

DANCE IN HENRY PRUNIÈRES'S *LA REVUE MUSICALE* (1920–40): BETWEEN THE EARLY AND THE MODERN

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Edited between 1920 and 1940 by Henry Prunières (1886–1942), *La revue musicale* is considered to be one of the most important music periodicals published in France in the interwar period. As such, it constituted a privileged site for discussion and reflection on aesthetic orientations of the period, and offers a remarkable portrait of musical activity in France. The original subtitle, “Revue internationale d’art musical ancien et moderne,” encapsulates an ambitious program of Prunières. Far from reserving its space solely for music, the journal made ample room for related artistic disciplines, such as literature, painting, and theater. Among these sister disciplines, dance and ballet featured prominently.

This article provides a typological and thematic portrait of the writings on dance and ballet that appeared in *La revue musicale*. What subjects are treated? Who are the authors? What links may exist between the journal’s editorial stances and these subjects and authors? All of these questions may be addressed through a study of primary sources, which constitutes a first step in a wider project to analyze and interpret the discourse on dance and ballet in *La revue musicale* in light of French cultural and artistic history of the interwar period. My objective is two-fold: first, to look more closely at one of the many aspects of *La revue musicale*’s ideology and aesthetic, and second, to bring new understanding to the reception of ballet, an artistic discipline that was very important during this period. Beginning with a survey of the journal’s ballet criticism, general articles on dance, and special issues devoted to the subject, it becomes clear that *La revue musicale* not only followed dance activity and practice between the wars, but it also acted in shaping the discipline through expressions of its editorial positions.

THE CRITICS: A REFLECTION OF MUSICAL ACTIVITY AND CHOREOGRAPHY BETWEEN THE WARS. The marked presence of dance in the pages of *La revue musicale* may be

explained initially as a reflection of the prestigious place that ballet held in Parisian cultural life during the interwar period, and particularly within the domain of music. The arrival of the Ballets Russes in Paris in 1909 transformed the artistic scene and infused choreographic art with an incomparable level of energy. Manfred Kelkel describes the shift as follows:

Relegated to the ranks of entertainment for long-time subscribers, at the time, ballet had become completely decadent, and it would take the extraordinary infusions of exoticism brought by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes to bring about the advent of the golden age of ballet that has been discussed at length.¹

Diaghilev also made of ballet a creative space that was sought out by composers; he commissioned some of the major scores of the 20th century, such as Debussy's *Jeux*, Satie's *Parade*, Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps*, *Pulcinella*, *Renard*, *Les noces*, and *Apollon Musagète*, and even Prokof'ev's *Le chout* (*Skazka pro šuta*), *Le pas d'acier* (*Stalnoj skok*), and *Bludnyj syn*. Following World War I, various companies were formed in the midst of the success of the Ballets Russes: first, Rolf de Maré's Ballets Suédois, and later, those financed by Ida Rubinstein and the Comte Étienne de Beaumont. Paris emerged as a European center for dance. In an article published in *La revue musicale* in 1929, Émile Vuillermoz noted, not without some irony,

We have entered the century of the dance. Each day, new types of maenads and corybants are born. There are psychological, philosophical, metaphysical, metachoric, ideographic, esoteric, conceptual, mystical, critical, idealist, determinist, and gymnopedist dances.²

A witness to the energy and diversity of Parisian dance activity, *La revue musicale* offered excellent coverage of ballet and dance events presented in Paris during the interwar period in its "Chroniques et notes" section. Between 1920 and 1930, ballet criticism reached readers mainly through the writings of Émile Vuillermoz (lead critic for the opera section), Henry Prunières (editor), and Boris de Schloezer (regular contributor), as well as André Coeuroy (editor-in-chief) and Valentin Parnac (contributor). While these critics generally devoted a large amount of space to narrative, set, and choreography, their writings appear to be even more centered on musical commentary.

A thorough study of ballet reception in *La revue musicale* is beyond the scope of this article. However, it is possible to provide an overview of some of the productions that were reviewed. Stravinsky makes an excellent starting point, since Vuillermoz and Prunières ardently supported his music. Vuillermoz described *Renard* as a "fantasy burlesque, very savagely Slavic," and called attention to the rhythmic force of *Les noces*, which he declared to be "the most precious part of the score."³ In reaction to *Apollon Musagète*, Prunières informed readers that

¹ "Relégué au rang de divertissement pour vieil abonné, le ballet était alors en pleine décadence et il faudra les extraordinaires bouffées d'exotisme, répandues en 1909 par les Ballets russes de Serge de Diaghilev, pour qu'advienne enfin cet âge d'or du ballet dont on a tant parlé." Manfred Kelkel, *La musique de ballet en France de la Belle Époque aux Années Folles* (Paris: Vrin, 1992) 2.

² "Nous sommes au siècle de la danse. Chaque jour voit naître une variété nouvelle de ménades et de corybantes. Il y a des danses psychologiques, philosophiques, métaphysiques, métachoriques, idéographiques, ésotériques, conceptualistes, mystiques, criticistes, idéalistes, déterministes et gymnopédistes." Émile Vuillermoz, "Les Sakharoff", *La revue musicale* 2/8 (June 1921) 257–60.

³ "Fantaisie burlesque, très sauvagement slave", Émile Vuillermoz, "Les noces Corinthiennes—Artémis troublée—Frvolant: Ballets Russes", *La revue musicale* 3/8 (June 1922) 262–64. "Le plus précieux élément de la partition", Émile

a new Stravinsky has appeared. His music is no longer the barbarous intoxication of destruction as it was in *Le sacre du printemps*. He is appeased within himself. His classicism is no longer only an attitude: One senses that he is responding to an intimate need of his mind and heart.⁴

As concerns the Ballets Suédois, which represented the modernity and daring of the young generation in the immediate post-war period, Vuillermoz showed no mercy. Reviews such as this, laced with xenophobic undertones, make this clear:

If the Ballet Suédois's accomplishments truly represent all of the effort of the "cosmopolitan generation working in Paris", our own indigenous art should feel the highest degree of patriotic pride. For it appears infinitely more favorable by comparison. The irritating mediocrity of the conceptions and performances of Jean Borlin's company is extremely humiliating for the representatives of artistic internationalism from the workshops of Montparnasse. There is such an impoverished imagination, such an indigence of creative means, and such a hesitation in its violence that one immediately pities the sterile agitation of these false revolutionaries.⁵

With respect to ballets composed by members of the Groupe des Six, opinion was divided. *Les mariés de la Tour Eiffel* prompted only a short review by Coeuroy.⁶ Of Milhaud's ballets, one critic wrote of *L'homme et son désir* that "his work is odd and brutal, but not without primitive splendor", while *Salade* was declared to offer "one of the most lively representations of the *Jeune France* musical generation."⁷ Still, *La création du monde* came under fire for its lack of daring.⁸ Prunières, *La revue musicale's* director, in particular appreciated the evocation of the past in Auric's *Les fâcheux* and the popular energy of Poulenc's *Les biches*. But Milhaud's *Le train bleu* left him indifferent; he felt that "only the refrains might have a chance to find a regular place in the repertoires of wind ensembles and *Orpheon* choirs."⁹ On the whole, Ballets Russes productions benefited from broader and more favorable coverage in *La revue musicale* than events organized by the Ballets Suédois, Ida Rubinstein, the Comte de Beaumont, and the Opéra de Paris.

Beginning in the early 1930s, editors added a regular feature especially devoted to dance.¹⁰ The creation of this new section doubtless had roots in the renewal of repertory

Vuillermoz, "Noces. Igor Stravinsky", *La revue musicale* 4/10 (August 1923) 69–72.

⁴ "Un Stravinsky nouveau se révèle. Ce n'est plus le barbare ivre de destruction du *Sacre du printemps*, l'apaisement s'est fait en lui. Son classicisme n'est plus comme naguère une attitude, on sent qu'il répond à un besoin intime de son esprit et de son cœur." Henry Prunières, "Ballets Russes", *La revue musicale* 9/9 (July 1928) 287–88.

⁵ "Si vraiment les réalisations des Ballets suédois résument tout le libre effort de "la génération cosmopolite qui travaille à Paris", notre art indigène peut ressentir le plus patriotique orgueil. Car la comparaison lui est infiniment favorable. La médiocrité désolante des conceptions et des exécutions de la troupe de Jean Borlin est fort humiliante pour les représentants de l'internationalisme artistique des ateliers de Montparnasse. Il y a là une telle pauvreté d'imagination, une telle indigence de moyens plastiques et une telle timidité dans l'agression qu'on prend immédiatement en pitié l'agitation stérile de ces faux révolutionnaires." Émile Vuillermoz, "Les Ballets Suédois—*L'Arlequin*", *La revue musicale* 6/4 (February 1924) 165–68.

⁶ André Coeuroy, "Les mariés de la Tour Eiffel", *La revue musicale* 2/10 (August 1921) 162–63.

⁷ "La recherche est cuieuse et brutale, mais non sans splendeur primitive...". Coeuroy, "L'homme et son désir", *La revue musicale* 2/10 (August 1921) 162. "Un des visages les plus vivants de la 'jeune France' musicale...", Boris de Schloezer, "Salade, ballet de Darius Milhaud", *La revue musicale* 5/8 (June 1924) 242–43.

⁸ Vuillermoz, "Les Théâtres Lyriques. *Le jardin du paradis*—Ballets Suédois—*La griffe*—*Sainte Odile*—*Le cloître*", *La revue musicale* 5/2 (December 1923) 166–69.

⁹ Henry Prunières, "Les fâcheux de Georges Auric et *Les biches* de Francis Poulenc aux Ballets Russes", *La revue musicale* 5/9 (July 1924) 61–65. "Certains refrains ont chance de trouver bon accueil dans les répertoires des fanfares et orphéons." Henry Prunières, "Le train bleu (aux Ballets Russes)", *La revue musicale* 5/10 (August 1924) 152–53.

¹⁰ A section entitled "Questions chorégraphiques", which gave voice to dancers on questions of technique, also

ballet at the Opéra de Paris. Writers for this section included, as always, Prunières and Parnac, as well as René Baron, Marie Levinson, Julie Sazonova, and Alexandrine Troussevitch. In contrast to the criticism of the previous decade, this new section appears to be more devoted to the choreographic aspects of dance, providing little gloss on the music. This may arise from the fact that many ballets presented during the 1930s had been performed in the 1920s with the same music but different choreography. The dance section in *La revue musicale* bears witness to the continually strong presence of a discipline that was even more diversified than it had been in the previous decade. It also demonstrates the importance given to dance through a perspective that reaches beyond its effect on musical creativity.

Ballets figuring in the dance section include Kurt Jooss's *Le tapis vert* (1932). This work made a strong impression on Prunières, who praised it as "an impressive revelation and a milestone in the history of ballet. It is the most moving dance event to be realized since the demise of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes."¹¹ Lifar's productions of *L'envol d'Icare* (1935) and *David triomphant* (1937), to music by Igor Markevitch and Vittorio Rieti respectively, as well as revivals of *Daphnis et Chloé* and *Giselle*, a pinnacle of romantic ballet, were also singled out for praise.¹² As a result of its reputation, a number of companies flocked to Paris: the Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo,¹³ the Ballets 1933,¹⁴ London's Vic-Wells Ballet,¹⁵ the Philadelphia Ballet,¹⁶ the Ballets Polonais with Nijinska,¹⁷ and Jean Weidt's Ballets 38,¹⁸ to mention only a few. Artists from the four corners of the earth paraded their talent on the Parisian scene, drawn to the city by its rich array of dance activity and informed audiences. The list is impressive: Indra Ramosay, Nyota Inyoka, and Uday Shan-Kar from India;¹⁹ Kurdish dancer Leila Bederkhan;²⁰ Sai Shoki from Korea;²¹ and Yachi Nimura and Toshi Komori from Japan. Komori made his mark in the 1926 production of Armande de Polignac's ballet *Urashima*.²² Others included Kurt Jooss, Agnès de Mille,²³ and Alexandre von Swain,²⁴ some of whom would later become leaders in the realm of modern dance.

appeared sporadically.

¹¹ "Le tapis vert est une révélation de marque et une date dans l'histoire du Ballet. C'est le plus émouvant spectacle chorégraphique qui ait été réalisé depuis la disparition des Ballets russes de Diaghilev." Henry Prunières, "La danse: *Le tapis vert*", *La revue musicale* 13/130 (November 1932) 309–10.

¹² Julie Sazonova, "La danse: *David triomphant* (Opéra)", *La revue musicale* 18/175 (June–July 1937) 112–13; René Baron, "Variétés: Sur *Giselle*", *La revue musicale* 13/126 (May 1932) 398–400; Julie Sazonova, "La danse: À l'Opéra—*Daphnis et Chloé*", *La revue musicale* 15/144 (March 1934) 236–37.

¹³ Henry Prunières, "Ballets de Monte-Carlo", *La revue musicale* 14/138 (July 1933) 121; Alexandrine Troussevitch, "La danse: Les Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo", *La revue musicale* 15/147 (June 1934) 56–57; Pierre-Octave Ferroud, "Autour de la danse: Les Soirées de Monte-Carlo", *La revue musicale* 16/157 (June 1935) 53–56; René Baron, "La danse: Ballets de Monte-Carlo", *La revue musicale* 18/175 (June–July 1937) 111.

¹⁴ Henry Prunières, "Ballets 1933", *La revue musicale* 14/137 (June 1933) 43; 14/138 (July–August 1933) 121.

¹⁵ Julie Sazonova, "Le Vic-Wells Ballet, du Théâtre Sadlers Wells de Londres", *La revue musicale* 18/175 (June–July 1937) 105–06.

¹⁶ Henry Prunières, "Ballet de Philadelphie", *La revue musicale* 18/175 (June–July 1937) 106.

¹⁷ René Baron, "La danse: Les Ballets Polonais", *La revue musicale* 18/179 (December 1937) 442.

¹⁸ Henry Prunières, "La danse: Les Ballets 38", *La revue musicale* 20/189 (March 1939) 137–38.

¹⁹ René Baron, "La danse: Uday Shan-Kar", *La revue musicale* 18/171 (January 1937) 58–59.

²⁰ Julie Sazonova, "La danse: Leila Bederkhan", *La revue musicale* 17/162 (January 1936) 66.

²¹ Julie Sazonova, "Questions chorégraphiques", *La revue musicale* 20/192 (July 1939) 66.

²² Henry Prunières, "La danse: Ballets de Nyota Inyoka—Yachi Nimura (Vieux-Colombier)", *La revue musicale* 14/134 (March 1933) 206–07; idem, "Ballet *Urashima*, par Armande de Polignac", *La revue musicale* 7/4 (February 1926) 147–48. René Baron, "La Danse: Toshi Komori", *La revue musicale* 15/144 (March 1934), 239.

²³ René Baron, "La danse: Récital Agnès de Mille", *La revue musicale* 16/157 (June 1935) 52–63.

²⁴ René Baron, "La danse: Alexandre von Swaine—La danse", *La revue musicale* 17/170 (December 1936) 448–49; idem, "La danse: Alexandre von Swaine", *La revue musicale* 18/179 (December 1937) 442–43; Claude Chamfray,

Among the group of dancers that *La revue musicale* followed closely, the Russian couple Clotilde and Alexandre Sakharoff as well as the Spanish dancer Argentina—whose Parisian success prompted a veritable pilgrimage of epigones²⁵—drew regular, enthusiastic responses from the journal for almost 25 years.²⁶ The inauguration of the Archives Internationales de la Danse, at the initiative of the Ballets Suédois's Rolf de Maré,²⁷ set off a period of intense activity in traditional, classical, and non-Western dance that was duly reported in the pages of the journal.²⁸

On the whole, criticism published by *La revue musicale* offers a highly diversified portrait of dance during the interwar period, a portrait that may be easily divided into two periods that pivot around the dissolving of the Ballets Russes after Diaghilev's death in 1929.

PRUNIÈRES AND DANCE. The significance accorded dance in *La revue musicale* resulted not only from the intensity of dance activities during the period and the concomitant rage among composers and the public for ballet; dance was also closely related to its editor's interests. A specialist of French and Italian 18th-century music, and Lully in particular, Prunières also produced writings on the ballet de cour that continue to hold an authoritative place in the literature.²⁹ Aside from a generous amount of ballet criticism, Prunières contributed a number of full-fledged articles on the subject to the review. In the course of one centered on the 19th-century Neapolitan dancer and choreographer Salvatore Vigano, he encourages dancers to renew their art through inspiration from past masters:

"La danse: Récital de danse Alexandre von Swaine, Centre Marcelin Berthelot", *La revue musicale* 20/193 (August–November 1939) 110; Julie Sazonova, "Questions chorégraphiques [Alexandre von Swain]", *La revue musicale* 20/192 (July 1939) 67.

²⁵ Julie Sazonova, "La danse: La Sardana de Teresina", *La revue musicale* 17/163 (February 1936) 136–37; idem, "La danse: Danses Espagnoles", *La revue musicale* 17/165 (March 1936) 221; Marie A. Levinson, "La danse: Emma de Miranda, Salle d'Iéna", *La revue musicale* 17/165 (April 1936) 302.

²⁶ Émile Vuillermoz, "Les Sakharoff", *La revue musicale* 2/8 (June 1921) 257–60; Roland Manuel, "Les danses des Sakharoff", *La revue musicale* 3/9 (July 1922) 68–69; Gabriel Audisio, "Les Sakharoff (Théâtre des Champs-Élysées)", *La revue musicale* 10/11 (December 1929) 170; Julie Sazonova, "La danse: Les Sakharoff", *La revue musicale* 16/158 (July–August 1935) 144–45; Roger Lannes, "La danse: Le récital Clotilde et Alexandre Sakharoff", *La revue musicale* 19/184 (June 1938) 396–97; Henry Prunières, "Argentina", *La revue musicale* 9/5 (March 1928) 154; Valentin Parnac, "Ballets Espagnols de l'Argentina", *La revue musicale* 9/11 (October 1928) 475–76; idem, "Les danses de l'Argentina (Théâtre des Champs-Élysées)", *La revue musicale* 10/7 (May–June 1929) 71–72; René Baron, "La danse: Argentina", *La revue musicale* 14/137 (June 1933) 61–62; idem, *La revue musicale* 16/158 (July–August 1935) 145; idem, *La revue musicale* 17/167 (July–August 1936) 61–62.

²⁷ Henry Prunières, "La danse: Inauguration des Archives de la Danse", *La revue musicale* 14/137 (June 1933) 62–63; Pierre Tugal, "Un centre de documentation unique: Les Archives Internationales de la Danse", *La revue musicale* 18/175 (June–July 1937) 71–73.

²⁸ Alexandrine Troussevitch, "La danse: Les conférences des Archives Internationales de la Danse", *La revue musicale* 15/146 (May 1934) 393–94; idem, "La danse: Exposition organisée par les Archives Internationales de la Danse", *La revue musicale* 15/146 (May 1934) 396; Yves Lacroix-Novaro, "La danse: Vieilles danses Françaises", *La revue musicale* 17/162 (January 1936) 70–71; René Baron, "Alexandre von Swaine: La danse", *La revue musicale* 17/170 (December 1936) 448–49; Henri Collet, "Les conférences: Gala de danse", *La revue musicale* 18/173 (April 1937) 217; René Baron, "La danse: Aux Archives de la Danse", *La revue musicale* 18/174 (May 1937) 305–06; Julie Sazonova, "La danse aux Archives Internationales de la Danse: Théâtre et Danses aux Indes Néerlandaises", *La revue musicale* 20/189 (March 1939) 135–37.

²⁹ Henry Prunières, *Le ballet de cour en France avant Benserade et Lully* (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1914); idem, "Le ballet sous Louis XIII", *Bulletin de la Société Internationale de Musicologie* 10/2 (1914) 1–16; idem, "Ronsard et les fêtes de cour", *La revue musicale* 5/7 (May 1924) 27–45. See James R. Anthony, "Ballet de cour", *Grove music online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

There is some interest for great modern choreographers to study closely Viganò's ballets.... The work of scholars such as Jaques-Dalcroze, instinctive discoveries by dancers such as Isadora Duncan, and productions the likes of Fokine, Nijinsky, and Massine tell of the advent of a new theatrical form of dance that will be to classic dance what Debussy's continuous recit was to Gounod's melody. The perfect union of pantomime and dance in a single dramatic work, rhythmically underpinned by music, is the goal towards which all choreographers more or less conscientiously strive.³⁰

This conception of dance is in fact directly linked to one of *La revue musicale's* guiding principles: to take from the past in order to construct musical modernity. Prunières's personal interest in dance may partly explain the presence of a number of seminal articles devoted to the subject in *La revue musicale*.

THE ARTICLES: HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE AND CONTEMPORARY STAKES. In *La revue musicale*, the themes of articles on dance, like those devoted to music, also reflect the idea of a fruitful coexistence of the early and the modern. On one hand, there are texts that take an historical perspective. On the other, there are writings that provide reflection on strictly contemporary problems in ballet. The first group includes a number of biographies of dancers and choreographers,³¹ texts exploring the relationship between specific composers or writers and ballet,³² and articles on well-defined genres or periods.³³ Among the historical articles appearing in regular issues of *La revue musicale*, writings on subjects bound up in the revival of French dance traditions of the 17th and 18th centuries dominate other subjects. For example, in an article on the traditional bourrée of Auvergne, Mario Versepuy describes the origins, steps, and music for the dance, which he qualifies as the most popular and characteristic of all early regional dances of the French provinces, and claims that "it expresses the musical sentiment of an entire territory, an entire race."³⁴ In his article entitled "Notes sur le ballet au XVII^e siècle: Les danseurs de Lully", André Levinson recalls the choreographic theories of

³⁰ "Un grand chorégraphe moderne aurait intérêt à étudier de très près les ballets de Viganò.... Les recherches d'un Jaques-Dalcroze, les trouvailles instinctives d'une Isadora Duncan, les réalisations des Fokine, des Nijinsky, des Massine présagent l'avènement d'une danse théâtrale nouvelle qui sera à la danse classique ce que le récit continu de Debussy est à la mélodie de Gounod. L'union parfaite de la pantomime et de la danse en une action dramatique, rythmée par la musique, est ce vers quoi tendent plus ou moins consciemment tous les chorégraphes modernes." Henry Prunières, "Salvatore Viganò", *La revue musicale* 3/2 (December 1921) 94.

³¹ Henry Prunières, "Salvatore Viganò", *La revue musicale* 3/2 (December 1921) 71–94; F. Prior, "Un grand maître du ballet au XIX^e siècle: Auguste Bournonville", *La revue musicale* 18/179 (December 1937) 401–10. See also Georges Favre, "La danseuse Clotilde Maffeurai, première femme d'Adrien Boieldieu", *La revue musicale* 21/195 (January 1940) 1–11; Jean Allary, "Mémoires d'Isadora Duncan: Amour, musique et danse", *La revue musicale* 9/5 (March 1928) 97–116; Julie Sazonova, "Anna Pavlova", *La revue musicale* 12/114 (April 1931) 303–13.

³² Emmanuel Couvreur, "Isadora Duncan et Wagner", *La revue musicale* 2/4 (February 1921) 188; André Cœuroy, "Wagner et le ballet", *La revue musicale* 3/2 (December 1921) 206–13; André Levinson, "Théophile Gautier et le ballet Romantique", *La revue musicale* 3/2 (December 1921) 149–62; idem, "Stéphane Mallarmé, métaphysicien du ballet", *La revue musicale* 5/1 (November 1923) 21–33; idem, "Stravinsky et la danse", *La revue musicale* 5/2 (December 1923) 155–65; idem, "Notes sur le ballet au XVII^e siècle: Les danseurs de Lully", *La revue musicale* 6/3 (January 1925) 44–55; idem, "Le ballet de *Prométhée*: Beethoven et Viganò", *La revue musicale* 8/6 (April 1927) 87–97; Serge Lifar, "Maurice Ravel et le ballet", *La revue musicale* 19/187 (December 1938) 266–72; idem, "Igor Stravinsky, législateur de ballet", *La revue musicale* 20/191 (May–June 1939) 81–90; Julie Sazonova, "Molière et la danse", *La revue musicale* 18/173 (April 1937) 162–76.

³³ Mario Versepuy, "La bourrée d'Auvergne", *La revue musicale* 5/3 (January 1924) 45–49; Léon-Honoré Labande, "Ballets dansés à la cour d'Honoré II, Prince de Monaco en 1654–1655", *La revue musicale* 10/1 (November 1928) 7–26; Valentine Hugo, "La danse au théâtre pendant la Révolution Française", *La revue musicale* 3/5 (March 1922) 220–30; 3/6 (April 1922) 44–50; 3/7 (May 1922) 127–46.

³⁴ "Elle exprime le sentiment musical de tout un terroir, de toute une race." Versepuy, "La bourrée d'Auvergne", 45.

individuals such as Beauchamps, Pécourt, and Feuillet, who erected the rules of the monumental French school of ballet.³⁵ An important contribution on dance during the French Revolution came to the journal from Valentine Hugo, whose interest in ballet is revealed in his many remarkable sketches of Nijinsky.³⁶ An article on ballets danced at the court of Monaco during the 17th century, another on Molière and dance, and even a description of various episodes in the busy life of dancer Clotilde Malfleurai all provided readers with a historical perspective on a contemporary art.³⁷

Aside from articles of a historical nature, articles delving into theoretical and aesthetic problems associated with ballet also appear in *La revue musicale*. Questions of dance notation, the psychological processes involved in creating choreography, and relationships between dance and music in ballet are all considered.³⁸ Beginning in the 1930s, articles debating future directions in dance appear to take precedence over historical issues. These writings echo debates waged within the dance community, beginning with Serge Lifar and his *Manifeste du chorégraphe* (1935),³⁹ in which he insists on the autonomy of dance in relationship to the other arts, and music in particular. Lifar's name was raised time and again in the pages of *La revue musicale* during the decade. In his article on dance in concert, Fernand Divoire explored the question of whether or not the addition of choreography diminished or enriched preexisting musical works, and raises Lifar's campaign as an example:

An artist who might have an "idea of dance" and who might seek out great music in order to add his dance to it commits a grave error.... If a person has "an idea of dance", he must attempt to replicate Serge Lifar's accomplishment: Create a dance and write music adapted to this dance.⁴⁰

Alexandrine Troussevitch refers to Lifar in "La chorégraphie et ses rapports avec la musique," which traces the evolution of ballet since Petipa while underscoring the alternation of dominating roles between dance and music. She concludes with commentary on Lifar's *L'envol d'Icar*, which illustrates the union of dance and composition, telling readers that "a whole new way has opened up—the unified work of choreographer and composer, both following the same path, holding to the same

³⁵ André Levinson, "Les danseurs de Lully," *La revue musicale* 6/3 (January 1925) 44–55.

³⁶ Valentine Hugo, "La danse au théâtre pendant la Révolution Française"; Richard Buckle, *Nijinsky on stage* (London: Studio Vista, 1971).

³⁷ Léon-Honoré Labande, "Ballets dansés à la cour d'Honoré II, Prince de Monaco en 1654–1655," *La revue musicale* 10/1 (November 1928) 7–26; Julie Sazonova, "Molière et la danse," *La revue musicale* 18/173 (April 1937) 162–76; Georges Favre, "La danseuse Clotilde Malfleurai, première femme d'Adrien Boieldieu," *La revue musicale* 21/195 (January 1940) 1–11.

³⁸ Marcel Stani Ducout, "Le chant de la danse: Note schématique sur une synthèse de la danse et de la musique," *La revue musicale* 18/173 (April 1937) 184–91; Valentin Parnac, "Notation de danse," *La revue musicale* 9/5 (March 1928) 129–32; Boris de Schloezer, "Psychologie et danse," *La revue musicale* 3/2 (Decembre 1921) 214–22; René Baron, "Ballet moderne: Tentative de conciliation," *La revue musicale* 14/137 (June 1933) 8; Fernand Divoire, "La danse au concert," *La revue musicale* 18/179 (December 1937) 406–10; Lazare Saminsky, "La nouvelle chorégraphie et sa musique," *La revue musicale* 4/8 (June 1923) 147–49; André Suarès, "Danse et musique," *La revue musicale* 3/2 (December 1921) 133–41; Alexandrine Troussevitch, "La chorégraphie et ses rapports avec la musique," *La revue musicale* 15/146 (May 1934) 340–48; Boulos Ristelhueber, "La danse de demain et le goût du théâtre," *La revue musicale* 20/190 (April 1939) 177–83.

³⁹ Serge Lifar, *Le manifeste du chorégraphe* (Paris: Coopérative Etoile, 1935).

⁴⁰ "Une artiste qui aurait "une idée de danse", et chercherait quelque grande musique pour y ajouter sa danse, commettrait une erreur grave.... Si l'on a "une idée de danse", alors il faut tenter ce qu'a réalisé Serge Lifar: créer la danse et faire écrire la musique qui s'adapte à cette danse." Fernand Divoire, "La danse au concert," *La revue musicale* 18/179 (December 1937) 409–10.

internal guideline.”⁴¹ Finally, Roger Lannes’s “La solitude d’un danseur: D’*Icare* à *David triomphant*” constructs a panegyric to the ballets of Lifar, as well as Ristelhueber, in a general consideration of future perspectives in dance, in which he asserts:

I assume it is obvious that the greatest event in classical ballet since Diaghilev’s death was the performance of *Icare*, for this ballet opened up new horizons for academic dance. And the entirety of Serge Lifar’s incessant experiments are obviously more useful to the health of classical ballet than all the new works [*créations*] that merely constitute reproductions of a choreography that has been repeated a thousand times over, albeit with a new score, outfitted in new colors, substituting leprechauns for gnomes or elves for sylphs.⁴²

The journal also provides direct testimony from Lifar on his theories of ballet, notably in a provocative article entitled “Igor Stravinsky: Législateur de ballet”, who is sharply taken to task for having

committed a fatal error in becoming a ballet composer.... This error of Mr. Stravinsky had disastrous consequences for 20th-century ballet: Other musicians, complete strangers to dance, followed Stravinsky’s example and forced us to dance to undanceable music. As a result, contemporary ballet found itself in an impasse from which choreographic authors now ardently seek escape.⁴³

We might question the important place given Lifar in *La revue musicale*. On one hand, his arrival at the Opéra de Paris ties in with the renewal of dance repertoire at this French institution and the establishing of a veritable “dance strategy”.⁴⁴ On the other, coming from Diaghilev’s company and the Franco-Russian ballet school, his work in dance also marks the renewal of the French ballet tradition that *La revue musicale* had a sure hand in reviving.

Still, Lifar’s work is not the only effort championed in the journal. In fact, several articles report on the presence and dissemination of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze’s ideas about eurhythmics, a method founded on an understanding of rhythm in which dance constitutes a significant element, though not an end in itself.⁴⁵ This method would make a profound impression later on Jacques Rouché, who instituted a class of eurhythmics at

⁴¹ “C’est une voie toute nouvelle qui vient de s’ouvrir – d’un travail uni du chorégraphe et du compositeur, les deux suivant le même chemin et tenant le même fil intérieur.” Alexandrine Troussevitch, “La chorégraphie et ses rapports avec la musique”, *La revue musicale* 15/146 (May 1934) 348.

⁴² “Je tiens pour évident que le plus grand événement du ballet classique depuis la disparition de Diaghilev a été la représentation d’*Icare*, car ce ballet a ouvert à la danse d’académie un horizon nouveau. Et toutes les recherches incessantes d’un Serge Lifar sont manifestement plus utiles à la santé du ballet classique, que toutes les “créations” qui se bornent à reproduire, accompagnées par une nouvelle partition, habillées d’étoffes d’autres couleurs et mettant en scène des lutins au lieu de gnomes ou des elfes au lieu de sylphides, une chorégraphie déjà mille fois ressassée.” Roger Lannes, “La solitude d’un danseur: D’*Icare* à *David triomphant*”, *La revue musicale* 18/173 (April 1937) 177–83; Boulos Ristelhueber, “La danse de demain et le goût du théâtre”, *La revue musicale* 20/190 (April 1939) 177–83.

⁴³ “M. Stravinsky a commis une erreur fatale en devenant un compositeur de ballets.... Cette erreur de M. Stravinsky a eu des conséquences désastreuses pour le ballet au XX^e siècle : d’autres musiciens, totalement étrangers à la danse, ont suivi l’exemple de Stravinsky et nous ont obligé à faire danser des partitions indansables. Le ballet contemporain s’est ainsi retrouvé dans une impasse dont les choréauteurs que nous sommes cherchent ardemment l’issue.” Serge Lifar, “Igor Stravinsky: Législateur de ballet”, *La revue musicale* 20/191 (May–June 1939) 90.

⁴⁴ Kelkel, *La musique de ballet*, 5.

⁴⁵ Albert Jeanneret, “Rythmique”, *La revue musicale* 2/10 (August 1921) 166–67; R. Pasmanik-Bespalova, “Danse et rythmique”, *La revue musicale* 5/6 (April 1924) 59–66; Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, “La technique intérieure du rythme”, *La revue musicale* 7/1 (November 1925) 25–36; Yves Lacroix-Novaro, “La danse: École de rythmique de Miss Pledge”, *La revue musicale* 14/138 (July–August 1933) 137; Samuel Baud-Bovy, “Suisse: Un festival Jaques-Dalcroze à Genève”, *La revue musicale* 18/174 (May 1937) 304–05.

the Opéra's dance school.⁴⁶ Aside from historical texts on ballet, *La revue musicale* made space for reflections on contemporary choreography, and thus appears concerned with being able to read in dance, always from a multidisciplinary point of view, its mandate to support transformations within the artistic movement.

SPECIAL ISSUES: MILESTONES OF THE CHOREOGRAPHIC MOVEMENT. In addition to background articles published regularly in *La revue musicale*, dance was also explored in issues exclusively devoted to the subject. Whatever the theme, those three thematic issues occupy an important place in the history of *La revue musicale's* content, because they reveal editorial biases through the subjects chosen, and thus considered richly significant or dictated by the artistic conditions of the time. These also particularly reflect the privileged situation and evolution of the art of dance in France, and become, in many ways the bearers of its milestones.

The first issue devoted to dance appeared in December of 1921 under the title "Le ballet au XIX^e siècle" and was the second publication of its kind undertaken by the journal, which reveals the level of attention Prunières and his team devoted to the choreographic art from the very beginning, the context of which, it is true, was highly favorable.⁴⁷ Richly illustrated, this issue is notable for its reproductions of various legendary, 19th-century ballerinas such as Marie Taglioni, Fanny Elssler, Carlotta Grisi, and Fanny Cerito, as well as a sonnet by Degas that was illustrated by 13 of his drawings. Paul Valéry, André Suarès, George Gabory, Victor du Bled, Vuillermoz, Levinson, Prunières, de Schloezer, and Coeuroy all contributed articles.⁴⁸

With the Ballets Russes ten years into its reign over the Parisian dance scene, and as Rolf de Maré settled into the capital along with his Ballets Suédois, the celebration of the golden age of the Opéra de Paris's ballet corps through articles on romantic ballet and its dancing icons in this 1921 special issue is not entirely innocent. Amidst the post-war choreographic turmoil, the issue recalls the legacy and glory days of this French company, the repertoire of which conserved its conventional approach to art and delayed its participation in modern trends of the time.⁴⁹ After renewing the art of dance, and even the very concept of ballet as a synthetic art, and bewitching the public with richly exotic productions, the Ballets Russes appeared as a beneficial and regenerating force for French ballet, which had become artistically impoverished and outdated at the end of the 19th century as a result of excessive virtuosity. According to Vuillermoz,

Ballet in opera made of the dancer a puppet on a string who performed displays of technical prowess for the pleasure of long-time subscribers. The Ballets Russes

⁴⁶ Ivor Guest, *Le ballet de l'Opéra de Paris* (Paris: Théâtre National de l'Opéra, 1976) 158–60.

⁴⁷ The first special issue published by *La revue musicale* was devoted to the memory of Debussy and appeared in 1920.

⁴⁸ The following articles are included in the volume (3/2; December 1921): Paul Valéry, "L'âme et la danse" (97–130); André Suarès, "Danse et musique" (133–41); Émile Vuillermoz, "Le ballet moderne" (142–48); André Levinson, "Théophile Gautier et le ballet Romantique" (149–62); Georges Gabory, "Zambelli (poème)" (163–66); Henry Prunières, "Salvatore Viganò" (167–90); Victor du Bled, "Le ballet de l'Opéra" (191–205); André Coeuroy, "Wagner et le ballet" (206–13); Boris de Schloezer, "Psychologie et danse" (214–22).

⁴⁹ Rouché would later refuse to mount *Les mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, but would present Pierné's *Cydalise et le chèvre-pied*. See Kelkel, *La musique de ballet*, 5.

demonstrated qualities of the pure French tradition in classic dance. It was a surprise to discover such a respect for the past among these revolutionaries.⁵⁰

In the same article, Vuillermoz calls for a renewal of classic technique that the evolution of musical language necessitates:

Classic dance was based on the principle of melodic squareness: If it wants to become part of the corpus of modern masterpieces—and it should—it will be forced to modify its rhythmic balance and soften its conception of the measure. Without abandoning its high doctrine in the least, dance has a duty to follow the prosody of our new composers.⁵¹

Passages such as this illustrate well the mindset in which music plays a prominent role in ballet. At the same time, it is precisely this conception that would be called into question some years later, in the pages of the same journal.

A second thematic issue on dance, devoted to the Ballets Russes, appeared in December 1930 as a tribute to Diaghilev, who had died in the previous year.⁵² This issue was intended as a memorial to the producer and impresario behind the Ballets Russes, who had been able to endow his company with impressive artistic drawing power. The issue contains testimonials, memories of friends and collaborators such as Gabriel Astruc, Alexandre Benois, Robert Brussel, Michel Georges-Michel, Émile Henriot, Louis Laloy, Michel Larionov, the Comtesse de Noailles, and Gilbert de Voisins.⁵³ In his concluding article, Prunières summarized Diaghilev's contribution to the worlds of music and dance as follows:

For almost 20 years, the Ballets Russes provided us with new things in the realms of music, visual art, and choreography every year. Aesthetic issues that seemed eternally debated in the inner sancta of Montparnasse and Montmartre were taken before the mass public. Each season came to call into question all that we previous believed to have been said already. Diaghilev's work was not always wildly successful, but there was much to be learned even from the failures. One might say that all of musical and artistic life depended in large part on this extraordinary man.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ "Le ballet d'opéra a fait de la danseuse une marionnette articulée exécutant ses prouesses techniques pour le plaisir des vieux abonnés. Les Ballets russes ont démontré les qualités de la pure tradition française dans la chorégraphie classique. On ne s'attendait pas à découvrir chez ces révolutionnaires un tel respect du passé." Émile Vuillermoz, "Le ballet moderne," *La revue musicale* 3/2 (December 1921) 49.

⁵¹ "La danse classique était basée sur le principe de la carrure mélodique : si elle veut s'annexer les chefs-d'œuvre modernes – et elle le doit – elle sera bien forcée de modifier son équilibre rythmique et d'assouplir sa conception de la mesure. Sans rien abandonner de sa haute doctrine, elle a le devoir de suivre la nouvelle prosodie de nos compositeurs." *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵² Henry Prunières, "Adieu à Diaghilev," *La revue musicale* 10/9 (September–October 1929) 193–96.

⁵³ The following articles are included in the volume (11/110; December 1930): Comtesse de Noailles, "Adieux aux Ballets Russes" (1–7); Émile Henriot, "Les Ballets Russes" (8–16); Gilbert de Voisins, "La belle légende des Ballets Russes" (17–20); Alexandre Benois, "Serge de Diaghilev: Essai de portrait par un ami-collaborateur" (21–32); Robert Brussel, "Avant la Fête" (33–41); Gabriel Astruc, "Le premier feu d'artifice" (42–47); Michel Larionov, "Souvenir sur Diaghilev" (48–56); Louis Laloy, "Hommage à Diaghilev" (57–61); Michel Georges-Michel, "La mort de Serge de Diaghilev et la fin des Ballets Russes" (62–66); Julie Sazonova, "La chorégraphie des Ballets Russes" (67–77); André Warnod, "Les peintres et les Ballets Russes" (78–89); Maurice Brillant, "L'influence multiforme des Ballets Russes" (90–100, [January 1931] 17–36); Henry Prunières, "Conclusion" (101–07).

⁵⁴ "Pendant près de vingt ans, les Ballets russes, chaque année, nous ont approvisionné de nouveautés d'ordre musical, plastique, pictural et chorégraphique. Des problèmes d'esthétique qui semblaient devoir être éternellement débattus dans les cénacles de Montparnasse et de Montmartre, ont été portés devant le grand public. Chaque saison venait mettre en cause tout ce qu'on croyait décidément élucidé. Diaghilev ne remportait pas que des victoires, mais il y avait beaucoup à apprendre même de ces défaites. On peut dire que toute la vie musicale et artistique dépendait pour une large part de cet

Published in 1938, the third thematic issue on dance focused on contemporary ballet.⁵⁵ It provides an accounting of the evolution of ballet since the death of Diaghilev and the arrival of Lifar at the Opéra de Paris, and meditates on future perspectives for the discipline. The polemic surrounding the relationship between music and dance had been in full force for some time already, voiced in the pages of *La revue musicale*. This issue opens with an article devoted to the memory of Diaghilev, which refutes accusations that he had reduced the role of dance to give greater importance to music.⁵⁶ Further on, Serge Lifar extended ideas he had expressed in his *Manifeste du chorégraphe*, writing, “To avoid disappearing, to develop freely, through its creative momentum, ballet must throw off the yoke of music, despite its charm and beauty.”⁵⁷ André Boll retorted in his article entitled “Pour ou contre une chorégraphie autonome,” asserting that “while the choreographic author is not himself a composer, it seems that a hierarchy in all matters must be preserved. This hierarchy requires that music dictate choreography, and not that choreography impose its rhythms on the music.”⁵⁸ *La revue musicale* does not appear to take a firm position to defend the composer’s point of view in this debate. However, it stimulates this defense by offering a platform where diametrically opposed ideas could meet.



Writings on dance in *La revue musicale* between 1920 and 1940 take the form of ballet criticism, background articles, and special issues. The authors are for the most part members of the editorial team, and regular contributors (Prunières, Cœuroy, Baron, Vuillermoz, de Schloezer), literary figures (Suarès, Valéry), and ballet specialists, dancers, or choreographers (Levinson, Lifar, Parnac, Sazonova, Troussevitch). The marked presence of dance in a journal mainly devoted to music but informed by multidisciplinary interest may be explained not only by the close relationship that the two disciplines had historically maintained and the importance of ballet on the Parisian artistic scene during the interwar period, but also by the personal interests of the director and the desire to reaffirm the role of ballet in the French artistic tradition.

An overview of the writings on dance reveals two major editorial positions allying a consideration of the past and the promotion of modernity: one centered on increasing valuation of the French choreographic tradition, the other focused on contemporary problems arising from the relationship between dance and music in ballet. Moreover, two central figures in French ballet of the interwar era, Diaghilev and Lifar, occupy a

homme extraordinaire.” Henry Prunières, “Conclusion,” *La revue musicale* 11/110 (December 1930) 105.

⁵⁵ The following articles are included in the volume (19/184; September 1938): Pierre Michaut, “Souvenir de Diaghilev” (161–72); Serge Lifar, “La danse et la musique” (173–86); André Boll, “Pour ou contre une chorégraphie autonome” (187–90); Roger Lannes, “Poésie de la danse” (191–97); André Boll, “Le décor de ballet” (198–200); Fernand Divoire, “Avenir du ballet” (201–06); Julie Sazonova, “Questions chorégraphiques” (207–10); José Bruyr, “En marge : Pour un petit Ana de la Danse. Mlle Suzanne Lorcica nous parle” (211–14).

⁵⁶ Pierre Michaut, “Souvenir de Diaghilev,” *La revue musicale* 19/184 (March 1938) 161–72.

⁵⁷ “Pour ne point disparaître, pour se développer librement, dans son élan créateur, le ballet doit briser le joug de la musique, fût-il beau et charmeur.” Serge Lifar, “La danse et la musique,” *La revue musicale* 19/184 (March 1938) 173–86.

⁵⁸ “Tant que le choréauteur ne sera pas lui-même compositeur il semble qu’il faille conserver, en tout état de choses, une hiérarchie. Et cette hiérarchie exige que la musique commande la chorégraphie et non que la chorégraphie impose ses rythmes à la musique.” André Boll, “Pour ou contre une chorégraphie autonome,” *La revue musicale* 19/184 (March 1938) 187–90.

significant place in the pages of the journal. In fact, the journal's content with respect to dance is neatly divided into two periods corresponding with the end of the Ballets Russes and the arrival of Lifar at the Opéra. What remains to be established is the degree to which this time delimitation may be applied to the entire corpus of articles in *La revue musicale*, and the extent to which certain texts may have been published at the expressed wish of the editor. Nonetheless, a foundation has now been laid for a broader study of the discourse of dance and the reception of ballet in *La revue musicale* with respect to French cultural history of the period between the wars.