

THE **Ballets Russes**  
IN AUSTRALIA AND BEYOND

EDITED BY MARK CARROLL  
FOREWORD BY DAVID McALLISTER, AM

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# Contents

Foreword .....	1
Acknowledgements .....	2
Introduction .....	5
Mark Carroll	
<i>Chapter One</i>	
Dancing the Ballets Russes: Creators and their interpreters .....	25
Lee Christofis	
<i>Chapter Two</i>	
'Astonish me!': Diaghilev, Massine and the experimentalist tradition .....	51
Lynn Garafola	
<i>Chapter Three</i>	
Tall tales and true: Ballet straddles the great divide .....	77
Mark Carroll	
<i>Chapter Four</i>	
Exhibiting art for ballet and theatre: A Ballets Russes cultural legacy .....	95
Andrew Montana	
<i>Chapter Five</i>	
The influence of the Ballets Russes on young Melbourne artists .....	115
in the late 1930s	
Gillian Forwood	
<i>Chapter Six</i>	
From Vassilieff to Nolan: The secret of the Kelly series .....	129
Felicity St John Moore	
<i>Chapter Seven</i>	
'A flutter in the orchestras': The Ballets Russes and the .....	141
Australian orchestral situation in the 1930s	
Mark Carroll	
<i>Chapter Eight</i>	
Just visualising the music?: Choreography raises its voice .....	161
Stephanie Jordan	
<i>Chapter Nine</i>	
Australian ballet music composition in the immediate .....	179
aftermath of the Ballets Russes	
Joel Crotty	

<i>Chapter Ten</i>		
	The welcome in the wilderness .....	191
	Valerie Lawson	
<i>Chapter Eleven</i>		
	Australian photography and the Ballets Russes .....	203
	Helen Ennis	
<i>Chapter Twelve</i>		
	Cameras and camaraderie: Life through an Antipodean lens .....	219
	Jane Albert	
<i>Chapter Thirteen</i>		
	The Ballets Russes, Spanish dance and <i>El amor brujo</i> in Australia .....	229
	Michael Christoforidis	
<i>Chapter Fourteen</i>		
	'That company of airy figures': The Ballets Russes in New Zealand .....	243
	Richard Stone	
<i>Chapter Fifteen</i>		
	New Zealand and Russian ballet: Beginnings and legacies .....	259
	Lee Christofis	
<i>Chapter Sixteen</i>		
	Borovansky's Ballets Russes .....	271
	Alan Brissenden	
<i>Chapter Seventeen</i>		
	The Australian legacy of the Ballets Russes .....	289
	Lee Christofis	
	Appendix A .....	311
	Ballets Russes in Australia – the repertoire	
	Appendix B .....	323
	Dancers and ballet staff of the three de Basil tours to Australia, 1936–40	
	Notes .....	329
	Index .....	349

# Foreword



The emergence in Paris in 1909 of Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes changed the course of ballet in the twentieth century. During the 1930s the arrival in Australia and New Zealand of Ballets Russes companies had an equally powerful effect, not simply on ballet, but on the cultural lives of the two countries.

How lucky for us to have seen the amazing artists of the Ballets Russes in performance, and to have some of them live amongst us here in Australia, sharing their art, wisdom and life experiences. We owe it to all of them to perpetuate their passionate belief that dance touches the very core of our humanity. Their personalities and creative mastery live on in our memories, photographic and film archives, and now also in this beautiful book.

The desire to know more about and to celebrate this much-heralded period in our dance history led to a unique research partnership between The Australian Ballet, the University of Adelaide and the National Library of Australia, under the banner of Ballets Russes in Australia: Our Cultural Revolution. Funded by the Australian Research Council and led by Nicolette Fraillon, Mark Carroll and Lee Christofis, the investigation has uncovered many hidden treasures and provided some glorious moments on and off stage. One of the more lasting of these outcomes is this wonderful book.

Enjoy!

David McAllister, AM,  
Artistic Director,  
The Australian Ballet.  
Photo by James Braund.

A handwritten signature of David McAllister in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

David McAllister

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## Supplementary information

Extensive additional information on the Ballets Russes in Australia and New Zealand can be accessed via the Ballets Russes Project website (<http://www.nla.gov.au/balletsrusses>). The site includes the PROMPT Collection, a listing of programmes, cast sheets and other ephemera in plain-text and digitised formats. It also includes information on photograph collections, albums, galleries and links to articles, other libraries, performing arts collections and websites in Australia and overseas. Project research documentation can be accessed at <http://blogs.nla.gov.au/balletsrussesresearch>.

The National Library of Australia (<http://www.nla.gov.au>) holds extensive materials on the tours, individual ballets and leading Ballets Russes artists. The materials include photographs, programmes, publications and Oral Histories. Rare Australian film footage taken during the tours is held by the National Film and Sound Archive (<http://www.nfsa.gov.au>).

The Theatre Collection at the Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide, holds related photographs, programmes and publications, including Léon Bakst's design compendia, at <http://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/handle/2440/12031>. The Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre (Melbourne) also has extensive holdings of tour-related documents.

# Introduction

Mark Carroll

Writing in London's *Daily Telegraph* on 27 August 1936, the balletomane Arnold Haskell alerted readers to 'an interesting experiment going on behind the scenes at Covent Garden, where Col. de Basil's ballet is teaching its repertoire to the company which is to tour Australia'.<sup>1</sup> The tour to which Haskell refers was the first of three to the Antipodes undertaken by ballet companies overseen by Colonel Wassily de Basil, who emerged to take control of the remnants of Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in the aftermath of the legendary impresario's death in 1929.

While de Basil shared Diaghilev's entrepreneurial zeal and formidable work ethic, the artistry of his companies owed more to their inheritance than to de Basil's own creative vision. The Ballets Russes was the brainchild of a group of St Petersburg artists – visual, literary and musical – established by Diaghilev's aesthetic mentor Alexandre Benois. Benois later recalled that the group was passionate in its belief that dance could serve as the catalyst for a new, collaborative art form:

Below left:  
Serge Diaghilev.  
Photo Lebrecht Music & Arts.

Below right:  
Colonel Wassily de Basil.  
Photo Lebrecht Music & Arts.







The ballet is one of the most consistent and complete expressions of the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the idea for which our circle was ready to give its soul. It was no accident that what was afterwards known as the Ballets Russes was originally conceived not by the professionals of the dance, but by a circle of artists, linked together by the idea of Art as an entity.<sup>2</sup>

E.J. Tait (centre) and Anna Pavlova (with four unidentified men), Australian tour 1926 or 1929. National Library of Australia nla.pic-vn3600797.

These self-styled Nevsky Pickwickians contributed to the prestigious and provocative magazine *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*), which Diaghilev and Benois, together and separately, published from 1898 to 1904.<sup>3</sup> In Mikhail Fokine the *Mir iskusstva* circle found a choreographer already undermining the entrenched, limiting practices of the Imperial Theatres, where he was first soloist. In Diaghilev, who was not a balletomane but a musician, curator, writer, publisher and exporter of Russian opera, the circle found the imagination and business acumen to create an enduring, if financially precarious, edifice – the Ballets Russes – which gave its first performance in Paris on 19 May 1909. There seemed no end to the creative possibilities Diaghilev would pursue, as Vaslav Nijinsky, Léonide Massine, Bronislava Nijinska, George Balanchine and Serge Lifar successively replaced Fokine as

*Announcing*  
*THE SUPREME OFFERING of the THEATRE*

J. C. WILLIAMSON, LTD., by arrangement with Alexander Levitoff, has the honor to present, for a brilliant season, the richest gift of the theatrical world—the famous Russian Ballet . . .

*The* RUSSIAN BALLET  
WITH  
Olga Spessiva



WITH the thunderous applause of the entertainment centres of Europe still ringing in her ears, we introduce to you Olga Spessiva, the greatest dancer of the Age. Mlle. Spessiva will be associated with Anatole Vilzak, the idol of Europe, and the finest company of Continental stars yet gathered together. The Russian Ballet will begin its special Sydney season on **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27.**

**THEATRE ROYAL**

his choreographers. Their collaborators came to include Igor Stravinsky, Maurice Ravel, Serge Prokofiev, Erik Satie, Natalia Goncharova, Benois, Léon Bakst, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Gabrielle Chanel, Jean Cocteau, Georges Rouault and the rising generation of French composers and artist–designers. For 20 years, from 1909 until Diaghilev’s death, the company remained at the cutting edge of European performing arts. Despite the best intentions of those associated with the famous Théâtre de Monte Carlo, Diaghilev’s winter-time home away from home, where the company was to have performed had not his death intervened, the burden of debt was such that the Ballets Russes was disbanded and its members and effects dispersed.

Enter Colonel de Basil. More interested in matters pecuniary, in 1931 de Basil formed an uneasy and ultimately short-lived alliance with the more cultured René Blum, the dance producer at the Théâtre de Monte Carlo. Together, de Basil and Blum drew on Diaghilev’s repertoire, collaborators and dancers, and came to rely heavily on his répétiteur Serge Grigoriev, who had taught, rehearsed and directed every Diaghilev performance. Grigoriev’s wife Lubov Tchernicheva became an inestimable coach for dancers new to the Diaghilev repertoire and was astute and discerning as she advised them on any new ballet. And so at the Théâtre de Monte Carlo, redolent of Diaghilev’s past glories, the Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo made its debut on 17 January 1932. Success followed success, until de Basil took sole control of what had become an international touring company after out-manoeuvring Blum in April 1935.

The de Basil troupes were brought to Australia by a company that looms large in the history of the performing arts in Australia – J.C. Williamson Limited. Until the early 1930s the Williamson company (aka ‘The Firm’) enjoyed a virtual monopoly in Australia as a performing arts impresario. Following its establishment in 1874 by the formidable James Cassius Williamson (1845–1913), the company built on its initial success in presenting Gilbert and Sullivan light opera and diversified into a range of genres, including grand opera, Shakespearean theatre, variety shows, military bands and ballet. Performances were usually staged in Williamson-owned theatres across the country, as was the case with the Ballets Russes tours. The activities of The Firm have been detailed by Viola Tait, the wife of Frank Tait, the youngest of five inimitable brothers who bought into the company in 1920. Tait’s account makes it clear that the company played a pivotal role in encouraging Australian audiences to view ballet as something more than a mere music hall entertainment of questionable artistic and moral value. Tait suggests that after a false start in 1893, when J.C. Williamson presented a grand ballet divertissement entitled *Turquoise* to an indifferent public, Adeline Genée’s visit in 1913 marked the ‘birth’ of ballet in Australia.<sup>4</sup>

Ballet’s profile continued to improve, courtesy of Williamson tours by Anna Pavlova in 1926 and 1929. Williamson cable books show that The Firm was keen to tour the Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo as early as 1933, when the company boasted Massine as its choreographer. After negotiations foundered, Pavlova’s reputed husband, Victor Dandré, offered The Firm a ‘Russian Ballet’ starring Olga Spessivtseva, whom J. Nevin Tait (The Firm’s London agent) described as a ‘replica Pavlova’.<sup>5</sup> Spessivtseva toured in 1934. Negotiations for a subsequent ballet company tour of Australia began in earnest in early 1936, after plans for a Russian opera company tour, which was to include the Markova–Dolin Ballet, came to nought. As had been the case earlier, negotiations were conducted by Nevin Tait in London and his brothers Frank and Ted in Australia. During February–March the Taites shifted their attention to the possibility of touring the Markova–Dolin Ballet itself,

Facing:  
Souvenir programme for  
the 1934 Australian tour by  
Olga Spessivtseva.  
Courtesy Special Collections,  
Barr Smith Library, University  
of Adelaide.

but balked at the high fees and guarantees demanded by Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin. The landscape altered appreciably when, on 18 June 1936, Nevin cabled his brothers with the news that de Basil had formed a second company – in addition to his heavily committed Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo. The new company was built around the Ballets de Léon Woizikovsky.<sup>6</sup> The date of the cable confirms that the Taits were better informed than company dancers, in that on 10 July Thomas Armour, an American dancer with Woizikovsky's troupe, informed the English balletomane Margaret Power that 'rumour has it that Léon has signed with de Basil using us as the nucleus for a second company'. With considerable understatement, Armour concluded that this 'would be a good idea I think'.<sup>7</sup> Indeed it was.

The company, to be known for touring purposes as Colonel W. de Basil's Monte Carlo Russian Ballet – with 'Direct from Covent Garden Opera' added to further pique public interest – was seen as an attractive proposition by the Taits because of the sheer size of its repertoire. Its demand, made to Nevin by de Basil's impresario, the Australian-born Daphne Deane (whose real name was Theodora Rabinowitz), that The Firm pay 50 per cent of its travel costs and a weekly guarantee of £800 also represented better value for money than the amount asked for by the Markova–Dolin company.<sup>8</sup> Not that Ted Tait was to see it that way when news spread of the impending visit of what sounded to him suspiciously like a B team. Viola Tait writes of Ted marching down to Adelaide's Outer Harbor upon the company's arrival there on 10 October 1936 to demand why he wasn't getting what he paid for, which was an experienced, established company supposedly teeming with stars.<sup>9</sup> The glittering premiere in Adelaide on 13 October confirmed that Ted needn't have worried, and the stage was set for an extraordinary episode in the cultural life of the Antipodes.

Richard Stone has compiled the following tour itinerary, which gives an indication of the sheer scope of the tours to Australia and New Zealand. The latter tours were undertaken by what had by then reverted to a single de Basil company.

## FIRST AUSTRALASIAN TOUR

Colonel W. de Basil's Monte Carlo Russian Ballet

(sometimes abbreviated to Monte Carlo Russian Ballet)

October 1936 – July 1937

Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, New Zealand, Brisbane, Sydney,  
Melbourne, Adelaide

### AUSTRALIA

Adelaide

Theatre Royal

13–28 October 1936

(21 performances)

Melbourne

His Majesty's Theatre

31 October – 22 December 1936

(60 performances)

Sydney

Theatre Royal

26 December 1936 – 26 February 1937

(72 performances)

New Zealand

Various cities (see below)

February–May 1937

(68 performances)

# Exhibiting art for ballet and theatre: A Ballets Russes cultural legacy

Andrew Montana

Timed to coincide with the third tour to Australia by Colonel de Basil's Ballets Russes, the Art for Theatre and Ballet Exhibition, which opened at the David Jones Art Gallery in Sydney on 5 February 1940, astonished viewers with the sheer number of works on paper, theatre costumes, fabrics and other properties on display. For the first time, an Australian exhibition of theatre arts revealed a spectacular treasure chest of art, costume and set designs created by contemporary British, European and Australian artists. The exhibition displayed a bronze Spanish dancer by Edgar Degas and historical properties, lent by de Basil himself, dating from the Imperial Russian Theatre and the Serge Diaghilev eras. These included a Léon Bakst-designed costume worn by Vaslav Nijinsky in *Le Spectre de la rose* and décor designs by Alexandre Benois and the Italian surrealist Giorgio de Chirico. The dancer and choreographer Serge Lifar lent posters designed by Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau that had previously been exhibited at a large Diaghilev retrospective organised by Lifar at the Louvre in Paris.<sup>179</sup>

Diaghilev's commissioning of avant-garde artists including Picasso, Henri Matisse, Giorgio de Chirico, Joan Miró, André Masson, André Derain, Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov is well known. But most of these artists were unheard of in Australia when de Basil's company arrived in the country. An eloquent teaser to the inaugural season in Adelaide in 1936, written by Arnold Haskell under a nom de plume, boasted that 'Australia is now seeing a history of ballet décor from "Scheherazade" to "Les Presages"', from Bakst and Benois to Masson, a half-century of art development'.<sup>180</sup> While generally confined to artistic circles, knowledge in Australia of this European 'half-century of art development' gradually increased in the years before the Second World War through the influences of the Russian ballet, contemporary art exhibitions, and publications.

The Art for Theatre and Ballet Exhibition revealed the strength of the impact of the Ballets Russes spectacles on artists working in England during the previous decades. The organisers aimed



'Ballet History in Costume and Décor', Sydney Morning Herald Women's Supplement, 6 February 1940, National Library of Australia NX 354.

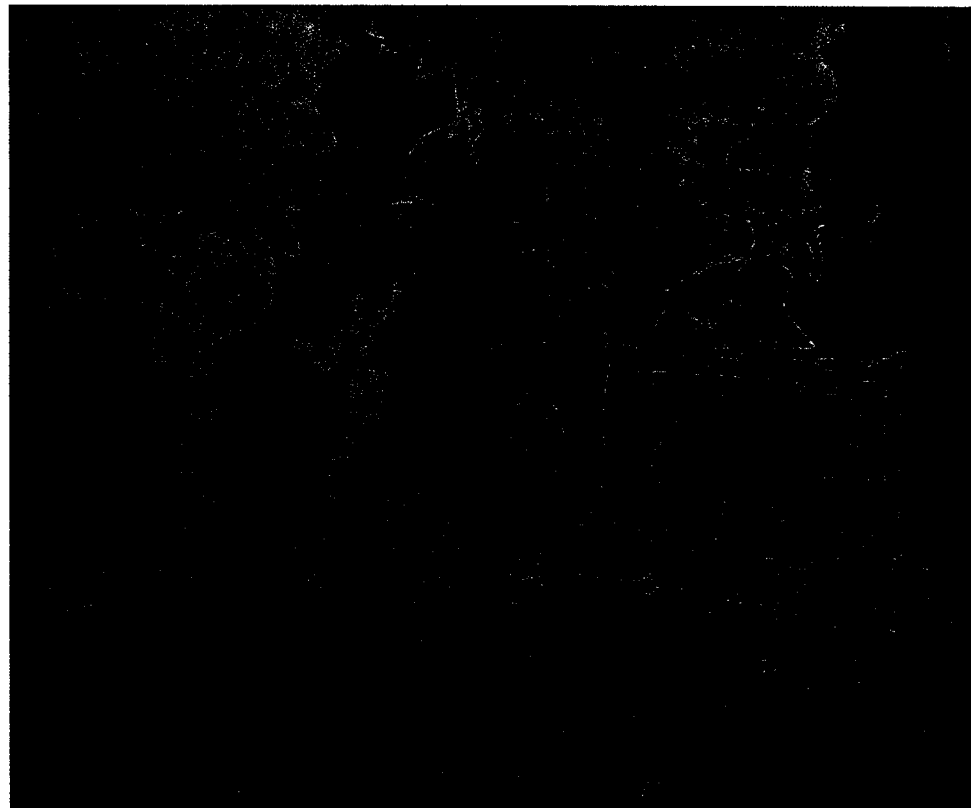
to provide an inspirational model for Australian artists, while at the same time increasing the public's appetite for ballet and its related art forms. Held at a range of venues, the exhibition consolidated the appeal of theatre art exhibitions. It encouraged artists to use the ballet and dancers as motifs, to design for the theatre and ballet and to create romantic or abstract and, at times, surrealist settings for imaginary ballets. Whether modernist and 'primitive' in their decorative boldness, or classically oriented in their composition and handling of figures, Australian artists drew creative inspiration from the Ballets Russes. Yet many exhibitions of theatre arts generated by the three Ballets Russes tours were ephemeral in nature and their significance has been lost to cultural memory. This essay sheds further light on this remarkable phenomenon which, as a major part of Australia's interactive



visual arts scene during these decades, had a long-standing influence on the development of theatre design in Australia.

Writer, arts champion and critic Harry Tatlock Miller was the enterprising chief organiser of the Art for Theatre and Ballet Exhibition, which after its Sydney opening toured to Melbourne and Adelaide in conjunction with Ballets Russes seasons in those cities. The entrepreneurial and sophisticated Miller, who had recently returned from England with de Basil's company, aimed to foster a cultural landscape that would see Australian artists patronised for the design of costumes and sets for what he hoped would become a thriving performing arts scene in Australia. Passionate about radicalising the theatre arts, Miller championed the suggestive and abstract nature of contemporary design for ballet, the 'magic' as he called it, in favour of 'scene-painters who used to turn out in mechanical fashion their over-ornamental hideously realistic backgrounds'.<sup>181</sup>

Consideration of some of the Australian exhibitions inspired by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes does more than simply provide a background to Miller's enterprise. It confirms the revolutionary impact of the Russian Ballet on Australian visual artists and shows the ways in which the subsequent generation of de Basil's Ballets Russes performers liberated and inspired them. The exhibitions of pastel and charcoal portraits of dancers by Enid Dickson in the foyer of the Theatre Royal, Sydney, during the 1939 and 1940 seasons are a case in point. Dickson sketched the ballet in Brisbane in 1926 during the tour of Anna Pavlova and again during the subsequent tour of Olga Spessivtseva, which Pavlova's manager and reputed husband Victor Dandré organised. Years later Dickson resolved to



capture the spirit of the Ballets Russes dancers. Popular with many of the dancers during the Ballets Russes seasons in Sydney, including Harcourt Algeranoff (who had partnered Pavlova in Australia in 1929), Dickson sketched behind the scenes, in dressing rooms and green rooms, capturing in her portraits and action sketches the dancers' costumes and make-up, their expressions and gestures.<sup>182</sup>

Drawn to the rhythms and lines of a dancer's body, whether in motion or at rest, and to the fauvist-like colours and shapes of the costumes and the décor, artists responded to ballet's concert of movement, design, music and lighting. Upon returning to Australia from England in 1921, Thea Proctor became the chief spokesperson for the synergy of art forms presented by the Ballets Russes. Believing that ballets were 'the most inspiring things that exist', Proctor stressed their influence on art, music and stage production, and on the modern emphasis of colour and design in the

Thea Proctor  
1879, Armidale, New South  
Wales – 1966, Sydney,  
New South Wales  
*Le Coq d'or*, c. 1938  
Watercolour on silk 69 x 83.5 cm  
Gift of Sir James McGregor, 1948  
University of New England,  
Armidale NSW  
© Art Gallery of New South Wales  
and University of New England



Photographic reproduction  
by Daryl Lindsay,  
The Shoe, c. 1939.  
National Library of Australia  
Papers of Margaret Walker,  
MS 8495 Series 23.

visual arts.<sup>183</sup> Proctor, having witnessed the opening season of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in Paris in May 1909, and subsequently the Australian tours by Diaghilev's successor, responded to the richness of the scenography and costuming in the productions and their resonances in modern art and design.<sup>184</sup> Her art reflected this brilliant spectrum.

In the early 1910s Proctor had painted decorative scenes on a silk fan-shaped support inspired by *Carnaval* (1910), after Diaghilev's early designer Bakst. Proctor later also created a scene from *Le Coq d'or* (1914) on a silk rectangle, after Natalia Goncharova's neo-primitivist and folkloric settings and costumes for the ballet, which she would have seen when it was first staged in Australia in 1938 by de Basil's Covent Garden Russian Ballet. Moreover, Proctor's imagination was fired by *L'Oiseau de feu* (*The Firebird*), designed originally by Bakst. Performed in Australia during

the first tour and again during the last tour of the Ballets Russes, *The Firebird* used the décor and costumes designed by Goncharova for its 1926 restaging in Paris by Diaghilev's company.

Proctor always regarded the spectacles of the Ballets Russes as both inspirational and instructional. Her decorative sense of colour and design were transferred through her practice and teaching into diverse media, including appliqué and needlecraft, costume design, floral art, print making, drawing and painting. Proctor engendered an appreciation of ballet in her former student, the renowned modernist interior decorator Marion Hall Best. Best recalled how she was drawn 'to the design and grouping of dancers, the unfolding of pattern in movement through space and the second moving pattern of the related colour harmony of the costumes to the décor . . . all one with the music'.<sup>185</sup>

In 1934, Proctor co-organised a Sydney exhibition of contemporary European art borrowed from private collections which included Bakst's *Pierrot et la poupée*, designed for Léonide Massine's *La Boutique fantasque*.<sup>186</sup> Exhibitions of her own art included many pictures inspired by the Ballets Russes. A review of her 1937 Sydney exhibition singled out her watercolour drawings after the ballets for their 'lovely effect of motion' and their 'long, flowing, elegant line'.<sup>187</sup> In a review of a subsequent exhibition, she was described as a latter-day Degas, whose new work after the Ballets Russes showed not only a 'pure quality of line' and much 'grace and distinction', but also strength in 'no uncertain terms'.<sup>188</sup>

Daryl Lindsay was considered to be the artistic proponent of Degas in Australia on the strength of his many studies of the Ballets Russes dancers. The youngest of four brothers well known in

artistic circles, Lindsay became the Director of the National Gallery of Victoria in the early 1940s. A member of Cynthia Reed's circle, which promoted modernist art and design in Melbourne, Lindsay held an exhibition of pictures in pastel, ink and wash at Reed's shop in early 1935. The pictures were inspired by the Russian Ballet performances he had seen in England, prior to the first Australian tour.<sup>189</sup> In 1934, Reed, later the wife of artist Sidney Nolan, had taken over the shop from the illustrator and furniture designer Fred Ward, who was himself attracted to the Ballets Russes as a subject. In 1938 Ward illustrated – with the clarity that characterised the contours of his furniture design – a page in Melbourne's *Argus*, whimsically depicting some of the company's leading dancers performing character roles.<sup>190</sup>

While some in Reed's circle were drawn to dance for its abstractionist expression of bodies moving in space and time, Lindsay consciously aligned himself with the tradition of Degas, an artist considered in 1930s Australia to be a modern master of draughtsmanship. In 1938 Lindsay exhibited some of his works at a large exhibition of dance drawings, which also included works by Degas, at the Leicester Galleries in London. According to Lindsay, Degas was the only artist other than himself who had succeeded in capturing the movement of dancers. Well practised in the quick observation and sketching of dancers, Lindsay was critical of much ultra-modernist experimentation in art. He pursued a timeless dignity in his ballet subjects and he always worked around a figure's central axis, whether the body was in movement or at rest. Yet as a classical modernist, Lindsay was attracted to the ballet as a subject because of the rhythm, colour and movement that could be captured in pen, pencil and wash, or worked into an oil study. Lindsay emphasised that the artist's function was to 'give an impression of movement by fixing on paper a sort of composite movement in which the dancer's flight is most completely expressed'.<sup>191</sup>

At the beginning of the first tour Lindsay exhibited for sale a large collection of studies of the Ballets Russes dancers in the foyer of His Majesty's Theatre in Melbourne. Another, in early 1937, was opened by Arnold Haskell in the foyer of the Theatre Royal, Sydney. According to Haskell, Lindsay captured 'the real spirit

Photographic reproduction  
of a study by Daryl Lindsay  
of Yura Lazovsky c. 1939.  
National Library of Australia  
Papers of Margaret Walker,  
MS 8495 Series 23.



of the ballet'.<sup>192</sup> Lindsay was the artist member of the triumvirate that promoted the successes of the Ballets Russes in Australia, which also included Haskell and E. J. Tait, the Managing Director of J.C. Williamson. Lindsay illustrated Haskell's book, *Dancing Round the World*, which was published in London in 1937. Lindsay went back to England and held several exhibitions at galleries there. He returned to Melbourne with Haskell and the Ballets Russes in 1938, ready to exhibit his new works of the dancers sketched from the wings and auditorium of Covent Garden, and on board the *Maloja* en route to Australia. Reviewing Lindsay's exhibition in the foyer of His Majesty's, Melbourne, the art critic Basil Burdett – who was later to curate the seminal 1939 *Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art* – confirmed Lindsay's title as 'Australia's Degas'. Burdett stressed the 'penetrating syntheses' of his subjects rendered in ink, watercolour and pastel, 'based on careful and arduous study' of the dancers depicted in movement, tying their shoes and adjusting their costumes, and sitting or standing at rest.<sup>193</sup>

Lindsay's study of Yurek Shabalevsky in *Prince Igor (Polovtsian Dances)* was just one of many works singled out for praise by the press, works which in turn enhanced the stardom and glamour of the principal dancers, Irina Baronova in particular.<sup>194</sup> Additional successful exhibitions of Lindsay's ballet studies followed in Sydney and Adelaide. As he had done in the catalogue of Lindsay's exhibition at Tooth's Gallery in London, Haskell championed Lindsay's art in the foreword to Lindsay's *Back Stage with the Covent Garden Russian Ballet*.<sup>195</sup>

One critic judged the drawings of Ballets Russes dancers made by Kay Ambrose, an English artist, dance writer, designer and friend of Haskell, as lacking 'the clearness and elegance which are to be found in Daryl Lindsay and Thea Proctor'.<sup>196</sup> Ambrose's drawings of leading Ballets Russes dancers, which she made during their recent appearances at Covent Garden, were exhibited at the David Jones Gallery in 1938, where they were praised nevertheless for their verve and leaping muscularity. These qualities were also readily apparent in Ambrose's drawings of Tatiana Riabouchinska published in the *Home* and in her study of Riabouchinska in *Blue Birds*, which featured on the journal's cover in early 1939.<sup>197</sup> Opened by Haskell, Ambrose's exhibition in Sydney also served to promote the dancers, many of whom were performing at the time in Sydney.

Several of the Ballets Russes dancers were themselves visual artists, and a number of them exhibited their work during the Australian seasons. Savva Andreyev, for instance, had studied drawing in Paris and worked on a large number of pictures of his dancing colleagues during the first tour. In Preece's Gallery in Adelaide he exhibited for sale his portrait and costumed studies of the dancers in action, working up his dramatically lit drawings in pastel on tinted paper with what one critic called 'strength and distinction'.<sup>198</sup> Sviatoslav Toumine also exhibited his drawings of company members in Sydney in 1940, along with a number of costume drawings for the company's revival of *Coppélia*. But the works of the vivacious Danish-born dancer, artist and designer, Birger Bartholin, whose exhibitions of décor, costumes and dancers were held in galleries and theatre foyers around Australia, received greater publicity during the late 1930s. During the first tour in 1936, Bartholin designed the backcloth for the second scene of *L'Oiseau de feu* after the original by Goncharova was shipped to America from England by mistake. Bartholin was assisted in his execution of the backcloth by a number of Melbourne artists, including Fred Ward.<sup>199</sup>

Bartholin exhibited a collection of his original designs at the Industrial Art Centre in Sydney in February 1937, followed by a larger exhibition of gouache pictures and designs at the Independent



Theatre Club rooms there in June. Some of these were created during the ballet's seasons in Brisbane and New Zealand.<sup>200</sup> Bartholin's art was characterised by wit, decorative fantasy and a light, modernist sense of colour and line. As was with virtually all of the exhibition openings of ballet art, his were society gatherings, where many of the star dancers represented in the pictures mingled with the guests. This enhanced the appeal of the ballets, the celebrity of the dancers, and the sale of pictures.<sup>201</sup> According to Melbourne artist and critic George Bell, Bartholin had studied at the school of André Lhote, the painter known in Australia for his colourful and geometrically faceted paintings, and for his theories on cubism. Another report mythologised that Bartholin was related to Paul Gauguin.

Commentators tended to promote Bartholin's art as decoration suitable for the interiors of modern homes.<sup>202</sup> This was seen as a compliment at a time in Australia when a modern painting was regarded as an ensemble of pictorial elements that resulted in an overall decorative design.

Birger Bartholin  
1900, Odense,  
Denmark – 1991,  
Copenhagen, Denmark  
Backdrop design for second  
scene of *L'Oiseau de feu*  
(*The Firebird*), gouache,  
watercolour and pencil on  
paper, inscribed lower left.  
To Frederick from Billy  
Bartholin, Melbourne, 1936.  
Private collection.



Publisher, patron, artist and art enthusiast Sydney Ure Smith proposed this correlation when he opened Bartholin's second exhibition in Sydney, declaring that the artist's coloured drawings and designs 'would not only make charming mementoes of the visit of the Russian Ballet, but would prove effective decorations for a modern home'.<sup>203</sup> A long-standing and active promoter of applied modernism, Ure Smith was one of several commentators who encouraged Bartholin's animated and spritely expression. Reviewing his June showing in the foyer of His Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne, the *Argus* critic reckoned that Bartholin's studies would make an ideal mural decoration, while Burdett, writing in the *Herald*, thought that Bartholin's designs for Ravel's *La Valse* would make 'extremely attractive decorations for any wall'. For Burdett, the décor and costume designs created by Bartholin for his ballet *The Shadow*, based on a story by Hans Christian Anderson, struck a haunting, classical note 'reminiscent of Chirico'. His scene for *Balletomanes*, with its 'mid-Victorian atmosphere, in which a lady who might be David's Madame Recamier repainted by Marie Laurencin, reclines luxuriously in a box in the rich shadow of canopied curtains', was sheer fantasy.<sup>204</sup>

Bartholin's fanciful sense of costume history was also applauded in the reviews of his exhibition held at Peter Nation's Art Shop in Adelaide in July. The *Advertiser* critic, for example, noted his ability to mingle 'surrealist symbolism' with the technique of stage design in his ideas for the ballet *Diana*, and in his vivid décor and costume designs for César Franck's *Symphonic Variations*.<sup>205</sup> Ranging from pictures of leading Ballets Russes dancers, including Léon Woizikovsky, Igor Yousskevitch, Tamara Tchinarova and Hélène Kirsova, to imaginative ballet designs of his own devising, Bartholin's art was versatile. He was a popular personality, and it was Kirsova, his friend and later patron, who opened his exhibition under Harry Tatlock Miller's management in Melbourne in 1937.

Miller's next major project on the back of the Ballets Russes was a large exhibition of pastel and gouache paintings, inspired by the ballets and dancers, by the young Melbourne-based artist Loudon Sainthill. This was held at the Australia Hotel in Melbourne in April 1939. Years later, Miller described the impact of the Ballets Russes on Sainthill's imagination:

But probably the greatest turning point in his life was the arrival in Australia of the Colonel de Basil Russian Ballet Company, in the thirties, when one season followed another in quick succession. Suddenly, for the first time, he saw how Larionov, Goncharova, Mirò, Bask, Benois, Rouault, Bérard and de Chirico, could saturate a stage with colour and create wholly new dimensions. To him, then, the Russian Ballet was an exotic oasis in what seemed an antipodean desert.<sup>206</sup>

The extent of the popularity, if not the rage, for exhibitions of ballet pictures and photographs is gleaned from George Bell's review of Sainthill's exhibition of gouache paintings. Bell defended 'another ballet exhibition' in Melbourne by Sainthill on the grounds that the young artist did not emulate the many photographic studies of the Ballets Russes, but was 'designing his pictures', many of which he thought were outstanding. Harold Herbert in the *Argus* was less than impressed, and suggested that, from 'Degas to Daryl Lindsay, the ballet had been drawn and painted almost to a stage of anathema'. While Sainthill's 'bizarre' decorative sense and his obvious nascent talent for stage design impressed the critic, Herbert was less thrilled by his handling of anatomy, which for him was reminiscent of sawdust-filled dolls. Herbert must have had in mind the exhibition of the young Australian artist and later prominent theatre designer and painter, Kenneth Rowell. In 1938,

Rowell made and costumed an idiosyncratic collection of sawdust-filled dolls with papier mâché faces, representing characters from the Ballets Russes repertoire, including dancers from *Carnaval*, *La Concurrence*, *Cotillon* and *Giselle*, which were exhibited at a dance studio in Melbourne.<sup>207</sup>

Bell commended Sainthill's pastel studies of Baronova, Riabouchinska and Anton Dolin from *Le Coq d'or*, and his studies from *Petroushka* and *Symphonic fantastique*. Other critics likewise praised Sainthill's talent in working his figures and portraits from a background of a generalised but rich single tone to create dramatic light and dark effects and a stage-like atmosphere. The *Age* critic put it astutely: Sainthill sought to impress the observer through 'the medium of his aesthetic perceptiveness rather than by any oral demonstration'.<sup>208</sup> His 'aesthetic perceptiveness' would continue to absorb the nuances and lyricism of the dancers' emotions, the colourful richness of the Ballets Russes spectacles, and no doubt its music. These qualities led ultimately to Sainthill's unique expression of 'Fantasy Modern', a surrealistic style, which in his later paintings and theatre designs transported echoes of the illusionist court masques and ballets of the English and European Renaissance into the mid-twentieth century.

The spectacle of the Ballets Russes performances inspired artists, designers, dancers and the public, and the success of the ballet seasons stirred aspirations for a creatively charged performing arts scene in Australia. Harry Tatlock Miller's Art for Theatre and Ballet Exhibition opened soon after he and Sainthill had returned to Australia with de Basil's Original Ballet Russe, the third and last of the touring companies. Sainthill had mounted a successful exhibition and sale of his ballet pictures at the Redfern Gallery in London, and Miller's idea to bring a large collection of theatre arts to Australia, supported by the British Council, occurred to him while he was watching the Ballets Russes at Covent Garden. Miller was aware of the influence of the Ballets Russes on the renaissance of the English theatre arts during the 1920s and 1930s. For Miller, stage design was an essential part of a whole ensemble, comprising dancing, music, lighting and art, and he envisaged this *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total-work-of-art ideal flourishing in Australian ballet.<sup>209</sup> While the recent outbreak of war in Europe had impeded the development and organisation of the exhibition, it also hastened its humanitarian objectives and purpose. Indeed, Lord Lloyd, the Chairman of the British Council, wrote in his foreword to the illustrated souvenir catalogue (featuring a cover designed by Sainthill) that:

Australia is sharing with Great Britain the burden and responsibility of a struggle for world justice, and for world order, [and] I think it not inopportune that Great Britain should manifest a desire to share with Australia the great artistic and cultural tradition to which all the British Commonwealth of Nations is heir.<sup>210</sup>

In the catalogue the distinguished ballet historian and critic, Cyril Beaumont, described Diaghilev's introduction to London of the decorative arts associated with ballet, which had been the catalyst for British artists to design for the ballet. Beaumont believed that this had laid the foundations for what he hoped would become an established school, already evident in Colonel de Basil's recent commissions of artists for the Ballets Russes seasons in London.<sup>211</sup> The creative torch was now being passed to Australia through the agency of this exhibition and the ballets themselves.

De Basil opened Tatlock Miller's exhibition at the David Jones Gallery in front of the huge

Under the Patronage of His Excellency the Governor and Lady Daphne

YOU ARE INVITED TO AN  
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of  
**ART for THEATRE  
and BALLET**

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(Under the auspices of The British Council, London)

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EPSTEIN, BENOIS, de CHIRICO, BEATON, MESSEL, DUNCAN  
GRANT, LOUDON, SAINTHILL, FEDOROVITCH, GONCHAROVA,  
CHRISTOPHER WOOD, LORD BERNERS, PIERRE ROY,  
PRINCE KOROVINE, LAURA KNIGHT, etc., for the productions  
of Colonel W. de Basil, the Vic. Walls Ballet, C. B. Cochran, Noel  
Coward, John Gielgud, etc.

PORTRAITS, STUDIES, COSTUMES  
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crowd of society figures, balletomanes and company dancers. All of the exhibits were for sale, except those from de Basil's and other collections. Ure Smith spoke of the exhibition's potential to inspire Australian artists to work for the ballet and theatre, and praised Sainthill's designs and his paintings of the dancers, which were featured in a large section of the display.<sup>212</sup> The scope of work was wide-ranging: as well as de Basil's material from the Diaghilev era, it showed art inspired by or created for the stage by around 50 artists, including Degas, Charles Conder, Cecil Beaton, Oliver Messel, and John Piper. Also featured were block-printed backcloth hangings by Michael and Ella O'Connell, who had crafted avant-garde textile designs in Melbourne throughout the 1930s before returning to England. The abstract ideas of modern and contemporary painters were widely represented in works by British painters Duncan Grant, Augustus John, Paul Nash, Christopher Wood, Edward Burra, Jacob Epstein, and in 'Oriental décor' by the peripatetic and now legendary artist, Ian Fairweather, who was then living in North Queensland. The press applauded the strong representation of women artists. The exhibition included designs by Vanessa Bell, Sophie Fedorovitch, Goncharova, Nadia Benois, Laura Knight, Doris Zinkeisen, Gladys Calthrop,

and the designs of 'Motley', the triumvirate of painters, Elizabeth Montgomery and Sophia and Peggy Harris, then well known in England for their works for John Gielgud and his productions in London. Kay Ambrose's recent works inspired by Indian dance were also acclaimed.<sup>213</sup>

Thronged people attended the Art for Theatre and Ballet Exhibition in Melbourne when it opened there on 18 April 1940 in the Mural Hall of the Myer Emporium. Guests mingled with dancers, including Nina Verchinina, Tamara Toumanova, Yura Lazovsky and Roman Jasinsky.<sup>214</sup> From early April the foyer of His Majesty's Theatre was hung with drawings of the dancers by Roy Hodgkinson, sketched from backstage, in performance or in the intervals between the ballets. Hodgkinson's ballet drawings were already known to Melbourne audiences through his illustrations published in the press during the previous two Ballets Russes tours. Burdett praised Hodgkinson's exhibition – again opened by de Basil – for its vitality which, the critic wrote, would 'excite lovers of the dance'. Indeed, Burdett went as far as to claim that ballet had 'never been more vividly recorded' in Melbourne than in Hodgkinson's drawings.<sup>215</sup>

Souvenir programmes of the new Ballets Russes season included an insert advertising the Art for Theatre and Ballet Exhibition, which helped to establish a direct link between the two events in the minds of Melbourne audiences.

De Basil was the guest of honour at the exhibition's opening and was accompanied to the platform by Daryl Lindsay, who designed covers for matinee benefit performance programmes throughout the Melbourne season.<sup>216</sup> Burdett linked the exhibition to the ballet company, which he described as 'a travelling exhibition itself'. Audiences at the ballet would not only see *Francesca da Rimini*, choreographed by David Lichine and premiered at the Theatre Royal in Sydney, but also the original set and costume designs by Oliver Messel featured in the Art for Theatre and Ballet Exhibition.<sup>217</sup> Moreover, viewers saw Beaton's designs for *Le Pavillon*, which had premiered in Australia during the Sydney season and was performed in Melbourne. Burdett compared favourably the many photographs of the ballets and dancers by the Sydney photographer Max Dupain with the large collection of photographs of the ballets exhibited by the English photographer Gordon Anthony.

Loudon Sainthill  
1918, Australia – 1969, England  
*The Echoes*, 1940, Sydney  
Gouache on paper mounted  
on card, 31.0 x 41.3 cm  
Elder Bequest Fund 1940  
Art Gallery of South Australia,  
Adelaide



# Ballet Competition

Colonel de Basil's competition for an Australian Ballet was judged last month at the Sydney National Art Gallery, where the work was exhibited for two weeks. The prize was awarded to Donald Friend for the Ballet "Huld-Up." His designs and others which received Honourable Mention are reproduced on these pages.

No less than sixty-seven designs were submitted for this competition, which was initiated by Colonel de Basil. He felt interested in encouraging local talent, to see if Australia could produce an original ballet. Though no definite rules were laid down regarding subject matter, the judges suggested that the Australian historical period from the gold rush up to the twenties would be suitable.

At least twelve of the designs were in pencil or charcoal material and showed that, despite the lack of experience in this work, there are a number of people here who, with encouragement, have the right feeling for drama and costumes.

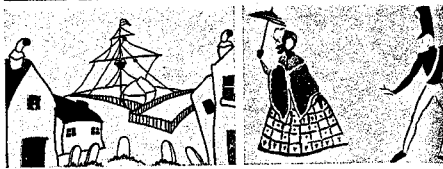
It is hoped that theatrical managers will give an opportunity to carry out some of these ideas in the near future.

Colonel de Basil, always ready on expeditions, commissioned the Martin sisters to design the dresses and costumes for Schaeffer's new ballet, "Eternal Struggle," which had its premiere at the Theatre Royal in Sydney last month.

"The Middle," by Donald Friend, awarded first prize, Ballet Competition. Top left: "The Girl with the White Dress" and Kelly's girl friend depicted in class. Centre: Group of men, including a young man in a white dress, and a young man in a white dress. The third illustration is the scene of holding in the past office scene.



Caroline: Ballet in one act by W. J. Spill. The heroine: Miss. 1. Design for backcloth. The shades are placed in this position by the warriors after their first scene. 2. The Wiser Spirit: The Annet, The Witch Doctor.



Fingert Hill, by Kathleen and Norman Myers. A romantic story of the arrival from England at the finance of an early settler. 1. Fingert Hill in 1840. 2. Chaperon: Soldier.



Port Arthur, Tasmania, 1840, by Gene Austin. Teaching story of wrongdoers and young women who save his former love during Port Arthur as guest of office. 1. Church and Penitentiary at Port Arthur (white cloth). 2. Soldier: convict.

Five Hobart Rogues, 1828, by Phyllis Person. Her a connected story, has a sequence of scenes and episodes of the old-fashioned life which was the first rogues in Australia. 1. Stage setting for Hobart Rogues, 1828. 2. Chaperon for "Hobart Rogues": The Girl, the Sailor, the Gentleman, the Lady.

The Misses Martin had an excellent set of costumes and drew for their ballet, "Fingert Hill," illustrated above. The backcloth for the Port Arthur Ballet and the Hobart Rogues are well thought-out, very colorful and descriptive. The Carabosse Ballet is an excellent setting and good in color.

John Bell's costumes were particularly good for her Ballet, "The Girl with the White Dress," and William Doherty's designs were stimulating.

The entries included a "King's Crown" Ballet and a "Waiting Maidens" Ballet, also one or two Staff Ballets.

The Australian Ballet certainly gives us the chance to "glamorize" the contact days. Note the Liza-like costume in the Port Arthur Ballet. Who knows, such design may set a new fashion in next year's grey silk, cowrie shells with decorative-plated hand arms? One can visualize a long costume on the stage followed by the growing soldier complete with his cut-a-mine tails.

AUSTRALIA, General Journal, 1940, No. 1, 1940-41



Just as audiences had been in Sydney and Melbourne, those in Adelaide were also fascinated by Sainthill's works when the exhibition opened at the Australian Art Gallery on 18 June 1940. One journalist singled out the works of Sophie Fedorovitch, who had reportedly designed the majority of costumes worn by South Australian Robert Helpmann, and showed interest in the display of fabrics for the costumes for Lichine's *Graduation Ball*, designed by Alexandre Benois.<sup>218</sup> Louis McCubbin, the artist and Director of the National Art Gallery of South Australia (as it was then called), introduced de Basil and the Lord Mayor, who opened the exhibition. As was the usual practice, leading company dancers, including Tamara Toumanova and Igor Schwezov, were the guests of honour.<sup>219</sup> McCubbin, who had used *Les Sylphides* as the subject for a painting exhibited in the early 1930s, supported the exhibition by purchasing four works for the Gallery. These were Charles Conder's *The Sea Wall* from the *Carnival* set, Doris Zinkeisen's *Fruit and Flower Sellers* (a design for *The Taming of the Shrew*), a wood engraving by Blair Hughes Stanton, and Sainthill's gouache, *The Echoes*.

McCubbin described as 'daring, arresting and original' Sainthill's quasi-surrealist painting of five abstract dancing figures, circumscribed by white cage structures and placed within a space

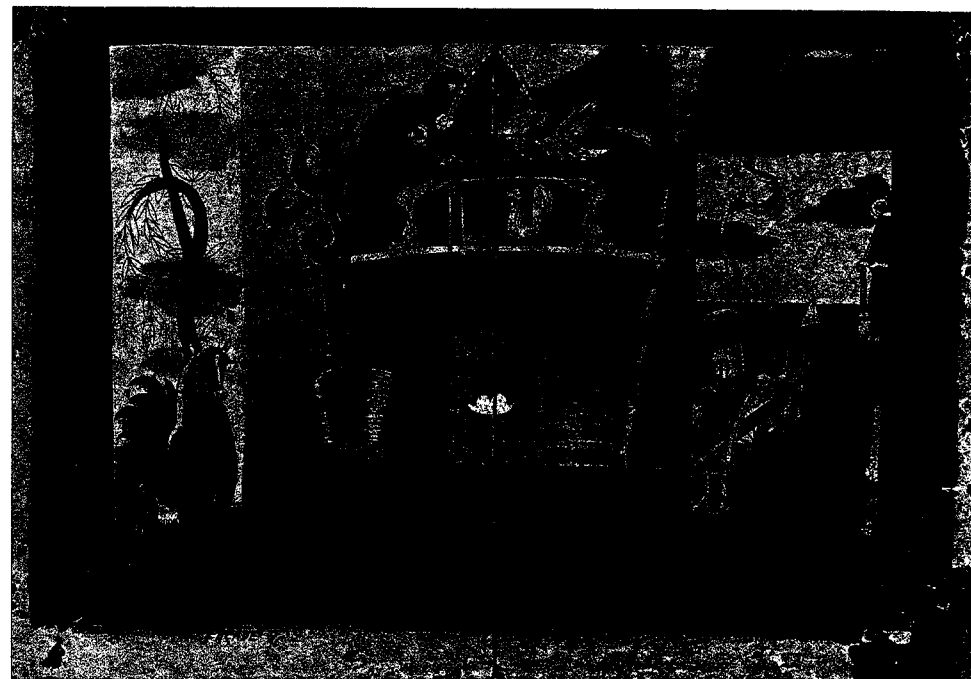
resembling a shadow box, with yellowish forms floating above their heads against a brown and green stippled sky.<sup>220</sup>

Although the National Art Gallery of South Australia was the only state gallery to purchase works from the exhibition, de Basil himself presented the National Art Gallery of New South Wales (now the Art Gallery of New South Wales) with designs by Goncharova for *Le Coq d'or* and Benois for *Graduation Ball*.<sup>221</sup> In February 1940 de Basil had announced a competition for Australian artists. The competition was designed to elicit designs and ideas for a projected ballet on an Australian theme which he hoped to produce while the Ballets Russes remained in the country. A committee, comprising de Basil, Ure Smith, Will Ashton (the Director of the National Art Gallery), B.J. Waterhouse (the Chairman of Trustees) and Burdett, was assembled to adjudicate.<sup>222</sup> The themes proposed, which varied from nineteenth-century tall-tale colonial adventures, to the Australian beaches, suggested that de Basil aimed to integrate the influence of the Ballets Russes with the narrative myths and legends of Australian history, and scenarios inspired by contemporary life.

While de Basil never produced a new ballet designed by an Australian artist, his competition attracted a large number of talented entrants, whose works were exhibited at the National Art Gallery in Sydney between late July and early August 1940. Around 70 designs were submitted for the competition, which carried a ten-guinea prize. Although designs for a 'Kings Cross ballet' and a surf ballet were exhibited, choices were narrowed down to nineteenth-century colonial period themes. Donald Friend won the competition with his designs for *Hold-Up*, a ballet based on a fictitious incident in the life of the bushranger Ned Kelly. Kelly, the legendary Australian anti-hero, was later also the subject of an iconic series of paintings by Sidney Nolan. Friend's designs for *Hold-Up* were characteristic of his satirical wit and sharp, edgy larrikinism and were described as being 'unique among the work exhibited, in that they exploit a vein of wayward rollicking humour'.<sup>223</sup>

Many competition entries were singled out for praise by the press or received honourable mentions. William Dobell used Indigenous Aboriginal motifs for his ballet, *The Legend of Fire*, as did W.J. Splatt in his *Corroboree Ballet*. Phyllis Pitman designed a ballet, *First Hobart Regatta 1838*, and Jean Bellette offered a ballet called *Bennelong*. Kathleen and Florence Martin's designs for a ballet, *Flagstaff Hill*, received special commendation. The talented Martin sisters from Melbourne soon became well known to Ballets Russes audiences as the designers of Igor Schwyzov's *Lutte éternelle*, which opened at the Theatre Royal only days after the winner of de Basil's competition was announced.<sup>224</sup> De Basil's competition succeeded in raising the awareness of the Ballets Russes among local artists, who in turn adopted ballet as a theme in their paintings. These included Proctor's costume designs for a ballet *Mirage* and Amie Kingston's oil painting of a drop curtain for an imagined ballet, both of which were presented at annual art society exhibitions throughout 1940.<sup>225</sup>

The departure of the Ballets Russes in September 1940 did little to diminish the popularity of ballet arts exhibitions in Australia – the ballet arts were now part of the cultural fabric of the country. Of the dancers who elected to remain in Australia, Hélène Kirsova and Edouard Borovansky continued the practice established by the Ballets Russes of accompanying their seasons with exhibitions of theatre arts, including the works of artists they had commissioned for their ballets. During a season of the Borovansky Australian Ballet in Melbourne in late December 1941, for instance, Hodgkinson, Lindsay, William Constable, Sainthill, Kathleen and Florence Martin, William Dargie and others



displayed works in an exhibition held in the foyer of the Princess Theatre.<sup>226</sup> Another exhibition, presented at Melbourne's His Majesty's Theatre during a short season of Borovansky's company in April 1943, included paintings and drawings by Lindsay, Alan McCulloch, Ruth Shackel and Dargie. In August 1944 a huge sale exhibition of ballet pictures and ballet décor and costume designs was mounted to coincide with the Australian tour of Borovansky's company, with Frank Lynch's sculpture of Borovansky flanking its entry. The exhibition, held in the foyer of His Majesty's, presented many of Constable's décor and costume designs for Borovansky's ballets, paintings of the ballets by Dargie, John Rowell and Norman McGeorge, drawings by Lindsay, Len Annois, McCulloch and Marjory Penglase, and a large collection of lithographs also by Annois.<sup>227</sup> Writing in the *Herald*, Clive Turnbull described it as 'an interesting demonstration of the manner in which a common subject strikes a variety of artists'.<sup>228</sup>

Kirsova also used an exhibition of theatre arts to publicise her patronage of Australian artists. During the second tour of her company to Melbourne in January 1944 an exhibition in the upper foyer of His Majesty's featured décor and costumes designed by Alice Danciger, Kingston, Wolfgang Cardlamatis and Sainthill for her new ballets.<sup>229</sup>

William Constable  
1906. Bendigo,  
Victoria – 1989, Melbourne,  
Victoria. Set design for the  
ballet *Façade*, 1942.  
Drawing, gouache, pen and  
paper mounted on card.  
55.8 cm h x 81.6 cm w  
National Gallery of Australia  
Collection (NGA 871940)

One critic described the show as contemporary and exciting, and went on to say that ballet:

can invariably be relied upon to prompt this release of the imagination, especially amongst artists of the younger generation: and the present show, packed as it is with alluring lithographs, paintings and drawings by some of the most intelligent among the younger generation of Australian artists, is a conspicuous event in the art activities of the local scene.<sup>230</sup>

Then, as now, artists hoped to gain commissions and earn a living from their collaborations with choreographers. When the Ballet and Art Theatre Club was formed in Sydney in 1944, one of its founding objectives was to offer practical support, through a large exhibition of ballet arts, to the many Australian artists:

whose total experience in the allied arts of drawing, painting and dance movement, probably would cover the most progressive thought and expression in the dance – theatrical and otherwise – anywhere in the world to-day.<sup>231</sup>

Held at Cowell's White House, a large home-furnishings store, the December 1944 Art for Ballet exhibition showcased works by Ambrose, Bartholin, Constable, Cardamatis, Danciger, Dickson, Elaine Haxton, Adrian Feint, Kingston, Lindsay, Francis Lymburner, Proctor, Grace Cossington Smith, Friend, Annois, Sainthill, Arthur Fleischmann, and Florence Martin. Also featured was the artist Harold Byrne, who had produced a book, introduced by Léon Woizikovsky, of aquatint and line etchings entitled *The Spirit of the Ballet*, commemorating the first Ballets Russes tour. While many of the works exhibited were for sale, others, including designs by Bakst and Benois, were loans from private collections. A large window display and a series of dance tableaux presented memorabilia from the Ballets Russes, Pavlova, and Adeline Genée, also held in private collections. Other exhibits reflected an increasing interest in the dance forms and costumes of Mediterranean, East European, South East Asian and Islander cultures, and in 'modern expressive dance' brought to Australia by émigrés from fascist Europe.<sup>232</sup> The cultural diversity was enhanced further by an accompanying series of talks given by Kirsova, Gertrud Bodenwieser, and Tamara Tchinarova.

Tatlock Miller had laid the groundwork for the 1944 exhibition, not only through his 1940 Art for Theatre and Ballet Exhibition, but also courtesy of a second show, called the Australian Art for Theatre and Ballet Exhibition, which was presented at the Education Department Gallery, Sydney, in March 1942.<sup>233</sup> The exhibit included a selection of works classified as 'English Art for Theatre and Ballet', which had been a part of his earlier touring exhibition to Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide during the final Ballets Russes season. The ballet motif in many paintings and drawings by Dargie, Proctor, Lymburner and Lindsay paid homage to the Ballets Russes dancers and repertoire. Tellingly, many of the costume and décor designs by Constable, Sainthill, the Martin sisters, Kingston and Nolan exhibited in the 1942 showing had by then been put into production.

One reviewer, struck by the sophisticated range of designs, noted that the 'ballet has certainly inspired Australian artists to a remarkable degree'.<sup>234</sup> Such was the vision for the future of ballet and the theatre arts in Australia that these and other artists, including Kenneth Rowell, Friend,

Haxton, Adrian Feint and Paul Haeffiger, exhibited many designs for imagined and projected ballets. Tatlock Miller's foreword to the catalogue explained his purpose in mounting this large exhibition of representative Australian talent. Reflecting the extraordinary impact of the Ballets Russes tours in Australia, this exhibition was not to be mistaken as a retrospective of the artists' previous achievements:

This is the first exhibition of Australian design for the theatre and ballet, representing the work of some twenty-five interstate artists. It shows that the initial impetus has been given to our painters and designers to work in this, to us, almost new sphere of art. Now that the beginning has been made it is to be hoped in the future that Australian artists will become a permanent part of the theatre in this country and abroad.<sup>235</sup>



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- 122 Massine, *My Life*, p. 208. In a radio interview with Irving Deakin that coincided with the opening of the ballet in New York, Massine described the ballet a little differently: 'It represents a collaborative effort between Mr. Hindemith and myself, and it deals with the story of St Francis of Assisi's renunciation of pomp and worldly vanities . . . much of the ballet is devoted to the youth, who is still attracted by the glamour of riches, who enjoys well-being, and hears the call of manly pride'. 'Music and Ballet: Eighty-Eighth Programme', WQXR (13 October 1938). Transcript of programme, pp. 6–7. Adolph Bolm Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library.
- 123 Massine, *My Life*, p. 209. 'Choreographic legend in one act and five scenes' was the description of the ballet on the programme.
- 124 Grace Roberts, *The Borzoi Book of Ballets* (New York: Knopf, 1946), p. 266.
- 125 Arnold L. Haskell, 'Ballet Extremes: d'Erlanger and Hindemith', *Bystander* (10 August 1938). De Basil Ballets Russes Clippings File (Box 2566), Victoria & Albert Theatre Collection.
- 126 John Martin, "'St Francis" Ballet Danced by Massine', *New York Times* (15 October 1938), p. 20.
- 127 Martin, "'St Francis" Ballet Danced by Massine'.
- 128 Massine, *My Life*, p. 212.
- 129 Massine, *My Life*, pp. 211–12.
- 130 Spurling, *Matise the Master*, p. 380.
- 131 Spurling, *Matise the Master*, p. 380.
- 132 Quoted in García-Márquez, *Massine*, p. 269.
- 133 Quoted in García-Márquez, *Massine*, pp. 269–70.
- 134 Jeremy Harding, 'In Order of Rank', *London Review of Books* (8 May 2008), p. 16.
- 135 Quoted in García-Márquez, *Massine*, p. 270.
- 136 Quoted in García-Márquez, *Massine*, p. 273.
- 137 H.G., 'De Basil Ballet at Covent Garden. Season Begins This Week. Personalities and Developments', unidentified clipping (27 June 1937). De Basil Ballets Russes Clippings File (Box 2566), Victoria & Albert Theatre Collection.
- 138 Marcia B. Siegel, *Days on Earth: The Dance of Doris Humphrey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 162–3. The ballet was performed at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1936, not 1935, as Siegel states.
- 139 For Fleischmann's background and patronage of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, see Janet Light, 'Julius Fleischmann', in *The Golden Age of Costume and Set Design*, pp. 91–102.
- 140 For reports of these various lawsuits, see 'Law Report, July 16. High Court of Justice Chancery Division, Dispute Over Copyright of the Russian Ballet', *Times* (17 July 1937), p. 3; 'Law Report, July 23. High Court of Justice Chancery Division, Dispute Over Copyright of the Russian Ballet', *Times* (24 July 1937), p. 3; 'Court of Appeal. Rival Claims to Copyright in the Russian Ballet', *Times* (23 February 1938), p. 4. Additional newspaper accounts can be found in De Basil Ballets Russes Clippings File (Box 2566), Victoria & Albert Theatre Collection.
- 141 Arnold L. Haskell, 'The Ballet: De Basil's Ballet Russe', *New English Weekly* (2 November 1933), pp. 64–5.
- 142 Arnold L. Haskell, 'Ballet Extremes: d'Erlanger and Hindemith', *Bystander* (10 August 1938). De Basil Ballets Russes Clippings File (Box 2566). Haskell seems to be alluding to Ernest Newman's discussion of the Hindemith score – which Newman found 'full of interest' – published a few weeks earlier in the *Sunday Times*. 'The Week's Music: Two New Ballets', *Sunday Times* (24 July 1938). De Basil Ballets Russes Clippings File (Box 2566), Victoria & Albert Theatre Collection.
- 143 Haskell, 'Ballet Extremes'.
- 144 Arnold L. Haskell, 'Ballet – Success and Failure', *Bystander* (12 July 1939), p. 42. Not everyone agreed with Haskell about Soudeikine's designs. A.V. Coton, for instance, found 'the assembly of blues, purple and cyclamen in the second scene . . . magnificent'. A.V. Coton, "'Paganini": New Fokine Ballet', unidentified clipping, [2 July 1939]. De Basil Ballets Russes Clippings File (Box 2566), Victoria & Albert Theatre Collection.
- 145 Constant Lambert, 'Why Ballet is Booming', *Sunday Referee* (21 June 1936), p. 16.
- 146 Haskell, 'Ballet – Success and Failure'.
- 147 A.V. Coton, *A Prejudice for Ballet* (London: Methuen, 1938), pp. 213–14.

### 3 Tall tales and true: Ballet straddles the great divide

- 148 See Michelle Potter, 'Arnold Haskell in Australia: Did Connoisseurship or Politics Determine his Role?', *Dance Research*, 24 (Summer 2006), pp. 37–53, and Potter, 'De Basil in Australia: Publicity and Patronage', in *Dance Research*, 11 (Autumn 1993), pp. 16–26.
- 149 *Daily Telegraph* (28 December 1936), n.p.
- 150 'J.S.B.', 'The Ballet and Ballyhoo', *Wireless Weekly* (19 March 1937), n.p.
- 151 E.J. Francis, 'Fits for Mr Haskell', *Home* (1 March 1937), pp. 33, 86.
- 152 'J.S.B.', 'The Ballet and Ballyhoo'.
- 153 John Sinclair, 'Russian Ballet and Our Culture', *Mail* (5 September 1936), p. 14.
- 154 Some of the material that follows first appeared in 'A political soft-shoe shuffle', *Brolga*, 25 (December 2006), pp. 6–22. Reproduced by kind permission.
- 155 'Hooper Brewster Jones, 'Russian Ballet May Omit Adelaide: Effort to Obtain Season Advocated', *Advertiser* (5 August 1936), p. 14.
- 156 'Visit of Russian Ballet: Sisters Offer Guarantee of £100 Each', *Advertiser* (6 August 1936), p. 18.
- 157 See Cheryl Hoskin, 'The Allan Wilkie-Frediswyle Hunter-Watts Theatre Collection', *Bibliophile* 11.1 (August 2003), pp. 23–30. Sir Josiah helped to draft the Australian Constitution.
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- 160 'Russian Ballet: Government's Patronage', in 'Views and Comments', *Advertiser* (6 October 1936), p. 22.
- 161 'Russian Ballet Tickets: Contrast with Children's Display', in 'Views and Comments', *Advertiser* (8 October 1936), p. 22.
- 162 'Details of Ballet Distribution', *Advertiser* (12 October 1936), p. 13.
- 163 'Monte Carlo Russian Ballet', 'Legislative Council: Questions and Answers', *Official Reports of the Parliamentary Debates: Session 1936, 2* (4 June – 19 November 1936), p. 1904. The exchange was reported in the *Advertiser* the next day. 'MPs and Ballet Tickets: More Than Two Refused Invitations' (14 October 1936), p. 11.
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- 169 Elisabeth George, 'Tuesday Topics', *Advertiser* (13 October 1936), p. 12.
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### 4 Exhibiting art for ballet and theatre: A Ballets Russes cultural legacy

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## 5 The influence of the Ballets Russes on young Melbourne artists in the late 1930s

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