arched position. Gretchen Ward Warren, *Classical Ballet Technique* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1989), 14-15, 26-27, 48-49.

[532] Faurobert, ed., *Il dépend de vous d'être jeune et belle*, 108.

straight spine was the building block of youth and allure, endowing "purity" and "noblesse" on any woman who could master correct posture.[533] Beauty commentators and dance instructors alike posited the value of learning correct posture, which would allow women to carry their bodies with ease, confidence, and feminine grace while accentuating their most flattering features. Just as for female dancers, achieving the correct aesthetic went in tandem with cultivating a disciplined exercise routine and bodily comportment. At the same time that Christian Dior introduced the New Look's constraining tiny-waisted dresses, beauty gurus insisted that physical activity would render the corsets of bygone years unnecessary by creating "a natural muscular corset" that costs only "three months of abdominal exercises."[534]

Another self help guide, *The Secret to a Good Figure with Dance*, featured contributions by celebrated French ballerinas, including Yvette Chauviré, Janine Charrat, Renée Jeanmaire, Janine Solane, and Ludmilla Tchérina. The guide provided photographs of the celebrated dancers demonstrating *tondus*, *pliés*, *cambrés*, and *arabesques,* all intended to elongate the limbs and hone supple thighs, abdominals, and glutes. Regular repetition of these movements, the booklet assured, would ameliorate "the aesthetic of the female body and correct physical faults that are, alas, so frequent among our young women," allowing the reader to "sculpt" for themselves "the body of Psyche."[535] Ballet aesthetics also shaped notions of femininity in other ways. For those who found barre exercises insufficient for attaining the desired results, the guide provided advertisements for hair salons, underwear, lipstick, facials, plastic surgery, and a beauty institute

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[533] Faurobert, ed., *Il dépend de vous d'être jeune et belle*, 49.

[534] Faurobert, ed., *Il dépend de vous d'être jeune et belle*, 19.

[535] Boris Kniaseff, "Un Corps de Psyché," *Le Secret de la Ligne par la Danse: 6 leçons par 6 étoiles*, ed. Irène Lidova (Paris: Rester Jeune, 1948), 35-36.

offering everything from massages, makeovers, and skin treatments to tanning beds and "intestinal lavages."[536] These late-1940s guides were part of an ongoing conversation: after the destabilization of war, journalists and social commentators of the postwar years sought to restore social order by reestablishing ideal womanhood, defined by domesticity, beauty, and maternity.[537] Ballet, and its association with feminine beauty and refinement, contributed to this larger project of stabilizing normative femininity.

Along with ballet-inspired exercises targeted toward female readers, French dance magazines published advice about makeup and fashion. Guiding those who might take inspiration from the ballerina's dramatic visage, *Danse et Rythmes* taught readers to distinguish everyday makeup from stage makeup. While ballet makeup was intended to "enlarge the eyes and mouth" and attract the viewer's eye, everyday cosmetics should appear natural and soften flaws. Unlike the ballerina, "one should not be able to say of a woman that she is well made-up – just that she is lovely."[538] Through such advice for women, the ballerina promoted a purportedly attainable model for postwar femininity, bringing together physical culture with the elegance and aesthetic expertise that could only be taught in the ballet academy.

In women's magazines, dance publications, and media geared toward wider audiences, the ballerina's body, physical discipline, and elegant posture were proffered to readers as vital credentials for any woman.[539] In postwar France, the ballerina became a particularly potent

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[536] Irène Lidova, *Le Secret de la Ligne par la Danse: 6 leçons par 6 étoiles* (Paris: Rester Jeune, 1948), 81.

[537] Colvin, *Gender and French Identity after the Second World War*, 49-108.

[538] Catherine Chakhatonny, "Principes du Maquillage," *Danse et Rythmes*, February 1960, 29.

[539] Historian Kelly Colvin has examined the way that women's magazines in the postwar period "taught women how to be feminine again, thereby restoring a positive, conservative vision of gender relations." She observed that, at this time, "a woman needed to conform to a particular vision of femininity, one that emphasized her aesthetics and fragility, all while propping up male virility." Kelly Ricciardi Colvin, "'A Well-Made Up Woman': Aesthetics and Conformity in Postwar France," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (October 2015), 693-4.

pedagogical tool. No female figure was better suited to this task than the ballerina. Her body appeared frail and aesthetically pleasing to male observers. Her roles were relegated to either the dainty, helpless sprite or princess, or the malevolent sorceress – gendered tropes that restricted women's opportunity and perceived potential. The ballerina's movements and body were often confined by the gaze and manipulation of her male counterpart. Maintaining strict cohesion to normative gender performance was considered by dance critics to be key to ballet's success. As dance writer José Atienza opined, "For dance to retain its power as an artform, the men must remain male and the women, female – even in the most purely fantastical dream scenes."[540] Although the ballerina, like ordinary women, performed femininity, the significance of her performance was heightened to national and international levels: her believability as a woman determined the ballet's success. On tours abroad, France's reputation rode on a convincing interpretation of youthful, virtuosic beauty inseparable from Frenchness itself.

The Ballerina in the Soviet Union

For the Soviet Union and France alike, the ballerina was an ideal purveyor of cultural influence, exerting diplomatic soft power that was packaged within beauty, grace, and physical dexterity. In the popular imagination, the globetrotting Soviet ballerina was a woman who served her country by traveling and performing femininity abroad, excelling in both domestic and professional spheres. The figure of the Soviet ballerina provided a new model for Soviet womanhood to suit the more global context of the Thaw. At the same time, dance exchanges with France raised new questions about female corporeality and women's roles on stage as

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[540] José Atienza, "Éditorial," *Danse et Rythmes*, January 1960, 3.

ballerinas from Paris – the "capital of feminine elegance"[541] – took center stage. Proper gender performances mattered deeply to both France and the Soviet Union during cultural exchanges, and diplomats became involved when the wrong cultural artifacts slipped through the cracks. As a vehicle for both French and Soviet culture, international ballet tours were carefully planned and censored for acceptable gender representations. For example, the Bolshoi company program for the 1958 tour to Paris highlighted that the Soviet vision of Giselle diverged markedly from that previously known to French audiences. The program explained that the Giselle conceived by Westerners was a "frail flower who appears fatefully doomed," while the Soviet Giselle "[fought] against ethereal spirits to save a man and prove that happiness can be found in this world."[542] This comparison suggested that Soviet ballet plots offered a more empowering model for women than its Western counterparts.

In the Soviet Union, veneration for the ballerina extended into everyday life to an extent that did not occur in France. The ballerina embodied beauty, discipline, service to the nation – as well as a respectability that stemmed especially from these latter two qualities. For this reason, the Soviet press was less concerned with a dancer's aesthetic feats than with the courage, strength, and unwavering commitment to hard work that fueled her artistic accomplishments. The ballerina appeared in Soviet women's magazines and culture publications as the epitome of a respectable career for women. A 1956 cartoon (see Figure 15 below) from *Sovetskaia Zhenschina* features a ballerina among seven other female professionals. The drawing announces, "In all outfits, my dears, you are great!" Other women in the cartoon include a

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[541] Boris Mouravieff, "Il y a 140 ans, à Saint-Petersbourg Eudoxe Istomina imaginait ce raffinement supreme de la danse classique: les pointes," *Le Tribune du Genève*, 17 October 1957, 8.SW.2241, BNF-Richelieu.

[542] "Voici la secrète Oulanova qui mit 3 ans pour preparer 'Juliette,'" *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 7 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

mother watching her sleeping child, a factory worker, a nurse, a scientist, a tractor driver, an ice skater, and a teacher – all of whom are being photographed, sculpted, or recorded by primarily male observers. The cartoon highlighted the most respected professional paths for women in the Soviet Union, bringing together traditional women's occupations – that of nurse, teacher, and mother – with those particularly valued in a communist society – factory worker and agricultural laborer. The scientist and ballerina represent Soviet cultural and intellectual sophistication, while the ice skater stands in for athleticism, which became an increasingly visible marker of Soviet power in the postwar period at international sporting events.[543]



Figure 15: "In all outfits, my dears, you are great!," *Sovetskaia Zhenschina,* March 1956, 42.

In another drawing from 1962, a ballerina's pointed toe leads the way as artistic representatives gather to celebrate International Worker's Day (see Figure 16). The drawing is suggestive of the ballerina's centrality in images of women's artistic labor in the Soviet culture. The artist of this cartoon seems unconcerned with the irony that a performer of a historically aristocratic art stands at the forefront of a workers' celebration.

[543] See Sylvain Dufraisse, *Les héros du sport: une histoire des champions soviétiques (années 1930-années 1980)*, (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon Éditions, 2019).



Figure 16: *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 1 May 1962, 4.

The ballerina entered Soviet citizens' homes as a common feature of material culture. She appeared on tea sets, carved wooden boxes, porcelain figurines, perfume bottles, postcards, matchbox labels, and postage stamps from the 1950s-1970s. If ballet symbolized culture, images of female dancers on everyday items demonstrated that the owner possessed *kul'turnost'* – the quality of being cultured. In the postwar years, the Soviet government sought to ensure that its citizens conformed to the norms of *kul'turnost'* by demonstrating good taste, a baseline of education, as well as appropriate behavior and speech. These standards were most important for Soviet citizens who were permitted to travel abroad – including and especially performers – since their cultured-ness (or lack thereof) would reflect on the Soviet Union.[544] The prevalence of the ballerina in 1950s and 1960s Soviet material culture suggests that citizens collected such pieces to demonstrate their appreciation of and knowledge about the state art of ballet. In

[544] Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker, *Time Travelers: The Russian and East European Tourist Under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 221-222.

domestic and international contexts, Soviet ballet brought together patriotism and art, making the ballerina a crucial resource in the country's arsenal for promoting Soviet cultural accomplishment. Although the Russian ballet school was lauded abroad for its virile and technically savvy male dancers who owned the stage for long stretches of time, the ballerina remained at the symbolic forefront of the profession.

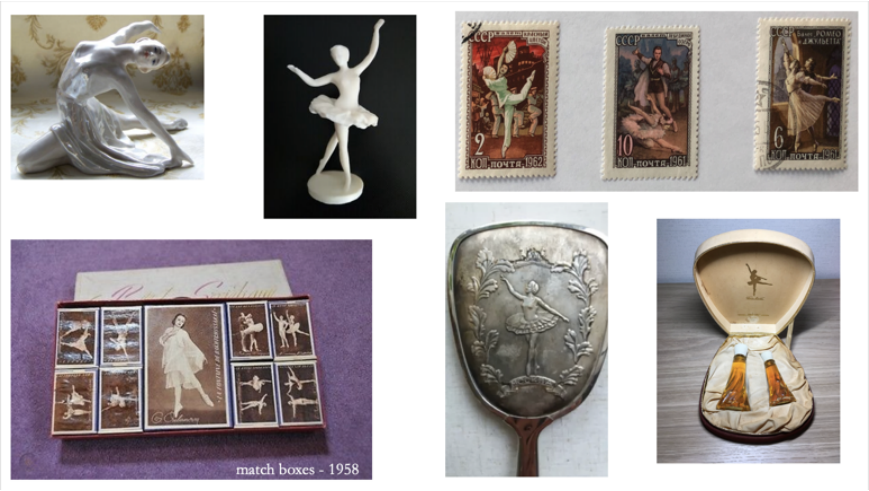


Figure 17: The ballerina in Soviet material culture

In 1956, just as the Soviet Union began sending its ballet companies abroad with some regularity, the magazine *Soviet Woman* (*Sovetskaia Zhenschina*) published a fictional story about a touring Soviet ballerina. Leonid Lench's "Loyal Heart" recounts the professional and family life of Natasha, whose frequent international tours spurred doubts in her Russian love interest, Seryozh, about the viability of their relationship. Natasha was an ordinary "mischievous, big-eyed Moscow girl" struck by an unexpected and meteoric rise to international stardom. Before Natasha's most recent tour, Seryozh accompanied her to the airport and held back the desire to confess his love to her. Instead, he stammered, "Look, Natasha…don't bring shame on…the Russian land!" She laughed off his command, promised to write, and boarded the plane. Nearly a week later, Seryozh had not received a letter from Natasha. Concerned by her silence, he

dropped by Natasha's house to ask her family for news about the tour. Natasha's grandparents explained that their granddaughter's performance was such a success that the prime minister of the tour's host country sent her a huge bouquet of roses – not once, but twice! Upon learning this, Seryozh was distraught. How could he – a simple, Soviet engineer – compete with a wealthy foreign prime minister? Natasha's talent and her newfound artistic and diplomatic contributions to the Soviet Union had put her beyond Seryozh's reach. His thoughts raced, "Cultural exchange, there's nothing to be done! Ballet is the first in line, and understandably so: the language of ballet is the language of human emotions!...Bouquets of roses, ministers, diplomats, the international press, astounding success…And me? Who am I? An ordinary engineer!" Noticing Seryozh's crestfallen appearance, Natasha's grandmother chuckled and exclaimed, "Natotchka is a patriot! She would never marry this prime minister!" Besides, she reasoned, by now Natasha had flown to the Netherlands and would soon depart for Canada. In the midst of this conversation, Natasha called home and spoke with Seryozh. He learned that all was well: not only did Natasha desperately miss home, but she reciprocated his love for her. The story concludes with an interview between Natasha and a foreign journalist, who conceded the unquestionable triumph of Soviet ballet abroad. In broken Russian, the journalist declared, "I have seen your Galina Ulanova, but I did not suspect that there was also such enormous strength in your young dancers! You have – how do you say? – melted[545] our audiences. I am not a fan of your social system, but I am obliged to admit that the Soviet Union had developed great Russian ballet!" He concluded the interview by asking, "What awaits you [at home] in Moscow?", to which Natasha responded: "Work! And a loving, loyal heart."[546]

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[545] Rastopit'

[546] Leonid Lench, "Vernoe Serdtse," *Sovetskaia Zhenschina*, February 1956, 36-37.

"Loyal Heart" elucidated for its readership the new role of the Soviet ballerina in a post-Stalin world. Natasha climbed from her humble roots to international stardom, which allowed her to showcase Soviet talent across the globe. Seryozh's fear that the globe-trotting Natasha would be lured away by prestige and wealth abroad reflects underlying anxieties that Soviet citizens who began traversing Cold War boundaries during the Thaw might choose not to return. Natasha, however, remained a steadfast "patriot" and, rather than basking in Western plenty during her travels, longed to return to her "simple" engineer, Seryozh. While on tour, she accomplished her most important goal by securing admiration for Soviet art, even from observers with little faith in communism. The story's conclusions make her priorities clear: she is hard-working and committed to serving her nation through her profession, while her romantic feelings for Seryozh promise that Russia will always be her home, no matter where her professional duties may call her.

Soviet dancer Galina Ulanova described her mission as a ballerina as much the same as Natasha's – she sought to play strong, heroic women to correspond with Soviet values, which championed "peace," "a noble heart," and "selfless devotion to one's homeland."[547] Accordingly, she reworked her interpretation of Juliet (in *Romeo and Juliet*) to reflect her understanding of the young girl as a heroine willing "to die for a patriotic cause."[548] Stories like "Loyal Heart", and the highly publicized tours of Soviet ballerinas in the Moscow and Saint Petersburg Press, provided models for how foreign travel should be carried out as Cold War boundaries gradually became more porous. Natasha's allegiance to family and homeland are inextricable; her love for a foreigner was made impossible by her patriotism.

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[547] Galina Ulanova, "The Making of a Ballerina," 82.

[548] Galina Ulanova, "The Making of a Ballerina," 77.

The trope of a ballerina who successfully balanced her domestic duties with her profession recurred throughout the pages of *Soviet Woman* magazine, which was distributed abroad, including in France. Parisian commentators often asserted that proper femininity remained unattainable to most Soviet women and alluded to the idiom of the "manly Communist woman" that permeated French reactions to Soviet female athletes and dancers alike. In contrast, *Soviet Woman* insisted that Soviet women thrived at home and at work, all the while benefiting from Soviet fashion that accented a woman's best features without deteriorating into unseemly extravagance.[549] The magazine's portrayal of female dancers successfully balancing domestic and professional worlds was mirrored in Bolshoi performance programs, where images of ballerinas dancing were featured alongside pictures of the artists neatly quaffed and relaxing at home – which was not typically the case for male dancers. The inclusion of photographs from the ballerina's home may also indicate the special celebrity status enjoyed by female principal dancers, but the images are also a reminder of the female dancer's domestic comforts. Among the most visible Soviet women in Western Europe, ballerinas were expected to model Soviet womanhood while traversing Cold War boundaries – and to do so with elegant grace.[550]

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[549] Il'ya Okunev, "Kak odevaiutsia sovetskie zhenshchiny," *Sovetskaia Zhenschina*, April 1956, 46-47.

[550] Anne Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad After* Stalin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 131.



Figure 18: Maya Plisetskaya shown in home alongside her performance in *Swan Lake*, from program on Soviet ballet for Universal Exposition in Belgium, 1958

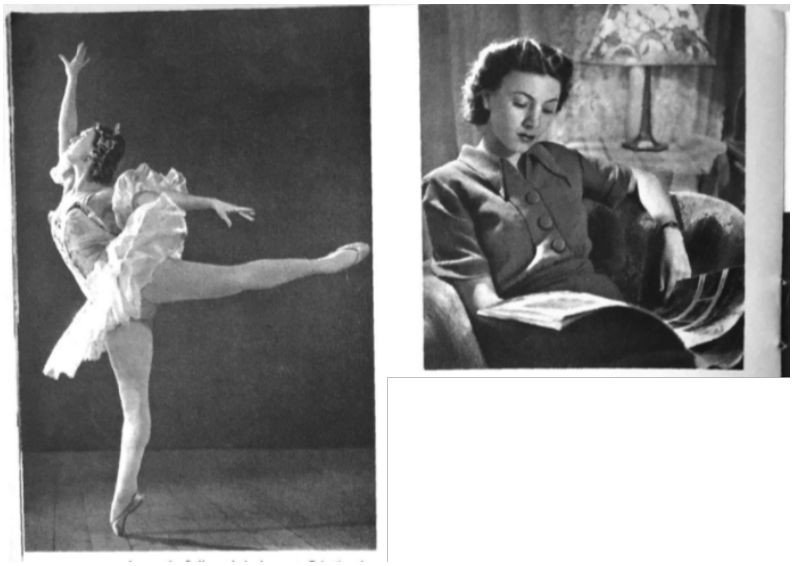


Figure 19: Raisa Struchkova performing and reading at home, from program on Soviet ballet for Universal Exposition in Belgium, 1958

For all of Soviet observers' pride in their own ballerinas, they were fascinated by French ballerinas, who – to Soviet eyes – appeared unusually small and fragile. In contrast, Soviet critics hardly mentioned French male dancers unless to comment that the Opéra de Paris's male dancers fell short of expectations. Especially beloved by Russian critics was Yvette Chauviré – perhaps the most famous French ballerina in the Soviet Union during the early postwar years. To Soviet observers, Chauviré appeared "thin, jittery, passionate, and unusually strong-willed"[551] with "irreproachable technique."[552] Growing to rival Chauviré's fame in the late 1950s was the much younger Liane Daydé, who was described as "a dainty figure – uncommonly thin, with slender legs, and a small, pretty head."[553] Chauviré and Daydé stood out on Soviet stages because their bodies appeared, as Soviet dancer Marina Semenova described Daydé, "tender and fragile" while remaining "very strong" – a combination that allowed the dancer to create "the impression of physical weightlessness."[554] Kirov ballerina Elena Tchernichova recounted that Daydé was one of the first Western performers she saw perform on the Kirov stage.[555] The Soviet dancer recalled that the French ballerina's arms were so flexible as to suggest "bonelessness," and that her "arms and legs were as delicate and perfect as a figurine."[556] The delicacy of their movements, Muscovite observers asserted, complemented the ballerinas' apparent effortlessness.

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[551] V. Gaevskii, "Torzhestvo Traditsii," *Sovetskaia Gazeta,* 17 June 1958, 3.

[552] Mikhail Gabovich, "Pervye vpechatleniia," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 7 June 1958, 4.

[553] Marina Semenova, "Frantsuzskaia balerina na stsene Bol'shogo Teatra," *Izvestia*, 4 January 1958, 3.

[554] Marina Semenova, "Frantsuzskaia balerina na stsene Bol'shogo Teatra," *Izvestia*, 4 January 1958, 3.

[555] Just months before the Franco-Soviet ballet exchange of 1958, Liane Daydé and Michel Renault carried out a tour in Leningrad and Moscow during December 1957-January 1958. For this reason, Daydé and Renault had some notoriety among Soviet audiences and had established some friendly contacts among Soviet artists before the Bolshoi-Opéra de Paris exchange.

[556] Tchernichova, *Dancing on Water*, 102.

Daydé danced, one critic claimed, simply because she enjoyed dancing: "Fatigue is unknown to her. Reveling in dance, she conveys this sense of ecstasy out to her audience."

Altogether, Soviet audiences were left with an impression of French female dancers' flawless form, swift turns, elegant arm placement, and "essentially French grace."[557] When Daydé toured in Moscow and Saint Petersburg with her partner Michel Renault, Renault was scarcely mentioned in the press coverage. Headlines announced the presence of "A French Ballerina on the Bolshoi Stage," mentioning Renault in only two sentences toward the end of an article dedicated to Daydé.[558] During the 1958 ballet exchange, dancer Mikhail Gabovich praised the Opéra's ballerinas, having been struck by their flexibility, lightness, and the springiness of their jumps. The female dancers' quality and professionalism, Gabovich claimed, attested to the "high-quality, professional technique" of the whole company, even if the Opéra's male dancers "gave [him] a slightly different impression."[559] Similarly, V. Gaevskii credited Daydé with the success of the "whole tour." To Gaevskii, Daydé was a "shining example" of the professionalism, absolute mastery, and advanced level of expertise particular to French female dancers.[560] In such assessments, the accomplishments of the ballerina served as an index for the caliber of the entire company, to an extent not present in French ballet criticism.

Reverence for the ballerina in Soviet culture notwithstanding, the bilateral Franco-Soviet ballet exchange of 1958 raised debates about whether female dancers had retained a prominent enough place in contemporary Soviet ballets. Acclaimed ballerina Victorina Krieger used the

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[557] Rostislav Zakharov, "Frantsuzskii balet v Moskve," *Pravda*, 20 June 1958, 6.

[558] Marina Semenova, "Frantsuzskaia balerina na stsene Bol'shogo Teatra," *Izvestia*, 4 January 1958, 3.

[559] Mikhail Gabovich, "Pervye vpechatleniia," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 7 June 1958, 4.

[560] V. Gaevskii, "Torzhestvo Traditsii," *Sovetskaia Gazeta,* 17 June 1958, 3.

occasion of the Opéra tour in Moscow to propose that more Soviet ballets be created to showcase female dancers' wide range of talents.[561] She bemoaned the limited choreographic opportunities for ballerinas, asking, "Do we have many ballets, in which the ballerina, in all her brilliance, can show her artistry and classical dance technique, on which she has worked for many years – starting in dance academy through all of her professional life? Where, in what ballet, can a ballerina like Maya Plisetskaya unleash all of her extraordinary gifts?"[562] The options, she concluded, are limited primarily to older works, such as *Swan Lake* and *Don Quixote*. After watching the Opéra de Paris ballet in concert, she felt that dance had fallen out of Soviet ballet. She recounted a supposed exchange that she heard between a mother and daughter during a performance of *Karman'ola*: the mother repeatedly asked her daughter, "What is the ballerina doing?" The daughter answered, "she is worrying," and later, "she is suffering." Another viewer called out, "What is the ballerina doing?", to which someone nearby responded: "she is bursting from the arms of the *marquis*." After hearing this dialogue and attending the Opéra de Paris

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[561] Krieger posited that, because Soviet choreographers preferred storytelling and miming to classical ballet technique, dancers of contemporary Soviet works were prevented from performing the choreographic mastery cultivated by years of rigorous training. She asserted that contemporary Soviet productions – such as Igor Moiseyev's *Spartok* and Leonid Lavrovsky's *The Stone Flower* – featured little dancing by the lead protagonists. For example, the lead ballerina in *Spartok* "passes across the stage but dances very little," while the male lead, she insisted, had not a single dance during the whole performance. She located the root of this problem in Soviet artistic directors, who supplanted classical choreographic technique and replaced it with pantomime.[561] This trend produced ballets in which lead performers were denied the opportunity to showcase their meticulously developed talents. In this critique, Krieger intervened in a debate about Soviet ballet that had existed nearly as long as the Soviet Union itself. In the 1930s and 1940s, discussions about the role of ballet in a socialist society contributed to a new paradigm for Soviet ballet. After this shift, the art of dance was expected to convey a coherent plot and serve a political and social mission that would be comprehensible to audience members. Art for art's sake was condemned, and choreographic experimentation risked drawing accusations of "formalism," which defined any artwork that prioritized form over the piece's popular resonance or ideological content. Ezrahi*, Swans of the Kremlin,* 60-65.

[562] Viktorina Kriger*,* "Kogda zhe balerina zatantsuet?," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 10 July 1958, 3. Elena Tchernichova made a similar complaint: as a ballerina, she felt Soviet ballet offered little room for innovation. She wrote, "It all was fossilized because of the proscriptions against anything that looked Western." Plisetskaya's "new physicality" challenged this convention, but less successful dancers could not get away with being so provocative. Tchernichova, *Dancing on Water*, 121.

ballet performances, Krieger declared, "I want to cry out: When will the ballerina start dancing, already?"[563] Krieger argued that, too often, Soviet ballets confined the female dancer to tropes of victimhood and her relationship with a male love interest, with few opportunities to showcase her virtuosity. Krieger's commentary, by juxtaposing contemporary Soviet works with those presented by the touring French company, critiqued the limitations on ballerinas in Soviet dance and the limitations on their physicality on stage. Her comparative use of the French ballet company for this argument demonstrates how Franco-Soviet dance tours influenced domestic debates about women's place in the dance profession.

Soviet Ballerinas Arrive in Paris

After the initiation of Franco-Soviet dance exchanges in the mid-1950s, physical expectations of French ballerinas were thrown into even sharper relief by comparative descriptions of their Soviet counterparts. In France, frailty on stage could signify strength. Indeed, petite size, intricate movements, and the impression of weightlessness were sought after in soloists at the Opéra de Paris. By contrast, the iconography around women in the Soviet Union was not delicate. Discussions about Soviet ballerinas' bodies demarcated the boundary between feminine ballet aesthetics on either side of the Cold War divide. In the early Cold War years, French observers admired Soviet female dancers for their perfect placement and strength. At the same time, Soviet ballerinas evoked androgyny and gender ambiguity arising from their prominent muscles and athletic figures, sculpted by rigorous training and stringent Soviet discipline. Some dancers, particularly the renowned Maya Plisetskaya, induced discomfort

[563] Kriger, "Kogda zhe balerina zatantsuet?"

because of their almost-inhuman ability to metamorphose into animals – a mystical power credited by French critics to an allegiance to socialist realism.[564]

French observers asserted that many Soviet ballerinas appeared strange, exotic, or not entirely womanly. Assessments of Soviet women's bodies were couched in language about the dancers' lack of "etherealness" or "lightness," pointing to the idea that Soviet ballerinas were too muscular or athletic to embody the feminine ideal. During the first postwar Franco-Soviet dance exchange in 1954, a *Le Monde* journalist noticed that "the coquettish beauty of our ballerinas contrasts quite surprisingly with the appearance of Soviet female dancers, who can only be differentiated from their male comrades by the delicacy of their features."[565] This journalist was exaggerating; the differences between male and female Soviet dancers were plain to see. But as historian Stéphanie Gonçalves pointed out, perhaps this perception of Soviet women's unfeminine athleticism stems in part from well-known images from Soviet propaganda,[566] in which women are depicted hauling hay or forcefully wielding a flag or a weapon, wearing loose uniforms that obscure the body.

The impression of collision between male and female ballet roles also arose from French perceptions that Soviet companies used similar technique for men and women. In the French ballet school, ballerinas and male dancers were distinguishable not only by their costumes, but their steps and roles. Western female dancers tended to perform dainty, intricate steps and turns,

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[564] J. Bourgeois, "Plessetzkaya étonne plus qu'elle n'émeut," *Arts*, 15 January 1964, 4.SW.200, BNF-Richelieu.

[565] "À l'Opéra, le corps de ballet accueille les danseurs soviétiques," *Le Monde*, 5 May 1954, R.Supp.4219 I, BNF-Richelieu.

[566] Stéphanie Gonçalves, *Danser pendant la guerre froide, 1945-1968* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018), 108.

while men supported the ballerina and executed high leaps in a show of strength.[567] Soviet companies, French observers asserted, tended to showcase both male and female dancers adept in a capacious range of technique. Their ballet vernacular appeared less gendered and less differentiated by company hierarchy. In 1961, dance critic Dinah Maggie observed of Soviet ballerinas: "Their musicality, their nobility, their adaptability to all styles, their technical feats in which the women rival men."[568] Similarly, ballerina Maya Plisetskaya stood out for her ability to attain "as much height as a man" during leaps.[569]

French critics located the root of Soviet ballerinas' physical difference in the exigencies of Soviet ideology, which – officially, at least – called for minimizing the gap between men and women. One journalist observed that, although classical ballets continued to dominate the Bolshoi's repertoire, the regime "took its revenge" by altering the appearance and role of female characters.[570] This shift in the ballerina's part was not imaginary – Soviet companies intentionally reframed women's roles to appear more heroic and proactive. Poking fun at the communist ballerina's newfound agency, French critics concluded that her heroism implied that the Soviet "Giselle is muscular" ("Notre Giselle est musclée").[571] This language was not limited to ballet. In the related world of international sports, Western observers were disturbed by the muscular appearance of Soviet and Eastern bloc female athletes perceived as a threat to the

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[567] Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 44-46.

[568] Dinah Maggie, "Nouveaux programmes du Ballet de Leningrad," *Le Combat*, 26 May 1961, Presse 142, BNF-Richelieu.

[569] Olivier Merlin, "Maia Plisetskaia à l'Opéra," *Le Monde*, 29 September 1961, 8.SW.2226, BNF-Richelieu.

[570] "Voici la secrète Oulanova qui mit 3 ans pour préparer 'Juliette,'" *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 7 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

[571] "Voici la secrète Oulanova qui mit 3 ans pour préparer 'Juliette."

Western women against whom they competed. That Western women could remain "properly feminine" signified to paternalistic officials that capitalist societies had protected their women from corrupting masculinization brought on by sexual deviance, excessive labor, or disregard for "gender-appropriate" behavior.[572] Meanwhile, Soviet female athletes were ridiculed as manly "Amazons" who got ahead by casting aside their femininity.[573] During the Cold War, showcasing women whose bodies corresponded with the feminine ideal type conveyed that their nation had preserved gender stability, and therefore, political and social stability.[574] The contrasting persona of the "manly Soviet woman" already existed in the French psyche and therefore informed French perceptions of Soviet ballerinas.[575]

French observers evaluated the shape and size of Soviet women's bodies to ascertain the legitimacy of the Soviet Union's balletic tradition and assess the outcome of Communist ideology in practice. French audience members, journalists, and dance critics concluded that a Communist society did not usually produce feminine women. Comparisons between French and Soviet ballerinas intensified with the initiation of Franco-Soviet ballet exchanges in the 1950s. In the months before the first successful Cold War company exchange in 1958, French dancers Liane Daydé and Michel Renault spent a month performing at the Bolshoi in Moscow in the first

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[572] Rob Beamish and Ian Ritchie, "Totalitarian regimes and Cold War sport: steroid 'Übermenschen' and 'ball-bearing females,'" in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, ed. Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrew (London: Routledge, 2007), 20.

[573] One American sports physician declared that Soviet female Olympic athletes displayed "a masculine edge" over their American competitors, but that in any case "we don't want our women to be defeminized in order to win." Robert Kerr cited by Rob Beamish and Ian Ritchie, "Totalitarian regimes and Cold War sport," in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, ed. Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrew (London: Routledge, 2007), 21.

[574] See Colvin, *Gender and French Identity after the Second World War* and Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society*, 97-100.

[575] Sylvain Dufraisse, *Les héros du sport: une histoire des champions soviétiques (années 1930-années 1980)* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2019), 211-213.

official tour of French dancers in the Soviet Union. French journalists who witnessed the event contrasted Daydé's diminutive size with that of her Soviet colleagues and surmised that Daydé's physique would set the new standard for Soviet ballerinas. A writer for right-leaning *Le Figaro* described the crowd of Bolshoi dancers, photographers, backstage crew, and costume makers that surrounded the two French dancers after one performance: "Ms. Daydé was much less athletic than the Russian dancers and looked a bit like a pony surrounded by Clydesdales. 'Ladies, take a good look at her – you're going to have to lose weight,' a Soviet ballet master said to the nearby local ballerinas."[576] The trope of the large, athletic Soviet woman persisted as full dance companies arrived on French soil. Soviet dancer Olga Lepeshinskaya was called "more punchy and fierce than feminine."[577] During a 1967 tour by the Kiev Opera ballet, one journalist remarked that "the physique of [Irena] Lukachova was not sufficiently ethereal to coincide with our image of Giselle."[578] French observers made similar observations of female Soviet folk dancers, who were notable for their "iron ankles and calves." Even female dancers who moved gracefully had "a little too much muscle;"[579] another commentator simply deemed the Soviet women "large and pretty."[580]

The longtime unattainability of Soviet performers added a certain allure to their performances. One French journalist marveled in 1964 at the newfound accessibility of Soviet

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[576] N.C., "Étoiles Françaises de la Danse à Moscou," *Figaro*, 23 December 1957, Series 19900035, Carton 82, AN.

[577] Marie Brillant, "Au Bolchoï: Gisèle," *La Croix*, 20 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

[578] Albert Burnet, "'Giselle' et 'Chouralé' par le Ballet de Kiev," *Le Soir*, 24 August 1967, 4.SW.6429, BNF-Richelieu.

[579] Pierre Julien, "Au Palais des Sports: Le Ballet Moïsseïev," *L'Aurore*, 10 October 1966, 4.SW.1155, BNF-Richelieu.

[580] René Jouglet, « La Danse de la Volga aux Rives de la Seine, » *Mondes Littéraires*, 4 December 1958, 8.SW.1228, BNF-Richelieu.

performers, explaining that "it was not very long ago that Soviet ballerinas did not grant interviews. We only saw them from afar."[581] Both on and off stage, French journalists asserted that Soviet women looked different from Parisian women. Even when a dancer met the critic's physical expectations, her attire could detract from a successful embodiment of femininity. To the French eye, the Soviet ballerinas appeared unembellished and plain. One journalist observed that Ulanova went out "wearing no furs, or make-up, or jewels. Instead, she's a woman with a shy and understated style with no concern for elegance."[582] Similar remarks were made about the Soviet dancers of the all-female Beryozka company, who toured in Paris in 1957. Parisian onlookers emphasized the performers' "great simplicity" and natural looks, "exempt of any artifice." The dancers' unadorned appearance was rationalized by reference to the whims of Beryozka company director Madame Nadezhdina, who insisted that her dancers limit the use of makeup both on and off stage. Heavy use of makeup, Nadezhdina asserted, would weigh down the dancers and "separate the dancer from the audience."[583] The dancers' humble appearance was considered by French observers to be an idiosyncratic feature of Soviet dance resulting from Soviet artists' desire to democratize ballet.

Although French critics lauded Ulanova's Parisian performances in the 1950s and 1960s, the same critics were astonished that the Bolshoi's leading lady appeared so ordinary. In the view of some critics, Ulanova's lackluster costume prevented a convincing performance of Juliette. One journalist lamented the appearance of Ulanova's loose-fitting costume, calling on her to

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[581] Nicole Hirsch, "L'Assoluta: Dans une vilaine loge de l'Opéra, la Plessitskaïa au repos," *L'Express*, 9 January 1964, 4.SW.200, BNF-Richelieu.

[582] J.L., "Le Ballet Soviétique à la Conquête de Paris," *Dimanche Matin*, 9 May 1954, R.Supp.4219, BNF-Richelieu.

[583] "En 'avant-première à Paris: le CIDAD reçoit le Ballet russe Berezka," *La Danse*, July 1957, 2.

wear something "more flattering than this tunic that almost resembled a work uniform."[584] One evening the dancer visited Maxim's wearing a tasteful beige suit, described in *Paris-Presse* as a Chanel-style suit that had been "adjusted" by Soviet designers. Implying that Ulanova had donned a Chanel knockoff, the journalist bitingly remarked that the dancer had been gifted a car, a chauffeur, and a maid from the Soviet government, and yet there was "no doubt that she is ripping off our couturiers."[585]

Ulanova enjoyed friendly relations with the Communist Party throughout her career, receiving four Stalin prizes and four awards of the Order of Lenin. She overtly resisted foreign fashions and cultivated an identity disinterested in Western fashion, media, and shopping opportunities. When, during a 1967 tour, French ballerina Liane Daydé asked, "Will you visit the *couturiers* in Paris? How about the shops?," the dancer made headlines by firmly saying "*Niet!*" (No!)[586] She dressed demurely and shied away from the media spotlight. On one occasion, Ulanova became visibly fed up with French reporters' attention, as well as their preoccupation with her attire and appearance. Shortly after the start of the 1958 Bolshoi tour in Paris, she sought to ward off the French press by shielding herself with a piece of clothing. Despite Ulanova's wishes, the incident made headlines – complete with a photograph.

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[584] Françoise Reiss, "Le Ballet du Bolchoï," *Réforme*, 7 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

[585] "Chez Maxim's, le 'cosaque' de la Oulanova," *Paris-Presse*, 3 January 1969, 4.SW.10883, BNF-Richelieu.

[586] "À Paris, Galina Oulanova dit niet à tout, sauf à la danse," *France Soir*, 13 December 1967, 4.SW.10883, BNF-Richelieu.



Figure 20: "Cette nuit à l'Opéra Oulanova, étoile du Bolchoï de Moscou, danse pour la première fois à Paris, mais refuse de se laisser photographier," *L'Aurore*, 31 May 1958, R.Supp.6070, BNF-Richelieu.

While performing, the dancer became "light," "enthralling," personifying "dance itself." Critics marveled that she transformed from a middle-aged woman into a youthful girl before their very eyes in her role as Juliette. Ulanova's age – relatively advanced for a star dancer at 44 years old during the Soviet tour to Paris in 1954 – frequently figured in press coverage of Bolshoi performances.

Ulanova was not the sole victim of probing inquiries about age. In general, the Soviet women appeared older to French eyes. One observer described with relish the first encounter between French and Soviet ballerinas in 1954: "The French ballerinas, with all their kindness and natural grace, welcomed the Soviet ballerinas. The latter could not conceal their shock at the youth of our star female dancers. This century had waited only ten years to receive Ulanova,

whereas [our dancers] Mademoiselles Daydé, Lafont, Vaussard, Vyroubova, and Bardin are not yet thirty."[587] Another journalist commented that, "next to the young French ballerinas, the Russian women looked older and more severe."[588] In fact, the Opéra de Paris's highest paid ballerina, Yvette Chauviré, was only seven years younger than Ulanova. And of course, Soviet ballet had its own arsenal of young stars – such as Ekaterina Maximova, Natalia Bessmertnova, Alla Osipenko, and Raisa Struchkova. Descriptions of the dancers' gravity likely grew in part from conceptions of Russian reserve and discipline. French critics credited Soviet regimentation and inherent sternness for producing perfect dance technique,[589] but contended that these benefits could compromise a dancer's unique creative persona and feminine warmth.

One Soviet ballerina, however, conveyed a unique artistic identity that intrigued and disturbed French audiences. Like Ulanova and her age-defying metamorphosis, Maya Plisetskaya gained a reputation for her ability to transform on stage, contorting her body in ways that defied human constraints. Plisetskaya is now celebrated for her performance of the *Dying Swan* solo, as well as her role as Odile-Odette in *Swan Lake*, which she performed during guest performances at the Opéra de Paris in 1961 and 1964. Ulanova's traditionalist approach to the solo, which remained in her repertoire until her 1962 retirement, was well-respected by foreign and Soviet audiences. Plisetskaya neglected academic exactness – her movements seemed to flow from within rather than from years of absorbing correct placement. The latter's new

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[587] Henry Magnan, "Huit jours qui firent trembler l'Opéra," *Carrefour*, 12 May 1954, R.Supp.4219(2), BNF-Richelieu.

[588] "À l'Opéra M. Lehmann ouvre le foyer de la danse à Mlle Oulanova, " *Figaro*, 4 May 1954, R.Supp.4219(1), BNF-Richelieu.

[589] For example, Catherine Clairval, "Les Ballets du Bolchoï à l'Opéra de Paris," *Danses et rythmes*, July-August 1958.

interpretation sent shockwaves through audiences around the world. Her performance introduced a new form of corporeal expression for the ballerina, which was all the more revolutionary in the Soviet Union, where accusations of "formalism" could ruin an artist's career.[590] As Kirov ballerina Elena Tchernichova recalled, "Everything about Plisetskaya was unconventional, and everything about our lives was bound by convention and regulation."[591] Plisetskaya cultivated a Soviet ballerina for the Thaw era, in contrast with Ulanova's stringent compliance with the Party line. It was for this reason that, in France, Plisetskaya's fame eclipsed that of the older dancer.

In contrast to the elegance of French ballerinas, Plisetskaya charmed French onlookers with her "simplicity" and "lack of sophistication," appearing to be merely an "athlete in tights."[592] Even before Plisetskaya's first appearance at the Opéra, journalists felt that her body's composition merited analysis. One only had to see Plisetskaya in her black leotard and tights to notice "the extraordinary strength of her legs." The critic qualified this observation, asserting, "I don't mean to suggest that she has fat calves….but you can sense the steel infrastructure, the muscles of a grasshopper," allowing her to hover and swirl in ways that "defy the laws of nature."[593] *Figaro* journalist Jean Fayard admitted that his typical image of Russian women involved "rather round Muscovite ladies." Plisetskaya's powerful athleticism so contrasted with

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[590] "Formalist" described any artwork that prioritized appearance or form over the piece's social purpose or ideological content. By the mid-1930s, "formalist" came to stand in for Western-influenced, modernist, or pessimistic artwork, in contrast with the realism and optimism found in folk and folk-inspired artistic traditions. See Christina Ezrahi*, Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 60-61.

[591] Elena Tchernichova, *Dancing on Water: A Life in Ballet, from the Kirov to the ABT* (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 2013), 122.

[592] Jean Fayard, "Maia Plisetskaia: un 'cygne russe' à Paris," *Figaro*, 23 September 1961, 8.SW.2226, BNF-Richelieu.

[593] Fayard, "Maia Plisetskaia: un 'cygne russe' à Paris."

this view that, upon meeting the ballerina, Fayard felt compelled to compliment the dancer's "greyhound-like silhouette," to which Plisetskaya apparently responded, "Oh! I am not as thin as French women!"[594]

If Plisetskaya's new interpretation of Odile-Odette and *Dying Swan* inspired colleagues like Tchernichova, contemporary French observers initially found her performance shocking and unnerving. One critic admitted to feeling disconcerted by her solo, which he found too mechanical to arise from a living creature. Plisetskaya's finely tuned muscular reactions and absolute precision of movement produced a performance that was "more athletic than poetic."[595] Her unusual corporeality called into question her very humanity, earning her a reputation as robotic, bird-like, or otherwise vaguely beast-like, "metamorphizing before our eyes from one state to another at an unbelievable rate."[596] Some observers focused on the dancer's rippling, flexible arms, which were considered "more reptilian than feminine." Although she had the "approximate appearance" of a woman in the human world, "while dancing her true nature is betrayed: an invertebrate, tentacled, polymorphic creature that shocks, seizes, and disturbs…" The critic J. Bourgeois asserted that Plisetskaya's unsettlingly accurate portrayal of a swan was a case of realism taken too far, developing from the demands of socialist realism. In this context, she had grown into a different kind of being altogether – "no longer a Muscovite ballerina dancing on stage, but a bewitching beast…."[597] In descriptions recalling the Cold War East-West

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[594] Fayard, "Maia Plisetskaia: un 'cygne russe' à Paris."

[595] Jean Cotte, "Maïa Plissetskaya: Technique russe sans charme slave," *France Soir*, 10 January 1964, 4.SW.200, BNF-Richelieu.

[596] Gilbert Bloch, "Maya Plissetzkaia dans 'Le Lac des Cygnes," *L'Humanité*, 10 January 1964.

[597] Patrick Thevenon, "Le Miracle de l'Opéra," *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 10 January 1964, 4.SW.200, BNF-Richelieu.

divide and the divergences between Eastern and Western Europe, Bourgeois suggested that Plisetskaya "probably emerge[d] from an unknown way of life that evolved on another planet, or even in another galaxy."[598] Indeed, Plisetskaya's inherent indefinability is reflected in the French media's constant and varied misspellings of her name, on which journalists cannot seem to agree.[599]

Born in Moscow, Plisetskaya was the daughter of a silent film actress (Rachel Messerer) and a diplomat (Mikhail Plistski). The dancer's parents were arrested during the Great Purge (1936-8); her father was executed and her mother spent several years interned in a Gulag – a family history that placed Plisetskaya on the list of "nonexportable" artists until 1959. It did not help matters that she was known to be outspoken and flouted the rules by inviting foreigners to her home without permission on at least one occasion.[600] The sense of Plisetskaya as *other* may well have stemmed as much from her Soviet identity as from her Jewish heritage, which set her apart from most other Soviet dancers.[601] Hints at her background lurked behind proclamations that "Plisetskaya does not look like Western ballerinas."[602] In a short article providing answers to

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[598] J. Bourgeois, "Plessetzkaya étonne plus qu'elle n'émeut."

[599] The dancer's last name appears as Missetskaïa, Plissetzkaïa, Plessetzkaya, Plisetskaïa, Plessetskaya, Plissetskaya, and Plessitskaïa, to name a few. Most articles alternate between spelling her first name "Maya" and "Maïa," while others incorrectly refer to her as "Maria."

[600] Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 196-197; Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today*. London: 4th Estate, 2016, 342-4.

[601] Two other successful Jewish-Soviet dancers Valery Panov and Elena Tchernichova faced anti-Semitic abuse during their careers. After the Soviet Union lifted the ban on Jewish emigration to Israel in 1971, both emigrated to Israel. Dancer and choreographer Leonid Yakobson also struggled against anti-Semitic stereotypes, using "the Russian ballet stage as a space to capture parts of Jewish culture that were vanishing outside." Janice Ross, *Like a Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 194-5.

[602] Nicole Hirsch, "L'Assoluta: Dans une vilaine loge de l'Opéra, la Plessitskaïa au repos," *L'Express*, 9 January 1964, 4.SW.200, BNF-Richelieu.

six questions about Plisetskaya's life, one question asked, "How is it that Maya Plisetskaya wears a cross when she is of Jewish origin?"[603] Apparently the question of Plisetskaya's faith and ethnicity counted among the top six questions to which readers craved an answer. French journalists could not help but describe the dancer's body, which included "a Semitic face, with sharp features, nostalgic eyes, a long, even nose, the legs of a mare, and arms capable of rippling like a *houri*…"[604] French caricatures of Plisetskaya shared this fascination with her body, portraying her as stick-thin with a large head and prominent nose. No other Soviet ballerina garnered such attention to her physical appearance. Perhaps Plisetskaya was simply the most famous of the Soviet female dancers in this period, but she was late in joining the carousel of international dance tours because the Soviet government only permitted her to travel abroad in 1959, after she personally requested Khrushchev's permission.[605]



Figure 21: Caricature of Maya Plisetskaya and her partner Nikolai Fadeyechev, *Le Figaro*, 23 September 1961, BNF-Richelieu, 8-SW-2226.

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[603] "Voici combien la TV a payé la Plissetskaïa," *Paris-Presse*, 2 February 1964, 4.SW.200, BNF-Richelieu.

[604] Oliver Merlin, "Maïa Plisetskaïa, c'est le feu slave," *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 9 January 1964, 4.SW.200, BNF-Richelieu.

[605] Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 193-197.

French reporters' and dance critics' reactions to Soviet ballerinas reveal how the stereotype of the muscular communist woman informed initial encounters between Soviet female dancers and the wider public. French viewers expected to see austere, strong "Amazons," who did not quite conform to French feminine norms. The discipline of the Soviet system also appeared to leave its mark on many ballerinas, who "compromised" their youth by spurning makeup, dressing plainly, and closely following conventions at the cost of their individuality. Unbeknownst to French critics, Soviet dancers had been sternly instructed to remain professional and avoid drawing unnecessary attention to themselves during offstage interactions.[606] Breaking the rules would disqualify performers from future tours, so most artists complied with these expectations. Despite these constraints, Plisetskaya made a stronger impression than most because of her forceful, individualized interpretations and Jewish heritage that set her apart in the eyes of French observers. In French reactions to Soviet dance tours, the idiom of the strong, muscular Soviet ballerina faded by the early 1970s. Increased Franco-Soviet cultural interaction after 1954 had done some of the work of disentangling real Soviet ballerinas from the New Soviet Woman ideal, the "broad-shouldered, broad-hipped, big-boned female laborer."[607]

Shopping in Paris

The French media's sharp focus on Soviet ballerinas' attire and shopping habits during Franco-Soviet dance tours demonstrates how ideas about gender and consumerism became enmeshed in the conceptual boundary between East and West. Women's engagement with

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[606] See Chapter Two, "Dancers Behaving Badly."

[607] Ross, *Like a Bomb Going Off*, 190.

consumer culture has historically been a contentious encounter rife with both new possibilities for self-expression and threats to the social and political order.[608] French and Soviet women experienced divergent relationships to consumer goods – a tension that became central to Cold War rhetoric in the 1950s and 1960s, when Western and Soviet officials launched competing claims over which economic system provided more quality, comfort, and convenience.[609] The local press encouraged visiting Soviet ballerinas' shopping sprees and emphasized Opéra de Paris dancers' own close relationship to consumer culture through marketing initiatives and the fashion industry. The ballerina's consumer practices helped define her femininity, as well as her place in a modern and aesthetically sophisticated society. Pressure to define French women as smart consumers was all the more heightened by comparisons with the American housewife, shown in advertisements and international expositions with the latest newfangled domestic appliances.[610] What set the French housewife apart was not that she had money to spend, but rather her discerning taste. Activities that might otherwise be dismissed as frivolous – applying makeup, following fashion trends, or picking out new furniture – became powerful ammunition during Franco-Soviet cultural interaction. The enhanced significance of women's consumer culture in Cold War politics helps explain journalist Slavenka Drakulič's observation that "the real Iron Curtain is made of silky, shiny images of pretty women dressed in wonderful clothes, of pictures from women's magazines."[611] During tours, French observers analyzed Soviet

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[608] The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 8 and Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[609] For example, the Moscow Kitchen Debates between Khrushchev and Nixon in 1959.

[610] Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 427.

[611] Slavenka Drakulič, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2016), 27.

ballerinas' clothing, use of cosmetics (or lack thereof), and shopping as evidence of their own nation's cultural and economic superiority. Comparisons implied that while French women were accustomed to modernity and abundance, Soviet women marveled at the number of commodities available. Although commercialization and the bourgeoning consumer culture of the 1950s and 1960s sat uneasily with French cultural analysts,[612] ballerinas' shopping behavior during dance tours offered a site around which to delineate the refined femininity of French women from that of "unsophisticated" communist women. Susan Reid remarked how Soviet journalists called upon the nation's women to "recover their lost femininity" during these years.[613] In a similar way, Parisian observers implied that visits to France held the key for Soviet women to regain their womanhood, which had been withheld or foreshortened by communist policies.

After Stalin's death, attitudes toward fashion in Soviet culture began to shift. Although excess and ostentation were frowned upon, women's magazines encouraged their female readership to dress sensibly and with style. In 1956, *Soviet Woman* specified to readers that, counter to what they may believe, socialism was not incompatible with fashion.[614] In an effort to resolve this misconception, one letter to the editor written from East Germany inquired, "how does a Soviet woman dress?" The columnist, Il'ya Okunev, explained fashion did not have to be

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[612] For example, Rebecca Pulju explains that postwar economic planners "were often suspicious of the rationality of ordinary women consumers…," *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar* France, 2.

[613] Susan Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen," 232.

[614] The magazine *Soviet Woman* proclaimed that the Soviet Union championed the cause of women – especially in capitalist and post-colonial countries where women remained under man's tyranny. Although *Soviet Woman* put forward an explicitly political agenda – for instance, an end to colonial wars in Vietnam, the banning of atomic weapons, or the removal of American forces from South Korea – the magazine envisioned an ideologically-defined femininity that could be leveraged to garner influence for the Soviet Union abroad. Soviet propagandists used notions of domesticity to legitimize the Soviet Union abroad. While French commentators asserted that proper femininity remained unattainable to most Soviet women, *Soviet Woman* insisted that Soviet women lived in the best of both worlds: they enjoyed a comfortable home life with the pleasures of motherhood while also attaining equality with men. French diplomats were well aware of initiatives by the Soviet Communist Party to mobilize new gender norms abroad for the cause of ideology and banned *Soviet Woman* in France through the early 1950s.

"a product of capitalist interests and thirst for profit." In a socialist system, Okunev explained, fashion "serves the whole population and the aesthetic needs of the working masses and fulfills a person's natural desire to update his or her clothes." Soviet fashion does change, the writer insisted, but only in response to the needs, interests, and changing tastes of the people.

In contrast, capitalist fashion companies primarily served "non-working women" and were motivated by profit to create new, unusual trends. As a result, fashions in capitalist countries "do not arise from the shape of the human body, nor from the purpose of the garment, nor the demands of hygiene, but out of a desire for extravagance." Although Soviet designers take care to emphasize a woman's feminine figure, Okunev declared, "extravagant, trendy styles will not find any imitators among us."[615] "Trend" and "trend-setter" were derogatory words indicating a preference for base aesthetic novelty over practicality. Nevertheless, the pages of *Soviet Woman* suggest a taste among its readers for feminine and modern clothing designs; nearly every issue contained a fashion spread with the latest dresses and coats that could supposedly be found at the GUM department store or the Obshesoyuznyi Fashion House. By December 1956, the magazine featured a regular "Paris" column within its fashion section, sharing seasonal collections from Jacques Heim, Maggy Rouff, Lucile Manguin, and Dior fashion houses.[616]

Claims that Soviet fashion successfully met women's aesthetic needs, however, were met by the stark reality that Soviet factories were not equipped to handle a constant rotation of innovative patterns. The limitations of the garment industry required that each factory produce

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[615] Il'ya Okunev, "Kak odevaiutsia sovetskie zhenshchiny," *Sovetskaia Zhenschina*, April 1956, 46-47.

[616] For example, "Parizhskie Kollektsii," *Sovetskaia Zhenschina*, December 1956, 45; "Parizhskie modeli," *Sovetskaia Zhenschina*, January 1957, 44; "Parizh, 1958", *Sovetskaia Zhenschina*, May 1958, 45.

clothing based on the same design for five years before introducing new patterns.[617] Technical challenges aside, skepticism toward Western styles hindered wholehearted acceptance of French fashion among Soviet cultural commentators, even as renewed contacts with the West enabled Moscow and Leningrad designers to take inspiration from Western patterns. In short, there remained a great deal of ambivalence about whether Parisian designs had any place in Soviet women's closets. Renowned fashion designers such as L.K. Efremova visited Paris and praised French haute couture, whereas others dismissed Parisian dresses as "refined models of uselessness."[618] Historian Larissa Zakharova argues that, to resolve this dilemma, communist fashion designers mobilized a "double language." Designers railed against Western bourgeois fashion in public, all the while appealing to Soviet officials to approve regular trips to Paris, arguing that French couture offered a rich well of insight for Moscow fashion houses.[619]

Unlike Moscow clothing designers, many Soviet ballerinas touring in France had few misgivings about publicly patronizing Parisian boutiques and shops. After tours, visiting dancers left France with suitcases full of new shoes and clothing. During the early Thaw years, individual dancers penetrated the frontiers of French fashion houses, notably Maya Plisetskaya, who cultivated friendships with Coco Chanel and Pierre Cardin. In post-Cold War memoirs, Soviet ballerinas did not shy away from expressing their reverence for French consumer goods. Plisetskaya, for example, felt inhibited by Moscow fashion houses' offerings and was enticed by the variety and novelty of French designs. Shopping was a central experience of the dancer's first

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[617] Larissa Zakharova, "Dior in Moscow: A Taste for Luxury in Soviet Fashion under Khrushchev," in *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Bloc*, eds. Susan E. Reid and David Crowley (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 102.

[618] N.T. Savel'eva, cited by Larissa Zakharova, "Dior in Moscow," 96.

[619] Larissa Zakharova, "Dior in Moscow," 95-120.

Parisian tour. She recalled that, "It [was] completely unthinkable that a Bolshoi dancer, even the most famous, [could] wear haute couture….Needless to say, I did some serious shopping in Parisian stores."[620] Alla Osipenko shared Plisetskaya's embrace of French attire. During a 1956 tour in Paris, Osipenko admired the outfits of French ballerinas and felt ashamed of her drab wardrobe. When she returned to Paris in 1961, she was determined to remedy the sartorial disparity between herself and French artists by visiting a Christian Dior ready-to-wear boutique. She purchased a cream-colored dress with a matching jacket, which she treasured for 25 years until the outfit became so frayed that, unable to part from it, she had the garment recrafted into a lamp shade.[621] The contrast between Osipenko's new Dior attire and that of most Russian dancers was not lost on her partner Rudolf Nureyev, who approached her at a party at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées and exclaimed, "This is the way a Russian ballerina should dress!"[622] Fashion played a large role in dancers' experiences in France; as celebrities in the Soviet Union, many artists felt they deserved better clothing options than Soviet shops could provide.

By the 1970s, Plisetskaya became known for her love of French fashion and was dubbed "an ambassador for French fashion" by designer Pierre Cardin.[623] Thanks to the close friendship between Plisetskaya and Cardin, the latter created costumes for several Bolshoi company ballets that were choreographed by Plisetskaya. This was the first time that a national Soviet theater

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[620] "L'étoile du Bolchoï aux Folies-Bergère," *L'Aurore*, 5 April 1972, 4.SW.3853, BNF-Richelieu.

[621] Joel Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko: Beauty and Resistance in Soviet Ballet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 96.

[622] Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko*, 96.

[623] "Cardin: A Moscou Plissetskaïa fait triompher la mode parisienne", *France-Soir*, 16 June 1972, 4.SW.3853, BNF-Richelieu.

ordered its costumes directly from abroad,[624] but Cardin's contribution to the Bolshoi stage was not openly acknowledged in the Soviet Union. Although Cardin designed ten costumes for the 1972 production of *Anna Karenina*, his name was absent from the Bolshoi Theater playbill. As Plisetskaya explained, "The costumes were all ours. Soviet ones. It was the Ministry of Culture which panicked and forbade the management to mention a foreign name in the list of credits."[625] Only years later, during a tour abroad, was the fashion designer acknowledged for his work on the costumes for *Anna Karenina*, after which Cardin's name was eventually added to the Bolshoi Theater programs. To Plisetskaya, the Bolshoi's use and acknowledgment of a French couturier's work denoted a softening in the Cold War climate: Franco-Soviet artistic collaboration had succeeded and was officially recognized on the Soviet national stage. As she observed, "the Iron Curtain parted this way, at a turtle's pace, slowly but surely."[626]

Although it seems clear that many Soviet dancers were eager to go shopping in Paris, the French media interpreted these experiences through the lens of Cold War rhetoric and national pride in Parisian luxury goods, taking for granted that all women visiting from communist countries desired Parisian couture. It is difficult to say to what extent Soviet dancers' interpretations differed from that of French reporters – particularly because many accounts about shopping in the West come from the memoirs of dancers who left the Soviet Union.[627] And after all, French ballerinas, too, stuffed their suitcases to the point of bursting with souvenirs while

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[624] "Cardin: A Moscou Plissetskaïa fait triompher la mode parisienne", *France-Soir*, 16 June 1972, 4.SW.3853, BNF-Richelieu.

[625] Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 171.

[626] Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 171.

[627] For example, the memoirs of Natalia Makarova, Elena Tchernichova, Valery Panov, Rudolf Nureyev. Maya Plisetskaya never defected but had an antagonistic relationship with the Soviet government.

abroad – Yvette Chauviré, for example, recalled woefully discarding many objects she had acquired on tour because she could not latch her overstuffed suitcase.[628] If there is nothing nationally unique about tourists purchasing souvenirs, shopping became a particularly gendered aspect of Soviet tours to France. In both press accounts and dancers' memoirs, ballerinas seemed to be doing most of the shopping and often conveyed that French consumer goods provided them a wider range of expression as women. A dancer's reasons for spending precious, limited resources on French clothing were necessarily subjective.

Several Kirov and Bolshoi dancers cite pressure to compare with other dancers, especially foreign ones. As mentioned above, Alla Osipenko recalled feeling ashamed of her outfit after meeting French ballerinas. New opportunities to travel abroad exacerbated hierarchies between Soviet ballerinas. Maya Plisetskaya pointed out that a *nevyezdnaia*, or "non-traveling,"[629] ballerina was identifiable by her less fashionable wardrobe. A popular aphorism that circulated among performers highlighted ballerinas' motivation for seeking expensive Western clothing on the black market: "We won't be seen in anything worse than [the *nevyezdnye*]!"[630] Dancers took pride in their attire from French fashion houses and felt that such luxuries aligned with the ballerina's elevated status in Soviet society. Plisetskaya asserted that her time in the spotlight justified finer clothes, reasoning: "People look at me; I'm in the public

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[628] Yvette Chauviré, *Je suis ballerine* (Paris: Éditions du Conquistador, 1961), 34-35.

[629] The label "nevyezdnye" was used colloquially by performers to label actors and dancers who were "non-exportable" and hence not permitted to participate in tours abroad. During her early career, Maya Plisetskaya was deemed a *nevyezdnaia* because her Jewish heritage rendered her politically suspect, and because her father was a victim of the purges in 1938. In 1959, Khrushchev intervened to permit her participation in a tour to the United States, believing that her performance would ensure the tour's success. Henceforth, Plisetskaya was allowed to travel on international tours.

[630] Plisetskaya*, I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 169.

eye."[631] Furthermore, the longtime inaccessibility of French designer clothing rendered the novel designs all the more enticing. At a time when the Party line dismissed Western clothing as decadent bourgeois ostentation and Soviet fashion designers discreetly promoted patterns inspired by Parisian fashion houses, touring ballerinas were drawn to the modern styles publicized in both Soviet and French magazines. The internationalism of their profession seemed to demand clothing that allowed the dancers to blend in a global social milieu. The ballerinas' shopping decisions made clear that, throughout the Cold War, one of the central arbiters of women's fashion continued to be Paris – Soviet fashion designers' claims to provide more practical, functional, and elegant clothing notwithstanding.

In the 1950s and 1960s, French observations insinuated that Soviet ballerinas were overwhelmed by the unprecedented access to Parisian women's couture. In truth, Soviet dancers on tour indeed enjoyed greater access to foreign commodities than ever before, but they were no strangers to products from abroad. Contraband clothing items smuggled into the Soviet Union fetched a large price, and many people were happy to pay for the quality and caché offered by French or American clothing. Maya Plisetskaya noted that Bolshoi Ballet dancers relied on black market attire to dress themselves with dignity. As she explained, "After all, you can't find a good-looking dress in GUM. In my entire life, I didn't see a single one in GUM."[632] While dancing in the West, Alla Osipenko placed shoes at the top of her shopping list, since good shoes were "impossible to find in Leningrad."[633] Between tours, dancers like Plisetskaya and Osipenko

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[631] Plisetskaya*, I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 169.

[632] Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya*, 168. GUM is an abbreviation of Glavnyi universal'nyi magazin, literally "Main Universal Store," the largest department store in Moscow.

[633] Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko*, 88.

also depended on Soviet traffickers in foreign goods. Plisetskaya's supplier was Klara, who purchased items from the wives of Soviet diplomats and resold them after tripling the original price.

Clothing was not only a matter of aesthetics or ostentation; in the Soviet Union, foreign labels conveyed the message that a capitalist nation could provide something that communism could not. This message grew more powerful when displayed on the body of a famous individual, such as a Bolshoi ballerina. Plisetskaya recalls the judgmental gaze produced on Moscow streets by her provocative foreign couture. After Plisetskaya's 1966 trip to Paris, a woman saw her sporting a French astrakhan coat and crossed herself, exclaiming, "Oh Lord, isn't she a sinner!"[634] As a high-profile individual, Plisetskaya also faced the reactions of Communist Party officials, who regarded her wardrobe with skepticism. She recalled, "even our slow-witted leaders felt that there was something deliberate here, that I was dressed as if onstage, not 'like us.' Khrushchev said to me with a certain reproach, "You're dressed awfully beautifully. Are you rich?"[635] Because a wealthy appearance challenged principles of equality, distinction attracted suspicion. Makeup was viewed with the same degree of skepticism since, as journalist Slavenka Drakulič noted, traditional communist ideals favored a woman who closely resembled a man.[636]

Seizing the opportunity to highlight French prosperity, the Parisian press made a game out of following Soviet dancers into boutiques and department stores. According to one *Paris Soir* journalist, shopping was the only area where he saw clear "signs of détente" in the Bolshoi

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[634] Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya,* 170.

[635] Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya,* 169.

[636] Drakulič, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, 23.

company's behavior. Supposedly the foreign dancers scanned the streets for long lines, since in Moscow, the stores with the longest lines had the best-quality merchandise. According to these criteria, the writer noted, "there's nothing much to buy in Paris. But this doesn't stop them from venturing in and coming out with their arms loaded with packages."[637] Soviet ballerinas admired French fashion, particularly that of Coco Chanel.[638] French observers took this admiration for granted, offering disparaging descriptions of Soviet ballerinas' garments and concluding that Soviet attire could not compare with French fashion. After an interview with Bolshoi dancer Raisa Struchkova, one journalist reflected on the dancer's royal blue suit with a straight-cut jacket and skirt: "It was not fashionable. It was without fashion."[639] While accompanying the company for several days, she saw several Bolshoi dancers poring over a copy of *Elle* that they had purchased, exclaiming and pointing at the models with every turn of the page.[640]

By the time of the 1972 Bolshoi tour to Paris, the entire company – numbering 300 people – visited the Chanel fashion house.[641] The French press photographed Soviet principal ballerinas modeling Chanel "butterfly" dresses and observed that Coco Chanel's recent death enabled ballerina Natalia Bessmertnova's access to the fashion house's fitting room, into which the designer "would have never allowed a foreigner."[642] Even as the appearance of Soviet

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[637] Thierry Nolin, "Le secret des danseurs du Bolchoï: Les Conserves", *Paris Soir*, 9 January 1970, 4.SW.6137, BNF-Richelieu.

[638] Chanel had also designed costumes for the Ballets Russes in the 1920s. Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 254.

[639] Claude Ledoux, "Après 15 jours de succès triomphal à l'Opéra de Paris, j'ai vu un danseur du Bolchoï Ballet lire en cachette le 'Courrier du Cœur,'" *France Soir*, 19 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

[640] Claude Ledoux, "Après 15 jours."

[641] Coco Chanel had died the previous year, on 10 January 1971.

[642] Hélène de Turckheim, "Ambiance Bolchoï chez Chanel," *Le Figaro*, 5 April 1972, 4.SW.3587(3), BNF-Richelieu.

dancers on French stages became normalized, journalists implied that the Soviet Union's most elegant women were hungry for the craftsmanship only found in Parisian fashion houses. During a runway show of the 1972 Chanel collection, one French journalist remarked that the Bolshoi ballerinas in attendance – who themselves were "hardly made-up at all" – stared at the Chanel models "wild-eyed," determined that "no detail, no accessory escape their notice."[643] Such observations implied that France held the key to feminine elegance, and that the Soviet Union's inability or unwillingness to provide quality fashion and cosmetics would leave even the most sophisticated female citizens unfulfilled as women.

Western media, the French included, relished dramatic stories about Soviet women who lost control during their first encounter with abundance. The most extreme instances of this culture shock apparently contributed to psychological breakdowns: a pianist for the Kirov ballet received her daily stipend and was later discovered staring through the window of an appliance store, mumbling to herself incoherently and immobilized by the decision about what to buy in the face of such variety. She was promptly escorted back to the Soviet Union.[644] Similarly, cases of alleged theft by Soviet women in the West received widespread media attention. In August 1956, the arrest of Olympian discus thrower Nina Ponomareva for theft from a London shop made international headlines. Ponomareva was accused of stealing five hats, the value of which totaled $4.62. Soviet press reporting on the affair accused the British government of framing Ponomareva, who was deemed an innocent victim of "provocation."[645] The athlete pled not guilty. The court excused her offense as the result of insurmountable temptation and sent her

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[643] "Le Bolchoï chez Coco (Chanel)," *France-Soir*, 6 April 1972, 4.SW.3587(3), BNF-Richelieu.

[644] Valery Panov with George Feifer, *To Dance* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1978), 209.

[645] Chulaki, Ulanova, Melik-Pashaev, et al, "V redaktsiiu gazety "Izvestiia'," *Izvestia*, 21 September 1956, 2.

straight back to the Soviet Union[646] – a decision suggesting that a Soviet woman faced with capitalist plenty could reasonably be expected to resort to shoplifting. This diplomatic flareup unfolded shortly before the Bolshoi Ballet's scheduled October 1956 premiere in London, merely two years after the Soviet ballet performance in Paris was unexpectedly cancelled in 1954. Representatives from the Bolshoi Theater had publicly threatened to cancel their tour to London in the fallout from the Ponomareva incident, but since the athlete had been sent home by the time the Bolshoi's tour began, the Soviet company's first postwar performance outside Russia proceeded without incident.[647]

Only ten days after dazzling Parisian audiences in June 1958, ballerina Olga Lepeshinskaya was arrested in Brussels for stealing gloves, an umbrella, and cufflinks. Another shopper alerted an officer after having seen Lepeshinskaya stuff the items into her purse and leave the store. The officer followed the dancer into the street, requested that she open her bag, and removed the items. The ballerina asserted her innocence, explaining that she "only wanted to see in the daylight whether or not these gloves matched [her] dress."[648] She was held by the Belgian police and questioned for nine hours straight, causing her to miss the Bolshoi's rehearsals and the first half of the company's evening performance. Perhaps wishing to avoid an international diplomatic scandal on the register of the Ponomareva incident, the Belgian police and Ministry of Foreign Affairs made no comment on the theft. The store ownership, supposedly concerned about alienating Russian tourists, did not file a complaint. After the intervention of

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[646] David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 473-474 and Dufraisse, *Les héros du sport*, 128-132.

[647] David Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 474.

[648] "Arrêtée pour vol à l'étalage Olga Lepechinskaia danseuse-étoile des Ballets Bolchoï affirme avoir été victime d'une provocation," *Paris Journal*, 30 June 1958, R.SUPP.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

Soviet ambassador Victor Avilov, the charges against Lepeshinskaya were dismissed.[649] The event was particularly embarrassing since the ballerina was among the Bolshoi company's highest-ranked dancers, second only to the legendary Galina Ulanova. French press coverage of the incident implied that Lepeshinskaya's arrest provided more evidence that even the Soviet elite did not know how to behave once faced with plenty. We cannot know Lepeshinskaya's intentions, but Soviet performers were provided little spending money and cooked in their hotel rooms to save cash for clothing and souvenirs while on tour. An artist who had used up her allotted pocket money might feel torn between giving up on the items entirely or shoplifting. Unsurprisingly, Soviet memoirs have little to say on the matter.

French observers' assessments of Soviet dancers' contact with Western consumer culture might suggest that the former held a less critical view of commercialization and consumerism than would be found in the Soviet Union. France, however, had its own fraught relationship with consumer culture – a tension that was both deeply gendered and burdened with implications for French national identity in the postwar period. In the United States, France, and the Soviet Union alike, governments accepted that their very legitimacy rested in part on providing a comfortable living for the nation's population. In the push toward mass consumerism, French economists carefully analyzed and incentivized desired consumer behavior by women. Rebecca Pulju demonstrates how planners and popular media alike encouraged French women to make purchases that made the home more comfortable, convenient, attractive, and modern, stimulating France's economic growth in the process.[650] Even once women had been granted the rights to

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[649] "Olga Lepechinskaïa avait 'choisi' quelques souvenirs à Bruxelles. Elle ne rapportera en U.R.S.S. qu'un non-lieu," *Paris Journal*, 30 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

[650] Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society,* 2-3.

vote and work, state planners envisioned a model of consumerism for women centered on the twin roles of "citizen consumer" and "domestic manager" which – in the midst of postwar anxieties about the national birthrate and longing for normalcy – perpetuated women's conceptual tethers to the home.[651]

In the postwar Soviet Union, too, women emerged at the center of concerns about developments in consumer culture. Khrushchev placed material culture at the center of his agenda, seeking to placate the Soviet population by providing a more comfortable standard of living. The onus for cultivating a comfortable domestic space fell primarily on women. As Susan Reid explains, "The gendering of consumption as a 'feminine' issue in Cold War discourses on both sides of the Iron Curtain placed women at the center of the regime's efforts to negotiate its relations with the people over the crucial territory of living standards."[652] As the primary population shopping for food and for the home, Soviet women of the late 1950s were responsible for making tasteful purchases that would contribute comfort and sophistication to the home. More so than in France, women were simultaneously called upon to beautify themselves *while* entering the workforce, simultaneously taking on the roles of "active worker and passive spectacle."[653]

Because of women's cultural and economic centrality to French and Soviet consumer culture, ballerinas' shopping behavior garnered the spotlight during tours across Cold War boundaries. If French women enacted their role as citizens in part through responsible shopping

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[651] Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society,* 227.

[652] Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen," 252.

[653] Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen," 232.

habits,[654] critical assessments of Soviet ballerinas' consumer behavior insinuated that Soviet women lacked the knowledge and economic freedom to contribute to building postwar normalcy at home. French observers suggested that women from socialist countries had been deprived not simply of consumer goods, but of the ability to completely express themselves as women. Once Soviet ballerinas arrived in France, it seemed natural to French commentators and journalists that the dancers' first encounter with French cosmetics, clothing, and household appliances would amaze. In the most extreme cases, reporters implied, this encounter could provoke kleptomania – fueled by a deep need to recover the femininity withheld by Soviet economic planning.[655] This narrative positioned France as a purveyor of refined, sophisticated femininity that was part and parcel of a French *civilisation* that had retained its exceptionalism even as global influence shifted away from Europe and toward the United States and Soviet Union after World War II.

Conclusion

As central fixtures in an art that had been highly codified since the development of classical ballet in seventeenth-century France, the bodies of both male and female dancers have long been infused with assumptions about gender and race. Because the ballerina is a feminine ideal type that could be embodied by any skilled dancer, her appearance and movements

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[654] Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society,* 16-19.

[655] Accusations of kleptomania have historically been tied to the idea that women are susceptible to a loss of control at the sight of desirable things. French reporters imply that, after experiencing the material deprivations of Soviet life and being unaccustomed to abundant consumer goods, parsimonious Soviet women succumb to kleptomania. See Patricia O'Brian, "The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in Late Nineteenth-Century France," *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 1 (Fall 1983): 65-77; Ann-Louise Shapiro, "Disorderly Bodies/Disorderly Acts: Medical Discourse and the Female Criminal in Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Genders*, no. 4 (1989): 68-86; Ann-Louise Shapiro, *Breaking the Codes: Female Criminality in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Leslie Camhi, "Stealing Femininity: Department Store, Kleptomania as Sexual Disorder," *Differences* 5, no. 1 (1993): 26-50; Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1896-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Émile Zola, *The Ladies' Paradise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

conveyed expectations for how a woman should move and look, as well as the role she should play. Upon the initiation of Franco-Soviet dance exchanges during the Thaw, Cold War rhetoric merged with the clearly drawn national lines between the French and Russian ballet schools, intensifying the stakes of this feminine performance. In debates about the figure of the ballerina, defining femininity became a contested ground over which observers in both countries made sense of differences across the Cold War divide.

During the Thaw, the ballerinas who toured between two of Europe's most prestigious national ballet academies became deeply implicated in how journalists, diplomats, artists, and audience members alike made sense of women's roles on national and global stages. From the perspective of French officials, the nation's ballerinas – as emblems of idealized French femininity – served as gentle cultural ambassadors that bolstered France's cultural influence through their performances and interactions with foreign leaders. The reciprocal reception of Soviet companies enabled the local press to mobilize Parisian fashion and consumer culture to demonstrate that France could provide for its population and, in the process, preserve femininity. For the Soviet Union, the exchanges enabled the Russian ballet school to stake its claim on France's national stage and showcase a model for Soviet womanhood that balanced artistry, patriotism, and unwavering service to one's home and nation. On the other hand, the French tours in Moscow and Leningrad provoked subtle critiques of women's roles on Soviet stages. The Soviet dance community pointed to French performances as proof that Soviet choreographers should showcase ballerinas' talents, rather than undermining years of training by creating roles with more pantomime than choreographic complexity. Concerns that female dancers' roles were less artistically interesting than that of male artists may have been provoked

by another difference between Soviet and French ballet: the role of the *danseur*.[656] Soviet viewers may have noticed that the ballerina remained the star of French ballet, whereas men often served to support the ballerina rather owning the spotlight alone. As the next chapter will show, Soviet ballets of the 1950s and 1960s created prominent and energetic roles for men, who became athletic symbols of strength, determination, and patriotism for international audiences.

[656] A *danseur* is a male dancer.

Chapter Five: Men in Tights and Women *en Travesti*: The Male Body and Cold War Masculinity

On the morning of March 31, 1958, Paris witnessed a ballet spectacle of the most unusual kind: a sword duel between the Marquis de Cuevas and Serge Lifar, two of the city's most prominent figures in the dance world.[657] The duel began with a dispute over the intellectual property rights of a ballet that Lifar wrote while he was de Cuevas's employee.[658] After a heated confrontation – dismissed by some onlookers as a "handkerchief ballet" – at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Lifar and de Cuevas publicly chose witnesses and confirmed the duel, which would be fought by sword until first blood was drawn.[659] Even before the duel occurred, French writers highlighted that the two dancers were unlikely to successfully perform the masculine connotations of a traditional duel. In nineteenth-century France, dueling became a central facet

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[657] The Marquis de Cuevas was Chilean by birth, and a naturalized American citizen, but he founded his own ballet company in Monaco, called *Le Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas*. Ukrainian-born Serge Lifar came to France in 1922 after being invited by Russian choreographer Bronislava Nijinska to join an experimental dance company in Paris. This company's director, Serge Diaghilev, had asked Nijinska to send him her five best dancers. When the fifth invited dancer did not show up, Lifar was called into action and joined Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in Paris. Although neither Lifar nor de Cuevas were born in France, both were key members of the French ballet scene. By 1958, Lifar had lived in France for over 30 years, and choreographed the ballets performed by France's most prestigious Opera house. De Cuevas was also a local celebrity, and his company's productions often performed in Paris and competed with those of the Opéra de Paris. Both men lived, danced, and choreographed in Western Europe and the United States, and hence fit into what ballet critics called the "occidental" tradition.

[658] The conflict began ten days before the duel at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, where the Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas performed a ballet entitled *Noir et Blanc*, which had originally been choreographed by Lifar during his time working in de Cuevas's company after World War II. The Opéra de Paris contested this performance, however, stating that the choreography of *Noir et Blanc* had too much in common with another Lifar piece, *Suite en blanc*, which belonged to the Opéra de Paris Ballet's repertoire. The night of the performance, de Cuevas gave a speech which overtly addressed the prohibition against *Noir et Blanc,* stating, "I thought that in France everything was free and unhindered. I was wrong…" Serge Lifar arose and left the performance hall, airing the reasons for his opposition to *Noir et Blanc* in the hallways. As the marquis passed by, Lifar dropped his handkerchief as a symbolic throwing down of the gauntlet. In response, de Cuevas snatched up the tissue and tossed it into Lifar's face, issuing a light slap in the process, after which the duel was confirmed. See: "Différend Opéra-Marquis de Cuevas à propos du Ballet 'Noir et Blanc,'" *L'Aurore*, 22 March 1958; "L'incident Lifar-Cuevas," *Le Monde*, 23 March 1958; Le Passant, "Serge Lifar et le Marquis de Cuevas jouent le 'Ballet du mouchoir,'" *La Croix*, 23 March 1958; "Le Duel Cuevas-Lifar, Le Marquis choisit l'épée," *Figaro*, 24 March 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.

[659] "Le Duel Cuevas-Lifar, Le Marquis choisit l'épée," *Figaro*, 24 March 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.

of bourgeois male sociability. The use of a sword in dueling was traditionally connected to military prowess, but the sword was also a symbol of polite society, recalling the swords formerly worn as symbols of rank at court by noblemen. Much like dancing, dueling combined dexterity and physical prowess with skill and discipline. Sword dueling was also said to reflect a man's integrity and adherence to a code of honor, acting as a measure of his character.[660] A man's behavior in a duel demonstrated his physical health and reflexes, but also his willingness to respect social rules and gracefully acknowledge defeat when necessary.[661]

The dancers' perceived frailty conflicted with their perceived ability to engage in a serious duel. In critics' eyes, the "meek" and ineffective Lifar and de Cuevas offered a pathetic semblance of traditional dueling between men, producing an uncanny spectacle. In postwar France, masculinity meant youth, productivity, financial success, and physical strength. Masculinity was defined in large part by where a man stood in relation to other men. As responses from newspapers across the political spectrum indicated, de Cuevas and Lifar had failed to portray "masculine" qualities on all counts. Journalist Paul Gionnoli sarcastically pointed out that the duel indeed required courage: if one considered de Cuevas's arthritis and Lifar's susceptibility to illness, he noted, "each man risked a few weeks in bed."[662] Lifar's habit of sleeping in late became a running joke in subsequent coverage, as observers inferred from his

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[660] Writer and social critic Ernest Legouvé commented, for instance, that one hour of fencing with your son-in-law would tell you much more than several months of investigations. Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 162.

[661] For instance, at many fencing clubs, it was forbidden to swear, smoke, drink, or raise one's voice. Addressing one's opponent with the informal *tu* was frowned upon, as it indicated a lack of courtesy. According to Nye, the reappearance of dueling in France in the 1870s stems from France's 1871 defeat by Prussia. He observed that French men's renewed preoccupation with fencing emerged alongside the "determination of patriots of rebuild the strength of France and prepare for revenge." Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*, 165.

[662] Paul Giannoli, "À Moi Marquis, Deux Mots!…," *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 26 March 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.

sleep schedule that Lifar was unproductive and feeble, eroding his masculine credentials. As one journalist sardonically narrated, "This is the classic moment of all great duels, the sun has just started to peek over the horizon. It is 11:20am."[663] One drawing of the event featured a delicate Lifar gracefully leaping toward de Cuevas, who commented, "This is the first time I've seen you in good form in the morning!"[664] Several journalists pointed out with mild surprise that the duel was not just a joke, after all.[665]

Cartoon artists caricatured the event with relish. The two men were portrayed with shapely legs and thighs, and ruffled shirts. Their swords offered inadequate phallic symbols — squiggled, curved and embellished with cloth bows.[666] In another depiction, a tights-clad Lifar attempts to pierce de Cuevas with flowers, while portly de Cuevas, awkwardly donning a full suit of plated armor, holds an ineffective curved and whip-like sword.[667] The real confrontation concluded when de Cuevas struck Lifar with his sword, lightly cutting his left arm. Yet even this injury was a laughing matter. As *Le Parisien* described, "Serge Lifar had himself given a bandage as 'large as his arm,' so that his reconciliation with the marquis does not seem like a mere empty gesture."[668] The light scratch resulting from the duel enhanced the event's aura of

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[663] J.-C.J., "Le duel n'était pas un poisson d'avril," *Le Parisien*, 31 March 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.

[664] Yves Salgues, "Le Duel Cuevas-Lifar (qui se déroulerait ce matin, à Versailles)," réveille la tradition des d'Artagnans en jaquette," *L'Aurore*, 28 March 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.

[665] Paul Giannoli, "À Moi Marquis"; J.-C.J., "Le duel n'était pas un poisson d'avril."

[666] "Le Duel Lifar-Cuevas sera arrêté 'au premier sang,'" *Le Parisien*, 24 March 1958. ; Yves Salgues, "Le Duel Cuevas-Lifar," R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.

[667] Paul Giannoli, "À Moi Marquis."

[668] J.-C.J., "Le duel n'était pas un poisson d'avril."

spectacle and absurdity because the “injury” highlighted the low stakes involved. Accounts of the duel mocked the dancers’ woefully inadequate attempt to defend their honor as men.



Figure 22: “Duel Marquis de Cuevas-Serge Lifar,” *Le Canard Enchaîné*, 26 March 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.



Figure 23: “Duel Marquis de Cuevas-Serge Lifar,” *Paris-Presse L’Intransigeant*, 26 March 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.



Figure 24: "Duel Marquis de Cuevas-Serge Lifar," *L'Aurore*, 26 March 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.



Figure 25: "Duel Marquis de Cuevas-Serge Lifar," *France Soir*, 1 April 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.

Journalists interpreted the duel as a failed performance of masculinity, which was all the more inadequate because — in critics' eyes — the two men had intentionally catered the event to the public eye.[669] Accounts of the duel accused Lifar and de Cuevas of soaking in the publicity

[669] It is unclear whether the dancers intentionally tipped off the press about the location of the duel, but beforehand journalists reported a dramatic chase through Paris. Aware that the duel was approaching at an unknown place and time, the press organized a stakeout to watch the two men, in case they left home during the early morning hours. According to journalists who tailed the dancers, De Cuevas was noticed leaving his home around midnight. His car dropped him off at the Ritz hotel at the Place Vendôme, where he ran through the hallways, exited onto a different street, and jumped into a taxi, which took him to a friend's house in Boulogne, not far from the dueling site. Perhaps

and pandering to the cameras. As *Le Combat* described, "Lifar, for his part, doesn't want to be bandaged up until he's hugged the marquis. For heaven's sake! You must allow time for the photographers to do their jobs! Honor has been saved…"[670] This comment implied that the duel had little to do with the masculine imperative to defend honor. Instead, such accounts suggested, the dancers put on a spectacle and relished the public eye, in blatant defiance of the fact that duels were supposed to be carried out in secret. The performative aspect of the duel itself undermined Lifar and de Cuevas's ability to deliver a convincing performance of masculinity. Journalists' and critics' commentary on the Lifar-de Cuevas duel crystalized around the notion that authentically masculine performance remained inaccessible to male ballet dancers. As a result, a sword duel between the two dancers could only be interpreted as a farce. Since the early nineteenth century, French *danseurs* had been stereotyped as passive, fragile, feminine, and inclined toward deviant sexual desires – a notion that had still not completely dissipated when Franco-Soviet dance exchanges began in the 1950s.

This chapter investigates how Soviet ballet tours gave new life to prewar ideas about modern masculinity in postwar France. Comparison of male bodies during the Cold War became a language through which French and Soviet observers understood power relations between two nations. In the context of Cold War dance tours, male bodies on stage played both ideological and artistic roles. Male dancers served as representatives of their nations, trained to portray the health and cultural brawn of their home country. Successful performances of masculinity for male dancers depended on physical demonstration of discipline, strength, and control over their

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he truly was trying to lose the press, but his unsuccessful attempt only intensified the story's intrigue and appeal. Philippe Bouvard, "Épilogue pour un soufflet: Serge Lifar et le Marquis de Cuevas ont interprété 'Le Duel' dans un théâtre de verdure, près de Vernon," *Figaro*, 31 March 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.

[670] "Le duel Cuevas-Lifar," *Combat*, 31 March 1958, R.Supp.6071, BNF-Richelieu.

own bodies. Ballet companies molded men to conform with conceptions of male beauty by sculpting bodies through exercise regimens and crafting costumes and uniforms that accentuated the appropriate physical qualities.[671] Dancers from both countries were typically in their twenties, and Soviet theater directors especially preferred to send the most youthful faces abroad.

When Soviet artists first arrived in Paris in 1954,[672] ballet lovers and journalists alike were smitten with the Soviet male dancer, who embodied virility, strength, and dynamism, while skillfully serving as partner to the ballerina. Maintaining painstaking control over his own body and guiding the ballerina on her proper course, the Soviet dancer modeled restraint and authority over his female partner. Russian dancers' command of the stage echoed Soviet confidence in the postwar era: victory in the Great Patriotic War validated Soviet power on a global stage and confirmed the USSR's position alongside the world's largest military powers. Bolshoi Theater dancer Galina Ulanova observed that World War II permanently transformed all aspects of Soviet life, including ballet. As she noted, "During the war most of our spectators at the Bolshoi Theatre were men in uniform. Even if they came to Moscow for no more than a day or two, Soviet army men made it a point to go to the theatre. This was indicative of our Soviet people's, and our army's, great impulse for poetry and high culture, of the loftiness of the people's spirit." In her view, the war lent a higher cause to ballet's role in crafting a "new Soviet person."[673]

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[671] In the war's wake, the sight of unmutilated, healthy male bodies carried the message of national strength and rejuvenation. Johanna Bourke observed that during World War I, the British military proclaimed the beauty of the male body by providing uniforms designed to accentuate the soldier's "manly" qualities, making them appear taller, with wider shoulders. To the same end, she notes, the British army encouraged soldiers to engage in acts of public nudity – while bathing, or waiting for their uniforms to be washed – to encourage admiration of male bodies. Johanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male Body*: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 128-9.

[672] Although this tour was cancelled on the eve of the premiere, journalists and some lucky members of the public had attended the company's rehearsals.

[673] Indeed, Soviet histories of Russian ballet rarely fail to mention the patriotism of the nation's ballet performers throughout the war, such as Yuri Slonimsky's recollection that, during the Bolshoi company's wartime migration to

Following the ideal of the New Soviet Man, masculinity was defined by patriotism, physical strength, a revolutionary attitude and the determination to carve out positive change in the world – qualities manifested in Soviet ballet roles for men during the 1950s and 1960s.[674] International dance tours allowed the Soviet Union to broadcast its postwar cultural and ideological authority, and its male dancers became foot soldiers and ambassadors in this endeavor.

Changing perceptions of the performing male body were also shaped by cultural shifts linking athleticism to national strength. During the mid-twentieth century, governments began to use international sporting events to provide a platform for celebrating their nation's unique aptitudes.[675] In 1952, Soviet athletes participated in the Olympic Games (Helsinki) for the first time, after which the Soviet Union embraced the power of physical culture to project national unity and athleticism.[676] The Cold War intensified the stakes of these physical feats, where

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Kuibyshev, "the dancers were animated by patriotic enthusiasm: teams toured the front lines performing for the troupes [and] many dancers joined the armed forces…." Slonimsky, "A Little of History," *The Bolshoi Theatre Ballet Notes* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956). Ulanova describes this "new Soviet person" as "a champion of peace and justice, the new Soviet citizen has a noble and big heart. He is modest and selflessly devoted to his Homeland. He is the new man we meet and see everywhere, and the qualities he possesses must be portrayed in contemporary ballet if we wish to do justice to our age." Galina Ulanova, "The Making of a Ballerina," in *The Bolshoi Ballet Story* (New York: Heller and Heller, 1959), 81-82.

[674] These "masculine" values permeated male ballet roles through the choreography, in which men frequently jumped and bolted across the stage into soaring leaps. Their confidence in lifting ballerinas – even with one arm – also showcased their virility. A performer's "masculinity" was also conveyed in ballet plots, in which the male lead embodied a heroic figure who spared no effort to remake the world for the better. Janice Ross, *Like A Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 190-1.

[675] Barrie Houlihan, "Politics and Sport," *Handbook of Sports Studies*, ed. Jay Coakley and Eric Dunning (London: SAGE, 2006), 216-17.

[676] Sylvain Dufraisse, *Les Héros du sport: une histoire des champions soviétiques (années 1930-anées 1980)* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2019), 110-11 and Houlihan, "Politics and Sport," 216. For other examples of how masculine athleticism underpinned conceptions of modern nationhood, see: Simon Creak, *Embodied Nation: Sport, Masculinity, and the Making of Modern Laos* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017) and Wilson Chako Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

athletes' bodies were judged not only by their strength, but also by their appearance.[677] These international events provided competing models of male athleticism in the modern world and helped redefine masculinity in countries who participated.

Inseparable from Cold War politics and artists' physical bodies, dance tours redefined modern masculinity in parallel with international athletic competitions. From the 1909 arrival of the Ballets Russes in Paris to the return of Soviet dance companies to France in the 1950s, Soviet male dancers provided a model of modern athleticized masculinity that French dancers regarded as worth imitating in their own theaters. After the Ballets Russes dissolved in 1929, the company left behind Lifar, who became the ballet master of the Opéra de Paris (1930 to 1944 and 1947 to 1958). Continuing the legacy of the Ballets Russes, Lifar was credited with "reviving" the male dancer in France by using some of the same methods as Soviet companies, creating more prominent, energetic roles for men, whose identity as a man was further accentuated by daintier choreography written for Opéra ballerinas.[678] Even after twenty-three years of leadership, however, Lifar's masculinization project in the Opéra de Paris was incomplete.

In the early postwar years, the recent memory of France's failure to push back the German invasion gave new life to anxieties[679] that took root in the nineteenth century: the

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[677] For example, Western reporters and observers claimed that Soviet ideology was taking women's athleticism on a path toward "irreversible masculinization." Rob Beamish and Ian Ritchie, in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, ed. Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews (London: Routledge, 2007), 22.

[678] Lifar also revitalized male dance by creating some ballets in which the central role was a *danseur*: for example, *Icare*, in which he played the primary role. This ballet featured many high leaps to simulate Icarus's flight. Ilyana Karthas, *When Ballet Became French: Modern Ballet and the Cultural Politics of France, 1909-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2015), 256-8.

[679] Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). In the same way, the French military defeat in the Franco-Prussian War had "stirred up anxieties about the physical state of its men" that contributed to choreographers' and dance critics' initiatives to salvage French male dancers' masculinity in the early twentieth century. Karthas, *When Ballet Became French*, 243-6.

lingering fear that modern life had emasculated French men, a problem epitomized by the French male ballet dancer.[680] In 1954 and 1955, Soviet *danseurs* return to the Parisian theater scene as powerful alternative models of modern masculinity. Cold War Soviet dance tours revitalized nostalgia for the era of the Ballets Russes and inspired new calls to "masculinize" French dancers once and for all, voiced by Parisian commentators who made direct comparisons between French and Soviet male artists. Appeals for "masculinization" contended that *danseurs* should be energetic, physically strong, and athletic – like Soviet performers. These dance critics also assumed that maintaining stark physical differences between men and women was key to preserving the *danseur*'s masculinity – an idea that was not as central to Soviet constructions of masculinity and femininity.[681]

Can We Rehabilitate the Male Dancer?: The *Danseur* from the Nineteenth Century to the Postwar Era

Dance is a useful site for exploring masculinity over time, as the presence of men onstage simultaneously manifested orthodox gender norms about relations between the sexes and challenged notions of masculine behavior by drawing the audience's eye to the male body. In the seventeenth century, ballet had been a courtly art dominated by men. In 1669, Louis XIV – himself a performer – created the Académie Royale de Musique et de Danse, which later became the Opéra de Paris. In the Académie's early years, dancers were all men, with female roles

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[680] Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006) and Christopher Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Masculinity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2004). Soviet critics would locate the root of this malady in the naturally emasculating effects of a bourgeois lifestyle. See Susan Reid, "Communist Comfort: Socialist Modernism and the Making of Cosy Homes in the Khrushchev Era," *Gender and History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 465-498.

[681] As Janice Ross explains, "Both the New [Soviet] Man and the New [Soviet] Woman were inflated into muscular human monoliths. Ideal Russian womanhood, in particular, was depicted as a broad-shouldered, broad-hipped, big-boned female laborer…." Ross, *Like A Bomb Going Off*, 190.

performed by men *en travesti.* By the nineteenth century, however, ballet came to be viewed as a feminine art, in which the male dancer did not belong.[682] Caricatures from the time depicted male dancers as grotesque monsters who were almost inhuman, seeking to steal the stage from ballerinas.[683] As Edouard de Beaumont commented, for instance, "The most unpleasant thing about a *danseuse* is that she sometimes brings along a male dancer."[684] As Karthas points out, men were not supposed to be regarded as mere bodies – it became "perverse" for men in the audience to enjoy watching other men dance, which required applying the gaze to male bodies.[685] Grace and virtuosity in dance became the purview of ballerinas, and male dancers who did manage to embody aesthetic beauty provoked anxiety and confusion. Masculinity and corporeal beauty appeared mutually exclusive on stage in France, because male dancers disrupted conceptions of normative, heterosexual desire among male audience members.[686] Female desire was denied, as women were expected to be desired rather than desiring — as evident in the plots of French Romantic ballets. Because of the stigma surrounding male dancers, in many nineteenth-century French productions male performers were replaced with women *en travesti*, which only increased voyeuristic opportunities for male audience members.[687]

For this reason, Romantic ballets shored up traditional gender norms, in which male characters manipulated, lifted, and displayed the ballerina, who became the objectified center of

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[682] Karthas, *When Ballet Became French*, 107-113.

[683] Karthas, *When Ballet became French,* 231.

[684] Cited in Burt, *The Male Dancer,* 11.

[685] Karthas, *When Ballet became French,* 228.

[686] Burt, *The Male Dancer,* 9.

[687] Susan Leigh Foster, "The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe," in *Corporealities: Body, Knowledge, Culture, Power* (London: Routledge, 1995), 10.

an increasingly sexualized art.[688] In nineteenth-century Romantic ballets, female characters fell into one of two categories: an unattainable supernatural being, such as a nymph or fairy, or a mysterious foreigner, both fated to be rescued, captured, and claimed by the male hero. [689] The choreography emphasized the ballerina's lack of agency – she was drawn to the prince helplessly, despite herself. The choreographic vocabulary of Romantic ballets also followed a gendered pattern: ballerinas performed dainty, complicated steps, prolonged balances, and *développés*.[690] Men, on the other hand, carried out high jumps, multiple pirouettes, as well as leaps punctuated by leg beats.[691] The male dancer occupied more space and performed motions that highlighted his strength, whereas female dancers' movements suggested fragility, lending the ballerina to being posed, turned, and manipulated by the male hero. Well into the twentieth century, positions of authority in the dance world were dominated by men, who worked as choreographers, artistic directors, and *maîtres de ballet*.

Just as the ballerina was on the rise in France, the French Romantic repertoire made its way to Imperial Russia. In 1847, French dancer and choreographer Marius Petipa arrived in Saint Petersburg. Petipa, working with imperial ballet master Jules Perrot, choreographed ballets that clearly followed a formula intended to reproduce and, later in the nineteenth century, build upon French ballet. In collaboration with Russian dancers, composers, and artists, Petipa helped create several foundational works of Russian Classicism, such as *The Sleeping Beauty* (1889), *The*

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[688] Burt, *The Male Dancer,* 27.

[689] Foster, "The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe," 4.

[690] In which the foot is drawn up to the knee, then the leg is straightened and held away from the body to the side, or upward at an angle.

[691] Foster, "The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe," 4.

Nutcracker (1892), and a new version of *Swan Lake* (1895).[692] These works marked a transition for the ballet world, which had formerly been rooted in France. After Marius Petipa's retirement, native Russian choreographers and ballet masters molded ballet into a quintessentially Russian art form.

Meanwhile, back in France, dance critic Théophile Gautier had famously declared that "nothing is more distasteful than a man who shows his red neck, his big muscular arms, his legs with the calves of a parish beadle, and all his strong massive frame shaken by leaps and pirouettes" in response to the ballet *La Volière* (1838).[693] In Ramsay Burt's view, this negative reaction to male dancers grew out of the impossibility for nineteenth-century men to express interest in and enjoyment from watching other men dance – an act that blurred the boundaries between homosocial and homosexual relations.[694] As the ballerina developed more erotic overtones, the male dancer became even more problematic in the public eye.[695] This tension contributed to the feminization of ballet in France – an association that lingered well into the twentieth century.[696] Yet it is also clear that problems around the French male dancer had

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[692] Karthas, *When Ballet Became French*, 12, 157.

[693] Théophile Gautier, cited by Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer: bodies, spectacle, sexualities* (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), 25.

[694] Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 27.

[695] Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 25.

[696] Ramsay Burt argues that male dancers remained accepted in some countries – such as Denmark, Sweden, and Russia – where ballet functioned under royal patronage rather than in a bourgeois, democratic context, where ballet companies followed the popular fashion for large, all-female corps de ballet. Burt, 24. Lenard Berlanstein also ties perceptions of ballet performers to France's political circumstances – in particular, he argues that female performers were vilified most during times of political upheaval that provoked concerns about moral and social decay (when the nation's men felt threatened and disempowered). Berlanstein does not address how this model might have affected perceptions of male performers over the nineteenth century. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 135.

changed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Gautier's derision was aimed at what he perceived to be unpleasant aspects of the male body that, next to the willowy limbs of ballerinas, were too bulky and awkward to be beautiful.

Franco-Russian dance interactions continued into the early twentieth century, laying a foundation for how viewers of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s interpreted French and Soviet performances. In 1909, the Ballets Russes arrived in Paris, introducing Russian art, music, and culture to Parisian crowds during a time of anxiety about depopulation and gender transgression among men and women.[697] At a moment when debates about French cultural identity surged, the Ballets Russes raised new questions about the relationship between art and national identity, and the role of ballet in defining national culture.[698] The Ballets Russes experimented with modernist dance styles, incorporating music by Igor Stravinsky and Claude Debussy, along with art by Pablo Picasso, Léon Bakst, and Henri Matisse, and fashion designs by Coco Chanel.[699]

The perceived contrast between French and Russian male performers was thrown into relief upon the Ballet Russes's arrival, which was credited with "reintroducing" the male dancer to Western audiences.[700] Russian ballets cast men in more prominent roles, perhaps because in Russia male dancers did not face the same disdain and suspicion as in France.[701] Although the

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[697] Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen*; Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair*; Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in fin-de-siècle France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[698] Karthas, *When Ballet Became French,* 17.

[699] Among the most important financial supporters of the dance company were wealthy women who shaped the Parisian intellectual scene, such as the Comtesse de Béarn, the Comtesse de Chevigne, and the Princesse de Polignac. Karthas, *When Ballet Became* French, 15.

[700] Burt, *The Male Dancer,* 5.

[701] Karthas, *When Ballet Became French,* 253. Dance scholar Ramsey Burt argues that European countries' political organization explains differing attitudes toward male dancers in the nineteenth century: countries with a bourgeois government and greater possibility for representation (France, Britain) increasingly rejected male dancers, whereas male dancers continued to thrive in national ballet companies that were supported by an aristocratic, royal government (such as in the courts of Saint Petersburg, Copenhagen, and Stockholm). In bourgeois societies, the

Ballets Russes never performed in Russia during international tours, most of the company's Russian dancers were trained in imperial Moscow and Saint Petersburg. The company sparked controversy throughout its tenure, most famously during the premiere of *The Rite of Spring* (1913), when the audience of the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées was shocked and appalled by the quick jumps, angular movements, and dancers' hunched backs in the opening act — all of which flew in the face of traditional ballet. The company set the stage for modern movement, which Diaghilev imagined as completely unencumbered by morality. To this end, the Ballets Russes featured eroticism as a tool to challenge convention.[702] The company pushed the limits of theatrical art, in the process introducing a new mold of male dancer that was unimpeded by the deficiencies that blighted the French *danseur*.

The Ballets Russes presented a male dancer – epitomized by Vaslav Nijinksy – who was athletic, virile, yet also aesthetically impressive. French contemporaries indicated that Russian dancers successfully walked the line between masculinity and grace, letting neither quality cancel out the other. Those who attended Ballets Russes performances knew Nijinsky for his high leaps: he appeared to suspend himself in the air for impossibly long durations and land softly, ostensibly with little effort. While Nijinsky exemplified male strength and agility, certain of his roles also conveyed what contemporaries described as "feminine" sensuality. This androgyny was deemed acceptable, however, when the dancer portrayed orientalist roles that

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male dancer — donning colorful silk and feathers — evoked aristocratic opulence and degeneracy, along with the weakness and emasculation of men who could not govern themselves. Burt, *The Male Dancer,* 24.

[702] For example, *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1912) caused a stir because dancer Vaslav Nijinsky — performing the role of the faun — appeared in a provocative, skin-tight leotard and thrust his hips into a nymph's scarf. Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), 27.

were expected to display "excessive" sexuality.[703] The modernist dances of the Ballets Russes provided opportunities for dancers to both challenge and reproduce norms of masculine performance. Karthas suggests that Ballets Russes dancers did not pose the same threat to gender orthodoxy as French dancers in part because they were foreigners from an ally nation, and hence would not imperil the nation's health.[704]

Both during the era of the Ballets Russes and in the postwar period, Russian dancers offered a point of comparison that provoked journalists' commentary about the state of French men. Past discussions about male dancers of the Ballets Russes were inseparable from early twentieth-century anxieties that modern life had emasculated French men. Contemporaries asserted that the "semi-Asiatic" and "semi-European" men of the Ballets Russes embodied a "natural," "primitive" masculinity — a quality made possible because these dancers had been shielded from the corruption and decay accompanying Victorian "super-civilization."[705] The trope of brutish Slavic men persisted in assessments of Soviet ballet in the 1950s-70s. Perceptions of Russian men were filtered through stereotypes about hypersexual non-white men, who simultaneously embodied threatening male desire and formidable strength.

Although male dancers became gradually more palatable to French audiences after the arrival of the Ballets Russes, Karthas notes that no male dancers attracted a French fan base comparable to that of Nijinsky until the mid-twentieth-century arrival of Nureyev and

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[703] In *Shéhérazade* (1910), for example, Nijinsky danced the role of the Golden Slave — a performance that composer Alexandre Benois described as "half-cat, half-snake, fiendishly agile, feminine, and yet wholly terrifying." Cited in Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 69.

[704] Karthas, *When Ballet Became French*, 247.

[705] Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 61.

Baryshnikov[706] — both of whom were from the Soviet Union. Perhaps the exotic, avant-garde reputation of the Ballets Russes allowed this company to be exempt from the standards and harsh critical eye held to Opéra de Paris ballet productions. The memory of the Ballets Russes, and its model of athletic masculinity, resurfaced decades later when Soviet ballet companies returned to Paris. Despite Lifar's efforts to restore dignity to the *danseur*, mid-1950s critics highlighted how feeble the Opéra's male artists appeared next to their Soviet rivals, whose evident strength and visible musculature added to their allure (rather than provoking disgust, which likely would have been Gautier's response). With the onset of Cold War Franco-Soviet dance tours, French dance critics of the 1950s could be persuaded that the male body, when properly honed, could become beautiful. Soviet companies provided a prototype for how this endeavor might be accomplished.

"Do We Need to Masculinize the Male Dancer?": The Problem of the *Danseur*

As Soviet dance companies arrived in France, and French men began to be showcased in postwar international ballet tours in the 1950s, ambivalence about French *danseurs* intensified. Journalists' and audience members' discussions of Soviet athleticism, strength, and muscle illuminate French anxieties about their own male dancers' masculinity. Touring male dancers inherently conjured tension: as the nation's most skilled artists, they had been selected to represent their country abroad. At the same time, however, the very fact that they displayed grace and sophistication on stage called their masculinity into question. Cold War ballet exchanges encouraged comparison and one-upmanship that journalists, critics, and dancers themselves projected onto dancers' bodies. Healthy, strong, flexible bodies contributed to nationalist

[706] Karthas, *When Ballet Became French*, 261.

narratives by reflecting that nation's ability to care for its people and produce a population that was both healthy and cultured. In this context, male ballet dancers landed in the confluence where political ideology and aesthetics met physical culture.

The arrival of Soviet dancers provoked new questions and debates about the role of male dancers on stage by offering an alternative model of masculinity for dancers. In March 1958 – just two months before Soviet performers arrived in France – an article in *Toute la Danse* asked a pertinent question: "Do we need to masculinize the male dancer, or replace him with cross-dressers?" As the journalist describes, a male friend with mild interest in dance approached him and asked, "Why are male dancers…so…graceful?" The narrator explained that male dancers endured rigorous training and had the potential to be equally beloved as their female counterparts, and that, furthermore, their dance pursuits were carried out with the most honorable of intentions. "These young men," he explained, "are not what they might appear to be." "All the same," the friend responded, "when I go to the ballet, I want to see real men dance, men who are wholesome and sensible."[707] As the dialogue continued, the narrator reminded his friend that, in the days of Louis XIV, women often could not appear on stage at all and that in ballet's infancy, there was nothing questionable about men on stage. The friend responded, "I hear you, but look at the Russians! Their dancers are true men [*mâles*]…"[708] Alluding to the fact that ballet fans tended to hold more respect for ballerinas than for her male counterparts, this dialogue suggested that French male dancers could not even qualify as "true" men, and that the speaker felt uncomfortable watching "unmanly" *danseurs* on stage. Russian dancers, in contrast, represented

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[707] Jean de Bournay and Fernand Lallement, "Faut-il viriliser le danseur ou le remplacer par les travestis?," *Toute la Danse et la musique*, March 1958, 23.

[708] Bournay and Lallement, "Faut-il viriliser le danseur. "

successful performance of masculinity. Observers' preoccupation with French male dancers' failed masculinity echoed early postwar anxieties that French men could no longer be called "men" at all.

In the 1950s and 1960s, French writers in dance publications, popular newspapers, and even dancers themselves expressed concern over the future of the French male dancer. In 1958, ballet master and choreographer Fernand Lallement suggested creating a new regime of dance training specifically for men, which he hoped would create a new school of young men who would become representatives of this so-called "genuinely masculine male dance," so that "parents would agree to allow their children to enter this vocation with the peace of mind that they would do so *as men"* [emphasis added].[709] The aesthetic demands of contemporary ballet seemed at odds with the successful performance of masculinity, yet Lallement's notion of crafting a specifically "male" school of ballet suggests that, for some critics, the problem lay in overemphasis on the ballerina and the "graceful" choreography written for male dancers.

During the Cold War, the Ballets Russes haunted the memory of ballet goers who struggled with this dilemma. To some ballet enthusiasts, Diaghilev's company offered the best solution to the problem of placing men on stage, implying that male dancers must be made athletic enough to be convincingly masculine. One French ballet critic bemoaned the transition from the Ballets Russes to the postwar French *danseur*, "what has become of the fantastic, unequaled, delightful dancer, the manly athlete that [contemporary French dancers] Michel Renault, Peter van Dijk and Pierre Lacotte replaced in principal roles, without being able to make us forget him?"[710] Although male dancers became gradually more palatable to French

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[709] Bournay and Lallement, "Faut-il viriliser le danseur. "

[710] *La Danse*, December 1956, 10.

audiences after the arrival of the Ballets Russes, throughout the Cold War male dancers continued to be portrayed by French journalists as silly and ineffective, suggesting that the "revival" of the male dancer facilitated by the Ballets Russes did not completely eliminate ballet's reputation as a women's art. At the same time, the memory of the Ballets Russes, and of Nijinsky in particular, continued to color perceptions of contemporary French *danseurs* and their Soviet counterparts after the start of Franco-Soviet Cold War dance tours.

"Rebellious, Willful, and Devoted to Freedom": The New Soviet Man and the Soviet *Tanzovshik* (male dancer)

Soviet male dancers did not face the same accusations of emasculation and sexual deviance. In the Soviet Union, men who performed in the nation's ballet companies were grouped together with other successful professionals who served the country through cultural, scientific, academic, or agricultural contributions. Conceptions of masculinity were bound up with the New Soviet Man — an idealized masculine figure embodied by industrial workers, engineers, aviators, and cosmonauts. First conceived in the Stalinist 1930s, the New Soviet Man appeared on political posters as a brawny, towering youth in perpetual motion (such as waving a flag or swinging a hammer), with an enthusiastic or determined expression on his face.[711] The beauty of the New Soviet Man was that – with adequate determination and loyalty to the Motherland – any man had the potential to become one, joining his compatriots as a fellow builder of socialism. This male figure represented the ideal Soviet citizen, with unwavering patriotism and the fortitude to translate that conviction into Soviet progress.

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[711] Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 259.

Later iterations of the New Soviet Man manifested some postwar particularities: for instance, his gestures are less dynamic, and the previously requisite theme of "struggle" became less common. As sociologist Victoria Bonnell explained, "hard work was, of course, part of the new and blissful postwar world projected by political posters, but now considerable emphasis was placed on the satisfaction and rewards derived from work well done and even, as we shall see, on contemplation of the good life provided by Soviet society."[712] This shift is undoubtedly at least in part a function of the Cold War: in the competition over which ideology could provide the superior standard of living, such posters suggested that communism emerged as the clear victor over capitalism. In this way, Cold War Soviet ideology was mapped onto the bodies of Soviet men, particularly onto dancers and athletes who traveled internationally. A strong, healthy, enthusiastic Soviet man demonstrated communist accomplishments, which were further confirmed in the hockey rink or on the opera stage.

Through discipline, patriotism, and feats of physical prowess, Soviet dancers and athletes showcased the best that the Soviet Union had to offer, legitimizing the Communist system. As historians Julie Gilmour and Barbara Evans Clements explained, 1950s propagandists viewed the struggle to mold athletes' behavior as a battle "between the self-discipline of the true athletic hero and the crude *maschismo* of an uneducated brute."[713] The notion of shaping the athlete's behavior to match that of an ideal male citizen dovetails with the New Soviet Man's implication that, through instruction (usually via the Communist Party), every man could be hammered into a cultured and empowered Soviet individual.[714] The Soviet Union placed its men in the

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[712] Bonnell, *Iconography of Power,* 260.

[713] Julie Gilmour and Barbara Evans Clements, "'If You Want to Be Like Me, Train!': The Contradictions of Soviet Masculinity," in *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture*, ed. Clements et al (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 217.

[714] This was not always the case. Early Bolshevik leaders deemed competitive sports to be "corrupt" and

international public eye to convey that Soviet Communism could compete ideologically, aesthetically, and physically with capitalist nations. As Gilmour and Clements noted, Soviet male athletes demonstrated that "a star so trained could be an example to the nation, selling not the products of capitalism as western athletes did, but the Soviet system itself in widely publicized media events at home and major competitions around the world."[715] During the Cold War, male dancers served the same function as internationally acclaimed athletes.

Another reason for the higher prestige of Soviet male dancers in their home country lay in the fact that dancers had access to special privileges in a country that often experienced food and housing shortages. Unlike ordinary men, they enjoyed access to luxury foods, spacious apartments, and other consumer goods that were beyond the reach of other Soviet citizens. Furthermore, the best male dancers were provided the coveted opportunity to travel abroad before this opportunity became accessible to regular Soviet citizens. As dance scholars Jennifer Fisher and Anthony Shay observed, "Unlike the case of aspiring professionals in the West, a dance career in Soviet times equaled a major step up in the social ladder. Wearing tights, therefore, perhaps was seen more as a uniform than as something that would automatically draw accusations of effeminacy."[716]

Postwar Soviet physical culture valorized masculine strength and skill, and Soviet journalists did not refrain from admiring their own nation's male bodies. Soviet reporters often

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"bourgeois." The shift toward competitive sports occurred primarily out of a renewed interest in bolstering the Soviet Union's reputation abroad - sports and dance were two notable ways that this undertaking was implemented. See Gilmour and Clements, "'If You Want to Be Like Me, Train!,'" 220.

[715] Gilmour and Clements, "'If You Want to Be Like Me, Train!,'" 220.

[716] Jennifer Fisher and Anthony Shay, *When Men Dance: Choreographing Masculinities Across Borders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18.

compared Russian athletes to their ancient Greek counterparts, particularly Hercules. For example, one journalist described heavyweight champion Yuri Vlasov as a "beautiful 'young Hercules,'" with "a wide chest, powerful hands, strong muscular legs, and beautiful proportions. It [was] obvious that it was on such a model that ancient Greek sculptors based their celebrated sculptures."[717] Physical attributes, however, were not sufficient: the toned muscle resulted from self-restraint, intelligence, and a strict training regimen which were also inseparable from idealized Soviet masculinity. Discipline was key for Soviet men who wanted to attain this ideal, which demanded abstention from heavy drinking, smoking, and womanizing. Indeed, male athletes' breaches of discipline were a persistent concern to Soviet officials because they impeded athletes' ability to embody idealized Soviet masculinity at home and abroad.

Echoing admiration of celebrity athletes in the Soviet Union, Soviet dancers and journalists expressed admiration for their male dancers without hesitation, emphasizing the athleticism and strength required of men trained in Russian classical ballet. The emphasis on training dovetails with understandings of the "New Soviet Man," who — with proper education and discipline — had the potential to be every man. The transformative possibilities woven into the Soviet masculine ideal were foundational to the Soviet cultural project. Male dancers were intended to embody this archetype, particularly as these men were selected to display socialist cultural, intellectual, and physical accomplishments abroad. To this end, Soviet male dancers were portrayed as patriotic, hard-working, physically fit incarnations of Communist cultural achievement.

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[717] Cited by Gilmour and Clements, "'If You Want to Be Like Me, Train!,'" 212.

Male dancers lent themselves to fulfilling the Soviet masculine ideal in part because Soviet dance offered a more prominent place to male dancers. Soviet ballet, unlike in the French context, did not have feminine connotations. In fact, postwar Soviet commentators were astonished that in many French ballets, certain male roles originally played by men had been permanently filled by female dancers. By contrast, the Soviet Union, ballet was officially deemed a manly profession. As one character notes in Eldar Riazanov's 1975 film *The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath*, "In earlier times real men went to riding school to prance on gelded horses, headed off to the firing range to shoot at the ace of diamonds, to fencing halls to fight with swords, to the English Club to do battle at the card table, or, in extreme cases, to the ballet."[718] In this case, ballet could unironically be declared a "masculine" activity on par with sword-fighting, unlike in the French context.

In discussing men's dance in the Russian tradition, dancer Vladimir Vasiliev emphasized traits typically aligned with idealized masculinity. He explained that Russian male dance had become "very athletic, requiring tremendous physical capabilities, at the same time necessitating that the choreographer cater his work to each specific dancer. This is an especially sensitive issue regarding leaps and jumps, which are our strong suit and an old tradition for us. Maybe Western schools are better at floor work."[719] Vasiliev highlights the physical prowess and strength demanded of Soviet male dancers, rather than their artistic and aesthetic accomplishments. Unlike French dancers, journalists, and ballet critics, Soviet sources do not typically use "grace" to describe male dancers. Indeed, even in the French context, "grace" is somewhat paradoxical

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[718] Cited by Ethan Pollock, "'Real Men Go to the Bania': Postwar Soviet Masculinities and the Bathhouse," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 11, 1 (Winter 2010): 47.

[719] Vladimir Vasiliev, interview by J.-L. Martinoty, "La Danse est un Art du Quotidien: Entretien avec Vladimir Vassiliev, premier danseur du Bolchoï," *Humanité*," 6 April 1972, 4.SW.6141, BNF-Richelieu.

when applied to male bodies: a mark of artistry, yet also a feminine quality. Instead, Soviet sources laud their male dancers for strength, masculinity, and determination.

Soviet dance critics highlighted their *danseurs*' qualities to conform with idealized masculinity: heroism, strength, and willpower. The masters of classical dance were credited for bringing "optimism, masculine energy, and strong-willed heroism" to leading male roles.[720] Ballerina Galina Ulanova herself traced this development in modern Soviet ballet, which saw the rise of a "new type of male dancer [and] new type of balletic hero": one that asserted "athleticism, masculinity, and certainty."[721] This adjustment necessarily meant refining the ballerina's role as well. No longer would the *danseur* exist merely to prop up the ballerina's beauty. Diverging from the French tradition of dealing with discomfort around the male body by hiding the *danseur* behind the ballerina, Soviet choreographers ordered male performers to center stage. As dance critic B. L'vov Anokhin explained, "Instead of the faceless ballet cavaliers seen on stages for many years, who existed just to 'accompany' the principal women's role, on our [Soviet] stage appeared male dancers – full-fledged participants in the choreographic performance."[722] Critics were proud that Soviet dance featured strong male leads, who represented a forceful break away from classical (read: Western European) representations of male ballet dancers.

As these values in male dance permeated Soviet ballet productions, no reference to a Soviet lead *danseur* was complete without some reference to his masculinity. For example,

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[720] L. Popova, Introduction to *Balet Bol'shogo Teatra SSSR,* ed. A. I. Anisimova (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo izobratel'nogo iskusstva, 1955).

[721] Galina Ulanova, "Dolg starshikh," *Izvestia*, 26 May 1962, 6.

[722] B. L'vov-Anokhin, "Kharakternyi akter v balete," *Ogonyok,* no. 39, 31 December 1953, 32.

Alexander Godunov was praised for his "splendid appearance and elegant manners combined with manly, courageous dance stylistics;"[723] Vakhtang Chabukiani "restored heroism and masculinity" to any role he played;[724] and a "masculine expression and particular virtuosic passion were intrinsic to all that Mikhail Lavrovsky did."[725] Yet this was not merely a case of highlighting male performers' virility in reviews: male roles in classical ballets were remade to suit postwar Soviet masculinity. Mikhail Gabovich was credited for doing away with the traditional quality of a "fervent paramour" with which the role of Romeo was usually performed. Gabovich dispensed with "sentimentality and sappiness," instead radiating "a heroic attitude, masculinity, [and] deep passion."[726]

Soviet ballet critics pointed out how, in a similar way, dancer Vladimir Vasiliev's appearance and style flew in the face of nineteenth-century conventions: not only did he lack the "haughtiness" and "mannered" look of Romantic *danseurs*, but Vasiliev's "legs [were] too thick, and he lack[ed] the aristocratic mien." Instead, Vasiliev's dancing was truly "Russian in character" – a style that "encompass[ed] simplicity and nobility, manliness and lyricism."[727] He had shed the aristocratic roots of male dance and showcased a body that more closely resembled that of a worker than a courtier, demonstrating that a "man of the people" also had a place on the Bolshoi stage. As this commentary about Vasiliev suggested, Soviet ballet critics were well aware that their nation's male dancers did not meet traditional standards for the *danseur* – in fact,

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[723] Alexander Demidov, *The Russian Ballet: Past and Present* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1977), 218.

[724] B. L'vov-Anokhin, "Kharakternyi akter v balete."

[725] O. Galin, "Dushoi ispolnennyi polet," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 11 March 1972, 3.

[726] Popova, Introduction, *Balet Bol'shogo Teatra SSSR*.

[727] Demidov, *The Russian Ballet: Past and Present*, 204.

the stockier bodies of Soviet *danseurs* became a point of pride and distinction. For example, the body of Yuri Vladimirov was entirely "against him" by traditional aesthetic standards, particularly his "athletic bodily proportions, heavily muscled legs, and squat build."[728] But this physique, combined with impeccable technique, lent itself to more original interpretations, which made clear that "Vladimirov [was] a typical man of our time: rebellious, willful, and devoted to freedom."[729] References to classical ballet aesthetics underscored the novelty of Soviet portrayals of masculinity in ballet, implying that French companies and their "soft" men were behind on the times.[730] This new Soviet male figure embodied strength, modernity, and the determination to bend fate to one's own liking, all of which reflected conceptions of Soviet identity on the global stage in the postwar period.

Beyond the portrayals of individual male performers, Soviet choreographers and theater directors, too, strategized to keep their male performers manly. Soviet ballerina and choreographer Tatiana Vecheslova recalled the importance of writing choreography and assigning roles in a way that maintained the male dancer's status. Everything else could be correct, Vecheslova explained, "but if a short man gets lost behind the larger figure of the female dancer, he will lose his masculinity."[731] Soviet dance professionals credited the Soviet ballet school for transforming male characters into roles that were not just complementary, but instead central, to each ballet production. Thanks to these innovations, according to one Soviet dance critic, "for the first time in the history of ballet the *danseur* ceased to be merely the partner of the

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[728] Demidov, *The Russian Ballet: Past and Present*, 210.

[729] Demidov, *The Russian Ballet: Past and Present*, 214.

[730] See page 308.

[731] Tat'yana Vecheslova, *Ia Balerina*, (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo "Iskusstvo," 1964), 73

ballerina and was taking his own place: an active and independent one…."[732] To prevent any compromise of the male artist's masculinity, Soviet *danseurs* were permitted stretches of performance time when they became the audience's primary focus, during which time they accomplished high leaps and other athletic feats meant to showcase strength and force of will.

The more prominent and well-muscled Soviet male ballet dancers of the early Cold War era were not a mere product of aesthetic preference. The appearance and placement of these performers developed from a national ideology in which conceptions of masculinity played a crucial role. In the postwar Soviet Union, ideals of physical strength, dynamism, and productivity became vital ingredients in the construction of masculinity. These values were intentionally translated into the bodies and movements of *danseurs*, who posed as exemplars of modern men who were as unpretentious as workers, disciplined as athletes, and heroic as their nation's early revolutionaries. Though they played many classical roles, the men who played Romeo, Prince Albert, and Prince Siegfried became symbols of Soviet industriousness, strength, and innovation in the arts. As the Soviet Union began participating in global ballet tours in the mid-1950s, the Soviet *danseur* cast his forward-looking gaze into international audiences, many of whom were taken aback by these conspicuous balletic roles for men.

"Their Dancers are Real Men!": Soviet Ballet Arrives in Paris

Cold War-era nostalgia for the men of the *Ballets Russes* was a popular subject in French dance publications, and even in ballet reviews in popular newspapers. By the mid-1950s, however, French ballet goers and journalists no longer needed to look to the past for inspiration

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[732] Demidov, *The Russian Ballet: Past and Present*, 203.

on the role of the male dancer: the long-anticipated Bolshoi ballet had arrived in Paris from Moscow. As Franco-Soviet cultural relations continued to develop into the early 1970s, Soviet performers remained pinnacles of masculinity in the eyes of French viewers. In the context of Franco-Soviet ballet tours, discussions about male bodies on stage took on new significance. Reactions to the masculinity of Soviet male dancers reflected the tensions around France's own *danseurs*, who seemed always caught between refined grace and effeminacy. The shapes of Soviet arms, necks, and legs were by no means irrelevant to journalists, who evaluated bodies not only in terms of aesthetics, but also as mirrors of Soviet athleticism, discipline, and exoticism. French observations of Soviet *danseurs* reflected the ways that France and the Soviet Union projected political and cultural influence through male bodies during the Cold War.

The French communist press touted the touring *danseurs*' manliness as evidence of Soviet might. Even before the Parisian public caught a glimpse of Soviet ballet, communist reporter Claude Roy attended a Soviet ballet troupe rehearsal and described reactions of French performers who were also present.[733] Roy sat alongside a *petit rat* from the Opéra de Paris.[734] When the rehearsal began, the young girl exclaimed with amazement, "But over there, their dancers are real men!" Roy was amused that the child loudly proclaimed a "truth" that the adults in attendance would dare not say out loud. After all, one acclaimed French ballet critic had pointed out that a male dancer could only exist by sacrificing "a bit of his virility in the constant drive toward grace" – a rule to which, Roy pointed out, Soviet dancers appeared to be the

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[733] This tour was cancelled on the eve of the premiere, and the French public never got to see the tour. See Chapter Three.

[734] *Petit rat* ("little rat") is the designation for young dance students – typically children – in ballet.

exception.[735] Another communist publication diplomatically described the Soviet male dancer as "built like an athlete" and "graceful but more virile than [the *danseurs*] of some countries."[736] Members of the communist press implied that French men were physically outmatched by Soviet performers, who managed to accomplish what had been considered rare in the French dance world: synthesizing grace with masculinity.

Yet even beyond the communist press, French critics admired that Soviet men possessed great agility and dexterity while remaining muscular enough to appear masculine in audience members' eyes. Perhaps the first thing French viewers noticed about Soviet *danseurs* was their large number: unlike the Opéra de Paris ballet company in which women dancers outnumbered men, nearly half of the Bolshoi company was made up of men in 1951.[737] By contrast, around that time only 37% of the Opéra de Paris ballet company was comprised of men. The Opéra-Comique had an even starker difference, with men making up one third of its dance company.[738] In the view of French dance critics, part of the reason for the gender balance in Soviet ballet companies was owed to the lack of stigma around men who danced in the Soviet Union. As one critic explained, unlike in France, "in the Soviet Union the ballet profession [was] not marred with prejudices, [so] recruiting men [was] much easier."[739] Men could pursue careers in dance

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[735] Claude Roy, "La dernière répétition des Ballet Soviétiques," *Humanité Dimanche*, 9 May 1954, R.SUPP.4219 I, BNF-Richelieu.

[736] Henry Magnan, "Ces ballets que Paris n'a pu voir," *Défense de la Paix,* June 1954, 46, C Pièce 58, BMO.

[737] For composition of Bolshoi Company in 1951-52, see A. I. Anisimova, ed., "Baletnaia Truppa Bol'shovo Teatra SSSR na 1951-1952 gg.," *Balet Bol'shovo Teatra SSSR*.

[738] In 1952, the Opéra de Paris employed 39 male dancers and 66 women dancers; the Opéra-Comique employed 17 men and 36 women. See "L'Oeuvre de nos Théâtres Lyriques," *L'Homme Libre*, 4 July 1952, Series Opera.Arch.20, Folder 124, BMO.

[739] Jean Silvant, "Comment vivent les danseurs en U.R.S.S.," *Toute la Danse et la Musique*, March 1956, 5. In 1952, the RTLN employed 39 male ballet dancers against 66 women ballet dancers.

without fearing judgment; to the contrary, they would be respected as disciplined professionals who served their country through art. To French observers, too, Soviet men projected masculinity-preserving competence and confidence. In a caption for a photograph depicting a Soviet dancer holding his partner above eye level, one journalist declared Soviet male dancers to be "robust athletes who lift their partners with ease and grace that is unrivaled among us [French]. They have shown that it is possible to be a remarkable *danseur* without becoming effeminate and that masculine grace is not necessarily questionable."[740] Since the nineteenth century, French male dancers had been unable to shake the emasculation associated with their profession. The arrival of Soviet performers heralded new possibilities for male performers who could embody grace without compromising their manliness.

French audiences' fascination with Soviet bodies sometimes ranged from admiration to dehumanization and exoticization. When Nikolai Fadeyechev entered the stage during the 1958 Bolshoi tour, writers observed that a murmur filled the Opera house. Journalist Olivier Merlin recalled that women around him sighed, "Oh, he's so handsome. My god, he's so handsome!" Throughout the ballet, Merlin noted, "we admired this marvelous virile vision (finally!), this manly head with his strong jaw and his fine nose, set on an open neckline and an athlete's body…"[741] As Prince Siegfried in *Swan Lake*, Fadeyechev "transformed into a seraph, leaping to the sky like Nijinsky, his muscles supple and obeying…"[742] Arriving on the Palais Garnier stage

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[740] Henri Marque, "L'Affaire des Ballets Soviétiques," *Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant*, 13 May 1954, Opera.Presse.1954, BMO. Marque and a group of other Parisian journalists were among the privileged few to see the visiting Soviet ballet troupe perform in 1954 – their tour was cancelled on the eve of the premiere after the defeat of French forces in Indochina in May 1954. For more on the cancelled 1954 tour, see Chapter Three.

[741] Olivier Merlin, "Le Bolchoi de Moscou interprète 'Le Lac des Cygnes,'" *Le Monde*, 4 November 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

[742] Merlin, "Le Bolchoi de Moscou interprète."

fifteen years later, Vladimir Vasiliev was reduced to a "an incredible human machine marked by strength," with "black tights [that] outlined his trim body, …armed with muscles and nerves."[743] During the 1961 Kirov tour, Rudolf Nureyev impressed Parisian reporters his impossibly high leaps and Tatar heritage.[744] Merlin described, "[Nureyev's] waist was tied with a white scarf on a deep blue smock, his large, peculiar eyes and his chiseled cheekbones appearing under his plumed turban. His superbly swollen thighs visible in his pristine tights - it was Nijinsky in *Oiseau de feu* once again."[745] Other journalists highlighted Nureyev's "athletic neck and legs, with a Tatar face."[746] Such assessments implied that Nureyev's exotic, less "civilized" origins enabled easier access to brute strength and muscularity.[747] Another journalist dubbed him "the most monstrous of the *monstres sacrés* of dance," suggesting that Nureyev's reversion into near barbarity lent passion and virility to his performances.[748]

Open discussion about the faults of French *danseurs* encouraged comparison with Soviet dancers, as we saw in the *Toute la Danse* dialogue about whether the French male dancer should be masculinized. One French observer remarked that Soviet men were all "much more robust than [our male dancers], and more slender.…they are agile, leaping, with full, rounded legs,

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[743] Jacqueline Cartier, "Il revient danser "Giselle" à l'Opéra," *France-Soir*, 2 October 1973, 4.SW.6141, BNF-Richelieu. For another example of this language, see J.S., "Le Premier Film sur le Ballet du Bolchoï," *Toute la Danse et la musique,* February 1958, 4.

[744] Nureyev came from a Tatar Muslim family and got his start dancing in local folk performances in the small town of Ufa, which is a 7-hour drive east from Kazan (the capital of the Russian republic of Tatarstan).

[745] Olivier Merlin, "Le ballet du Kirov à l'Opéra," *Le Monde*, 24 May 1961, Presse 142, BNF-Richelieu.

[746] Christine de Rivoyre, "Les Ballets de Léningrad, Qu'importent les flots de tulle et les torrents de perruques, allez voir les danseurs du Kirov: c'est sublime," *L'Express*, 25 May 1961, Presse 142, BNF-Richelieu.

[747] After his June 1961 defection, Western journalists completed the picture of Nureyev's exoticism by harping not just on his "Tatar" appearance, but also on his irascible attitude and capriciousness that, in the opinion of some critics, lapsed into unprofessionalism.

[748] Régine Gabbey, "Noureiev danse à Paris," *Réalités*, 19 May 1963, 88, Nureyev press file, CND.

stretched tight as an arrow, and they are all excellent partners."[749] Another commentator asked how it was possible that, unlike the "frivolous male performers of the West", the Bolshoi dancers never appeared short of breath nor dripping with sweat.[750] They did not merely carry ballerinas, but "literally juggled their partners, snatching them from the air in mid-flight, wielding them with one hand without any apparent effort."[751] Vasiliev became known as "a svelte giant,"[752] "gifted with an uncommon muscular strength and extraordinary extension that allowed him to take up the Opéra's large stage all by himself."[753]

Soviet dancers' masculine potency was coupled with austerity, which molded dancers' physique and performance into ideal representations of postwar Soviet power. The mystery behind the Soviet *danseurs*' incredible strength became a popular theme among French ballet goers and dance critics, who relished discussing the iron discipline for which the Bolshoi theater was known. As a result of this training regimen, the Soviet iteration of Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* looked little like the Romeo French audiences had grown to expect. As one critic remarked, Yuri Zhdanov "looked nothing like a frail adolescent. This was a man of iron…climbing Juliet's balcony with the facility acquired by a warrior's training."[754] The intense

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[749] Catherine Clairval, "Les Ballets du Bolchoï à l'Opéra de Paris," *Toute la Danse*, July-August 1958, 6-8.

[750] Olivier Merlin, "Qui sont ces danseurs du Bolchoï?," *Le Monde*, 26 April 1972, Fol.SW.150, BNF-Richelieu.

[751] "Le 'Bolchoï' à Londres," *La Danse*, October-November 1956, 25.

[752] Claude Baignères, "A l'Opéra, Vladimir Vassiliev dans Don Quichotte," *Le Figaro*, 25 April 1969, 4.SW.6141, BNF-Richelieu.

[753] Olivier Merlin, "Vassiliev: non pas un rival mais un égal de Noureev," *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 5 May 1969, 4.SW.6141, BNF-Richelieu.

[754] "Le 'Bolchoï' à Londres," *La Danse*, October-November 1956.

physical training required of Soviet dancers was coupled with asceticism and self-deprivation, made possible by conditions of life in the Soviet Union.[755]

Though lead performers in Soviet ballet companies were considered among the most fortunate of their nation's citizens, French journalists believed that dancers' careers also had a dark side: that all Soviet artists "paid for all the honor and fortune with unrelenting hard work."[756] When dancer Vasiliev toured in Paris with his wife, journalists asked explicitly about his exercise routine. In one interview, for example, Vasiliev explained that his exercise regime was so intense that during an eight-day vacation, he gained three kilos (about 6.6lbs), which he could quickly lose during a single performance of "Spartacus." Normally, he added, he weighed seventy kilos (about 154 lbs).[757] One journalist described Soviet men of the Bolshoi as "athletes with bird-like leaps and iron biceps…, all gifted with bunches of large muscles with which they are armored after six hours of daily training…."[758] This training was supplemented by a strict diet and by saying "*niet* to vodka" and all other alcohol.[759] Such descriptions of toned, self-restrained Soviet men permeated French descriptions of Soviet ballet, bolstered by the memory of Nijinsky, whose body served as an index for French and Soviet male dancers in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The Soviet performers' movements "testified to the obedience of superiorly trained muscles" with a conditioning regimen comparable to "that of stadium athletes." This

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[755] Merlin, "Qui sont ces danseurs du Bolchoï?"

[756] Bernard Feron, "La Troupe du Bolchoï à Paris: Des personalités de premiers plans dans l'aristocratie soviétique," *Le Monde*, 29 May 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

[757] René Sirvin, "Ce Van Gogh qui nous vient du froid: l'étoile du Bolchoï Vladimir Vassiliev," *L'Aurore*, 15 April 1972, 4.SW.6141, BNF-Richelieu.

[758] Oliver Merlin, "Qui sont ces danseurs du Bolchoï?"

[759] Jacqueline Cartier, "Vassiliev: Niet à la vodka," *France-Soir*, 5 October 1972, 4.SW.6141, BNF-Richelieu.

degree of discipline, along with the respect for authority within the troupe, appeared to distinguish Soviet dancers from their French counterparts.[760] The "uncommonly strong" Soviet dancer was meant to reflect ascendant Soviet political, cultural, and ideological confidence in the postwar era, all made possible by unwavering commitment and hard work. To some French viewers, however, Soviet discipline had gone too far: some performances felt "industrial," "systematized," with little freedom for dancers to interpret their roles; rather than true artists, they became "prisoners of the system."[761]

Soviet dancers' masculine credentials did not come only from their physique. Journalists and critics also factored in dancers' financial and professional backgrounds. The French press featured the origin stories of Soviet dancers who came from working class families – unlike most Opéra de Paris performers, who would have depended on the social connections and financial security of an upper-middle-class life to reach the Palais Garnier's illustrious halls. Vasiliev, for instance, had no shame about his humble beginnings. His father was a truck driver at a factory, where his mother worked as a cleaning lady. French journalists seemed amused by the fact that an international ballet star could come from such modest roots. He started dancing at nine years old, when he attended dance classes at a Pioneers' house,[762] until his dance instructors facilitated his entry into the Bolshoi choreographic school. One journalist remarked that Vasiliev was "the simplest, the most natural of boys," who, unlike most stars, did not take himself too seriously.[763] He seemed like a blond "tough guy" from Belleville (a reference to Belleville's history as a

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[760] Olivier Merlin, "La Leçon du Kirov," *Le Monde*, 16 June 1961, Presse 142, BNF-Richelieu.

[761] Paul Bourcier, "Prisonniers du Système," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 9 July 1970, 4.SW.6137, BNF-Richelieu.

[762] This organization was the Soviet Communist Party equivalent to Boy Scouts.

[763] René Sirvin, "Ce Van Gogh qui nous vient du froid."

working-class district).[764] Nureyev attracted the French media's attention for the same reason. The Western press repeated stories that his impoverished mother had fought off wolves to bring food to her children, and that, as a child, Nureyev had fainted at school from hunger.[765]

French journalists' interest in Soviet dancers' working-class heritage points to how class was gendered in 1950s-60s France. Observers implied that the strength and simplicity of a working man was "natural" – yet unlike Soviet dancers, most French *danseurs* came from the middle and upper classes and leveraged social and political connections to gain access to Paris's great Opéra house. Indeed, Soviet dancers themselves rejected notions of rank and prestige when the topic was raised, perhaps because such social distinctions would be counter to socialist ideals.[766] But the dancer's humble origins also bolstered his masculine persona. To Soviet audiences, such a background demonstrated that Vasiliev understood hard work and was willing to make sacrifices for the betterment of his community and country, unlike haughty, pampered bourgeois men. French audiences seemed just as compelled by this narrative. Their fascination with Soviet *danseurs'* unpretentious beginnings suggested that French contemporaries, too, wondered whether such an origin story deserved some credit for constructing such sturdy, unmannered men.

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[764] René Sirvin, "Les Mariés du Bolchoï Yekaterina et Vassiliev dansent à Paris où ils ont passé leur lune de miel en 1961", *L'Aurore*, March 5, 1969.

[765] Régine Gabbey, "Noureiev danse à Paris," *Réalités*, 19 May 1963, 90, Nureyev press file, CND. Richard Schickel, "Top male dancer who quit the Soviets dazzles the West," *Look*, 16 July 1963, 26, Nureyev press file, CND.

[766] One interviewer asked Vasiliev how he intended to maintain the title of "best [male] dancer in the world." Vasiliev replied that "such a pretentious qualification can sometimes have very harmful repercussions," and it can even prevent someone from improving further. "For this reason," he explained, "I won't allow myself to believe that I am the best in the world..." Vladimir Vasiliev in interview with Stéphan Ionesco, "Vladimir Vassiliev: 'Je ne me permets pas de me croire le meilleur,'" *La Tribune de Genève*, 8 April 1972, 4.SW.6141, BNF-Richelieu. Indeed, Soviet ballet companies did not use the common distinctions of "étoile" (star) and "first dancer" for the reason that such distinctions would be viewed as harmful to a dance troupe's collective spirit.

In some French ballet critics' eyes, however, masculine qualities could be as much a hindrance as an asset to a successful performance. Opéra de Paris dancer Michel Renault toured in the Soviet Union in early 1958, and upon his return observed that "the physique of male dancers [was] very different from that of French male dancers. If the Frenchman is light, the Russian is heavier and this discrepancy, from the very outset, produces differences in how the choreography is executed. Our *danseurs* are more elegant."[767] If French male dancers managed to be graceful at the cost of masculinity, Soviet dancers appeared to have the opposite problem. Like Renault, journalists opined that Soviet *danseurs*' bulk — and the acrobatic leaps designed to show off their strength — prevented them from achieving the elegant grace demanded from French male performers. A critic for *La Danse* supposed that the Soviet "Hercules" of the Bolshoi "paid little attention to grace and lightness" because these qualities were considered insufficiently masculine.[768]

One French writer noted that Yuri Soloviev's choreography indeed showed off his muscular strength, but as a result he was never able to embody the lyricism and emotional expression demanded of his role.[769] Another dance critic derided acclaimed dancer Vladimir Preobrazhensky as "an athlete rather than a dancer…his only function is to be an excellent *porteur*."[770] Similarly, Nikolai Fadeyechev was deemed "masculine" – but at the cost of a certain "heaviness," a quality acceptable for *porteurs* whose main task was to lift the ballerina, but less

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[767] Michel Renault, "Mon voyage en U.R.S.S.," *Danse et Rythmes*, February 1958, 7-8.

[768] "Le 'Bolchoï' à Londres," *La Danse*, October-November 1956, 25.

[769] R.M. Hofmann, "A l'Opéra de Paris 'La Fleur de Pierre' de Serge Prokofiev," *Journal Musical Français*, 6 June 1961, Presse 142, BNF-Richelieu.

[770] Germaine Boullier, "Belgrade," *La Danse*, June 1957, 34.

desirable for roles that required artistic expression.[771] Other commentators accused Soviet companies of casting aside artistry for the explicit purpose of showing off male dancers' virility. In one dance, the male performers sported costumes resembling military uniforms – a move taken, in some French critics' eyes, "for the sole purpose of showing off the [male] dancers' masculinity." Perhaps it was considered a cheap trick to showcase men in uniform with the Soviet military successes of World War II still fresh on viewers' minds. Still, their manliness was not all costumes and artifice: the writer conceded that the performers' manliness was undeniable in the effortless way they picked up their partners and held them up high.[772] A successfully masculine performance came at the cost of "inelegance." As another critic framed this trade off, "the male dancers' heaviness stemmed from a bias toward virility" in the Russian style.[773]

In some cases, evaluations about Soviet dancers' lack of elegance meshed with critiques of Soviet society, particularly in critiques that projected "lower-class" qualities onto dancers in order to explain their lack of refinement on stage. In one case a journalist attended the Soviet performance of *Giselle*, a ballet that was well-known and commonly performed in the French repertoire. He recalls a scene in which the Prince entered the stage dramatically, his back hunched by grief and suffering. Compared with the French performance of this scene the Bolshoi iteration looked to him like a "parody": "when these men aren't dancing," he explained, "they

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[771] Lise Brunel, "Maia Plissetskaia danse 'Le Lac des Cygnes,'" *Les Lettres Françaises*, 16 January 1964, 4.SW.200, BNF-Richelieu.

[772] François de Santerre, "Au Chatelet: 2e et 3e Programmes des Ballets Soviétiques," *La Danse*, August-September 1956, 13.

[773] André Denissov, "Retour du New York City Ballet," *La Danse*, October-November 1956, 18.

walk onstage like a bunch of peasants."[774] This French observer viewed Soviet ballet as a representation of Communist society – lacking elegance, polish, and training. Through dance tours, the movement of male bodies on stage was interpreted through a political lens and employed as an ideological critique of Soviet society. Such critiques conceded that the Soviet Union may have possessed brute strength but asserted that the communist nation had yet to rival France when it came to refinement and *civilisation*.

"Soft" Men: Soviet Commentary on French *Danseurs*

The arrival of French dancers in the Soviet Union was also a hot topic in the Soviet press, but it is important to note that French and Soviet media sources do not lend themselves to straightforward comparison.[775] Although every French media outlet was motivated by its own political agenda, the Soviet Union permitted a much smaller range for expression of opinion. The Soviet Communist Party supervised the Soviet press, meaning that Soviet journalists could work only within the limits of what the party deemed acceptable. Indeed, the Communist Party viewed the press as a central pedagogical tool — a means of spreading information, culture, and education among the Soviet population.[776]

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[774] Jean Laurent, "Cinquante ans de retard," *Artatou*, 13 June 1958, R.Supp.6073, BNF-Richelieu.

[775] One difference between the Soviet and French press is obvious at a glance: while French newspapers and magazines are filled with eye-catching advertisements, headlines, and photos, most Soviet media publications are filled margin-to-margin with text. While the occasional photo was featured, they were not the central focus. Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 6.

[776] Because the press was more centrally organized in the Soviet Union, newspapers did not need to compete for readership in the same way that Western papers did. Instead, Soviet papers were often geared toward particular nationalities or occupational groups.[776] Due to this distinct role of the press in the Soviet Union, Soviet media sources must be regarded as reflecting officially accepted opinions rather than necessarily that of — for instance — ballet critics more generally. In the Soviet world of ballet criticism, a select number of voices dominate the conversation in print media, several of whom were "people's artists," employed as dancers themselves. For this reason, Soviet discussions of French dancers are both less varied and less colorful than French journalists' commentary on Soviet ballet. It is nonetheless possible to trace an official narrative about the role of Soviet ballet —

Soviet journalists and ballet critics asserted that French male dancers of the 1950s and 1960s had clear insufficiencies. These critiques often aligned with what French commentators said about their own male performers. Many Soviet observers were perplexed by the Opéra de Paris *danseurs*' "softness" (miagkost') – a quality described as "especially intrinsic to French male dancers."[777] Soviet audience members and writers described French male performers as insufficiently masculine and lacking the proper technique in male dance that would be imparted by exposure to Russian pedagogy. Soviet ballet critics praised the technical contributions of Russian classical ballet, which were a point of national pride and cultural accomplishment. The contrast between French and Soviet male dancers accentuated the difference between the Western and Soviet ballet schools and was used to argue that the Russian tradition outmatched that of Western ballet companies. Cold War battles unfolded through cultural competitions, and as both countries viewed themselves as the torchbearer of the classical ballet's heritage, dance became a key battlefield in Franco-Soviet competition. As symbols of a postwar nation's strength and vitality, male dancers figured as central players in this rivalry. Soviet critics appeared confident that French *danseurs* fell short, reflecting poorly on French ballet, bourgeois art, and the physical state of French men.

Soviet commentators implied that a country's male dancers should showcase the best that a nation has to offer, suggesting that France was falling behind culturally and physically. Journalist Natalia Roslavleva enumerated the foreign male dancers in the Opéra de Paris ballet, inviting readers to speculate about what the purported preponderance of foreigners among the

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and Soviet male dancers in particular — on the Cold War global stage, and how Soviet men distinguished themselves from those of capitalist nations. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism*, 6.

[777] Nikolai El'yash, "Klod Bessi i Attilio Labis," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura,* 28 November 1961, 4.

company's lead men might indicate. After discussing the trend that many of most admired French performers were trained by Russian teachers, Roslavleva remarked, "Peter Van Dijk, a student of Tatyana Gzovskaya, is one of the leading male dancers at the Grand Opera (there called a "principal dancer"). He is German, his surname is of Dutch origin, he was born in Bremen, and danced at the Berlin Opera. Yuli Algaroff, as is well-known, is Bulgarian. If the Grand Opera administration must invite foreign male dancers from other countries, that says something about the condition of their ballet."[778] Roslavleva implies that the state of male dance in French ballet had become so impoverished that the Opéra de Paris ballet looked abroad to fill its theater with sufficiently talented, capable men. She also suggests that for some male dancers, finding a Russian instructor offered a solution to the "poor" training in male dance provided by Western European teachers. As she explains, "many male dancers from the Grand Opera feel the inadequacies of the style of men's dance taught to them, and turn to Alexander Volinin — a teacher in Paris and student of Tikhomirov ([Volinin] just died in 1955) — or study with [Olga] Preobrazhenska….Whatever happened to the French school, once known for pure, rigorously kept lines, soft elegance, and that impeccable - if slightly cold - chivalry?"[779] Roslavleva viewed French ballet as in decline, and Soviet ballet in ascendency — a transition for which male dancers served as an index. Indeed, French *danseurs* themselves, in her view, were aware of their own deficiencies and flocked to Russian teachers in order to resolve them.

Part of the problem with French ballet was that in the nineteenth century, the ballerina eclipsed the male dancer — a development that, according to Soviet commentators, never

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[778] Natalia Roslavleva, "Russkaia, frantsuzskaia, ital'ianskaia shkoly klassicheskogo tantsa, " n.d., RGALI, f. 2966, op. 1, d. 13, l. 75.

[779] Roslavleva, "Russkaia, frantsuzskaia, ital'ianskaia shkoly klassicheskogo tantsa," n.d., RGALI, f. 2966, op. 1, d. 13, l. 85.

occurred in Russian ballet. As an article in *Soviet Artist* observed of French ballet, "Starting from the 1830s, with the rise of Romantic ballet, male dance was no longer a priority, and Parisian stages saw the primacy of the ballerina." By the second half of the nineteenth century, the journalist elaborates that "prioritizing women's dance attained a hyperbolic scope. Male parts in ballets were even increasingly played by women *en travesti*, who were wearing men's costumes."[780] French audiences' preference for the female dancer perplexed and amused Soviet observers, who viewed this trait in French dance as an otherizing quality that set Western ballet apart from Russian classicism. Famed Soviet choreographer Igor Moiseyev had a similar response to *travesti* performers when he saw the Opéra de Paris ballet perform *Coppélia* during his dance company's tour in Paris in 1955. As he observed, "the ballet *Coppélia* was staged in the style of Nuitter and Saint Leon[781] with all the archaism of ballet from the last century, with notional gestures rather than realistic acting, with *travesti* (women playing men's roles), and with unsophisticated and primitive dances by the *corps de ballet*. It seems to me that we should not keep the show in such a primitive form, which eliminates the possibility of conveying the full depth of human experience and provokes a sense of irony in modern viewers."[782] In Soviet viewers' perspective, the transition toward "hyperbolic" admiration of the ballerina paralleled the "significant decline" of ballet theater in France, and in all of Western Europe.[783]

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[780] Natalia Roslavleva, "Frantsuzskii Balet," *Sovetskii Artist,* 28 May 1958.

[781] Charles-Louis-Étienne Nuitter wrote the libretto and designed the mise-en-scène for the original 1870 premiere of Coppélia, while Arthur Saint-Léon was the ballet's original choreographer. The Opéra de Paris ballet had preserved Nuitter and Saint-Léon's contributions to Coppélia in their 1955 performance, rather than updating the ballet with modern choreography or designs.

[782] Igor Moiseyev, "Otchet o gastroliakh Gosudarstvennogo ansamblia narodnogo tantsa Soiuza SSCR v Parizhe i Londone," RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 64.

[783] Roslavleva, "Frantsuzskii Balet," *Sovetskii Artist,* 28 May 1958.

One dancer who watched the Opéra de Paris ballet perform during their 1958 tour in the Soviet Union targeted the male dancers' costumes because, in his opinion, the garments only highlighted the performers' insufficiencies. Turning to his reflections on the male members of the dance company, he notes that "above all, [they wore] unfortunate costumes, designed by Mr. Faust. The costumes don't give the impression of masculinity and excessively "expose" the dancer, highlighting the inadequacies on certain male bodies."[784] The problem lay not with the costumes alone, but with the fact that the French male bodies on stage could not measure up to the scrutiny permitted by such tight-fitting, revealing attire.

The upstaging of male dancers by the ballerina and literal replacement of male dancers with women signaled a passé performance that had not been adequately adapted to contemporary audiences. French viewers often accused Soviet ballet companies of sticking too faithfully to stale and outdated Russian classicism, but Soviet observers made similar critiques about French ballet, supporting them with observations about the Opéra de Paris ballet's gender distribution in performances. For Soviet observers, the prominence of male dancers on stage represented the capability and authority of an entire national ballet school. By neglecting the men's dance training and hiding male dancers behind ballerinas, the Opéra de Paris ballet had set itself on a path toward inevitable decay. In Soviet ballet critics' eyes, the condition of France's most prominent symbol of cultural achievement was reflected in the feeble, poorly dressed bodies of its men.

In Soviet observers' eyes, a similar problem arose when French performers' bodies failed to align with the manly characters they were supposed to personify. For instance, First Dancer

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[784] Mikhail Gabovich, "Pervoe vystuplenie frantsuzskogo baleta," 1958, RGALI f. 2966, op. 1, d. 432, l. 24.

Michel Renault, though considered to be a "genuine Frenchman on stage" with "great charisma" and flexibility, failed to adequately embody his role, "Young Man," in *Les Mirages*. An article in *Sovetskaia Kul'tura* observed a notable discrepancy between the choreographic text and the man himself. In Renault's duet with a ballerina who played the role of "Shadow," the two performers failed to embody the gendered expectations of their roles: "the Shadow [was] masculine, yet the man [was] feminine." The critic viewed the "passivity" of Renault's performance as part of a larger problem within French ballet, which in his opinion tended to feature plotlines that "apologized for passivity [and] weakness of will."[785] Though male dancers were supposed to portray masculinity in physical form while on stage, Soviet dance critics were unconvinced that even the best French *danseurs* met standards for a convincing masculine performance.

Observers in the Soviet Union made clear that embodying masculinity on stage also depended on performing "masculine" choreographic vocabulary and displaying "masculine" traits (strength of will, determination, authority). Physical appearance was not enough to achieve a "manly" persona. As dancer Mikhail Gabovich noted, "the arsenal of movements in [French] male dance essentially lies in rotations (small and large pirouettes, turns in the air) and in groups of small leg beats." In his assessment, French dancers Peter van Dijk, Yuli Algaroff, and Lucien Duthoit displayed sufficient mastery of challenging leg beats, which were a key movement in male dance. The problem, Gabovich opined, lay in the fact that "men's dance also requires large flying jumps in a variety of combinations — listing them all is not possible here. This facet [of male dance] was not reflected in the [Opéra de Paris] program as it should have been, showing that [such jumps] evidently do not hold a large place in the dance practice of male

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[785] Mikhail Gabovich, "Pervye vpechatleniia," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 7 June 1958.

performers."[786] In Russian dance, flying leaps demonstrated strength and enabled dancers to take up space on the stage in a show of mastery and authority. By forgoing this aspect of male choreographic vocabulary, Gabovich suggests, French male dancers relinquished a successful performance of masculinity on stage.

Soviet critiques of French male dancers demonstrate how male dance became entangled with ideas about national strength and physical culture. As embodiments of a nation's strength and discipline, male dancers were held to similar standards as soldiers and athletes in the Soviet Union.[787] Rigorous training, self-discipline, patriotism, and strength were all demanded of Soviet male dancers. Soviet ballet critics looked upon "poorly trained," deficient French men on stage with cynicism, leaving little doubt as to which ideology produced more impressive masculine specimens. Soviet theater workers, diplomats, and journalists relished the feeling that – when it came to their model for the modern man, at least – ballet tours had confirmed that the Soviet way had a clear advantage over that of liberal democracies.

Conclusion

With the introduction of affordable air travel and the opening of Franco-Soviet cultural relations that enabled Cold War dance tours, postwar conceptions of national identity and masculinity crystalized around male ballet dancers. Because of *danseur*'s symbolic weight, his body became a contentious site where Cold War rhetoric met ballet aesthetics. As French and Soviet people worked out their nation's position in the postwar world, the male dancer variously

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[786] Gabovich, "Pervoe vystuplenie frantsuzskogo baleta," 1958, RGALI f. 2966, op. 1, d. 432, l. 24.

[787] Perhaps for this reason, male dancers were subject to scrutiny that did not apply to ballerinas, who were generally very well received by Soviet observers.

became an arena of competition, shame, or heroic triumph. Examining the discursive tensions around Cold War dancers' bodies reveals how reporters, dancers, and other members of the theater community understood the gendered boundaries between East and West. Travel restrictions, surveillance of touring dancers, and Soviet press censorship were only a few of the obstacles obstructing more fluid cultural interactions between the two nations. Despite these challenges, contemporary French and Soviet constructions (and deconstructions) of the *danseur*'s masculinity illuminate one way that dance tours transformed debates about the male dancer in the mid-twentieth-century Parisian theatrical world.[788]

Though reactions to the *danseur* were shaped in part by the nations' differing experiences of World War II and views on Cold War politics, they were also the product of how performative masculinity had been constructed in both countries since the turn of the century. In nineteenth-century France, theatergoers, choreographers, and journalists had rejected the male dancer as a *grotesquerie*, contributing to his replacement by women dancers *en travesti*. The eroticization of theater and ballerinas' reliance on wealthy consorts in relationships that often ventured into courtesanship further stigmatized the presence of men onstage.[789] This discomfort with French male dancers lingered well into the twentieth century, when Russian and Soviet dance companies introduced new prototypes for masculinity in ballet.

Like other Soviet cultural workers, choreographers had reconfigured definitions of manliness and brought men to the forefront of productions to serve an ideology that bound together masculinity with athleticism, modernity, and patriotism (in contrast with bourgeois

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[788] Indeed, because of press censorship and surveillance of performers in the Soviet Union, transformations stemming from cultural exchanges are more identifiable in French media, interviews, and memoirs.

[789] See Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve*.

passivity, weakness, and stagnation.) In twentieth-century France, on the other hand, the theater world questioned the French *danseur*'s virility and often preserved his traditionally secondary role supporting the ballerina. With the start of Franco-Soviet dance tours, contrasting conceptions of the male ballet dancer collided as the seemingly apolitical question of men's presence on the theatrical stage became inseparable from Cold War cultural one-up-manship. To many onlookers, the apparent strength – or weakness – of *danseurs* reflected their country's capacity to produce not just formidable performance art, but also a healthy, energetic population. But for French viewers, the sight of the Soviet *danseur* also stirred up pre-Cold War anxieties about the state of French men – an apprehension that had made male dancers targets of criticism for nearly a century.

Though the sight of bulky Soviet men did not usually win French viewers over to communist ideology, Parisian theatergoers remarked upon men like Vasiliev, Nureyev, Fadeyechev, and Gabovich and asked themselves why French ballet schools could not produce comparable men. Was it matter of style, ideology, or some inherently Slavic quality? Though French observers never found a definitive answer as to what their male dancers lacked, Franco-Soviet dance tours had introduced a new aesthetic of balletic masculinity to postwar French audiences, galvanizing efforts to reform male dance along the lines of the Soviet *danseur*. If Serge Lifar deserves some credit for reviving the male dancer in France, the 1950s arrival of Soviet companies and their athletic *danseurs* also played a role in changing conceptions of men on French ballet stages. Within the same decade of the Soviet companies' return to Paris, more boys enrolled in the Opéra de Paris school of ballet than ever before.[790]

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[790] Karthas, *When Ballet Became French*, 261.

The legacy of the Ballets Russes, and the revitalization of interest in Russian dance that followed Franco-Soviet ballet tours, inspired French choreographers, theater administrators, and dance critics to envision a more prominent place for athleticism and muscle in their own nation's male performers.[791] As decades passed and conceptions of France's role in the world returned to surer footing, even Soviet observers began to view French male dancers differently. As one Soviet journalist noted during the Opéra de Paris ballet's 1970 tour in the Soviet Union, "I must admit that over the years since the Grand Opéra's first tours in Moscow, the nature of its male dance has changed a bit. French male dancers, without losing their luster, lightness, or elegance of their demeanor, have acquired great masculinity, character, and strength."[792]

[791] This transformation, though inspired by Franco-Soviet dance tours and the rekindled influence of the Ballets Russes, did not take place in a vacuum. It was also a part of larger twentieth-century efforts to professionalize ballet and restore the legitimacy of dancers as artists – initiatives in which, as Ilyana Karthas points out – reconceptualization of both the male and female body were central. Karthas, *When Ballet Became French*, 302.

[792] Nikolai El'yash, "Nashi gosti: vstrechi s legendarnoi 'Grand-Opera,'" *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 24 January 1970.

Chapter Six: A Dance Genre for the People?: French and Soviet Folk Dance in the Global Cold War

In 1951, the French ambassador to Moscow returned to Paris to negotiate a possible music or performance exchange between the two nations. Even before ballet, folk dance emerged as a potential avenue for furthering Franco-Soviet cultural relations. The ambassador proposed bringing the Moiseyev company to France, but the idea was quickly ruled out because of the company's dubious ideological message and because, at the time, the Soviet Union would not receive a French dance troupe in return. French officials decided that bringing "a troupe like the Moiseyev company [was] inadvisable because no comparable company would be sent to the Soviet Union, and [this visit] would only serve as propaganda for communist organizations."[793] By 1955, however, the Moiseyev company became the first dance company to complete a tour on French soil.

In the 1950s and 1960s, folk performance became a tool for international influence in ways that ballet did not and could not. Folk dance has been left out of studies of Cold War dance tours, even though the genre played a crucial role in these exchanges and was even more symbolically loaded than ballet because of all that folk art represented in the competition between communism and liberal democracy. France and the Soviet Union both mobilized folk performance abroad to broadcast their countries' respect for heterogeneity, self-determination, and popular art forms. Specifically, this genre was meant to convey authenticity, respect for national minorities, and preservation of folk traditions. These qualities became key assets during Cold War cultural battles that unfolded in the midst of decolonization. As this chapter

[793] Report on Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges, 18 June 1951, Series 208Q0, Carton 198, MAE.

demonstrates, French folk companies struggled to compete with Soviet ones during international tours and folk festivals. For France, poorly received folk performances provoked anxiety and shame at being outperformed or rejected by newly independent peoples at folk festivals in the independent countries of Tunisia and Algeria. More concerning still was when Soviet folk companies received laurels and were even imitated by folk troupes in former French colonies. In the long term, the relative failure of French folk troupes is most obvious in the fact that few French companies from the 1950s-1970s remain well known. Their prior existence can be confirmed primarily by old record albums available on antique vendors' websites. The Moiseyev company, in contrast, is still performing and continues to enjoy international celebrity. Even though the Soviet Union is gone, one of its most powerful cultural relics remains alive and well. By contrast, few outside of France have heard of the French companies that were sent to compete with the illustrious Moiseyev company during the Cold War era.

Folk performance became a sensitive arena for Franco-Soviet cultural competition, because excellence in folk dance represented a country's ability to cultivate and respect rich popular artistic traditions. As we saw in Chapter One, Soviet commentators unfavorably compared French ballet companies' neglect of folk traditions with Soviet ballets, which were expressly woven with musical and choreographic folk motifs. In France, by contrast, the folk genre did not wield the same degree of political and social value; critics systemically ignored or even disparaged folk performance, especially before the Moiseyev's arrival in Paris demonstrated the genre's potential.[794]

[794] Indeed, the Kirov ballet company's valorization of folk themes may be – at least in part – behind French critics' assertions that the Kirov's performances appeared dowdy and antiquated.

As this rivalry revealed, however, "folk" was a contested term whose meaning had different stakes in the two countries. In France, this genre was associated with the countryside, and folk dance offered a means of expression and diversion for the peasantry. Because of its pastoral roots, the genre was tied to traditional visions of France as an agricultural nation with many small land holders.[795] Eugen Weber argued that folk traditions, and the regional identities that accompanied them, dissipated under the weight of French government efforts to centralize and homogenize French culture – a process, according to Weber, completed by World War I.[796]

Other historians have shown, however, that the project of constructing a uniform French culture was far from finished even in the mid-twentieth century. Folklore studies became a discipline in France during the interwar years, when French political leaders on the right and left agreed that, as Herman Lebovics explained, "art for the people had…to root itself in folklore," though leftist portrayals made room for workers in depictions of French national identity.[797] Lebovics examined how projects to transform Vietnamese peasants into Frenchmen inspired new efforts by French Conservatives to bring the country back to its pastoral roots in the 1930s. He argued that "the genesis and development of French folklore [was] an intellectually symbiotic process with that of the colonial rerooting project."[798] "Folk" offered itself as a form of expression emanating from rural and colonial subaltern populations, which could be wielded by governments to demonstrate the nation's steadfast connection to agricultural life and esteem for

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[795] See Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 117 and Marcel Faure, *Les Paysans dans la société française* (Paris: Colin, 1967), 15.

[796] Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, x.

[797] Herman Lebovics, *True France*: *The Wars Over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1992), 160.

[798] Lebovics, *True France,* 133.

"authentic" popular art. In the 1930s, Soviet efforts to preserve folk traditions became a source of inspiration for French ethnologists. Creators of the Musée de l'Homme toured Soviet folklore museums, which they found better staffed and resourced than comparable Parisian institutions.[799] This project of capturing the essence of French identity in folk culture included the participation of French communists who remained active in the 1950s and 1960s.[800] Even if politicians across the political spectrum had agreed upon the centrality of folk art to French national identity,[801] this cross-partisan commitment did not translate into a state-funded, thriving national folk company – as a similar impulse had during the Soviet nationality policies of the 1920s and 1930s.

Initiatives to preserve folk culture further intensified in Vichy France, which ushered in a thriving array of folk and singing groups. Rather than conveying a message of unity across diverse cultural groups, the Vichy-era folk ensembles emphasized national and ethnic purity. Each regional group limited itself to performers, costumes, songs, and dances from within its own region of France; some groups even performed in the local *patois*, intended to create the impression that real art emerged from "the people" rather than being imposed by external influences, whether ideological or national.[802] In the postwar period, "folk" could not completely

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[799] Alice Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 139.

[800] Notably, Louis Aragon and other leadership of the Parti Communiste Français. Lebovics, *True France,* 157-159.

[801] Shanny Peer demonstrates how 1937 Paris World's Fair organizers mobilized folklore and peasant culture as assets, rather than impediments, to modern French identity. Peer explains, those who planned the Fair "suggested how French farmers, regional artisans, and other producers could capitalize on traditional French strengths – such as small-scale, high-quality production of luxury goods, regional specialization, diversity, and even Old World charm – to carve a niche for themselves and their products in the modern economy." Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 World's Fair* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 3.

[802] Lebovics, *True France*, 172 and Jonathyne Briggs, *Sounds French: Globalization, Cultural Communities, and Pop Music, 1958-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 54. "Folk" was mobilized in the same way in Nazi Germany, where folk songs and dances were promoted as an example of "simplicity and elementary greatness in art" as an authentic representation of "the German soul," purported to be the opposite of cold, rational modernity. At

shake the negative association with these projects to achieve ethnic purity.[803] By the 1950s and 1960s "folk" was generally considered anachronistic and counter to the progressive ideal of modern France.[804] In areas where "folk" continued to thrive, the genre represented a threatening rallying cry in defense of a region's cultural specificity, exposing the friction between the nation's regionalism and the French state's efforts to centralize national and cultural identity.[805] During the 1960s, French Ministry of Culture policies promoted the idea that high art was the epitome of French national identity, and Minister of Culture André Malraux took initiative to spread this centralized definition of Frenchness out to the provinces.[806] Mired in the struggle between region and nation, and rural and urban, definitions of "folk" were also bound up in the genre's roots in "the people," an origin that bestowed authenticity and paths for democratizing art. In the end, the Ministry of Culture's aspirations of cultural unity by homogenization won out over French dance critics' and diplomats' to innovate and refurbish French folk dance to rival their Soviet and Eastern bloc contenders.

Whereas French Ministry of Culture officials viewed regional folk companies as a potential threat to a unified French national identity, Soviet companies explicitly leveraged diverse folk traditions to legitimize Soviet political and cultural power. At the First Congress of

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this time, there was much concern about eliminating "Bolshevik" influence from German art and music. Michael H. Kater, *Culture in Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 47-8.

[803] One subgenre of "folk," the *chanson*, did manage to thrive in the postwar era because, though was considered a product of the village, it contained both modern and popular elements. Briggs, *Sounds French*, 53.

[804] Briggs, *Sounds French*, 55.

[805] For example, Briggs examines how 1970s Breton musicians forged a "hybridized musical culture that stressed Brittany's importance and place in the modern world…help[ing] redefine Breton regionalism…in opposition to the universalist notions of the 1960s." Briggs, *Sounds French*, 111.

[806] Herman Lebovics, *Mona Lisa's Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

Soviet Writers in 1934, Maksim Gorky declared that socialist realism – and hence, the nation's artistic productions – should be based on the "folklore of the toiling people."[807] "Folk" served the Soviet Communist Party's dual initiative to elevate less elitist art forms and ensure that the nation's art was created for and by not just peasants, but a wider population: the *narod* (people). Indeed, the adjective used for "folk" troupes was "*narodnyi*" – the people's.[808] "Folk" was not considered a lesser artform. In fact, Soviet artists demonstrated their cultural savvy by showing knowledge of and appreciation for folk themes and stories, which were supposed to bolster musical and choreographic innovation.[809] Authenticity was also key: Soviet composers drew inspiration from folk and classical music to produce "real" and "good" productions in which "the people" could recognize themselves while benefiting from the edification offered by the right kind of art.[810]

Soviet folk ensembles' portraits of peaceful coexistence among diverse national groups emerged from Soviet nationality policies of the 1920s and 1930s, which promoted the languages, cultural practices, and folklore of national republics while integrating them under Soviet leadership.[811] To consecrate folklore's revered place in the Soviet Union, the Moiseyev

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[807] Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 165.

[808] Susannah Lockwood Smith, "Soviet Arts Policy, Folk Music, and National Identity: The Piatnitskii State Russian Folk Choir, 1927-1945," PhD diss. (University of Minnesota, 1997), 126. William Harkins argues that *narod* (the noun form) is untranslatable, because it encompasses at least three meanings: "nation, people, and folk." The term's ambiguity contributed to some confusion among Stalin-era literary critics who agreed that *narodnost'* equaled "good style" or "good Russian style" but were otherwise uncertain about the genre's aesthetic boundaries. William E. Harkins, "Foreword," in *Folklore for Stalin: Russian Folklore and Pseudo-folklore of the Stalin Era* by Frank J. Miller (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[809] Frolova-Walker, "'National in Form, Socialist in Content,'" 333.

[810] Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 31.

[811] See Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 269. This policy of encouraging national identity among minority groups appears

Ensemble was established in 1937 and became the first professional folk dancing troupe in the world. With the foundation of a national folk company, the Soviet Union began pouring financial resources into folk festivals, along with new professional and nonprofessional folk ensembles.[812] The ensembles became an ideal metaphor for the unification of diverse Soviet peoples. Soviet dance scholar Valeriia Ural'skaia explained that, in folk dance "all peoples meet on the same stage and the language of dance unites them in a friendly family, in which each person shares part of themselves, their family, and their people."[813] This "family" was unified under the guiding hand of the Soviet Communist Party, so it was important that "folk" performances be optimistic and patriotic.[814] In an introduction to a manual on popular song and dance, scholar T. Ustinova exalted the nation's folk troupes, produced by "Leninist-Stalinist national policies that ensured the full flowering of a culture that was socialist in content and national in form. The Party lovingly and caringly helps the people's talents flourish."[815] Ustinova viewed Soviet folk performance as a natural product of Soviet nationality policies, and she references Stalin's 1934

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counterintuitive to the Soviet project. Indeed, some Bolsheviks (e.g., Nikolai Bukharin and Georgy Piatakov) believed that after capitalism was eliminated, national identities would vanish. On the other hand, Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin asserted that, following a Marxist interpretation, rapid industrialization would contribute to heightened nationalist sentiment – a threat that had to be depoliticized and centrally managed by the state. The diverse nationalities would be unified by socialism, and allowances for nationalist expression would theoretically prevent any nationalist revolutions. See Terry Martin, "Modernization or Neo-traditionalism" in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (New York: Routledge, 2000), 352-3.

[812] The trend became so widespread that many collective farms, factories, and other workplaces organized their own folk companies. By the postwar period, the Soviet republics had established their own folk troupes, most of which were influenced in form and substance by the Moiseyev ensemble. Shay, *Choreographic Politics,* 64.

[813] Valeriia Iosifovna Ural'skaia and Iurii Efimovich Sokolovskii, *Narodnaia khoreografiia*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Iskusstvo, 1972), 5.

[814] See Anthony Shay, *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation and Power* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 81 and Suzanne Ament, *Sing to Victory!: Song in Soviet Society during World War II* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2019).

[815] T.A. Ustinova, *Russkie narodnye tantsy* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo kul'turno prosvetitel'noi literatury, 1950), 3-4.

assertion that the Soviet Union's many cultures be "national in form and socialist in content" so that they could be "fuse[d] into one General Culture."[816] Soviet artists and cultural affairs officials framed "folk" as not outdated, but progressive in its authenticity and proximity to "the people." "Folk" was also defined in a way consistent with communist ideology as a genre that united the country's diverse populations while remaining grounded in an optimistic portrayal of agricultural and industrial life and labor in the Soviet Union. As we will see below, the "authenticity" of troupes like the Moiseyev ensemble depended less on the origin of their material and more on whether their dances conformed with prescribed, socialist realist ideals of Soviet life.

With this interpretation of "folk" in mind, the Soviet Union exported its folk performers for ideological and diplomatic reasons. Reverence for folk tradition suggested respect for cultural diversity and implied that "the people's" art was worthy of a stage. This messaging became all the more crucial during decolonization, when colonial influence waned in newly independent African and Asian nations. Successful Soviet folk performances conveyed that the Soviet Union treasured and prioritized popular expression as representative of the nation, unlike liberal-democratic nations that prioritized "elite" dance like ballet. Instead, Soviet dancers excelled at *both*, appearing to walk the contested line between populism and elitism in the theatrical arts.

In this chapter, I refer to an ensemble or dance as "folk" if contemporaries at the time did so.[817] I place the term "folk" in quotation marks when the genre is discussed broadly (not

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[816] Joseph Stalin, cited by Marina Frolova-Walker, "'National in Form, Socialist in Content': Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51, no. 2 (1998): 331.

[817] In French, journalists and diplomats most often used the term "*folklorique*" and occasionally the term "*populaire*." In Russian, contemporaries preferred "*narodnyi*" (the people's), which was usually defined by French observers as "*folklorique*."

describing a particular dance or company), or when definitions of "folk" are themselves analyzed or compared. Although the term facilitates juxtaposing the two nations' companies placed within this genre, the performances discussed here primarily comprised invented traditions and encompassed varying degrees of modification from original village dances. My comparisons of Soviet and French folk companies developed out of contemporaries' own observations, which illustrate that people of the time considered the ensembles to be in the same genre.

In existing studies of Cold War dance tours, the role of folk dance is often overlooked. In the small number of studies that examine folk companies, the focus is typically on American-Soviet cultural relations.[818] Dance scholar Anthony Shay examined the Moiseyev Company's successful Cold War tours to the United States, pointing out that – in part – the Soviet folk company was so successful because it had no American analog and appeared incomparable to genres of American dance at the time.[819] After 1954, the Moiseyev company toured in Western Europe and the United States and was often sent to perform in developing and post-colonial countries throughout the Cold War. The company's purported heterogeneity served as a foil to racist Jim Crow laws in the United States and suggested that the Soviet Union could respectfully collaborate with diverse ethnic, religious, and national groups.[820]

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[818] Shay, "The Moiseyev Dance Company: Ancestor of the Genre," *Choreographic Politics,* 57-8; Clare Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 42-3; Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 72-3; Catherine Gunther Kodat, *Don't Act, Just Dance: The Metapolitics of Cold War Culture* (New Brunswick, NK: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 131-2; Anne Searcy, *Ballet in the Cold War: A Soviet-American Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 83; Victoria Hallinan, "Cold War Cultural Exchange and the Moiseyev Dance Company: American Perception of Soviet Peoples," PhD diss. (Northeastern University, 2013).

[819] Anthony Shay, *The Igor Moiseyev Company: Dancing Diplomats* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2019), 81.

[820] Anthony Shay, *The Igor Moiseyev Company,* 36.

Unlike the United States, France did have folk performance companies that were enlisted to compete against Soviet folk dance. France's folk troupes were predominately small (fewer than twenty performers), private ensembles that developed from initiatives to preserve local cultures within France. Bolstered by passionate local intellectuals and leaders who resisted the homogenization of France, Basque troupes (notably the Etorki Ensemble) became the best known of these regional ensembles.[821] Though France possessed companies similar to the Moiseyev and other Soviet folk troupes, a comparison of these ensembles revealed many problems with the descriptor "folk." After all, as Anthony Shay observed, "[Moiseyev's] new genre was called folk dance, but it was not folk dance."[822] Although the folk genre in both nations incorporated names, music, and movement vocabulary from the countryside, adapting "folk" to a theatrical stage involved spectacle and artifice that would not be found among the rural peoples this genre purported to represent. In both nations, "folk" performances were often invented traditions that served national and regionalist agendas depending on who performed them.

A New Folk Genre: the 1955 Moiseyev Tour to Paris

After the cancelled 1954 Soviet ballet tour to Paris, Soviet folk performance figured prominently in cultural exchanges between the two nations. In 1954, the French and Soviet governments organized an exchange of the Comédie Française and a composite Soviet ballet troupe from the nation's most prestigious theaters. The Comédie Française performed in

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[821] The Etorki Ensemble (active 1954-1984) was created by Basque author and dancer-choreographer Philippe Oyhamburu.

[822] Anthony Shay, *The Igor Moiseyev Company,* 5.

Moscow in March 1954 to much acclaim. Two months later, Soviet ballet was on schedule to take the Palais Garnier stage by storm, after the performances sold out and black marketeers profited off Parisians' fascination with Soviet dance. On the eve of the Soviet ballet premiere, however, French troops in Dien Bien Phu surrendered to the Viet Minh, triggering France's withdrawal from Indochina. After declaring a period of national mourning during which all theaters were closed, the French government delayed and subsequently cancelled the Soviet ballet tour altogether. This decision was roundly criticized by French commentators – most of all by the nation's communists (see Chapter Three).

After the debacle of 1954, French officials knew that bringing another Soviet dance company to France demanded sensitivity and caution. After negotiations for the Moiseyev tour were well underway, the Soviet Minister of Culture Nikolai Mikhailov exhibited reluctance and obliquely referenced the "troubles caused by last year's ballet tour." Mikhailov also warned that, as it turned out, the company director Igor Moiseyev may have "personal obligations" that could prevent him from leaving the country.[823] Despite this reticence, by the following month the Moiseyev dance tour to Paris was in the books. However, the uncomfortable encounter highlighted a dilemma faced by French diplomats after 1954: cultural relations with the Soviet Union needed to be repaired without accepting blame for bringing the curtain down on Soviet dancers in 1954. To show respect for the Soviet performers, French Cultural Relations and Foreign Affairs staff organized an event that had not been on the agenda for the 1954 tour: an officially organized inaugural performance by the Moiseyev attended by a wide range of French

[823] Telegram from French Ambassador Louis Joxe to Director of the AFAA Philippe Erlanger, 1 July 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 579, MAE.

political, academic, and artistic leaders.[824] But the event planners were careful not to take this show of support too far. Though at such an event it would be typical to include the French president on the invitation list, in this case President René Coty was intentionally excluded. French ambassador to Moscow Louis Joxe judged that, while the French president's attendance would be "deeply appreciated" and would "heal the wounds to [the Soviet Union's] pride inflicted last year," his presence was not necessary.[825] Having received this message from Moscow, Director of Cultural Relations Jacques de Bourbon-Busset justified this decision to his colleagues by explaining that the President's presence at the premiere might "give the Soviet Embassy the idea that we are somehow trying to 'compensate for' the Soviet ballet incident of 1954."[826] In place of the President, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Antoine Pinay was seated in the presidential box at the Palais de Chaillot.[827] After the previous year's embarrassing shortcomings, reception of the Moiseyev company had to be pulled off like a well-executed pirouette: success depended on creating the impression that the French government was not trying too hard. The choice of the Palais de Chaillot also carried symbolic meaning. The theater

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[824] The sixteen-page invitation list included cabinet ministers (e.g., the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Interior, the Minister of National Defense and Armed Forces, the Minister of Finance, etc.), the French president's staff, parliamentarians, former ministers of foreign affairs and national education, the French diplomatic corps and members of the Soviet Embassy in Paris, French theater administrators, members of the Parisian city government, the Académie Française, the Beaux-Arts Institute, the Goncourt Academy, the editors of top Parisian newspapers, among others. See List of invitations for the Moiseyev premiere, 16 September 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 579, MAE.

[825] Telegram from French Ambassador Louis Joxe to Director of the AFAA Philippe Erlanger, 27 September 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 579, MAE.

[826] Correspondence from Director of Cultural Relations Jacques de Bourbon-Busset to the Secretary-General of the Military General Ganeval, 28 September 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 579, MAE.

[827] Correspondence from Director of Cultural Relations Jacques de Bourbon-Busset to the Secretary-General of the Military General Ganeval, 28 September 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 579, MAE.

was the seat of the Théâtre National Populaire (TNP), a theater company devoted to reaching popular audiences and combatting the longstanding elitism of the French theater world.[828]

Still, the tour did not unfold without controversy. Soviet witnesses claimed that ongoing disagreements in the UN about the Algerian war for independence almost disrupted the Ensemble's premiere. The worst was avoided, but "a number of French government ministers defiantly returned [their] invitation cards" to the Moiseyev performance.[829] The tense political climate also hindered advertising for the tour. An internal Soviet report claimed that, shortly before the company's opening night, the hired French print workers went on strike, "thwart[ing] a widespread advertising campaign" because "Paris's big illustrated magazines were then unable to publish prepared material about the tour." The Soviet Embassy also warned that "reactionary" anti-Soviet organizations had planned to sabotage the premiere by creating mayhem in the auditorium, but no such disruption occurred – apparently because the French audience's warm reception "foiled [the reactionaries'] provocative plan."[830]

Notwithstanding a few empty seats and a reduced advertising initiative, French officials and media agreed with Soviet accounts that the folk tour was widely lauded by Parisian audiences. After a successful first performance, the company attracted countless ticket-buyers, who "laid siege" to the ticket booths and "stood vigil" for hours at the Palais de Chaillot – often

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[828] The TNP's egalitarian *raison d'être* dovetailed with the Moiseyev Ensemble's populist message, so the Palais de Chaillot became a worthy choice for the latter's Parisian tour.

[829] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 30.

[830] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 31.

to no avail, since tickets for the theater's 2,700 seats sold out for all remaining performances.[831] In the first decade of détente, Soviet and Eastern Bloc folk performance tours well outnumbered these countries' full-company ballet tours to France. Two Soviet folk companies – the beloved Moiseyev Company and the Song and Dance of the Soviet Army Ensemble – toured France *twice* during this period, a privilege not accorded to any individual Soviet ballet troupe.[832]

Part of folk dance's power lay in its ability to respond to popular requests. The Moiseyev's repertoire comprised 30 different short numbers, giving the company flexibility to repeat the audience's favorite numbers on demand multiple times in one evening. If the audiences applauded fervently enough, the company rewarded their cries of "bravo" and "encore" with another performance of the lauded act.[833] Soviet reports on the tour claimed that, during one Velodrome d'Hiver performance "most of the entire program was repeated at the audience's request." The Soviet observer recalled that the French audience particularly liked the choreographic work called "The Partisans," which celebrated the heroic deeds of Soviet partisans who fought the Germans in World War II. The audience may have noted the irony of holding this performance in the same venue where the Parisian Jewish population was interned before being deported by the Gestapo in 1942. After this dance, the company received 9 encores, after which

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[831] By the end of the tour, 80,000 tickets had been sold – some of them for record-breaking prices on the black market. Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 33.

[832] From 1955 to 1963, France hosted the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Ballet Company (1956), the Soviet State Ballet Soloists Ensemble (1958), Bolshoi Ballet Company (1958), and the Kirov Ballet Company (1961), compared with the following folk companies: the Moiseyev Company (1955), the Romanian Folk Song and Dance Ensemble (1955), the Beryozka Company (1957), the Caucasian Ballet Company (1957), the Dancers and Singers of the Volga Ensemble (1958), the Ukrainian Folk Ensemble (1959), the Song and Dance of the Soviet Army Ensemble (1960), the Moiseyev Company again (1962), and the Song and Dance of the Soviet Army Ensemble again (1963).

[833] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 37.

they repeated the number from start to finish, eliciting 15-minute-long applause from the audience.[834] At the Vel d'Hiv, the large Parisian audience seemed won over by the folk genre, which more genuinely reflected the wider population's culture than the balletic works presented in the Palais Garnier's rarified halls.

The interactions between folk performers and the French public revealed another quality that made the folk genre, and the way the art was deployed by Soviet troupes, novel to many Western audiences: unlike ballet, folk performance was interactive. Throughout the evening, the audience was invited in on the act, whether by singing along, calling out to and encouraging the dancers, and clapping. In this way, the company's unity expanded beyond the stage to encompass the audience. With satisfaction, Soviet sources reported on a *Libération* journalist's observation that "all those present were united in a single burst of delight." The evening's spectacle depended not only on the planned repertoire, but on what the audience demanded. The interactive quality of these events enhanced the feeling that audience members were physically transported on a journey to the furthest reaches of the Soviet Union – an especially thrilling experience since communist Europe remained inaccessible to most French people. Soviet officials reported with pride a *Carrefour* journalist's observation that "those present at the concert travel[ed] through the Soviet country, becoming acquainted with the dances of its people."[835] This sensation of familiarity with the Soviet people, and its rich diversity, was precisely the effect that Soviet folk companies were intended to achieve.

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[834] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 35.

[835] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 38.

The French public was struck not just by the variety, but by the sheer scale of the company's "mass scenes," which presented large numbers of performers. A Soviet summary of the tour's Parisian press coverage noted with satisfaction that *France Soir* deemed the Moiseyev's "mass scenes" to be so clear and rich that "even classical ballet could envy [them]."[836] Moving large numbers of dancers coherently reflected the company's ideological underpinnings by visually subordinating the dancers' individuality to the troupe collective. Although Soviet ballet followed similar principles by rejecting the hierarchical language that structured many classical ballet companies (e.g., "étoile," "first dancer," "sujet"), many celebrated ballet dancers nevertheless became unofficial "étoiles." The equalizing ambitions of Soviet ideology could be carried further with folk spectacles, in which most artists were indistinguishable from one another and the performance's message depended on its large scale. A Soviet official was happy to report *Le Monde*'s assessment that "the extraordinary coherence of the ensemble was more striking than the individual qualities of specific artists." The same author highlighted a quote from *Libération*, which called the troupe "the most cohesive, most harmonious ensemble," both in the look of the dancers and the unity of their movement.[837] By contrast, French folk dance was typically not just smaller in scale, but also performed outdoors. For a folk spectacle of this scale to appear on such a large stage must have astonished Parisian audiences.

As it turned out, these "mass scenes" featured only a fraction of the Moiseyev's regular performers. The company's generous budget enabled the troupe to amass over one hundred

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[836] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 36.

[837] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 37.

performers for domestic performances. However, as tours to the West became possible with the expansion of Franco-Soviet and Anglo-Soviet cultural relations in the mid-1950s, the company faced the budgetary demands of international travel. To cut the costs for travel, hotel rooms, and personal stipends, however, the Soviet Ministry of Culture required that Moiseyev trim his troupe down to 60 people for the Paris tour. Moiseyev protested that such a drastic reduction of the troupe would diminish the force of its stage presence.

This demand especially vexed Moiseyev since throughout the postwar period, "the Ensemble's activities had been directed toward expanding the number of new mass compositions." The company's "best works" all required large numbers of dancers onstage at once. The postwar directive to focus on large-group dances meant that the company had eschewed solo and smaller-group pieces – choreographic gaps that would have to be filled from scratch, in order for the company to perform successfully with only sixty people. Worse yet, with such a small company it would be "impossible" to maintain artistic quality while preserving a rich repertoire of various dance styles from across the Soviet Republics – conceding the performance's diversity would compromise the very mission of the troupe.[838] In light of these concerns, Moiseyev insisted that the touring company include 66 dancers (31 women and 35 men), along with ten musicians, two artistic and managerial staff, and five technical personnel, which put the company total well over the requested sixty individuals. Even then, Moiseyev explained, the troupe would lack essential personnel, such as hairdressers, light specialists, and costumers – all roles that the artists would be obliged to handle themselves.[839] Moiseyev's

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[838] Correspondence from Igor Moiseyev to the Minister of Culture N.A. Mikhailov, 10 August 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 1.

[839] Correspondence from Igor Moiseyev to the Minister of Culture N.A. Mikhailov, 10 August 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 2.

assertions must have moved the Minister of Culture to expand his original limit, since in October 1955 the troupe set off to Paris with 75 members in tow.[840] The company's "cropped" tour repertoire included 30 different dances representing 14 different ethnic and national groups.[841]

The company's diminished size did not impair the French public's warm reception of the Moiseyev – an enthusiasm that became evidence of tacit affinity for the Soviet Union among the French. Soviet observers emphasized the interest of young people and the working population, at whom the Vel d'Hiv Moiseyev spectacles were targeted. During the 1955 tour, Soviet participant claimed that an additional, matinée performance at a reduced price was organized "upon the request of students and [Parisian] artistic society."[842] In fact, it is clear from French archives that the idea for this concert came from the communist Association France-URSS (AFU), which coordinated the event with the stipulations that the AFU not officially appear and that the affair remain strictly apolitical. Perhaps the association's proposal was more persuasive because the proceeds from this matinée went to support renovations for the Château de Versailles.[843] Along a similar vein, a Soviet report on the tour claimed that two supplemental Moiseyev performances at the 10,000-seat Velodrome d'Hiver were tacked onto the tour's end because so many members of the French public had called for more opportunities to see the company.[844] In fact, popular

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[840] The company for the Paris tour comprised 62 dancers (32 men and 30 women), 7 musicians, 2 artistic directors, and 4 technical staff.

[841] Correspondence from Igor Moiseyev to the Minister of Culture N.A. Mikhailov, 10 August 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 3-4.

[842] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 33.

[843] Report from the French Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Moiseyev Ensemble, 17 October 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 578, MAE; Correspondence from Dr. Weill Hallé to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 18 October 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 578, MAE.

[844] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 35.

demand had little to do with the scheduling of these performances, which had been on the books since the tour's first contract was signed – though the intention behind booking this large venue was indeed to draw a larger, more socially diverse audience.[845]

The Soviet report on this event claimed that, between dances, "French youth, students, and workers sang French and Soviet songs," at other times calling out to greet the Soviet artists. This praise for Soviet folk art paralleled an apparent distaste for the United States: at one of the Vel d'Hiv concerts, the audience spontaneously broke out into boos when an advertisement for an American company played on the radio channel broadcast during intermission.[846] Whether or not this event happened (at least, to the extent reported in Soviet records), the story sheds light on what Soviet officials hoped to achieve by promoting Soviet folk performance, and which demographics they most aspired to reach. In the name of peace and unity among diversity, folk dance was mobilized to win over sympathy for the Soviet Union. By speaking a language geared toward younger and working-class audiences, it was hoped that this message would resonate among more revolutionary segments of France.

Parisian viewers would also have been struck by the colorful variety of spectacles. French folk troupes usually performed songs and dances from specific regions of France – for instance, Provence, Brittany, and the Basque region had their own folk companies. The Soviet Moiseyev company, however, was purported to represent all cultural traditions in the Soviet Union – Russian and non-Russian alike. For example, the latter's 1955 Parisian tour repertoire included a

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[845] Summary of Soviet performances in France since 1953 through the mediation of the Société des Spectacles Lumbroso, 3 February 1964, Series 554INVA, Carton 370, MAE; Note from the Cultural Relations Division to the Secretary General, October 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 579, MAE.

[846] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 36.

handful of traditional Russian dances, along with Belorussian, Georgian, Tartar, Uzbek, Azeri, Tajik, Moldovan, Dagestani, Ukrainian, Mongolian, Mari, and Nanai choreographic works.[847] The diversity of the repertoire was meant to be itself a testament to the Soviet Union's unity and heterogeneity. As Victoria Hallinan pointed out, the Moiseyev Company and similar ensembles sprouted from Soviet indigenization initiatives of the 1920s-30s, outliving the policies that bore them.[848] The geopolitical context had drastically changed by the 1950s, when the Moiseyev's paradigm of peaceful unity among national groups clashed against a backdrop of brutal suppression in Poland and Hungary.

Recurring themes throughout Moiseyev acts suggested that certain values cut across national and ethnic boundaries. Some dances comprised only men and others only women. Many acts featured lighthearted pastural themes, such as the harvesting of crops or playful flirtations among village youths – for instance, a comedic piece called *Travushka* played out a scenario in which one young man faces the dilemma: "eight chicks, [but just] one me." Another dance, from the Moscow region, examined the city's influence on surrounding rural areas in pre-revolutionary Russia. Alongside performances in this rural setting appeared the more serious theme of warfare. The "Tadjik Knife Dance," for instance, portrayed a single warrior who, though wounded, continued to fight the enemy in a relentless show of strength and endurance. The "Partisans" showcased Soviet partisans fighting to liberate their Motherland – through the

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[847] Dagestan was an autonomous Soviet socialist republic bordering Azerbaijan and Georgia; the region now constitutes Russia's southernmost point. The Mari people traditionally lived in central European Russia, along the banks of the Volga River. The Nanai people lived in the Russian Far East, near the Chinese border.

[848] Victoria Hallinan, "Cold War Cultural Exchange and the Moiseyev Dance Company: American Perception of Soviet Peoples," PhD diss., Northeastern University, 2013, 35-36.

medium of folk dance.[849] The war spectacles and village dances shared an emphasis on youth, athleticism, and purity of spirit – qualities that, this program implied, were essential to the Soviet individual.

Although Soviet and French observers alike harped on the authenticity of Soviet folk dance, the genre was very much a staged affair. The Soviet Union possessed denizens of folk troupes of varying sizes, but the State Academic Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Peoples of the Soviet Union was the best-known and best-financed.[850] After company director Igor Moiseyev helped propel the troupe into international fame in the 1950s, the company became better known by its shorthand name, "Moiseyev Ensemble." Moiseyev began as a dancer and ballet master at the Bolshoi Theater ballet. During his nascent career as a choreographer, Moiseyev served on the jury at a folk festival in Tajikistan, an event that he describes as a transformative experience. He had known that Tajikistan contained a variety of social, ethnic, and religious groups, but the folk festival shed new light on this diversity: he observed that each national group had its own music, costumes, set, and "vivid expression of its national flavor."[851] At the festival's conclusion, Moiseyev asked the Chairman of the Tajik Council of People's Commissars to arrange for him to travel throughout the republic. He was given a guide and three donkeys for the long tour of Tajikistan. This trip, in combination with his earlier travels in Ukraine, Belorussia, and Georgia, deepened his understanding of folk-dance traditions.

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[849] Report on Moiseyev Ensemble program for 1955 tour, October-December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 48 and Mary Grace Swift, *The Art of the Dance in the U.S.S.R.* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 116.

[850] Other prominent companies included: the Red Army Chorus, the Pyatnitsky Chorus, the Don Cossacks, and the Siberian Omsk company. From the Soviet republics, the Georgian and Ukrainian state folk companies were also permitted to tour in the West. See Anthony Shay, *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation and Power* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 61.

[851] Igor Moiseyev, *Ia Vspominaiu: Gastrol' dlinoiu v zhizn'*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Coglasie, 2016), 20.

Moiseyev prided himself on having traveled to far-flung and even "dangerous" regions that "no tourist could reach," all for the purpose of accumulating new folk dances.[852] He relayed one incident that occurred while he was searching the Belorussian countryside for inspiration. On a fall day, he passed a group of women toting pitchforks on their shoulders while cheerfully singing in Belarusian. Not understanding the words, Moiseyev consulted his interpreter, who explained that the women were singing about potatoes. Their song asked for good weather that would help the potatoes ripen, ensuring that next year would be prosperous and happy. This encounter became the inspiration for one of Moiseyev's best known dances, *bul'ba* ("potato" in Belarusian), in which joyous young women plant, raise, and harvest potatoes. Supposedly, fifteen years later, Moiseyev traveled back to Belorussia and saw people dancing the *bul'ba* everywhere. He asked villagers where they learned these moves and was told that "we've always had [this dance]" – even though, according to the choreographer, folklorists claimed that the *bul'ba* only appeared in Belorussia after Moiseyev's version. Moiseyev was flattered that "the people recognized [his art] to such an extent that they believed it to be their own."[853] His pride in his own artistic influence suggests that he did not aim merely to reproduce village dances. Rather, Moiseyev hoped to *create* folk culture; that today *bul'ba* is frequently referred to as a "Belorussian" dance indicates that he by some measure succeeded.

The origin story of *bul'ba* makes clear that though authenticity figured prominently in the company's identity, the troupe's acts were not simple transplants of village dances. Moiseyev's years of experience as a choreographer prepared him to integrate folk dances with the tenets of classical ballet. Dance scholar Anthony Shay points out that some of Moiseyev's dances

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[852] Moiseyev, *Ia Vspominaiu*, 21-22.

[853] Moiseyev, *Ia Vspominaiu,* 181.

contained few "authentic elements" at all, being instead populated by "[Moiseyev's] own unique character dance vocabulary." Rather than being untainted, "genuine" reproductions, the company's dances were inspired by village and national traditions, which were converted into a ballet movement vocabulary that was more appealing to contemporary viewers.[854]

The troupe gained legitimacy from the apparently varied national composition of its dancers: some artists focused on Eurasian dance traditions, while others specialized in Ukrainian or Georgian dance, and so on. This division of artistic labor implied that the folk dancers were descended from the national traditions that they were charged with representing – an idea replicated by foreign viewers. For instance, during the 1955 Paris tour French journalists referred to the female dancers of the *tropotyanka* dance as "Ukrainiennes" (Ukrainian women).[855] In reality, the Moiseyev troupe comprised only ethnically *Russian* dancers – though this fact does not seem to have been made explicit in the program.

Despite the company's optimistic portrayals of intra-national fraternity, the all-Russian troupe performed pieces that had been appropriated and adapted from the dances of national minorities, who themselves had little role in the company's choreographic work. Although Soviet officials proffered the nation's folk companies as retorts to oppressive imperialism, the companies repurposed national minorities' traditions to validate Soviet power. Moiseyev himself had no qualms about admitting that most dancers for this "diverse" company were not just ethnically Russian, but also primarily drawn from the Moscow region. Recruitment started when dancers were young – just thirteen years old – and was followed by four years of training at the

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[854] Shay, *Choreographic Politics,* 69.

[855] "Cette nuit au Palais des Sports les danseurs de Moisseiev ont fasciné le Tout-Paris," *L'Aurore*, 13 November 1962 ; "Olga (19 ans), la fille de Moïsseiev, danse dans les Ballets de son père," *France-Soir*, 28 October 1962.

company's Moscow-based academy.[856] The ensemble did not make any effort to recruit performers from other Soviet republics. Moiseyev did not seem to find this selective recruitment policy at odds with the company's message of fraternal unity across ethnic and national groups. He asserted that the selection process favored skill above all – including genuine diversity in the company ranks. In one interview he reasoned, "It's a matter of quality. If you dance their folk dances better [than the local troupes,] they applaud. Those who don't start in our schools have a lower professional level, so a Russian girl in our school dances Moldavian dance much better than a Moldavian girl."[857] Moiseyev's explanation attempts to mask the company's false claims to ethnic unity and diversity. The troupe's Russian composition offers a potent symbol of the privileged role of Russians within the Soviet Union.[858]

The Russianness of the company helps explain why Soviet observers considered the company's achievements to be a "Russian" victory. Soviet sources called the 1955 tour an unmitigated "triumph of Russian choreography" that elicited "unanimous" praise from the French media.[859] The Soviet report's characterization of the tour as a success for "Russian" choreography exposes a central tension behind the country's international folk-dance tours. That Soviet officials considered the company an embodiment of "Russian" dance belied the troupe's

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[856] Igor Moiseyev and Guy Silva, "Igor Moisseiev l'affirme: 'Nous n'avons été dépassé par personne," *L'Humanité*, 9 November 1976.

[857] Moiseyev, interview by Barry Laine, "Folk Ballet of Moiseyev: 'People's Art,'" *Los Angeles Times*, 28 September 1986.

[858] Soviet citizens were supposed to be members in a family of *equal* nations, but the 1930s saw a revival of Russian nationalism during which it became evident that Russia served as leader of this "family." Rhetoric of Russian nationalism intensified during World War II in calls to defend the motherland against foreign invaders, though propagandists still promoted the idea of unity amongst the nation's diverse groups. Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to its Legacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 121, 150-1.

[859] Report on the State Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Soviet Union in Paris and London, December 1955, RGALI, f. 2483, op. 1, d. 231, l. 32.

stated mission of representing a diverse array of Soviet cultures. The troupe appropriated and reworked dances cherry picked from Soviet provinces, leveraging the image of heterogenous unity in the interests of Soviet authority. At the end of the day, however, the company's victories were deemed "Russian" – even if the medium of this success was Azeri, Uzbek, Mongolian, or Tatar.

For Soviet officials, the 1955 Moiseyev tour to Paris marked a cultural, ideological, and diplomatic achievement, heralding new possibilities for Franco-Soviet cultural relations. Soviet diplomat Vladimir Erofeev declared that "the Igor Moiseyev ensemble unlocked the start of a brilliant parade of [Soviet] culture" in Paris.[860] In his recollection, Paris was "overwhelmed and enthralled by the colorful, effervescent, whole-hearted optimism and perfectly refined art of our young dancers," made up of "cheerful fellows and beautiful ladies." The troupe's director, Moiseyev, claimed that the tour even influenced clothing in the world's fashion capital of Paris, as Parisian women donned the bright red boots seen in the company's Ukrainian dances and imperial-style wool hats of the type worn in "The Partisans."[861] If the Moiseyev Company's Parisian premiere made a major cultural impact, the Soviet diplomat Erofeev posits that the tour's political impact may have been even greater, since the audience was filled with French political and cultural functionaries who – until that moment – had kept Soviet officials at arm's length and avoided the Soviet Embassy as a rule.[862]

The 1955 Moiseyev tour offered French viewers a first glimpse of Soviet art and people in the postwar period. The event altered Parisians' perceptions of the Soviet Union: audiences

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[860] Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 255.

[861] Moiseyev, *Ya Vspominaio*, 93.

[862] Erofeev, *Diplomat*, 256.

warmly received the Moiseyev, entranced by the rich variety of the repertoire. Soviet participants considered the tour a great success, claiming that the Moiseyev's dances resonated among French youth and workers and created new fashion trends in the world's fashion capital. The company accomplished what it set out to achieve by earning the admiration of local journalists and viewers who reflected on the Soviet Union's diverse national groups and the egalitarian spirit behind "mass scenes," in which each performer embodied a part in the intricate whole. Parisian observers – unenlightened about the dances' and dancers' true provenance – also appreciated the "authentic" feel of these performances. They left the theater feeling that they had traveled across the Soviet Republics and become acquainted with Soviet culture in all its diversity. The tour's largest contribution, however, had to do with its genre. The Moiseyev, and similar Soviet and Eastern Bloc companies who came to France afterward, exhibited greater potential for folk performance than Parisians had seen before. In the Soviet companies' wake, French dance critics and journalists began to wonder where French "folk" had gone wrong, and what might be done to remedy this "lacuna" on the Paris dance scene.

A "Lacuna" in French Culture: Domestic Battles over Folk Identity in the Cold War Era

Folk dance is a popular pastime and art form, usually drawn from local traditions. Despite their disparate geographical origins, folk companies in France and the Soviet Union had much in common: their dancers wore colorful costumes inspired by regional attire, which was starkly partitioned by gender. In both countries' companies, women wore flowing long dresses in bright colors or with floral prints with traditional caps or bonnets; men often wore white, long-sleeved shirts, sometimes with an embroidered waistcoat or decorative belt. Women's more intricate

clothing set them apart as vessels of national identity and symbols of ethnic difference.[863] The dancers' choreography was also gendered: women performed more turns and rapid, intricate footwork, whereas men's signature moves were kicks and high leaps that accentuated male performers' athleticism – which was especially the case in Soviet companies.[864] Although folk dance shared much movement vocabulary with ballet, a few things made folk dance unique: The dancers frequently performed while holding hands, in pairs or in long chains. In other numbers, the companies formed large circles or made intricate patterns of circles or crosses within circles. Theme-wise, folk performances from both countries favored dances centered on village life that conjured scenes of innocence and pastoral simplicity. Both countries' folk troupes told a story of bucolic harmony, traditional gender roles, and nostalgic preservation of an agricultural society considered integral to both French and Soviet culture.

Unlike Soviet dances which had been pruned from villages and melded into one repertoire, French folk dances developed organically in various regions of the country without a centralized home. In the late seventeenth century, Louis XIV founded the Opéra de Paris – an institution central to the professionalization and homogenization of the dance profession in France. The Opéra standardized theatrical dance, which was stripped of folk elements in favor of Louis XIV's new dance code.[865] Nineteenth-century French peasants danced to commemorate

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[863] This element of "folk," too, shares similarities with mobilization of this genre in Nazi Germany, where German women were designated as culture-bearers for the German nation. Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

[864] For illustrations of footwork and costumes, see Tkachenko, T. *Narodnyi Tanets*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Iskusstvo, 1967.

[865] Many French folk dances emerged organically from ballroom and village dances in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the distinctions were blurred between social and theatrical dance. Mary Stewart Evans and Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesography: 16th-Century French Dance from Court to Countryside* (New York: Dover, 1948 and 2011), 5.

marriages and religious holidays, at carnivals, and just for fun. In many areas, dance was intimately linked with work: farm and factory laborers counteracted the strain on their bodies by following up their shifts with dancing. Some folk dances were rooted in labor itself, such as in Breton threshing dances, in which villagers stamped on buckwheat to remove the rind.[866] The dances persisted over generations; their simple and repetitive motions were easy to learn, and the collective dances could accommodate an unlimited number of people. Dancing in the round or in long chains while holding hands was popular in nineteenth century villages – features that would remain hallmarks of French and Soviet folk performance. Geography shaped local repertoires, though as traveling became more accessible to more people, dances traveled, too.

Eugen Weber observed a decline in traditional local dances around the turn of the twentieth century. Young people and – eventually – soldiers traveled to larger cities, bringing home "the dances of city people," notably the quadrille, waltz, and polka.[867] Folk performance made its way onto the stage only in the early twentieth century, spearheaded by the nation's minority populations who sought to safeguard their cultural traditions. Ethnic groups like the Basques, Bretons, and Flemish fought erasure by cultivating local traditions, of which dance became an important part. These regional practices undermined the concept of a unitary French national identity and demarcated the boundaries of their distinct, unassimilated culture. For example, Basque scholars, composers, and choreographers ushered in the first attempts to bring Basque music and folk dance to the stage in the early twentieth century, with the aim of

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[866] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 446-7.

[867] Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 448-9. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, village dances were not performed by dance companies as we know them. However, there were rural musical societies equipped with musicians and dancers who gave concerts at marriages and feasts – of course, locals joined in the dancing. See Weber, 450.

preserving and promoting Basque traditions in their "authentic" and "true" form.[868] These folk companies cropped up on local initiative and usually remained worlds away from the funding, political connections, and international performance opportunities available to national dance companies. These troupes threatened the French Ministry of Culture's endeavor to eliminate cultural differences between Paris and the provinces and would have been unlikely candidates for state support.[869]

The experience of one Béarnaise folk troupe suggests one way that such companies were left to build their own destiny, lacking the state support offered to Soviet folk companies. During Nikita Khrushchev's 1960 tour of France, the premier attended a folklore *soirée* in Pau that featured the Béarnais Folklore Ensemble. Two days after this event, a representative from the ensemble wrote to Khrushchev via the Soviet Embassy. In the letter, troupe director Maurice Croutzet recounted Khrushchev's response to their performance: "At the end of the night, we shared with you the joy that we would feel if we could perform in the Soviet Union. Smiling, you responded, 'Well, why don't you come, then…and I'm sure that you'll be very successful.'" Having established Khrushchev's apparent support for the idea, Croutzet inquired what conditions must be met and whom he must contact for the tour to become a reality. In closing, he apologized that his request was "so lacking in protocol," since he had contacted Khrushchev directly rather than via the usual conduit, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[870] Over the

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[868] Natalie Morel Borotra, "Les modèles français et espagnols dans la création de l'opéra basque," from *La musique entre France et Espagne : Interactions stylistiques, 1870*-1939 (Paris : Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003), 94. Basque dancer and author Philippe Oyhamburu cites the similar reasons for his efforts to preserve Basque traditions in the 1950s, which included the foundation of the Etorki dance company. Philippe Oyhamhuru, "Nous étions des précurseurs," interview by Pantxoa Bergara, *Basque Cultural Institute* (website), 13 March 2008, https://www.eke.eus/fr/culture-basque/entretiens-acteurs-culturels-basques/philippe-oyhamburu.

[869] Lebovics, "Abolishing the Provinces" in *Mona Lisa's Escort*, 109-131.

[870] Correspondence from Maurice Croutzet to Nikita Khrushchev, 28 March 1960, GARF, f. P9518, op. 1, d. 279, l. 165.

coming weeks, Croutzet's letter pinged around the Soviet Ministry of Culture as Soviet Embassy staff in France researched the troupe and the conditions for a potential Soviet tour. Chair of the State Committee for Cultural Relations Yuri Zhukov had attended the folklore *soirée* and was able to confirm that the troupe director had indeed approached Khrushchev with the aforementioned request, to which the latter responded simply, "We would be happy to see you in the Soviet Union."[871] It seems that Croutzet's aspiration fizzled out in the Soviet bureaucracy because there is no indication that the Groupe Folklorique Béarnais ever made it to Moscow. Yet the very fact that the company director attempted to circumvent the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs by soliciting an official invitation from Nikita Khrushchev reflects Croutzet's impression that the French government would not take his appeal seriously. Though his folk company qualified to introduce Khrushchev to southwest France and the city of Pau, the local troupe was an unlikely candidate for representing the French nation to Soviet audiences.

Though the Béarnais folk troupe missed their opportunity to perform in the Soviet Union, their performance for Khrushchev inspired the French Ambassador to the Soviet Union Maurice Dejean to prioritize folk dance in the draft event schedule for the 1961 French Exposition in Moscow (August 15-September 15). The French Ambassador considered folk dance ideal for representing France to Soviet audiences, whom he called "fond of these sorts of performances." He also noted that Nikita Khrushchev had complimented French folk traditions during his 1960 visit to France. At the same time, the ambassador cautioned his colleagues that the Soviet Union exhibited a high level of mastery in its own folk companies, especially the Moiseyev Ensemble. Not just any French folk company would do for the exposition: Soviet audiences had high

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[871] Correspondence from Yuri Zhukov to N.A. Mikhailov, 15 April 1960, GARF, f. P9518, op. 1, d. 279, l. 166.

expectations for this performance genre. Writing from Moscow, he implored his French colleagues to bear this in mind when selecting a troupe. "I should like for any dance or choral ensemble sent here to be of the very highest quality," he explained, "otherwise, [the company] would only leave the Soviet public with a bad impression."[872] He was not alone in this concern – other French diplomats bemoaned that "too many" French folk companies had been sent to Eastern Europe "without sufficient preparation," which to their mind highlighted how much less folklore was valued in France's national culture.[873] Having witnessed the success of Soviet folk companies abroad, French diplomats saw great potential for French folk performance to win over international audiences.

This dilemma likely explains why, by the time that French and Soviet representatives finalized the 1961 Exposition program, Dejean had abandoned his idea of featuring French folk performers. Perhaps no French folk companies could meet the Soviet people's exacting standards for this genre. More likely, French diplomatic staff were constrained by financial considerations that required reducing the number and size of performances. By the final negotiations, three performance groups remained in the program: two solo artists (the mime Marcel Marceau and singer Colette Renard) and a small troupe from the Théâtre National Populaire (T.N.P.).[874] Reducing the number of performers indeed cut the cost of housing and *per diem* funds. However,

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[872] Correspondence from French Ambassador to the Soviet Union Maurice Dejean to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 7 April 1960, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

[873] Correspondence from French Ambassador to Yugoslavia François Coulet to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Antoine Pinay, 20 April 1955, Series 554INVA, Carton 571, MAE.

[874] The T.N.P., directed by Jacques Vilar, was a logical choice for a Soviet tour for another reason: the company's mission corresponded to Soviet aspirations of democratizing theater by making the art accessible and legible to audiences of all social classes. At the French Exposition, the company performed plays by Marivaux and Honoré de Balzac. See: Minutes from planning meeting for the French Exposition in Moscow, 7 April 1961, Series 36, Sub-series 24, Folder 3/1, MAE.

the need for Soviet approval of the program also factored in: French officials struggled to win over Soviet support for even this small number of performances. When the French representative, Robert Bordaz, broached the question of whether Moscow could accommodate Marceau, Renard, and the T.N.P., Soviet Cultural Relations representative Yuri Zhukov equivocated, noting that he was not sure that allowing such a number of performances would conform to the spirit of reciprocity, unless another Soviet spectacle were added to the corresponding Soviet Exposition in Paris. Zhukov fumed about the fact that an American ballet tour would take place concurrently with the Soviet Exposition and – to make matters worse – in the very same neighborhood of Paris. Leveraging his influence over the French Exposition program, Zhukov asked whether Bordaz could intervene to resolve this "problem."[875]

In the end, French negotiators secured the three acts' place in the Exposition, but the performance program was less expansive than originally intended because of these financial and diplomatic constraints. In a diplomatic report, Dejean clarified his reasons for dropping folk dance from the Exposition. Previous Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges had already exposed the Soviet Union to traditional aspects of French culture, such as the work of Victor Hugo, the plays of Molière, and the Paris Opéra ballet repertoire. More recently, the Soviet public's image of France would have been influenced by a Soviet film documenting Nikita Khrushchev's 1960 visit to France. Although Khrushchev surveyed several French factories and industrial sites, the Soviet documentary crew had excised footage of these tours, focusing instead on "aesthetic, folkloric, and human aspects" of France. Although Khrushchev's appreciation of French folk performance had initially encouraged Dejean to showcase traditional dance at this event, the

[875] Minutes from planning meeting for the French Exposition in Moscow, 21 March 1961, Series 36, Sub-series 24, Folder 3/1, MAE.

ambassador later realized that foregrounding *folk* at the Exposition would undermine the representation of France that the Exposition was supposed to promote. Soviet press and television, Dejean explained, had avoided informing their audience that "France had become a great industrial nation, at the forefront of engineering in many areas." Rather than proffering the traditional image of France reproduced in folk performance, he suggested that Exposition planners focus their energy on "filling the information gaps among the Soviet public, showing them everything that their press and cinema had deliberately kept hidden." To this end, he implored his colleagues to showcase "the modern France of today."[876] With this reasoning, it is unsurprising that Dejean and his colleagues removed folk dance from the Exposition events. The ambassador's change of heart revealed French officials' ambivalence toward folk culture. Although folk performance evoked cultural diversity, popular artistic expression, and scenes from France's historically pastural landscape, the art also had become less compatible with postwar visions of France's prominent place in the modern world. That is, a nation built on not just cultural achievement, but also technological innovation, industrial growth, and a comfortable standard of living.

France's conflicted relationship with folk culture also transpired in an advertisement for the J. Leonard textile firm that ran during the 1961 French Exposition in Moscow. In the ad, a chic French flight attendant sports a Chanel uniform trimmed with *tricolore* details. Behind her, Soviet folk dancers perform a Ukrainian number on the steps of Saint Basil's Cathedral in Red Square. The advertisement boasts that Coco Chanel had chosen J. Leonard's polyester fabric for the flight attendant uniforms showcased at the French Exposition in Moscow. The arrangement

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[876] Correspondence from French Ambassador to the Soviet Union Maurice Dejean to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 28 March 1961, Series 36, Sub-series 24, Folder 3/1, MAE.

of figures implies a fundamental difference between French and Soviet cultures. The flight attendant, positioned in the foreground, is the only person who has a face. Her lifestyle as a jet-setting woman reflects her independence and modernity, while her uniform signals that she is both patriotic and fashion-forward. Service to her patrons doubled as service to France, particularly on international flights, where she embodied French hospitality to travelers from around the world.[877] She outshines the Soviet folk performers who – though colorful and energetic – are subsumed into faceless anonymity. The faded colors of Saint Basil's, too, suggest that the best of Soviet culture was already passé. Juxtaposing a postwar French culture that kept pace with the modern world with a Soviet culture fixated on a traditional past, the advertisement belies Parisian assumptions that deemed folk dance – even at its most charming – archaic and démodé.

[877] Kelly Colvin observed similar tropes in discourses about French hostesses and flight attendants at this time. Kelly Ricciardi Colvin, "Hostess, You Must Be Beautiful to Look At!": The Public Female Body and the Commodification of French Femininity, 1945-1975 (paper presented at the Western Society for French Historical Studies, Bowdoin College, November 2018) and Kelly Ricciardi Colvin, "Charm Offensive: Air Hostesses and French Diplomacy, 1944-1974" (currently under review).



Figure 26: *L'Officiel de la Couture et de la Mode*, no. 473-474, September 1961

These biases against the folk genre help explain why only in 1960 – after Soviet and Eastern European folk companies had toured France at least ten times – France saw the foundation of a dance company that incorporated dances from a variety of geographic regions within France.[878] Unlike the Moiseyev Ensemble, however, this new company was privately run and did not receive state support. Ballad singer Jacques Douai and choreographer Thérèse Palau founded the Ballet National de Danses Françaises (BNDF) in November 1960.[879] Featuring

[878] A smaller version of the company had existed since the 1950s. The group only began touring regularly in the late 1950s, leading up to the BNDF's official creation in 1960.

[879] "Jacques Douai et Thérèse Palau fondent un Ballet national de danses françaises," *Le Monde*, 25 November 1960.

eighteen dancers, sixteen singers, and seven musicians, the troupe's program included songs and dances from Auvergne, Limousin, the Vendée, Brittany, Normandy, and Provence, among others. The group's name exemplified the company's reluctance to assign itself to the "anachronistic" folk genre: unlike many Soviet ensembles of this kind, the company did not include "folk" in its name, opting instead for the qualifier "French." The company's publications described the group as representing France, past and present, in all its geographic diversity. Folklore became the elephant in the BNDF's room – evoked and disavowed even in the same sentence.

Rejecting the prevalent notion that French "folk" equaled backwardness and division between the provinces, the BNDF attempted to the rebrand the genre as unifying and innovative. The troupe's program included an introduction replete with agricultural metaphors. Describing how figurative five-hundred-year-old wheat had been used to develop amazing new crops, the program author proclaimed that "in the abundance of tradition, a renewal was waiting to be reborn" – all this process required was a "kernel of inventiveness."[880] Although the BNDF's dances were rooted in the past and in rural France, the company directors were wary of appearing passé or artistically stunted. For this reason, reference to "tradition" had to be counterbalanced with language about innovation and revival. According to the program, the company's performances went "beyond folklore and historical reconstitution." Rather than merely reproducing village dances, the troupe sought to "seed a new harvest" by recreating the nation's dances and songs to produce a spectacle at once "old and modern."[881]

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[880] Pierre Seghers, Introduction to Ballet National de Danses Françaises program, October 1960, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

[881] Seghers, Introduction to Ballet National de Danses Françaises program, October 1960, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

The company's identity crisis stemmed from a broader challenge with defining the folk genre in France. Other historians have observed how ideas about youth and revival became enmeshed in French identity during the decades of postwar economic recovery, *les trente glorieuses*.[882] At a time when the nation fixated on hope for the future, the ensemble aspired to persuade a public of Parisian theatergoers to revisit the past. Emphasizing the company's novelty and artistic innovation offered one strategy to achieve this goal. Yet perhaps Paris did not contain the bulk of the BNDF's target viewership: the troupe expanded its audience beyond major cities, touring to 68 other French towns – including less populated communes such as Vitré, Tarare, and Bouvron – in addition to spending two stints at the Petit Théâtre Marigny in Paris.[883]

The BNDF and admirers of the troupe realized that marketing "folk" in contemporary France was an uphill battle. Dance critics praised the richness of French folk traditions and bemoaned the country's lack of appreciation for the genre in the same breath. Founder of Danse et Culture Jean Dorcy declared that, "[BNDF] choreographer Thérèse Palau knows that our Folklore is the richest in perspective and in cadence, the most measured, and also the most neglected."[884] Rectifying the "neglect" of France's folk heritage became the troupe's primary *raison d'être*. The BNDF program's description of the company began with a section entitled, "A Lacuna!" Since World War II, the program explained, Paris had played host to a wide range

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[882] Richard Jobs, *Riding the New Wave: Youth and Rejuvenation after the Second World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) and Susan Weiner *Enfants Terribles: Youth and Femininity in the Mass Media in France, 1945-1968* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2001).

[883] Ballet National de Danses Françaises program, October 1960, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

[884] Jean Dorcy, Ballet National de Danses Françaises program, October 1960, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE. Danse et Culture existed from 1947-1978. Danse et Culture was one of several such organizations founded in the 1940s and 1950s (e.g. the work of Serge Lifar and the Association Française de Recherches et Études Chorégraphiques (A.F.R.E.C.) of Dinah Maggie), which were intended to promote dance and increase the social and monetary resources allocated to the art. See: Hélène Marquié, « Regard rétrospectif sur les études en danse en France, » *Recherches en danse* [online], 1 :2014, put online 1 March 2014, consulted 15 December 2020.

of folk companies from all over the world – notably performers from Spain, Argentina, Guinea, Hungary, Yugoslavia, the Philippines, India, and China, along with two Russian companies (Beryozka and Moiseyev) and one Ukrainian (Paul Virsky of the National Academic Folk Ensemble of Ukraine) artist. The countries included in this list speak to how French observers defined "folk" as a genre that thrived outside of Western Europe. Communist nations were especially well represented, contributing just over half (six out of eleven) of the listed countries that sent notable folk performances to France. By contrast, the program's author lamented, in France "folklore [was] so often disparaged." The lack of appreciation and support for French folk performance seemed especially shameful since the country possessed "a repertoire of regional dances and songs in ten varieties across a span of one thousand kilometers, offering Folklore as different as that of Provence, or Brittany, or the Pays Basque, or Auvergne." Despite this rich cultural spread, "only France" did not possess a unified ensemble that showcased the diversity of French folk tradition.[885]

The BNDF's outcry about a "lacuna" in the French dance world was not merely a case of the company justifying its own existence. Other Parisian journalists had also remarked upon this gap – especially by contrast with the successful tours by Soviet folk companies in the mid-1950s. One journalist reported on a program of dances from Anjou, the Pays Basque, Dauphiné, Bresse, Gascogne, and Limousin by the Conféderation Nationale des Groupes Folkloriques Français, which sought to fill the "inexplicable void" where French folk dance ought to be in Paris's dance scene. While praising the Conféderation's principled undertaking, journalist D. Peralta asserted that it would be unfair to begrudge "these young amateurs" their "uncoordinated nature,"

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[885] Ballet National de Danses Françaises program, October 1960, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

especially given the "limited resources" at their disposal and the fact that this event was possibly the first time these performers set foot on a Parisian stage. Despite the Conféderation's lackluster production, the event reinforced Peralta's frustration that France had no professional folk troupe "devoted to showing the world – starting of course with France itself – our diverse folk art." Peralta reminded readers of the "lesson" taught by the Soviet Moiseyev and the Beryozka Ensembles, along with Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, Indian, Israeli, and Argentine folk companies, who had been warmly received by Parisian audiences.

The success of foreign folk companies contrasted markedly with the fact that "people often [said] that French folk dances [were] not spectacular enough."[886] In short, France had failed to compete internationally in the realm of folk performance, and even many French people appeared unaware of the genre's artistic potential. Institutions and regular people alike devalued and dismissed the art, which solidified regional folk companies' low place in the choreographic hierarchy. As Peralta's comments suggest, Parisian journalists hoped that the Moiseyev's recent successes in Paris and abroad would galvanize French officials to cipher more resources to showcasing French folk traditions. The BNDF's creation planted seeds of hope that, at last, a French ensemble could develop enough in size and quality to compete with Soviet folk troupes. About a quarter of one review article about the Singers and Dancers of the Urals Ensemble's 1961 Parisian tour was devoted to commentary on the lack of comparable French productions. The journalist hoped, however, that the newly formed BNDF "would soon rival the large ensembles of which the Russians have shown us excellent examples, such as the famous Moiseyev Ensemble, the Beryozka Ensemble…."[887]

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[886] D. Peralta, "Danses de France," *Danses et Rythmes*, December 1957, 6.

[887] Jean Silvant, "L'Oural à Paris," *Toute la Danse et la Musique*, June 1961, 12.

Frequent reference to the neglect and disrespect for "folk" alluded not just to the relative lack of popular interest in folk dance compared to ballet, but the dearth of financial and institutional support for folk performance from the French government.[888] Indeed, that the solution to the absence of an official French folk ensemble became the creation of a private company purporting to fulfill this void also spoke to deficient government patronage of the folk arts. Dance critic and chief editor of *Toute la Danse* magazine Jean Silvant urged French cultural officials to view the BNDF in light of what the troupe could accomplish *if* given a modicum of the support provided to companies like the Opéra de Paris Ballet. Silvant directly addressed key government institutions, calling upon them to foster the BNDF's growth – if not to cultivate a richer cultural scene at home, then at least to permit France to compete with foreign, especially Soviet, folk troupes. He declared, "we hope that the Direction Générale des Arts et des Lettres, l'Action Artistique à l'Étranger, and la Direction des Affaires Culturelles understand what a proper 'Ballet National de Danse Française' would represent if supported and encouraged, with resources equivalent to those at the disposal of, for example, a foreign company like the Moiseyev."[889] *Le Monde* journalist Claude Sarraute saw the same potential in the BNDF, noting that "if [the company] had the means to multiply their number of costumes and performers by 10 or 20, they would have an ensemble worthy of those from the Democratic Republics."[890] As the comments of Silvant and other journalists revealed, the Moiseyev and Beryozka's triumphant tours to France altered the way Parisian dance critics and audience members thought about the

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[888] Without being able to see the AFAA's budget, I can only speculate that the association's director for much of this period, Philippe Erlanger, believed that folk performance would be a less persuasive tool for French cultural supremacy abroad than other French cultural representatives abroad.

[889] Jean Silvant, Ballet National de Danses Françaises program, October 1960, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

[890] Claude Sarraute, "Jacques Douai au Petit-Marigny," *Le Monde*, 28 February 1959.

folk genre. The Soviet companies showed that, when properly produced, folk performance *could* fill amphitheaters. If smaller French folk companies could not achieve the same, a lack of resources and institutional support was the culprit – not the genre's cultural specificity or inherent inelegance.

In the BNDF's early years, French commentators grappled with how to define the troupe's genre, irresolutely defined as "folk." Introducing the company to readers, reporter Lisa Brunel inquired, "[are these] folk dances? No, not exactly." And yet, "folk" seemed to be the only way to categorize the performance. She described the spectacle as a series of "danses populaires" drawn from all corners of France, with a repertoire that included saccharine love songs, sailor songs, and "folklore" numbers. A variety of "simple folk" movements were brought together in "a little ballet" that spanned the regions of Brittany, Lorraine, Provence, the south of France, and the Pays Basque. Conceding that the program might "thrill folklore lovers," the journalist cautioned readers that the company did not present raw moves transplanted from French villages, but rather, dances that had been adapted by a choreographer into a *divertissement* that suited the stage. Even if re-choreographing village dances compromised the performance's "authenticity," the dance critic asserted that such modifications were no cause for concern. Despite referring to the company's folk characteristics throughout her review, Brunel concludes by renouncing the spectacle's folk credentials. "Folk" seemed to imply that a piece was unhewn and unsophisticated, with a blush of exoticism – qualities at odds with predominant forms of contemporary French dance, specifically ballet. "Isn't it comforting," she asked, "to realize that the riches of our popular dances can give birth to this entertaining spectacle that is different from a folk performance and, perhaps, better for the stage?"[891] In this perspective,

[891] Lisa Brunel, "Chants et Danses de France: Jacques Douai et La Frairie," *Danses et rythmes*, 18 April 1959.

popular traditions could be a source of inspiration but were ill suited to theatrical settings. "Folk" had to be recast into a stage-worthy genre for which she had no name, but which – she reiterated – could not be called "folk." Like other choreographers and dance critics, Brunel rejected folk's connotations of obsolescence, insisting that this genre could modernize while retaining its quaint roots in the French countryside.

Despite dance critics' hopes, the BNDF never became a touring representative of France on par with Soviet folk troupes. The wife of Minister of Foreign Affairs Maurice Couve de Murville personally proposed that the nascent BNDF perform at the 1961 French Exposition in Moscow, but the Director for Cultural Exchanges Philippe Erlanger immediately nixed the idea. Although he promised to consider the plan, these assurances served primarily to placate Madame Couve de Murville. In an internal note, Erlanger asserted that "it would be awkward to nominate for Moscow a troupe of uncertain quality," especially considering that "it was not at all certain the Soviets would be disposed to welcome [the company]."[892] That the BNDF had not yet performed for exacting Parisian audiences also concerned foreign affairs officials – the praise of provincial audiences and critics were insufficient tokens of a troupe's quality. Financial resources for the exposition were limited, and the BNDF did not make the cut.[893] Instead, it was decided that a pair of star dancers from the Opéra de Paris Ballet, Claude Bessy and Attilio Labis, would tour in Moscow immediately following the Exposition.[894] As had been the case in

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[892] Report for the General Director of Cultural and Technical Affairs, 25 January 1961, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

[893] Correspondence from Jean Basdevant at the Direction Générale des Affairs Culturelles et Techniques to the General Commissary for the Exposition in Moscow, 1 February 1961, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

[894] Correspondence from Jean Basdevant at the Direction Générale des Affairs Culturelles et Techniques to the General Commissary for the Exposition in Moscow, 1 February 1961, Series 554INVA, Carton 234, MAE.

the past, French officials chose to represent French dance in its most refined form, rather than showcase folk dances. After all, as critics and diplomats alike reasoned, ballet was an inherently French tradition.

Unlike Soviet folk companies who employed classically trained dancers, the Ballet National de Danses Françaises and the Etorki Ensemble could not attract artists from the country's elite dance academies. With little established prestige to draw in candidates, the BNDF relied instead on printed advertisements in news publications. The call for applications specified that the troupe comprised twenty-five dancers and fifteen singers, which company directors sought to bolster with fresh blood, especially "young guys and girls." The advertisement only asked that applicants know how to read music and that they be French citizens between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five.[895]

After the disappointment of being dismissed from the Exposition plans, the BNDF director Jacques Douai submitted a series of proposals, seeking government support for tours to Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Holland, Israel, and Canada, along with a tour to South America covering Argentina, Uruguay, Chili, and Brazil. Diplomatic archives suggest that only the comparatively less expensive Bulgarian tour got off the ground, receiving the support of both the French legation (diplomatic post) in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian authorities. But the tour plans abruptly halted at the desk of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, who scrawled on the proposal: "Impossible. Too expensive."[896] A few years later, the BNDF proposed a tour to Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, along with Canada and the United States. Douai

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[895] "Ballet National de Danses Françaises" advertisement, *Toute la Danse et la Musique*, February 1961, page 32.

[896] Correspondence from the Minister of France in Bulgaria to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11 January 1962, Series 554INVA, Carton 337, MAE.

managed to receive the support of a Mr. Hofman, an American willing to help organize the American leg of the tour, but the AAFA – the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs branch responsible for financing such events – once again declined aid, and Douai's plans fizzled.[897] By the mid-1970s, the BNDF receded into obscurity.

Unlike the Soviet policy of curating folk-inspired productions for international audiences, French officials' approaches to their nation's folk spectacles wavered between mild admiration and embarrassment. The French Ministry of Culture worked under the assumption that culture could unite France's diverse linguistic and regional populations. Folk performance, with its emphasis on distinct regional cultural identities, did not conform with postwar visions of a modern, integrated French nation. For this reason, diplomats failed to see what "folk" could offer to France's image to international audiences. Although many journalists and officials acknowledged the need for financial resources to improve the country's folk companies, France's folk troupes were overlooked for prestigious international events and were left to organize their own tours, meaning that they lacked the political and monetary means to support the global circuits conducted by the Moiseyev.

Meanwhile, it was clear to contemporaries that Communist Eastern European nations were prioritizing folk dance. Some French dance critics described the mid-1950s Paris as a "Central European folkloric parade," which included Poles, Romanians, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Slovaks, and, of course, the Soviets.[898] These folk groups were joined by Greeks, Brazilians,

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[897] Correspondence from AFAA director Philippe Erlanger to Edouard Morot-Sir, 15 April 1966, Series 554INVA, Carton 337.

[898] By contrast, less than five years prior at the 1953 World Folklore Festival hosted by France and Spain, no communist nations attended. Participating countries included Spain, France, Northern Ireland, Switzerland, Germany, England, Japan, Holland, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Scotland, Indonesia, Italy, and Turkey. Yugoslavia attempted to participate but could not because Yugoslavian participants' visas were refused by the Spanish

Spaniards, "Orientals," and "Peaux-Rouges"("redskins") from North America. The critic judged these tours to be primarily of "ethnographic and human interest" and passed over the troupes' artistic value.[899] Such descriptions reveal how French contemporaries coded folk dance to be the art of non-white peoples, in contrast to the overwhelmingly "white" and typically French art of ballet. In these assessments, French prejudices about the folk genre as unrefined, traditional, and exotic were laid bare.

Because of this preconception of folk as "native" and non-white, French contemporaries were perplexed by the cascade of Soviet and Eastern European folk troupes that did not conform to established notions of the folk genre. Soviet and Eastern Bloc folk ensembles flew in the face of these stereotypes: their trained performers offered spectacles designed by legitimate choreographers for the theatrical stage, raising "folk" to the level of art. For example, dance critic André Denissov claimed that the Hungarian National Ballet's primary achievement was that – like the Moiseyev, and "unlike the other companies listed above" – the troupe was not "merely a folkloric exposition," but rather a "real performance conceived for the theater." Through the use of a "real" choreographer and artful organization of the dancers on stage, a simple "cultural ensemble" transformed into a "cultivated ensemble."[900] The Soviet Beryozka ensemble elicited similarly surprised observations: rather than witnessing "a series of tiresome round dances that were undoubtedly charming, but tedious," French critics were pleased to

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authorities. Jean Silvant, "Aux Représentants du Festival Mondial de Folklore Biarritz a dit 'Ongi Etorri," *Toute la Danse*, August 1953.

[899] André M. Denissov, "Retour des Hongrois," *La Danse*, February 1957, 6.

[900] Denissov, "Retour des Hongrois," *La Danse*, February 1957, 6.

discover instead a skilled company of dancers, "almost all of whom *have studied classical ballet* at the Bolshoi school" (emphasis in original).[901]

Touring Soviet and other communist dance companies reconceptualized folk performance in ways that challenged the received idea that "folk" was the antithesis of "modern." French observers asserted that "folk" could provide new horizons for choreographic art. One dance critic mused that, like Russia's influence over classical ballet, "the lesson of these folk ensembles – Czech, Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, etc, from countries with Slavic influence – proves worthwhile." These companies taught French viewers "to appreciate the results of the work that the people's democracies have devoted to promoting national folk art."[902] What is more, the genre showed promise for bringing together diverse populations, not just within the nation, but in the modern world. French journalists who attended the 1957 World Youth Festival in Moscow remarked upon the prominence of folk dance in how the Soviet Union presented itself to international audiences. The Festival brought over 30,000 visitors from 131 different countries to Moscow, where attendees participated in parades, performances, carnivals, and street parties. The event was a turning point in the Soviet Union's relationship with the outside world, marking the end of decades of Soviet cultural isolation and the start of a more open Khrushchev era.[903]

Bias against folk companies, and corresponding withholding of resources, helps explain why even as Soviet and Eastern Bloc folk troupes completed over twenty tours to France in the

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[901] M. Tassart, "Le Ballet 'Berezka,'" *La Danse,* July 1957, 19.

[902] "Théâtre de l'Étoile: Ballet National Tchécoslovaque," *Danse et Rythmes*, October-November 1957, 12-13.

[903] Kristin Roth-Ey, "'Loose Girls' on the Loose? Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival," from *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. Melanie Ilic, Susan Reid, and Lynne Attwood, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 76.

1950s and 1960s, this onslaught of folk performances was reciprocated by only one performance in the Soviet Union by the Basque Etorki Company in 1957, for the Moscow Youth Festival. Though founder Philippe Oyhamburu had intended to create a professional troupe that would become an "ambassador" for the Pays Basque around the world, the Etorki ensemble technically fell into the "semi-professional" category, moving between amateur and professional status as financial resources permitted. Despite this ambiguous identity, the company competed in the amateur category at the 1957 Moscow Youth Festival, where the group was ranked at the end of a long list in the Festival's lowest medal category – the bronze medal.[904] Soviet journalists reserved their criticism, devoting little space to the company. Analysis of the Etorki ensemble amounted to one sentence observing that the Basque performance, though "interesting," "undoubtedly [bore] the stamp of modernization, stemming from the allure of some classical choreographic techniques."[905] Here, too, assessments of "authenticity" proved critical to "folk's" success. This vague, succinct description hinted at the Etorki's lack of authentic "folk" credentials, though the Moiseyev and other Soviet troupes themselves restyled folk dances by incorporating movement vocabulary from classical ballet. Apparently the secret lay in modernizing "folk" without giving the impression that it had been modernized: in this case, the Festival judges saw through the illusion and were unpersuaded that the Etorki's dances were drawn unaltered from the Basque countryside.

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[904] The jury comprised one judge each from Denmark, the Soviet Union, Austria, Bulgaria, East Germany, China, Cuba, Romania, Finland, France, Czechoslovakia, and Japan. "Laureaty khudozhestvennykh konkursov VI Vsemirnoiu festivalia molodezhi i studentov udostoennye zolotykh, serebrianykh i bronzovykh medalei," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 15 August 1957, 1.

[905] A. Ermolaev, "Smotr iskusstva naroda mira," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 6 August 1957, 3.

Despite the company's apparently poor showing, Etorki dancers remembered the Moscow performance as a watershed moment in their dance careers. A Basque dancer named Igor recalled that the Youth Festival competition facilitated his introduction to Russian dances, an encounter he described as "love at first sight." He remained in Moscow after the festival to take some courses in Russian dance, and he claimed that four of the Etorki troupe's eight members went on to become professionals in the Russian style. For Igor's part, he returned home and began working with dance troupes founded by White Russian émigrés in Paris.[906] The Etorki's Moscow performance, it seemed – rather than furthering the reach of French art and culture – had the inverse effect of expanding Russian influence on French folk dance.

Dance scholar and journalist Jacqueline Thévoz described the Youth Festival as a smorgasbord of popular dance from across the Soviet republics. Some of the performers were "only indigenous amateurs" – but, Thévoz remarked, one could hardly tell the difference since, "in these countries, they dance the way they breathe." She was so impressed by the Soviet folk ensembles that she became convinced that the Soviet Union's privileging of popular dance had profound implications for the art of dance as a whole. She explained, "classical ballet has reached its limit, and it is popular dance in all its forms on which the classical dancer should draw to perfect his choreographic toolkit. The classical dancer who wallows in his domain is like an artist who draws art inside a famous gallery without ever coming into contact with the great outdoors. This much the people's democracies have understood."[907] After watching and writing about these companies, French choreographers and dance critics began to see the value of folk

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[906] Maurice Schmieder, "Igor et Anouchka," *La Dernière Heure*, 20 January 1971, 4-SW-11201 (G-K), BNF-Richelieu.

[907] Jacqueline Thévoz, "Le Festival Mondial de Moscou," *Danse et Rythmes*, October-November 1957, 32-33.

performance and the potential for this art to enrich French theater and perhaps even further French interests abroad. As yet, however, French folk dance had no centralized and state-supported theatrical home to realize this potential.

French observers noted that Soviet companies deftly walked the line between authentic "folk" and choreographic prowess. In the same magazine issue that introduced the nascent BNDF, a journalist reviewed the Ukrainian Folk Ensemble, which toured at the Alhambra in 1959. The troupe billed itself as "folk," and French dance critics did not hesitate to place the company within the folk genre, describing the performance in ways that illuminate the French dance community's understanding of "folk." As discussed above, folk dance and the stage were not usually viewed by French journalists as a winning combination. For this reason, it seemed logical when a piece's populist roots were sacrificed to create more artful entertainment. However, Parisian dance critics suggested that Soviet folk companies did not have to contend with this tradeoff. One *Danses et Rythmes* reporter pronounced the Ukrainian Folk Ensemble "balanced, harmonious, *just right* (emphasis in original)… not a single time did we have the impression that this [company] presented over-the-top folklore. It was pure, simple, and cleverly dosed."[908] Much of the credit went to the troupe's choreographer, who had enfolded "accurate folkloric sources (non-commercialized)" into choreography that "surpasse[d] the popular genre and truly elevat[ed] itself to the level of ballet."[909]

Unlike the French folk company reviewed in the same magazine issue, the ensemble preserved folk traditions without compromising choreographic virtuosity. The "non-commercialized" quality of the troupe's source material – presumably drawn from rural dances –

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[908] Martine Cadieu, "A l'Alhambra: Les Ballets des Cosaques de l'Ukraine," *Danses et Rythmes*, April 1959, 10.

[909] Martine Cadieu, "A l'Alhambra."

lent authenticity and did not impede the company from producing a respectable performance untethered from what was derisively called "popular" art. Perhaps French audience members would interpret the supposedly uncommodified character of Soviet folk dance as emanating naturally from a state-funded company in a communist nation. The irony of this fixation on the ensemble's "non-commercialized" foundation is that the refashioning and marketing of "folk" lay at the very center of the genre in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union mobilized professional folk companies to achieve diplomatic, ideological, and financial ends, as well as to further Soviet artistic influence abroad. On the ideological front, the troupes suggested to many international viewers that the Soviet Union valued the popular traditions of its national republics, winning over legitimacy for the Soviet imperial project.[910]

The following year, Paris received yet another Soviet folk company: the Song and Dance of the Red Army Ensemble. Like the Moiseyev, the large company of 180 artists captivated French audiences, who flocked to see the troupe's tour at the Alhambra and afterward still filled 5000 seats daily at the Palais de Sports for the tail end of the ensemble's Parisian tour. French dance critics conceded that they, too, were taken aback by the high quality of the Red Army Ensemble's acts. Critic Jean Silvant asserted that even more surprising, however, was the lack of any effort to create an analogous French company, "one similar to the Moiseyev Ensemble." Government support for such a project seemed too much to hope for, but he pointed out that

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[910] The companies' artistic influence can be seen in the fact that similar companies popped up across the globe after the Moiseyev began touring (for example, in Egypt, Chile, Turkey, the Philippines, Mexico, and Iran). The troupes also became important diplomatic emissaries in the 1950s and 1960s, and the Moiseyev Ensemble was often the first troupe to be deployed when a country began developing cultural relations with the Soviet Union; all told, the Moiseyev completed over 130 tours to dozens of countries between 1942 and 1990. Soviet folk companies' acrobatic, lighthearted, and populous performances were warmly received and imitated around the world. Finally, these troupes' successful tours also became crucial money makers for the Soviet government. See: Anthony Shay, "The Moiseyev Dance Company: Ancestor of the Genre," in *Choreographic Politics*, 68.

France possessed a number of choreographers and choral directors who would be interested. Silvant implored, "So what are we waiting for to gather and coordinate these private initiatives?"[911] From the mid-1950s, one Soviet folk company after another was welcomed to Paris, and yet by 1960, France still had no comparable folk troupe.

Even as French audience members "ooh'ed" and "ahh'ed" at touring Soviet folk companies,[912] Parisian journalists hesitated to describe similar French companies as "folk." Few such troupes in France garnered enough clout to perform on Parisian stages; troupes that made it to Paris were credited for their folk-*inspired* sentimentalism and deemed simply "danses françaises." These judgments suggested that "folk" only really existed elsewhere: countries considered less modern and less accomplished in the arts. As Soviet folk tours to France revealed, however, Parisian audiences were not "too sophisticated" to appreciate the folk genre; perhaps they were only waiting for a folk troupe that would revel in, rather than obfuscate, its populist identity – which, after all, was the very mission behind the Soviet folk enterprise.

French diplomats scratched their heads as to why France could not produce a folk company that national and international audiences admired, but they missed the fact that French institutions themselves did not seem to value the nation's folk culture. Proponents of French "folk" struggled against accusations that the genre was provincial, divisive, and out of pace with modern French identity. Although the French government financially supported the Opéra de Paris and the Comédie-Française, French folk dance had no official home. Even as French diplomats called for cultivating French folk troupes that could counter the influence of Soviet folk companies, such initiatives foundered against domestic Ministry of Culture initiatives to

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[911] Jean Silvant, "Chronique du mois," *Toute la Danse et la musique*, June 1960, 3.

[912] Martine Cadieu, "A l'Alhambra."

emphasize unity over regionalism and modernity over tradition. For this reason, French folk troupes seldom received the financial or promotional support necessary for them to keep pace with a Soviet company like the Moiseyev.[913]

Cultural Proxy Battles: Folk Dance and Franco-Soviet Cultural Competition in North Africa

If France struggled to find a place for folk dance within the metropole, these tensions only multiplied when a folk company left French soil. Particularly fraught was France's participation in international folk competitions hosted by former French colonies in the early 1960s. At these events, newly independent countries could compete and vote against French troupes – or cast votes *for* Soviet and communist participants. Host countries controlled the terms by laying the ground rules for competition, configuring the schedule and recruiting the jury who would decide the victor. Though similar events were hosted around the world, the final section of this chapter examines two international folk competitions hosted in Tunisia in 1963 and in 1967. During these years, France reluctantly ceded territory, while Soviet influence – embodied by the globe-trotting Moiseyev and Beryozka companies, among others – expanded. Hosting representatives from France, Eastern Europe, and Africa, these events became microcosms of political and cultural conflict between France, the Soviet Union, and newly independent nations in the wake of decolonization.

Soviet folk companies' global circuits kicked off well before the 1960s international festivals that are this chapter's focus. The Moiseyev Ensemble's first tour took place during

[913] The AFAA – the department that would have approved funding for a regional or BNDF folk tour – functioned in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

World War II, when the company performed in Mongolia. Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, the troupe toured extensively and exclusively in Eastern Europe, with the exception of a 1954 tour to China.[914] The Moiseyev's 1955 tour to Paris was not just the first postwar Soviet dance company tour to France: the tour also marked the Moiseyev's first performance in a Western country. In the mid-1950s through the 1960s, the Soviet Union also began touring its folk companies throughout the Global South. These tours were intentionally deployed to foster sympathy toward the Soviet Union in nations whose political destinies appeared vulnerable. As dance scholar Anthony Shay explained, "Russian government leaders claimed that unlike the colonialist West, they venerated the folk traditions of their non-Russian populations. For viewers in the developing world, this claim appeared to be embodied by the Moiseyev's spectacular dance company," which featured a range of ethnic, religious, and national dances.[915] The folk companies' ostensible diversity and message of peaceful fraternity seemed an attractive alternative to the language of Western colonial powers whose legitimacy was fading day by day.

French Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff paid special attention to combatting Soviet cultural influence in former French colonies, especially in Tunisia and Algeria. Their concerns were not unwarranted: Soviet officials targeted post-colonial regions as ripe for cultural and ideological influence. Folk performance figured prominently among Soviet cultural diplomacy across the board, but especially to newly independent countries. French diplomats observed with some anxiety that Soviet folk companies were lauded and even imitated in North Africa. The

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[914] The Moiseyev Ensemble's tours during this period included: Mongolia (1942); Finland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia (1945); Hungary, Austria, Yugoslavia, and Poland (1946); Czechoslovakia and Poland (1947); Hungary (1949); East Germany (1950); Hungary, Austria, and Romania (1951); Finland (1952); Hungary, Poland, East Germany, and China (1954). See Moiseyev, *Ya Vspominaio*, 220.

[915] Shay, *Choreographic Politics*, 68.

domino effect appeared to be playing out in folk companies across the Global South. In this context, diplomatic records reveal that these tours were interpreted by French and Soviet officials as cultural proxy battles. French diplomats reported with consternation that the Soviet Communist Party had revitalized folk performance and used the art form as an instrument for "moral education" in politically vulnerable countries – an influence that could not go unchallenged.[916]

It was likely for this reason that, despite the BNDF's challenges acquiring the French government's financial support for tours to Eastern Europe and North America, the troupe received a subvention to participate in a 1963 folklore festival in Monastir, Tunisia. The BNDF would represent France in a face off against folk troupes from Tunisia, Italy, the United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria), Czechoslovakia, Turkey, and Yugoslavia.[917] The Tunisian government and the Association d'Action Artistique Française offered financial aid to support the tour, but the company was forced to reduce their number of touring performers by ten and still faced a deficit of 3,280 francs.[918]

A French diplomatic representative, Monsieur Beaumelou, attended the event to read the crowd and gauge the local population's interest. The attendees primarily comprised a "popular audience," yet the French observer was impressed by their "comportment, receptiveness, certainty of taste, and independence." For example, as Beaumelou remarked with delighted

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[916] Correspondence from the French Ambassador to the USSR Yves Chataigneau to Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman, 27 December 1948, Series 241Q0, Carton 148, MAE; Letter from the French Ambassador to the USSR Yves Chataigneau to Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman, 11 April 1951, Series 208Q0, Carton 195, MAE.

[917] Monsieur Beaumelou, Report on the Monastir Folkloric Festival, August 1963, Series 554INVA, Carton 370, MAE.

[918] Jacques Douai, Budget for the BNDF performance in Monastir, 13 June 1963, Series 554INVA, Carton 370, MAE.

surprise, attendees did not even break out into a stampede – notwithstanding the large crowds drawn by the event.[919] Although much of the festival was conducted in French, the Tunisian president, Habib Bouguiba, delivered a speech in Arabic, in which he explained the folk genre's significance for the audience. He declared that folk united people in a grassroots fashion, beneath the level of political and economic leaders.[920] Beaumelou did not comment on the speech's content, yet it is easy to imagine the French diplomat's discomfort upon hearing Bouguiba – a former Tunisian independence fighter and president of a seven-year-old independent Tunisian nation – expound upon folk art's power to transcend political strictures. These observations must have especially stung given the global success of communist nations' folk troupes, who spoke the language of folk more persuasively than did their French counterparts.

It was perhaps no surprise when both the audience and jury favored the Yugoslav company, closely followed by the Czechoslovak troupe, above the rest. At the festival's conclusion, French representatives requested that France – having sent the only professional troupe in the competition – be left out of the ranking, even though Beaumelou was "persuaded that France would have won third place."[921] Beaumelou observed that the French troupe attracted a large audience but was disadvantaged by a number of factors: insufficient lighting for costumes designed for display under spotlights, and a sound system managed by technicians who showed up seven hours late for rehearsal with the troupe. Most frustrating of all, Beaumelou lamented that the performance's "dramatic progression" was interrupted by the festival's program

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[919] Beaumelou, Report on the Monastir Folkloric Festival, August 1963, Series 554INVA, Carton 370, MAE.

[920] Beaumelou, Report on the Monastir Folkloric Festival, August 1963, Series 554INVA, Carton 370, MAE.

[921] Beaumelou, Report on the Monastir Folkloric Festival, August 1963, Series 554INVA, Carton 370, MAE. The final rankings were: 1. Yugoslavia, 2. Czechoslovakia, 3. Turkey, 4. United Arab Republic, and 5. Italy.

schedule, which placed a company of Tunisian songs and dances between the first and second half of the BNDF's act.[922] In other words, the primary faults with the French troupe were laid at the door of their Tunisian hosts, who, it was implied, possessed neither the technology nor manpower to put on a theater-worthy production.

Even though the Soviet Union did not compete in this festival, the Moiseyev's presence was palpable. The United Arab Republic's troupe performed a spectacle that Beaumelou judged "very neat yet completely out of line." The audience was particularly shocked by one number, which was "nothing other than the Soviet [Moiseyev] dance 'Les Partisans,' in which the red flag was simply replaced by the U.A.R. emblem."[923] The French diplomat's observations suggested that the Tunisian public recognized this piece as a Soviet one, and that such flagrant duplication was frowned upon. Still, the Egyptian company's imitation was neither surprising nor uncommon, as the Moiseyev's tours had spawned similar companies throughout the Global South and beyond.[924] France's relationship with Egypt remained tense after the 1956 Suez Crisis, in which France and Britain had launched a coordinated invasion of Egypt to retake control of the Suez Canal, only to be pressured by the United Nations leadership to retreat. Khrushchev had delivered vague promises to defend Egypt – though the Franco-British withdrawal obviated any need for Soviet intervention. With this dangerous clash looming in recent memory, French officials shook their heads in dismay at such blatant Soviet influence on Egyptian culture.

Later that same year, Jacque Douai was in the process of negotiating a tour for the BNDF in Algeria, when the French Embassy in Algiers got word that the Bolshoi ballet had booked a

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[922] Beaumelou, Report on the Monastir Folkloric Festival, August 1963, Series 554INVA, Carton 370, MAE.

[923] Beaumelou, Report on the Monastir Folkloric Festival, August 1963, Series 554INVA, Carton 370, MAE.

[924] Shay, *Choreographic Politics*, 68. Other examples include: Mexico, Iran, the Philippines, Turkey, and Chile.

tour to come just before the French folk troupe would arrive. One French diplomat asked whether it was "really in the best interest of [the BNDF]" to perform right after a Soviet dance tour. He suggested changing the date of the French folk tour, to prevent any direct comparisons between the Paris-based folklore troupe and Soviet dancers, who consistently trounced French folk companies in international competitions.[925]

Later in 1963, Tunisia hosted a "Soviet Cultural Week," which featured conferences, an art exhibition, film screenings, and performances by the Beryozka Orchestra and Ballet company. The French ambassador to Tunisia pointed out that while Turkey, Bulgaria, Egypt, and the Netherlands had carried out similar events in previous years, the Soviet version was worth reporting because it surpassed the preceding events in both scale and importance. The ambassador judged that the Week's events had been a great success for Soviet culture; the Beryozka folk company, which the local Tunisian press described in glowing terms, made an especially strong impression. The wider public was just as eager: he noted that "the theater was filled for every [performance] and the audience's remarks – Tunisian and foreign alike – were enthusiastic." There was no doubt, he concluded with dismay, that the events had swayed public opinion in favor of the Soviet Union.[926] Soviet folk companies continued to tour and – as it seemed to French Embassy staff – continued to outdo their French counterparts.

A few years later – in the summer of 1967 – Hammamet, Tunisia hosted the three-day International Festival of Popular Arts, which included folk performances from across Africa, and Western and Eastern Europe. The stakes of this event were all the higher because France was

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[925] Telegram from the French Ambassador to Algiers to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 19 September 1963, Series 554INVA, Carton 337, MAE.

[926] Correspondence from the French Ambassador in Tunisia to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 4 December 1963, Series 554INVA, Carton 279, MAE.

competing not only against several communist nations, but also against several of its own former colonies, which had gained their independence about a decade prior. French diplomatic reports remarked upon the event's success. The outdoor theater was sold out almost every night, and on the final night, the crush of people around the entrance was so fierce that staff could only calm the crowd by promising that another performance would be added to the schedule for the following day. Among the attendees was a contingent of émigrés from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union who resided in Tunisia, flocking to applaud their national companies. Invited nations were called upon to showcase their national folk dance and musical traditions. For example, the Austrian company featured mountain dances and Tyrolian songs, and the Romanian troupe brought Gypsy dances, while the Tunisian group performed scarf and caravan dances of the Bedouins.

France was represented by the Etorki Company, which performed folk dances from the Basque region of southwestern France. The troupe comprised men and women dancers: the women wore flowing red skirts and white chemises with soft slippers, while the men wore white trousers and shirts with red accents on the hat and belt. The women's performances involved small, intricate footwork, while the men carried out restrained jumps and kicks (rather than the explosive leaps characteristic of Soviet folk dance). French diplomats reflected that the Etorki company's showing – though "respectable" – was outshone by the other delegations at the festival. In particular, the company's small number of dancers (only twelve) and the fact that they danced to pre-recorded music resulted in "a skeleton performance lacking luster." The diplomatic report recommended that, in view of the high level of achievement attained by other countries' folklore ensembles, France should prepare a more robust folk spectacle for future competitions. Otherwise, the diplomat warned, the French delegation faced the shame of "having

to rely on a bit of indulgence from the jury just to receive the bronze medal in the 'non-stylized or unelaborate folklore' category."[927]

On top of the French company's relatively poor showing, French officials were concerned to have been so publicly outdone by the Soviet delegation, whose influence was undeniable. The Algerian company performed choreography clearly inspired by Soviet dance, with the result that "specifically Algerian character hardly manifested at all in the choreography."[928] For their part, the Soviet delegation included a Siberian folk dance company, peopled with physically unrivaled dancers that evoked fervent applause among the large Tunisian audiences of this event. Despite the Soviet troupe's impressive performance, French reports asserted that the "consensus" was that the Soviet Union should have tied for first place with the Senegalese delegation, which alone contributed "art nègre" to the festival with a "very good African folklore spectacle" of tam-tam drums, dance, and acrobats. Instead, the troupe from Senegal received the silver medal in the less prestigious "non-stylized or unelaborate folklore" category – just one step above last place, which was shared by Austria, France, Spain, Italy, and Czechoslovakia.

In the view of French officials, the final rankings could only be explained by political and ideological bias in the Tunisian jury, whose decisions were considered controversial by festivalgoers. Rather than the result of objective decision making, the jury's final rankings were considered "rather disappointing" and "not exempt from political considerations inspired by official members of the jury," according to additional information gathered by French diplomatic

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[927] Report on the program for the International Festival of Popular Arts in Tunisia, French Embassy in Tunisia, 1 August 1967, Series 554INVA, Carton 264, MAE.

[928] Report on the program for the International Festival of Popular Arts in Tunisia, French Embassy in Tunisia, 1 August 1967, Series 554INVA, Carton 264, MAE.

staff.[929] The embassy's conclusion that the Tunisian jury was rigged is rather unsurprising, even if French officials were willing to admit that their own troupe's performance was lacking. The French response conceded that folklore – unlike ballet – may not be a strength of French cultural production. Still, it seemed wrong to French officials that a Soviet folk company won out over national companies perceived to be more "genuine" and "closer" to folk culture.

Performances were judged not only by execution, uniformity, and costumes, but by the elusive quality of "authenticity." For this reason, the Algerian and Egyptian companies' mimicry of Soviet folk dance was a serious ding on their overall evaluation in French reports, while the Moroccan troupe's "authenticity," the Czech company's "candidness," and the Romanian delegation's "flawless execution of Gypsy airs" were advantageous.[930] These assessments raised questions not only about who could perform folk dance best, but also of who could lay claim to genuine folk culture. In postwar France, folk performance and ballet were often viewed as diametrically opposed forms of expression. The latter was based in Paris and considered to be the pinnacle of physical discipline and exactitude, while the former was a popular spectacle drawn from the countryside and scarcely on par with "*la danse*." Faced with France's own folk companies' failure to win over international audiences, French diplomats were forced to re-evaluate this elitist perspective. This confrontation manifested most clearly after the success of Soviet folk companies, which appeared to embrace the spirit of "authenticity" and egalitarianism in the arts with which French folk companies could not compete – particularly in former French colonies.

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[929] Report on the program for the International Festival of Popular Arts in Tunisia, French Embassy in Tunisia, 1 August 1967, Series 554INVA, Carton 264, MAE.

[930] Report on the program for the International Festival of Popular Arts in Tunisia, French Embassy in Tunisia, 1 August 1967, Series 554INVA, Carton 264, MAE.

Conclusion

How did folk performance become so "disparaged" – as termed above by one French dance critic – after strong interwar support for the idea of a French identity entrenched in folk culture?[931] Why, even after the arrival of Soviet and Eastern Bloc companies that inspired Parisian dance critics and diplomats to envision new possibilities for French "folk," did France fail to produce a worthy competitor? Although Soviet folk tours convinced many French viewers that "folk" had the potential to represent a diverse nation without compromising unity, initiatives to revitalize French folk companies faced bias against the genre as outdated and discordant. These aspirations were further inhibited by disagreement amongst French officials about which groups should be allowed to embody French culture on domestic and global stages. Dance enthusiasts' and diplomats' calls to develop folk ensembles based on the model seen in Soviet companies clashed with the French Ministry of Culture's campaign to unite the cities and provinces – and, in the process – high art and popular culture.[932] In the view of Malraux, rural life became less central to definitions of French culture. This was especially true in the theatrical arts, whose heartbeat incontestably emanated from Paris.

Folklore was also weighed down by its affiliations with the Vichy regime, which in recent memory leveraged "folk" to construct a French identity rooted in the peasantry and nostalgia for an airbrushed agrarian past. Postwar French leadership sought to break with Vichy's representations of French identity, erecting instead images of a fresh, youthful, innovative France that appeared at odds with the traditional folk idiom. By the 1950s, even

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[931] Peer, *France on Display*.

[932] André Malraux's efforts to integrate the provinces into a centralized conception of French identity – determined in large part by Parisian culture – were not a symbiotic process. The Ministry of Culture technocrats dictated what "culture" meant and disseminated appropriate content via Houses of Culture. Lebovics, *Mona Lisa's Escort*, 128-9.

former proponents of preserving peasant culture adopted an agenda of modernizing and integrating French peasants into a reconstructed France.[933] French technocrats, politicians, and cultural affairs officials alike sought to carve out a place for France in an increasingly global postwar world. This new image of France would be modern, culturally and linguistically seamless, and diplomatically engaged within and beyond Europe – a role decidedly not served by "anachronistic" and regionalist folk performances.

After Soviet folk companies began their circuit of global tours, however, the genre's significance bubbled to the surface time and again for choreographers and diplomats who witnessed France's failure to export well-funded folk troupes that would resonate with international audiences. This shortcoming was particularly alarming in the Global South, bringing a spotlight to the decline of French cultural and political influence – a space that, French officials worried, rapidly filled with a Soviet presence. Wholeheartedly supporting (and commanding) its own state folk ensembles, the Soviet Union did not experience the same contested relationship with "folk" as France. The genre did not contradict the Soviet Union's credentials as a modern nation, perhaps because many Soviet state folk companies predated the country's ascendance to superpower status and because the genre smoothly integrated with the government's ideological and diplomatic goals. Leveraging "folk" remained expedient to Soviet leaders who billed the Soviet Union as a country in which diverse peoples played an equal part – messaging especially crucial during the Cold War battles for cultural influence in a decolonizing world. By contrast, Parisian Ministry of Culture officials' conceptions of a modern and

[933] Lebovics, *True France*, 183.

homogeneous French identity required making tradeoffs, of which French folk performance became one victim.

These contested battles over "folk" and national identity reveal the limitations of studies focusing only on Cold War *ballet* exchanges, in which France and the Soviet Union were equal competitors, though with often conflicting ideologies about the role and aesthetic of ballet. Ballerinas were indeed cultural ambassadors of the Cold War – but for the Soviet Union, folk performers constituted the vanguard of their cultural arsenal. Often sent to countries in the early stages of diplomatic contact as a trial balloon, the Moiseyev ensemble alone visited a far greater number of countries than either the Bolshoi Company or the Opéra de Paris Ballet. If the Soviet Union enjoyed an edge over France in the degree of its cultural influence abroad, this stemmed not from its theaters' superior balletic style as much from its confident, well-funded folk companies that won over viewers – elite and popular alike – around the world.





Figure 27: *France-URSS* (front and back covers), October 1955

Conclusion

As Cold War boundaries became traversable in the mid-1950s, dance became an indispensable tool for Franco-Soviet cultural diplomacy. Both countries took great pride in their contributions to the art of ballet and in their nations' historical collaborations that created contemporary ballet. Paris and Moscow possessed their own state-funded theater houses, which fostered ballet companies intended to preserve the nation's dance heritage and innovate along lines that reflected postwar French and Soviet identity. Given this shared history and continued allegiance to state-supported classical dance, dance tours had a special place in the Franco-Soviet diplomatic repertoire, encouraged by (mostly) friendly rivalry between the two dance schools. Cold War dance tours between the two countries revealed that the French and Soviet dance worlds shared common goals and challenges in creating a modern ballet theater which aligned with their national postwar identity. Citizens of both countries invested in the future of their national ballet school and grappled with the art's aristocratic origins. Soviet theater administrators prided themselves on opening up theater halls to working-class audiences, while their French counterparts debated the meaning of democratizing dance and faced critiques that the republican promise of equality did not apply to the rarified halls of the national opera house.

Comparisons enabled by Franco-Soviet dance tours unleashed heated debate over how to make ballet and opera more accessible to economically diverse audiences. During discussions about democratization, French theater officials adopted Soviet strategies for drawing wider audiences. Republican France and the communist Soviet Union could agree on this ideal, though this consensus did not stop both sides from arguing that their theaters more successfully attracted younger and working-class audiences. Still, the countries' shared ballet heritage and assertions about the art's wide domestic appeal deepened contemporary observers' sense that ballet could

unite the two nations after nearly a decade of postwar Soviet isolationism. As other historians and dance scholars have observed, these events caught the attention of ballet lovers and the disinterested. For viewers across the spectrum, early Cold War dance tours marked a new phase of cultural and political rapprochement.[934] In this regard – having brought together political leaders, artists, and a diverse public in both countries – postwar Franco-Soviet dance exchanges can be considered a diplomatic success.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, however, this diplomatic achievement came with a hefty price, along with controversies and diplomatic confrontations. Tour organizers in both countries worried over the risk of national embarrassment in front of international audiences: if the costumes were not sufficiently à la mode; if the male artists looked weak; if a dancer refused to return home or otherwise comported herself in a way unbecoming to her home country; or if the company was snubbed by the local press. Though dance tours served as a vital diplomatic tool in the postwar period, they also often exacerbated tensions and exposed differences across Cold War boundaries. By necessity, these tours involved large numbers of people moving across international borders. That alone introduced uncertainty. Although tour participants could be given background checks and carefully briefed beforehand, their spontaneous decisions abroad might make or break the tour's success – for instance, Rudolf Nureyev's famous "leap to freedom" received far more international press coverage than the 1961 Kirov tour to Paris itself. By the same token, French and Soviet officials could not completely account for local populations' responses to the visiting dancers. Audiences, French communists, disgruntled

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[934] See Claire Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1998); David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Stéphanie Gonçalves, *Danser pendant la guerre froide, 1945-1968* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018).

émigrés from communist Europe, and other protestors intervened to wreak havoc on diplomats' carefully laid plans.

Beyond the myriad dilemmas that could arise offstage during dance tours, audience reactions to onstage performances fueled narratives of how Soviet and French ballet demonstrated fundamental differences between the two nations. Though dance's physicality allowed for richer cultural exchanges than some comparable events like literary and painting exhibits, the art's very physical quality encouraged speculation about ideology, gender, and the body. Observers in both France and the Soviet Union understood differences between these two countries – as well as differences between communism and liberal democracy – through the language of gender. Dance tours exposed the contrasts between constructions of gender norms. Audience members examined the bodies of performers and weighed them against their own gender ideals. Gendered qualities like muscularity, grace, and size, became politicized inasmuch as they represented a particular ideology of beauty and strength. On the one hand, French critics attributed the strength and drive of Soviet men to a rigorous communist discipline. Soviet onlookers, on the other hand, assumed that liberal democratic governance had weakened France's men, a problem considered endemic to bourgeois nations. It was this same notion of communist discipline that justified French critics' observations about large and well-muscled Soviet ballerinas, while members of the theatrical community in Moscow were taken aback by the apparent fragility of French ballerinas. Perceived gender differences became a central way in which audiences and critics articulated Cold War power relations between France and the Soviet Union. Franco-Soviet dance tours sparked controversies and debates that emphasized areas of political and aesthetic divergence.

As we have seen, Franco-Soviet ballet tours kindled admiration, along with a torrent of comparison and one-upmanship. But when it came to ballet, both nations could at least respect the other as a historic contributor to the tenets of contemporary ballet technique. In contrast with ballet, folk performance revealed a separate kaleidoscope of values, aesthetics, and national histories. As Soviet folk companies burst confidently onto the international stage in the mid-1950s, hundreds of colorfully clad dancers embodied harmony amidst heterogeneity and pride in rural traditions, compelling French journalists and dance critics to rethink their nation's relationship to folk performance. In postwar France, folk dance was often dismissed as an amateur's hobby that – taking its most prominent forms in regions with minority groups in efforts to resist French homogenization – fit uneasily within the idealized conception of France: one nation, one language, and one culture.[935] By contrast, official portrayals of Soviet identity hinged on seamless unity across diverse peoples, united by unpretentious respect for "authentic" traditions not previously showcased in opera halls. French diplomats and theater enthusiasts alike expressed shame when comparing the Moiseyev Ensemble to small, underfunded French folk troupes. Yet acknowledgement of France and the Soviet Union's contrasting levels of support for regional and local performance traditions was not enough to produce a national French folk ensemble on the scale of the Moiseyev or Beryozka. Perhaps even more so than ballet tours, Franco-Soviet folk dance tours highlighted the deep divides between French and Soviet ideology, politics, and culture.

Considering that Franco-Soviet dance tours became – again and again – divisive rather than unifying, why did French and Soviet representatives continue to organize them? Beyond the

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[935] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

expense and complexity of moving hundreds of performers across the European continent, the tours unlocked opportunities for defections, diplomatic conflict, and embarrassing criticisms of dance aesthetic that implied denunciations of ideology. Despite these risks and challenges, however, participants in both countries perceived these events as worth the trouble. Amidst charged Cold War rhetoric, fears of global Americanization, and nuclear war set off by American-Soviet military rivalry, French diplomats prioritized extending a hand to the Soviet Union early and often compared with other Western powers. Though Soviet officials suspected France of unquestioningly following the Americans' lead, Soviet diplomats and artists expressed respect for French cultural accomplishments and took pride in the opportunity to rival the Parisian art scene by way of dance tours. On the other hand, French diplomats relished the chance to counter accusations of subservience to American policy by carving an independent path for France's relationship with the Soviet Union, all the while winning over Soviet audiences in a language with which they were already familiar: ballet.

In this context of mutual (though far from unqualified) respect, Franco-Soviet dance tours facilitated conversation rather than carving out hard boundaries. In the dance world, victories and failures were not total: for instance, the French may have worn superior costumes, but Parisian critics could not deny the high caliber of Soviet *danseurs*' leaps. That this dialogue became possible at all reflected the great strides of diplomatic progress from the pre-1954 years, when mutual suspicion had long prevented events of this kind. Of course, this diplomatic shift did not take place in a vacuum. In the postwar years, a nation's integration with the international community itself endowed legitimacy. Crossing political and geographic boundaries by participating in international organizations and economic agreements denoted that a nation had a seat at the negotiating table to alter the course of global events, most prominently at the Potsdam,

Yalta, and Tehran conferences where "The Big Three" carved out the postwar order. The French leadership – particularly Charles de Gaulle, who returned to power in 1958 – did not forget the slight of being uninvited to Yalta and Potsdam and sought to reconstruct their nation's image as a leader in European politics. Stalin, on the other hand, felt that his demands were ignored by American and British representatives and that Soviet sacrifices in World War II had gone unrewarded. Perhaps because both powers had felt snubbed by the United States and Britain in the early postwar years, French and Soviet leaders kindled the hope of exerting some influence on the other. After Stalin's death, international collaboration became even more crucial to the structure of postwar European politics, economics, and law: developments like the Geneva Convention (1949), the European Coal and Steel Community (1952), and the 1954 Geneva Conference created new norms and borders for multi-national conversation. It was no longer enough to "succeed" in relative isolation.

Expanding national influence, Khrushchev believed, depended on cultivating a role as an engaged diplomatic, cultural, and economic player in the international arena. French diplomats, who had been debating strategies to reach the Soviet public since 1950, seized upon this opening, which positioned France among the first to reach out to the Soviet Union. Given the countries' shared reverence for classical dance and the history of Franco-Russian balletic collaboration, ballet tours were among the first mediums of cultural exchange broached in early diplomatic plans after Stalin's death. This art form, often presumed to be "apolitical," also appealed to embassy staff seeking ways to reach ordinary French and Soviet citizens who might otherwise have little exposure to life across the Cold War divide. The French and Soviet dance companies that toured were technically impressive, and both sides hoped to win over audience members and humanize their nation to a wide international public. The continued reliance on Franco-Soviet

dance diplomacy, despite the tours' many obstacles, emerged from the intersection of the nations' historical balletic cooperation and new diplomatic norms that favored fighting the Cold War using the soft powers of art and culture.

Franco-Soviet dance tours may have been a mixed success for the participating governments, but the events produced cultural reverberations in both countries. With contributions by artists, reporters, diplomats, and audience members, the dance's political and social purpose was up for debate – discussions that altered the theater scene in Paris, Moscow, and Leningrad. Soviet artists' personal and professional lives were changed by new opportunities to travel abroad and the artistic and social encounters that tours enabled. Although there is no clear link between the start of Soviet dance tours and resistance among Soviet dancers, dance defections to the West became a symbol of rebellion during the 1960s and 1970s. Performers who chose not to defect found subtle ways to resist the Party's control over their work through aesthetic and choreographic rebellion.[936] Franco-Soviet dance tours' impact on French theater was more concrete. Members of the French public began questioning characteristics of the Opéra de Paris company: Why was its usual audience confined to "snobs," when Soviet performances attracted a socially diverse audience? Why did its men look so feeble next to Soviet "giants"? Questions like these prompted theater administrators to implement new strategies – they held

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[936] Leonid Yakobson and Maya Plisetskaya are particularly known for leveraging dance as resistance. Yakobson, however, paid for his resistance: although he enjoyed some professional success as a choreographer in the years after Stalin's death, his ballets were routinely blocked by censors, leading to financial hardship because Yakobson was only paid for works that made it to the stage. The most controversial of his works, *The Bedbug* and *The Twelve*, vexed Soviet censors because of the ballets' self-conscious challenges to the "hero" prototype that persisted in many Soviet plotlines. Janice Ross, *Like A Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015, 50-52, 251, 315. Despite her occasional defiance to Soviet authorities, Plisetskaya also feared the consequences of resistance. She explained, "The system is ruthless, deadly; an open rebellion is perilously dangerous. Now we know how they jabbed a poisoned hypodermic into Solzhenitsyn in a crowded store in Rostov, how they put poisoned cigarettes into the hotel room of Vladimir Voinovich. And to make it worse, to be forced to stew in your own juices, to be isolated from the rest of humanity, the latest discoveries and achievements of world culture, the work of your Western colleagues." Maya Plisetskaya*, I, Maya Plisetskaya*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 238, 282.

ballet concerts in "popular" venues like the Palais des Sports and encouraged new initiatives to foster a more athletic aesthetic in French male dance – without the ideological strings attached. Similarly, at the sight of proud Soviet folk ensembles, many Parisian dance critics began to doubt the established assumption that "folk" was anachronistic, divisive, and unworthy of a place on modern French stages. Although France never saw the formation of its own national folk troupe, Soviet folk tours to France provoked fervent calls to revive the genre and were used as a comparative example to promote nascent private French folk companies, like the Ballet National de Danses Françaises. These sites of influence reveal how Franco-Soviet diplomacy after 1953 created new possibilities for cultural interaction and transformation – processes that depended on the participation of a wide range of non-government actors.

After two decades of frequent dance tours, Franco-Soviet relations began to degrade in 1972 to 1973. During these years, French President Georges Pompidou met with Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. The talks were meant to establish common ground during negotiations leading up to the Helsinki Accords (1975). Instead, however, the meetings exposed new fractures between the two countries over human rights and the project of an independent defense system for Europe.[937] As relations continued to deteriorate, the subject of Soviet oppression and human rights abuses became a popular topic in the French press, to which *Pravda* journalists responded by denouncing the "abusive anti-Soviet attacks" which had become more and more frequent.[938] The late 1970s saw the onset of the "Second Cold War," which culminated in the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. European

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[937] French representatives insisted that Europe possess the ability to defend itself without American aid. Soviet representatives preferred a Europe that was "economically robust, but divided and without common defense, subject to American protection." Marie-Pierre Rey, *La Tentation du Rapprochement: France et URSS à l'heure de la détente (1964-1974)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991), 102.

[938] Rey, *La Tentation du Rapprochement*, 105.

leaders, including French President François Mitterrand, were drawn into a new arms race, anxious about Europe's vulnerable position in the event of nuclear war.[939] After this period of suspicion and hostility, dance tours did not regain their previously prominent position in the Franco-Soviet diplomatic repertoire. Between the disastrous Afghan War (1979-1989), a shrinking economy, and a growing protest movement in the Eastern Bloc, Soviet leaders had more pressing concerns.[940]

Thirty years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Franco-Soviet dance tours linger in popular memory.[941] Rudolf Nureyev's 1961 defection immortalized the possibilities and unexpected consequences of Cold War dance tours. Even though the government Nureyev defied is gone, his story remains political in Russia. In 2017, a new ballet about Nureyev's life, *Nureyev*, was set to premiere at the Bolshoi Theater. At the last moment, the production was postponed, and ticketholders feared that the ballet would be cancelled because the show openly recounts Nureyev's experiences as a gay man in the ballet profession.[942] By the time *Nureyev* finally premiered in December 2017, the ballet's producer Kirill Serebrennikov was under house arrest for embezzlement charges that some observers have called an attack on creative freedom.[943] During the Cold War era, French and Soviet theater officials struggled to shake away

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[939] In a 1983 speech, Mitterrand encouraged West Germany to adopt "the latest American missiles." Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 590-1.

[940] Judt, *Postwar*, 593-597.

[941] Just a few years before this writing, a new film, *The White Crow* (directed by Ralph Fiennes, 2018), retold Nureyev's story for contemporary audiences and featured a cast of French and Russian actors, including several professional ballet artists.

[942] A 2013 Russian law bans content considered to be "gay propaganda." Neil MacFarquhar, "Bolshoi Denies Gay Theme Forced Postponing of Nureyev Ballet," *The New York Times*, 10 July 2017.

[943] Roslyn Sulcas, "'Nureyev' Opens at Bolshoi After Delay and Much Speculation," *The New York Times*, 10 December 2017.

ballet's traditionalism and recast it as a progressive art form, while still imposing limits on whose stories and bodies could grace opera stages (and seats). The 2017 controversy over *Nureyev* demonstrated dance's enduring potential to be a site of physical and metaphorical border-crossings that elude authorities' efforts to delimit the boundaries of what ballet "should" be.

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Central State Archive of Literature and Art (TsGALI), Saint Petersburg

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