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SERGE DE DIAGHILEFF'S BALLET RUSSE

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THE REAL BALLET RUSSE

SERGE DE DIAGHILEFF

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PRESENTING

for the *FIRST TIME* in America

SERGE DE DIAGHILEFF'S BALLET RUSSE

FOUR WEEKS AT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE
TWO WEEKS AT THE CENTURY THEATRE
NEW YORK

and

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and Atlantic City

1916

Beginning in January

JOHN BROWN, *Business Manager*
METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE
NEW YORK CITY

PERSONNEL

WARSLAV NIJINSKY — THAMAR KARSAVINA

Lubov Tchernichowa	Alexandra Wassilevska
Lydia Sokolova	Sophie Pflanz
Leonide Massin	Adolf Bolm
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Conductor
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THE REAL BALLET RUSSE

FOR the first time, and after years of anticipation, the most famous company in the world of dancers and mimes—M. Serge de Diaghileff's Ballet Russe—is at last to be seen on the American stage. From the relatively distant time when it first journeyed westward from Petrograd and conquered successively Paris, London, Berlin and Vienna by the beauty of its dancing, the vividness of its miming, the magnificence of its settings and the vitality that swept through all that it did, expectation has run high that sooner or later it would visit America. Report long ago made the names of the two principal dancers—NIJINSKY and KARSAVINA—familiar on this side of the Atlantic. The sketches of Bakst, the eminent artist of the theatre, who designs nearly all the settings and costumes, have been seen and admired in our picture exhibitions, whetting curiosity about the realization of their sweep of line and opulence of color on the actual stage. By scores and by hundreds, Americans, returning from summers in Europe, have celebrated the unique qualities, achievements and illusion of the Ballet Russe. Its like, they have said truly, the present world does not know.

THE TOUR

Now, at last, all these wondrous things are to be fulfilled in the eyes and the ears of audiences in America. Next January, the real Ballet Russe, under M. de Diaghileff's own direction, will dance for the first times on this side of the Atlantic, on the ample stage of the Century Theatre, in New York. In February and March, it will make brief visits—in some instances for no more than one or two performances—to Boston, Albany,

NIJINSKY

Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Kansas City, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Atlantic City. At the beginning of April, it will return to New York to the Metropolitan Opera House, where the regular company of that illustrious theatre has resigned the stage to the Ballet for four weeks of consecutive performances in the regular course of the subscription season—an unusual compliment to another organization. Indeed, it is under the auspices of the Metropolitan Opera Company that the M. de Diaghileff forces are coming to America for such a tour as they have never undertaken before. As the Metropolitan is to opera, so is the Ballet Russe to the dance.

WITH FULL FORCES

For this tour, M. de Diaghileff has reassembled his company in full ranks and, as the contract with him specifies, he will bring to America fifty and more dancers.

At their head stand the *Incomparable* NIJINSKY and the *Renowned* KARSAVINA. Arrayed around them are the graphic and virile Bolm, who is producer, too; the expert and comic Cecchetti; the rising Massin; Mmes. Tchernichowa, Sokolova and Pflanz—each a danseuse of distinction; and two score more—all trained in the ballet schools and the Imperial Theatres of Russia and then practised in the ways and standards of M. de Diaghileff's company.

They will be seen in eighteen or twenty different ballets, and every one of them—again as the contract specifies—will be set in the scenery and clothed in the costumes originally or newly designed for it.

Most of these settings and of this paraphernalia is the work of Léon Bakst, the most distinguished artist in line and color that the theatre now knows. The rest comes from highly imaginative, individual and daring Russian hands.

KARSAVINA

To mount these ballets exactly as they have been mounted in Paris and London, a full stage staff experienced in the work will accompany the dancers from Europe. With them also, as chief conductor, will come Ernest Ansermet, high-placed in the younger generation of musicians.

Since the music of the ballets is, for the most part, the large and exacting music of eminent composers, he will have at his disposal in America an expert orchestra, seventy strong.

In a word, the full Ballet Russe will repeat on this side of the Atlantic its acclaimed performances on the other, without abating so much as a detail of them.

NIJINSKY AND KARSAVINA

At the head of the company, as has already been said, stand Warslav Nijinsky and Thamar Karsavina. By common consent Nijinsky is the most illustrious dancer of his sex in the present day, distinguished by manly beauty and strength, flawless technical skill, exceeding grace and agility of motion, rare imagination and invention in the composition of his parts and an unusual and pervading personality. In such ballets as "Les Sylphides" and "Le Pavillon d'Armide" he clothes superlative feats of skill in as remarkable a beauty; in "Narcisse," "Le Spectre de la Rose" and "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," he adds poetic invention and illusion to this beauty and this skill; while in such mimo-dramas as "Pétrouchka" and "Schéhérazade" he rises high in vivid and exotic impersonation. No dancer in the contemporary theatre has such individuality or ranges so widely as does he.

Mme. Karsavina has no less signal qualities as a dancer and a mime. She is in the full flush of youthful comeliness and plastic charm that is neither too simple nor too sophisticated. The Russians, the most expert

and exacting audiences that sit before ballets, have long applauded her artistry in the subtlest and the most elusive feats of the dance. To the Western World of London and Paris, she glamors these technical perfections with the graces of imagination, the felicities of detail and the fine ardor of impersonation of which they are the instruments. She can range from the timid and dreaming girl of "Le Spectre de la Rose" to the entrapping and devouring Oriental princess of "Thamar," and, whatever her part, invest it with a sensuous beauty that is half of herself and half of the character. Like a perfume is the delicate and insinuating illusion that she works upon the stage.

THE MAGIC ENSEMBLE

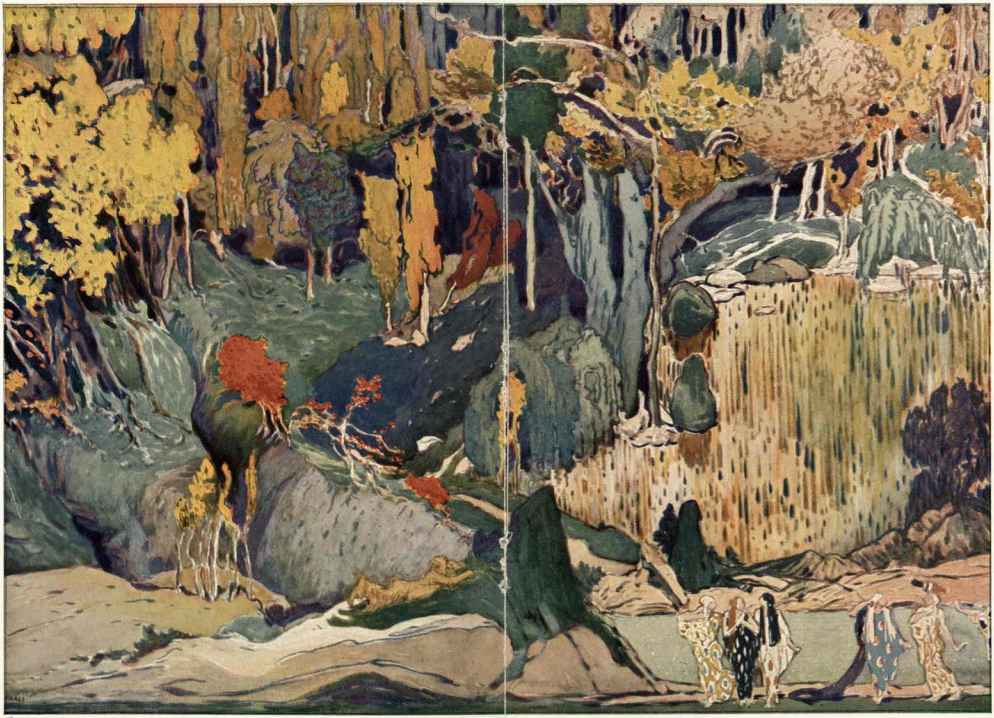
The individual powers of the rest of the Company will speak for themselves, especially in the vivid and pungent miming of Bolm; the youthful grace and charm of the dreamy Massin; the spontaneous finesse of the veteran, Cecchetti; and the mingling of personal beauty, pure artistry and sense of the imaginary scene and character that distinguishes the danseuses.

Yet at bottom, the magic of the Ballet Russe—the magic that will make it something new, strange and wonderful to the American stage—is a magic of ensemble. When it deploys its full forces in the languorous and misty beauty of "Les Sylphides" it summons a flawless and poetized vision. It dances through "Carnaval" and "Papillons" and fills the theatre with the atmosphere of romantic fantasy. In the scenes from "Prince Igor," it leaps and whirls as in primeval strength and barbaric prowess. In "Narcisse" it evokes equally the still beauty of old Greek legend and the wildness of old Greek orgy. In "Le Pavillon d'Armide," it is reborn into eighteenth century graces, elegance and fancy. An hour later, the stage glows

DÉCORS

"L'Après-Midi d'un Faune"—Bakst

LÉON BAKST



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ERNEST ANSERMET
Conductor

with the exotic illusion of the Indian legend of "Le Dieu Bleu" or quivers with the sensuous excitements of "Thamar." To them may succeed the racy folk-life and the gay whimsies of "Pétrouchka" or the Oriental savagery of "Schéhérazade." In all these ballets, each dancer has a clear individuality, yet each is a plastic and almost molten part of the whole. The vitality, the variety, the wealth of illusion are superb. The spectators are transported out of themselves.

BAKST AND HIS SETTINGS

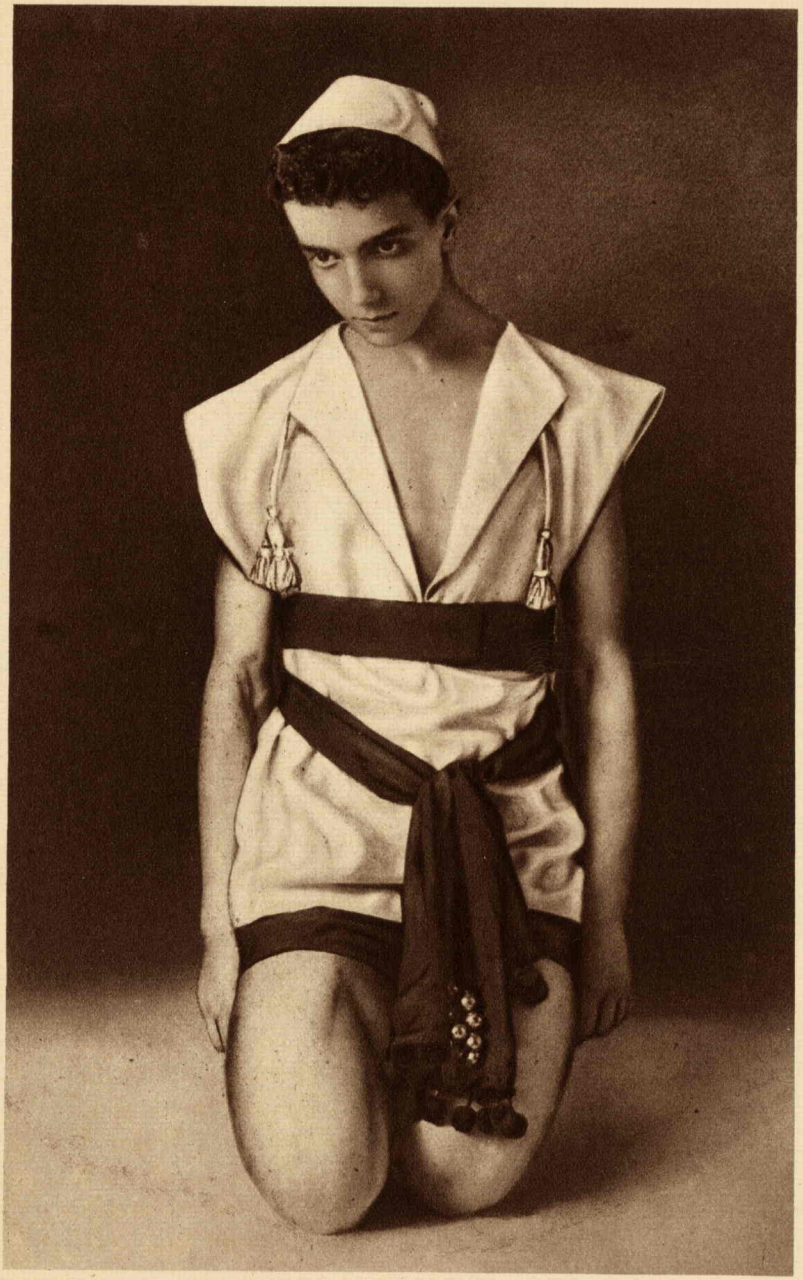
The scenic backgrounds against which these ballets move and the manifold costumes that clothe them are an essential part of this beauty and power of illusion. In a sense American eyes know the force of Bakst's line, the glow of his color, the bold sweep of his brush, the range and richness of his pictorial imagination. But to see them, as we have hitherto, in sketches only, was to see them in miniature and lifeless. His designs are work for the theatre and they do not come into vital being and full suggestion until they are wrought upon the stage. There, and only there, belong the sombre magnificence of his setting of "Schéhérazade"; the massed color and the fantastic detail of his India of "Le Dieu Bleu"; the vague and vaporous beauty of his hillside for the faun; the endless opulence of his color that floods "Narcisse" or the barbaric and ominous tower in which Thamar waits her prey. These settings are pictures such as our stage has hardly seen; they are backgrounds, too, against which the dancers are vivid or into which they seem to melt; but most of all, they summon and heighten the spirit and the atmosphere of the mimed drama or the unrolled vision. And those that have seen the fiery glow or the diaphanous loveliness of the Ballet Russe know how much of this twofold beauty springs from the costumes that Bakst has designed for it.

BOLM

Other backgrounds and other dresses from younger hands are decorative in the new manner of the European theatre, enriched with Russian warmth of color and play of fancy. From M. de Diaghileff's beginnings in Petrograd, he has cultivated artistry of setting as well as artistry of the dance. He has persuaded Bakst to design new settings for one and another ballet announced for America. He has even persuaded him to come himself.

THE MUSIC

As M. de Diaghileff has sought a union of many arts in the theatre, almost as diligently as did Wagner himself, so the music of his ballets is for the most part from the hands of eminent composers, classic, modern and contemporary. "Carnaval" and "Papillons" move to the like-named piano pieces of Schumann, transcribed for orchestra. The music for "Le Spectre de la Rose" is Berlioz's arrangement of Weber's "Invitation à la Valse"; for "Les Sylphides," the vaporous dances of Chopin; for "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," the elusive fancies of Debussy's like-named "Prélude"; for "Schéhérazade," Rimsky-Korsakov's glowing symphonic suite; for "Thamar," Balakirev's like-named tone-poem; for the dances from "Prince Igor," Borodin's opera, whence they came. The mimed scene in the watery palace of the river-god and the mimed episode of the melting of the snow-maiden are drawn integrally from Rimsky-Korsakov's operas, "Sadko" and "Snégourotchka." Stravinsky, bold innovator in harmony and instrumentation, master of rhythm and keen with sense of the theatre, wrote the music for "L'Oiseau de Feu" and "Pétrouchka." The Indian ballet, "Le Dieu Bleu," came from the graceful hand of the Parisian, Hahn, and the mythological "Narcisse" and the fanciful "Pavillon d'Armide" from the conductor-composer Tchérepnine.



MASSIN

Usually the Ballet Russe dances in two or three "numbers" at each performance—one or two longer mimo-dramas and one or two shorter "choreographic episodes." In all, M. de Diaghileff proposes to bring to America eighteen or twenty different pieces. Two are mimed scenes with incidental dances from Rimsky-Korsakov's operas—one from "Sadko" in the abode of the river-gods beneath the waters and the other from "Snégourotchka" in the woodland where the sun-god melts the snow-maiden in the warmth of love and spring. The ballets in the stricter sense of the word are: PÉTROUCHKA; burlesque scenes by Igor Stravinsky and Alexandre Benois; music by Igor Stravinsky; scenery and costumes designed by Benois. NARCISSE: mythological drama by Léon Bakst; music by Tchérepnine; scenery and costumes designed by Bakst. LE DIEU BLEU: Hindu legend by Jean Cocteau and de Madrazo; music by Reynaldo Hahn; scenery and costumes designed by Bakst. Polovtsian Dances from PRINCE IGOR; music by Borodine; scenery and costumes designed by Roehrich. THAMAR: choreographic drama by Léon Bakst; music by Balakirev; scenery and costumes designed by Bakst. L'OISEAU DE FEU: ballet in two scenes by Michel Fokine; music by Igor Stravinsky; scenery and costumes designed by Golovine. SCHÉHÉRAZADE: choreographic drama by Léon Bakst and Michel Fokine; music by Rimsky-Korsakov; scenery and costumes designed by Bakst. L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE: choreographic episode by Nijinsky; music by Debussy; scenery and costumes designed by Bakst. LE PAVILLON D'ARMIDE: pantomime-ballet by Alexandre Benois; music by Tchérepnine; scenery and costumes designed by Benois. LE SPECTRE DE LA ROSE: from a poem by Théophile Gautier, adapted by J.-L. Vaudoyer; music by Weber, orchestrated by Berlioz; scenery and cos-

tumes designed by Bakst. CARNAVAL: pantomime-ballet by Michel Fokine; music by Schumann, orchestrated by Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov, Tcherepnine and by Glazounov; scenery and costumes designed by Bakst. PAPILLONS: pantomime-ballet by Michel Fokine; music by Schumann, orchestrated by various hands; scenery and costumes designed by Bakst. LES SYLPHIDES: choreographic scene by Michel Fokine; music by Chopin, orchestrated by Glazounov; scenery and costumes by Bakst. DAPHNIS ET CHLOE: pastoral poem by Longus; music by Maurice Ravel; scenery and costumes by Bakst. SOLEIL DE NUIT: sacred Russian games, arranged by Leonide Massin; music by Rimsky-Korsakov; scenery and costumes by M. Larionof. LA PRINCESSE ENCHANTÉE; arranged by M. Petipa; music by Tschaikowsky; scenery and costumes by Bakst.

Of these ballets, "Pétrouchka" pictures a Russian fair and unfolds a whimsical tale of jealous puppets; "Narcisse" recounts the old legend of the Greek youth who preferred his own beauty to the love of women; "Le Dieu Bleu" is an exotic tale of Hindu gods, monsters, miracle and devoted loves; "Thamar" follows the Russian legend of the queen who lured her lovers to her tower and then slew them; "L'Oiseau de Feu" is a fantastic tale of sorcerers outwitted by human affection; and "Schéhérazade" is savage Oriental melodrama. Of the shorter pieces, "Carnaval" and "Papillons" weave romantic or fanciful episodes upon Schumann's music, and dress the personages in the garb of the forties; "Les Sylphides" is poetized dancing; the episodes from "Prince Igor" are equally dancing for its own sake, but now wild and barbaric; "Le Spectre de la Rose" is a young girl's dream of a phantom-lover; and "Le Pavillon d'Armide" is pure dancing again, glorified once more by imagination.

IN SUM

All these, then, are the dancers and mimes, the miscellaneous forces, the settings and the repertory with which M. de Diaghileff's Ballet Russe will make its first visit to America. Never before have such dancers in such array come across the Atlantic. Never before has such a diversity of ballet, mimo-drama and "choreographic episode" from such eminent hands been outspread on our stage. Never before have so many ballets moved to such music or been clothed in such settings and costumes. Never before have such performances wrought an equal magic, magnificence and vitality of illusion. In them the new arts of the dance and many a new art of the theatre touch their present climax.

PRESS COMMENTS

Nijinsky is among us as the protagonist of a revolution. By birth a Pole, and trained in the strict historic school of the Czar's Imperial Ballet, he was not long in realizing that his art required a freer outlet than could be found at St. Petersburg. He was scarcely twenty years old when he broke away to find a career more suited to his adventurous ambition in the famous company of dancers, then newly organized by Serge de Diaghileff. There he at once found himself the leading member of what is certainly the most wonderful company that has ever been known in the world of the theatre. I know of no parallel, indeed, to this extraordinary organization, either in respect of its size, its creative resource, or the wide field of its activities. Definitely "national" in its tone, M. de Diaghileff's ballet gathered to itself, and gave expression to, all the most prominent of the younger lights of Russian theatrical art. With men like Bakst and Benois as stage decorators and producers, with dancers like Nijinsky and Karsavina, and with a *corps de ballet* whose

general standard of excellence has seldom been surpassed, an almost perfect instrument was created for the revelation to the world of what was practically a new form of art. Rome, Berlin, Paris, London, Vienna, each in turn capitulated without a siege. And the hero of it, Warslav Nijinsky, was hailed everywhere as the Vestris of his age. The part played by him in establishing the success of the Diaghileff ballet is, indeed, undeniable. To the delicacy and grace of his presence and his remarkable endowment of physical strength, Nijinsky brings a gift of dramatic feeling and imagination which at once raises him to the highest rank as an artist. He is a great actor as well as being a great dancer, and his appeal to the intellect is even greater than his appeal to the eye.—*Le Temps, Paris.*

At first sight it would seem an extension of the term to include Mme. Karsavina among "makers of music." But her art distinguishes itself chiefly by the fact that it has much in common with music. She is more than a dancer and more than a mimetic illustrator of music. She has mastered these stages in such a manner as to have few rivals, but through them she has penetrated to a central point of vantage from which her method enables her to throw out a new path at will. To achieve expression without the extraneous element of speech is the quintessence of the art, and demands a special order of intelligence. It is the possession of this rare gift of seizing upon the inner principle that gives Mme. Karsavina her versatility, and at the same time makes of her performance something closely akin to music in the sense in which Walter Pater spoke of all art aspiring to the condition of music. That is to say, its material and its method are not only indissolubly identified, but independent of all else. In all this I have scarcely touched upon the quality of charm that pervades all her work. That is too elusive for description, and at the same time too obvious to need it.—*The Pall Mall Gazette, London.*

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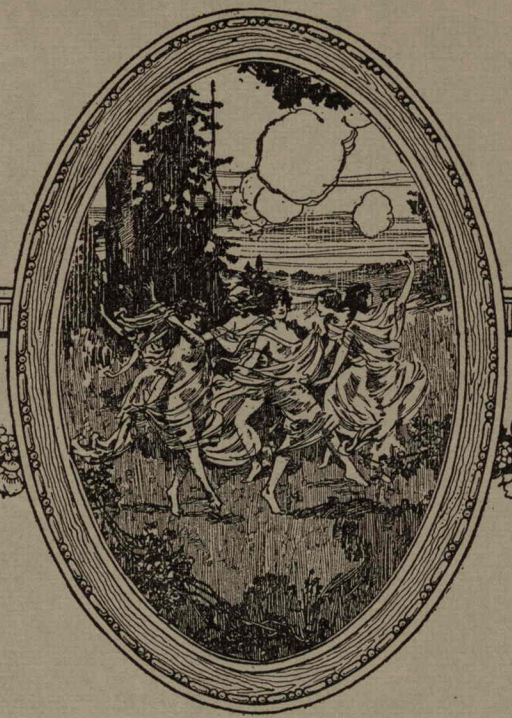
The Russian season has become one of our habits; no other suits the Parisian taste for the rare and the perfect better. To the attraction of curiosity which it provokes is joined that of giving us strong and durable impressions of art, and the memory of intense pleasures.
—*Comoedia, Paris.*

The dancing of Mme. Karsavina was a miracle of grace and vivid characterization, and once again she and M. Nijinsky endowed the music with beauties of a kind that may conceivably have been dreamed of, but were never realized before the combined genius of M. Bakst and the Russian dancers made it possible to crystallize the immaterial. —*Times, London.*

Mme. Karsavina and M. Nijinsky once more danced as though inspired, and the rest of the long cast played with the superb abandon combined with rigid self-restraint that characterize all M. Diaghileff's troupe.
—*Times, London.*

The gaiety of Paris is eclipsed. The Russian Dancers have deserted her. After providing the chief sensation of the season, they winged their flight across the sea that no longer sunders and alighted on the scene of their former triumphs—the boards of Covent Garden. The return of the dancers, then, is a *fait accompli.* We breathe again, but now that M. Serge de Diaghileff has actually landed his troupe safe and sound—we were about to say on *terra firma,* but the unyielding air is their real element—now that the first rapturous moments of recognition are over, we may allow ourselves the hope that the authorities really will produce all the ballets on their list and not leave some dangling to whet our disappointed appetite.

Mmes. Karsavina and Pflanz, Mm. Nijinsky and Bolm and the rest who seemed to bear familiar names did incomparable things in the ballets, and did them with the air of having just devised them on the spur of the moment for their own peculiar pleasure.
—*Times, London.*



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