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Cultivating Soviet Ballet:
The Red Poppy at the Bolshoi Theater, 1927-1960

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Lee Gurdial Kaur Singh

June 2021

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Kiril Tomoff, Chairperson
Dr. Ann Goldberg
Dr. Georg Michels
Dr. Dana J. Simmons

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The Dissertation of Lee Gurdial Kaur Singh is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Cultivating Soviet Ballet:
The Red Poppy at the Bolshoi Theater, 1927-1960

by

Lee Gurdial Kaur Singh

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in History
University of California, Riverside, June 2021
Dr. Kiril Tomoff, Chairperson

This dissertation illuminates the Sovietization and popularization of ballet in the 1920s through the 1950s. Through examination of ballet libretti, photographs, and film fragments, I analyze three versions of the ballet *The Red Poppy* (1927, 1949, 1957) at the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union to show how the ballet repertoire from one of the former Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet changed as artists and administrators made ballet "Soviet."

The Soviet government and Communist Party invested significant human, financial, and other material resources in artistic production for the purposes of politically educating and enlightening mass audiences. This pedagogical imperative brought about the conditions of possibility for Soviet artists and administrators to create out of their imperial inheritance a form of popular culture. I argue that Soviet ballet's accessibility and popularity were the result of a

combination of audience development strategies that engaged working-class audiences and changes in ballet repertoire.

This project interrogates the complex dynamics among state sponsorship, ideological oversight, and artistic practice. I examine archival institutional records, including contemporary discussions about ballet and ballet production processes. These sources reveal that ballet production was highly collaborative, and dancers (including women) were vocal participants in the processes. I argue that the Bolshoi artists of this period were committed to the pedagogical mandate for Soviet arts, and they used their professional expertise to develop genre-specific strategies to make ballet more accessible to mass audiences.

Combining serious subject matter, well-developed characters, strong plotlines, and storytelling through dance, I contend that Soviet ballets of this period paved the way for productions of even greater psychological complexity: the through-danced ballets of the Thaw era and beyond. In this way, the most restrictive decades of socialist realism proved generative for the genre of ballet.

This dissertation contributes deeper understandings of artists' integration into the Soviet cultural project, creative responses to socialist realism, collaborative creativity, dancers' agency and women's agency in ballet production, change over time in ballet's methods of corporeal storytelling, and the construction of twentieth-century popular culture.

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Note on Transliteration and Translation

I follow the American Library Association-Library of Congress Romanization Scheme for Russian language (without diacritical markers) throughout the text and notes, with a few exceptions:

1) Titles of ballets are given in English or French translation in the text, depending on whether a particular title is more familiar to American readers in French or English. Titles of operas are given in English translation in the text, unless a non-English title is more is more familiar to American audiences.

2) Anglo-American, French, and other non-Russian names of people are given in as close to their original spellings as I can determine (Adolphe Adam, rather than "Adol'f Adan"), unless the names appear in quotations from Russian-language sources.

3) Names of the Bolshoi Theater and Mariinsky Theater (*Bol'shoi Teatr, Mariinskii Teatr*) in the text are spelled as the respective organizations currently spell their names in English-language publicity materials.

Translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own. I am responsible for errors therein.

Terms for Citation of Archival Sources

fond (f.)	largest division of a collection of archival materials
opis' (op.)	inventory or register within a larger *fond*
delo (d., plural dd.)	file within an *opis'*
list (l., plural ll.)	page within a *delo*
oborot (ob.)	reverse side of a page
lichnyi fond	personal papers

Introduction

> "Indeed, 'enlightenment,' understood not merely as propagandizing for short-term benefit but as the transformation of people and the popular 'consciousness,' emerged as such a fundamental feature of the new regime that Soviet Russia might with justification be called the enlightenment state."
>
> —Michael David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind*

This dissertation illuminates the Sovietization and popularization of ballet in the 1920s through the 1950s. The Bolshoi Ballet was rapturously received when the company began to tour to Western Europe (1956) and North America (1959). People queued for days to buy tickets, and the ovations were tremendous. Ballet took center stage in Soviet cultural diplomacy. Perhaps as a result, dance as part of Soviet cultural exchange has received more scholarly attention than Soviet dance production for domestic audiences.[1] But the artists and the repertoire that stunned the West in the late 1950s were cultivated over the preceding decades. This

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The epigraph comes from Michael David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning among the Bolsheviks, 1918-1929* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 4.

[1] David Caute's chapter provides an overview of tours by various Soviet dance troupes: "The Ballet Dancer Defects" in *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 468-505. For more on tours by Igor' Aleksandrovich Moiseev's USSR State Academic Folk Dance Ensemble, see "Ballet and Soviet-American Exchange" in Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 69-91; Anthony Shay, "The Moiseyev Company: Ancestor of a Genre" in *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation and Power* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 57-81, and *The Igor Moiseyev Dance Company: Dancing Diplomats* (Bristol: Intellect, 2019). For more on the Bolshoi Ballet's tour in 1956, see Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 137-168. For more on the Bolshoi Ballet's 1959 North American tour, see Cadra Peterson McDaniel, *American-Soviet Cultural Diplomacy: The Bolshoi Ballet's American Premiere* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015) and Anne Searcy, *Ballet in the Cold War: A Soviet-American Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

dissertation sheds light on the development of the Soviet ballet aesthetics and kinesthetics that amazed and delighted Western audiences after decades of seclusion behind the Iron Curtain. While I do not deal directly with the tours, the cultivation of "Soviet" ballet for Soviet audiences in the 1920s through the 1950s was fundamental to the astonishing success of the cultural exchange tours that began in the mid-1950s and continued to and beyond the fall of the Soviet Union. This project brings to light the domestic significance of Soviet ballet and helps explain ballet's enduring popularity in post-Soviet Russia.

Unlike previous scholarship, my dissertation examines multiple versions of one ballet at a single theater and focuses on the creative and production processes through which Soviet artists transformed the elite genre of ballet into a form of socialist popular culture. I argue that Soviet artists exercised decisive agency in these processes and that, in ballet, socialist realism was generative.

Ballet, an art form intimately associated with the Russian imperial family and European courts of centuries past, may not seem like an obvious choice for integration into the first socialist society. Yet in just a few decades, Soviet artists and officials transformed ballet into a common good for mass audiences. Soviet leaders believed "that art should be a tool for cultural and political change."[2] The former Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet were initially folded in to the Soviet

[2] Tijana Vujosevic, *Modernism and the Making of the Soviet New Man* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 1.

cultural project as part of opening prerevolutionary artistic achievements to working-class audiences who had not previously been able to access them.[3] Within fifteen years, the focus of Soviet cultural production turned toward cultivating millions of citizens who would be capable of building socialism and communism.[4] Soviet citizens were supposed to be "cultured" (*kul'turnye*); understanding and appreciating ballet was part of being a cultured Soviet person.[5] But this was not the prerevolutionary Russian ballet.

Starting in the 1930s, ballet and other art forms were tasked with what I call a "pedagogical imperative." The Soviet government and Communist Party invested significant human, financial, and other material resources in artistic production for the purposes of politically educating and enlightening mass audiences. In exchange for those resources, artists were supposed to create literature, plays,

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[3] In the Russian Communist Party platform from the Eighth Party Congress (1919), under the heading "In the Sphere of Education," point 10 reads: "It is equally necessary to open and make accessible to the toilers all art treasures that were created on the basis of the exploitation of their labour, treasures which hitherto were exclusively at the disposal of the exploiters." The platform was printed in English in the *International Socialist Review* 22, no. 4 (Fall 1961) and is available as "The 1919 Lenin Program of the CPSU (Bolsheviks)," Marxists Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/isr/vol22/no04/rcpb.html (accessed June 8, 2021).

[4] These ideas had pre-revolutionary roots. The Russian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century also strove to deliver music and other arts to middle-class people, workers, and peasants. Lynn M. Sargeant writes of prerevolutionary musicians who led ensembles in factories and villages, "As utopian and idealistic as their Soviet counterparts, these would-be culture-bringers hoped to transform Russia by transforming Russians" (*Harmony and Discord: Music and the Transformation of Russian Cultural Life* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 279). See also Murray Frame, *School for Citizens: Theatre and Civil Society in Imperial Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

[5] On "culturedness," see Vadim Volkov, "The Concept of *kul'turnost'*: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process" in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2000), esp. 223-225.

music, visual arts, films, and other productions that showed audiences how to understand their present and how to build a better future. The pedagogical imperative brought about the conditions of possibility for Soviet artists and administrators to create out of their imperial inheritance a form of popular culture.

As the purpose of ballet changed under the new regime, the genre changed, too.[6] Prerevolutionary Russian ballet did not have a pedagogical mandate. In the Soviet period, professional ballet at the former Imperial Theaters and at new theaters around the country became accessible. Soviet ballet was accessible in that working-class audiences got tickets and were welcomed into the theaters. And it was accessible in the sense that mass audiences could understand the ballets they experienced. They could identify with the characters and imagine themselves in the situations. They developed opinions about the performances and sometimes even advised the theaters on how to improve their productions.

I argue that Soviet ballet's accessibility was the result of a combination of audience development strategies that engaged working-class audiences and changes in ballet repertoire. While the era of socialist realism has traditionally been viewed as a period where art was sacrificed to political demands, I show how ballet's pedagogical mandate stimulated choreographers and dancers to

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[6] This process is related to what Katerina Clark has described with respect to Soviet literature: "The Soviet novel performs a totally different function from the one the novel normally performs in the West, and this difference in function has given rise to a different kind of text" (*The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 3rd ed. [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000], xi).

incorporate new types of characters and concepts that had not been embodied in ballet in Russia before the revolutions. The new subject matter and requirement that ballets adhere to dramatic logic also led artists to develop alternative methods of corporeal storytelling. Combining serious subject matter, well-developed characters, strong plotlines, and storytelling through dance, ballets of the 1930s and 1940s[7] paved the way for productions of even greater psychological complexity: the through-danced ballets of the Thaw era and beyond. In this way, the most restrictive decades of socialist realism proved generative for the genre of ballet. The pedagogical imperative was a catalyst for creativity.

Socialist Realism

This argument contributes to scholarship on the dominant paradigm for all arts in the Soviet Union: socialist realism. The term "socialist realism" was invented in 1932.[8] Author Maksim Gorkii and politician Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov

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[7] Some historians and critics refer to ballets staged at the former Imperial Theaters in the 1930s and 1940s as "drambalety," a contraction of *dramaticheskii balet* (dramatic ballet). However, as Elizabeth Hannah Stern points out, this term was not used much to describe these ballets at the time they were created ("Politics in Pointe Shoes: The Genesis and Afterlives of Stalinist *Drambalet*" [PhD diss., Princeton University, 2019], 18-19). I have elsewhere attested that the term was used contemporaneously to describe productions outside the Soviet state academic theaters (Lee G. K. Singh, "In Defense of *Drambalety*: A Decisive Stage in the Development of Twentieth-Century Ballet" [paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages, San Diego, CA, February 8, 2020]). Because there is so much confusion about to what the term refers, I will not apply the term anachronistically. Following my sources, I will use the term *drambalety* herein to refer to productions at the studio "Dramaticheskii balet" that operated in Moscow from 1918 until it was disbanded during World War II. For more on studio "Dramaticheskii balet," see E. P. Belova et al., *Russkii balet, Entsiklopediia, Bol'shaia Russkaia Entsiklopediia* (Solgasie, 1997), s.v. "'Drambalet,'" http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/d/drambalet.html (accessed May 31, 2021).

outlined the first parameters of socialist realism as an aesthetic-political project in speeches to the First Congress of the Writers Union in 1934. Socialist realist art was supposed "to depict reality in its revolutionary development."[9] It was supposed be accessible to Soviet audiences, of high aesthetic qualities, reflective of the Communist Party's current ideological priorities, and educative of its audience both in terms of their aesthetic taste and in their quest to be ever better participants in the construction of the coming communist utopia. As Zhdanov described, socialist realism entailed creating "works from which the people of our times can learn."[10]

From the mid-1930s, socialist realism was the official art of the Soviet Union, though the precise priorities for its execution were constantly being revised in complex interactions that were influenced by Party officials, audience preferences, and the preferences of artists themselves.[11] Typically, literature received the greatest official attention (positive and negative) and artists and artists' organizations in other genres triangulated appropriate techniques and approaches based on literary practice, public feedback (including criticism, prizes, repression,

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[8] Katerina Clark et al., *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 139.

[9] A. A. Zhdanov, "Soviet Literature—The Richest in Ideas. The Most Advanced Literature," in H. G. Scott, ed., *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism in the Soviet Union*, 1935 (Reprint, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), 21.

[10] Zhdanov, 23.

[11] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Lady Macbeth Affair: Shostakovich and the Soviet Puritans," in *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 214.

material rewards, and so on) directed toward novelists and other authors, and the aesthetic parameters of their own non-literary genres.[12] As Kiril Tomoff observes about Soviet music, "members of the party's highest leadership circles knew that although they could appreciate and sometimes evaluate music, they depended on professionals to fill out their vague impressions with specific musical content."[13] Similarly, artistic professionals were aware that the Soviet cultural project required their expertise, and they exercised agency accordingly.

The first two decades of "socialist realism" in art, roughly the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s, were the time of greatest official arbitration regarding which artistic approaches were appropriate for Soviet audiences. At the time of the Khrushchevian Thaw in the 1950s, Soviet "socialist realism" became quite capacious. After the mid-1950s, many artistic approaches and works that could not have garnered traction in the 1940s came to be justified within the increasingly catholic boundaries of "socialist realism."[14]

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[12] Clark et al., 139-140.

[13] Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939-1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 134.

[14] The mechanisms for defining Soviet socialist realism in the 1930s will be further discussed in Chapter 4. It is important to underscore socialist realism was never static. As Katerina Clark observes, "there are many different Socialist Realisms" (*The Soviet Novel*, 3). In each of the genres and places where socialist realist art has been produced, the definitive characteristics of "socialist realism" have changed over time. Elizabeth Hannah Stern and Jens Richard Giersdorf explore socialist realism in ballet and modern dance in the German Democratic Republic: Elizabeth Hannah Stern, "The Afterlife of *Drambalet* in the German Democratic Republic," in "Politics in Pointe Shoes: The Genesis and Afterlives of Stalinist *Drambalet*," 302-453, and Jens Richard Giersdorf, *The Body of the People: East German Dance Since 1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).

Because of Soviet socialist realist art's pedagogical imperative and because of its imbrication in what has come to be perceived as an unsavory (even monstrous) political system, art of this time and place has often been dismissed as unworthy of study by both later generations of Soviet and post-Soviet scholars as well as Western European and American scholars who study the Soviet Union. The situation that Katerina Clark described in the late 1970s and early 1980s still largely prevails:

> Soviet Socialist Realism is virtually a taboo topic in Western Slavic scholarship. It is not entirely taboo, for it can be discussed, but preferably only in tones of outrage, bemusement, derision, or elegy. Three main arguments underpin this collective judgment. First, it is felt to be intellectually suspect—or simply a waste of time—to analyze what is patently bad literature. . . . Second, it is argued that it is virtually immoral to devote attention to a tradition that has developed at the cost of so many violations of intellectual freedom and integrity, of so much human suffering. Finally, it is felt that Socialist Realism itself is so lifeless and dull that any study of it would of necessity be hopelessly pedestrian (unless, of course, enlivened by tales of infamy or by acerbic comments).[15]

I reject all three of these arguments against studying artistic production in the Stalin era. First, judged by their own standards rather than foreign and/or later aesthetic priorities, ballets of this period were not "patently bad."[16] Second, if it were

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Julia Hell, Xudong Zhang, Antoine Baudin, and Régine Robin analyze socialist realism in other genres in the German Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of China, Poland, and Hungary (essays included in Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, eds., *Socialist Realism Without Shores* [Durham: Duke University Press, 1997]). My project focuses on change over time in ballet production just before, during the height of, and during the early years of the Thaw related to Soviet socialist realism.

[15] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, ix-x.

immoral to study a phenomenon known to cause human suffering, most medical research would fall into this category of "immoral" inquiry.[17] Third, contemporary Soviet audiences did not find the ballets of the 1920s through the 1950s dull. All cultural production—including ballet—has the capacity to reflect and affect the environment in which it is produced. Therefore, cultural production—including socialist realism—is a valid object of study for a historian seeking to understand how society functioned in a distant time and place.

Integration, Not Resistance: The Pedagogical Imperative as a Common Goal

This project explores the complex dynamics among state sponsorship, ideological oversight, and artistic practice. Jan Plamper observes that many studies of Soviet culture assume a binary and antagonistic relationship between censors and writers, which is a proxy for a larger scholarly assumption about an

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[16] Jennifer Homans introduces her multi-century history of ballet with this claim: "I have thus tried to tell a story but also to step back from the story and *evaluate the dances*. This can be difficult since so many ballets have been lost; we cannot always point to this or that step or phrase to argue a point. But we must still try, in good faith and with open-minded attention to the evidence we do possess, to establish a critical point of view—*to say that this ballet was better than that one, and why*. Otherwise our story would be nothing but a disaggregate of names, dates, and performances: not a story at all" (*Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet* [New York: Random House, 2010], xxiii). Italics mine. I do not think it is the job of a historian to judge works of art from the past unless by the criteria that prevailed at the work's creation. Judging dances of the past by today's standards is the job of a critic (journalist), which Homans has since become. I judge that the Soviet ballets of the 1920s through the 1950s qualify as ballets, but beyond that, evaluation is not my primary mode of analysis for this project.

[17] Historians of the Great Purges J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov write, "Cancer researchers are no doubt repelled by the ravages of the disease they study, but they do not write of their repulsion in their scholarly works or allow it to replace or obviate their need to analyze and explain dispassionately. Their question, like ours, is 'how was this all possible?'" (*The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939*, updated and abridged ed. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010], 18).

antagonistic relationship between state and society. He suggests that "[t]his dichotomy obfuscates the actual processes of cultural production, which remain buried under the weight of a paradigm of repressive violence directed from top to bottom, from censors as the party-state incarnate to the cultural producers."[18] Some scholars have dismantled this dichotomy by attending to artists who were integrated as "officials" in the Soviet government and Communist Party bureaucracies.[19] This approach does not work well for ballet; I did not come across any dancers of this period who became "officials" outside of the theater. Another way to complicate the picture of the relationship between the state and society and open interpretive space for dance to influence its society is to look at the ballet production processes.

Attention to the ballet production processes reveals that the artists exercised considerable agency. Because Soviet government and Communist Party officials at the highest levels were mostly not professional artists, the directives from on high were rarely detailed enough to be realized literally. Because the policy formulations tended to focus on literature, artists in other genres had even more opportunity to develop artistic methods to realize the ends described by the directives. This space between the letter of the directives and their aesthetic

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[18] Jan Plamper, "Abolishing Ambiguity: Soviet Censorship Practices in the 1930s," *The Russian Review* 60, no. 4 (October 2001): 526–527.

[19] See, for example, Mayhill C. Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge: State and Stage in Soviet Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), esp. Chapter 2.

realization served as an opportunity to integrate artists into the Soviet cultural project.

The opposite of integration—artistic resistance—has been the most powerful lens brought to understanding the history of Soviet ballet. I do not wish to discredit the resistance described by Christina Ezrahi, Joel Lobenthal, Ania Nikulina, and Janice Ross.[20] However, many stories of resistance are remembered (for a variety of reasons) decades after the fact. Memoirs are inherently challenging to theorize, especially when the political environment being remembered has come to be viewed as one in which "good" people would have resisted. I suspect that people like to think of themselves as having been on the "right" side of history, regardless of their actual beliefs and behaviors in the past.[21]

I am wary about imposing readings of "resistance" in the absence of contemporary evidence. Expressions of open resistance to government policies in professional meetings would have been dangerous for Soviet artists in the Stalin era and probably unwise as late as 1960. However, contemporary documentation of ballet production processes does reveal professional disagreement. These sources

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[20] Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*; Joel Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko: Beauty and Resistance in Soviet Ballet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Ania Nikulina, "Maya Plisetskaya's *The Carmen-Suite*: Recovering a Hidden Repertoire," *Theatre Journal* 71, no. 2 (June 2019); and Janice Ross, *Like a Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

[21] At this stage of my project, I have almost entirely avoided the incorporation of evidence from memoirs; my research is based on documents generated at the time about which I write.

challenge stereotypes (by now firmly debunked by generations of social historians) that the Soviet government and Communist Party effectively micromanaged citizens' everyday lives. Even in a large government institution such as the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (GABT), professionals argued over how to achieve the stated goals of Soviet cultural policies. In my reading, these artists were not resisting—they were looking for genre-appropriate solutions. In other words, the artists and the Soviet government and/or Communist Party agreed on broad cultural aims, but the government and the Party were not equipped to plan precisely how to achieve those aims in every genre. So, the artists developed their own approaches to achieving their common goals.

Scholarly emphasis on resistance obscures the labor of thousands of artists who got on with their everyday work as dancers and choreographers in the Soviet state theaters. It is hard to tell, of course, what Soviet subjects actually thought or believed at the time, whether their apparent loyalty was based on political affiliation or on something else. In the end, it is less important to me whether or not an individual actor believed that ballet production would help create the conditions of possibility for communism. Because so many GABT employees behaved as if they believed that what they were doing was their duty as Soviet citizens and because the Soviet government made unparalleled investments in ballet, GABT was able to produce dozens of new ballet productions in this period.

I suspect, but cannot prove, that there are generational differences between artists who were born in the first two decades of the twentieth century, who grew up and trained as dancers amid the revolutions and the patriotic fervor of the second world war, and artists who graduated from ballet school in the 1950s and later. Perhaps the earlier generation did believe that socialism and communism promised a better future for the Soviet Union and eventually the rest of the world. If so, they had no reason to "resist" in this period. They were part of an idealistic cultural project.[22] And, as a result of their perceived capacity to educate the public, ballet dancers were elite members of Soviet society.[23]

Insisting on resistance as a criterion (or prerequisite) for scholarly analysis denies the dignity of these artists' labor and their achievement in remaking ballet as a form of Soviet popular culture. Art created or used for political purposes is not inherently bad art (especially if judged by the standards of its day) or non-art; artists who did not overtly resist the Soviet system were still artists. Their creativity in the context of state socialism should still be of interest to scholars, particularly because

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[22] In Spring 2013, Jens Richard Giersdorf advised me to remember that the socialist project was idealistic (personal communication).

[23] Erina Therese Megowan analyzes material benefits of Stalin-era cultural elites during World War II, including artists of the Soviet state theaters, in "For Fatherland, For Culture: State, Intelligentsia, and Evacuated Culture in Russia's Regions, 1941-1945" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2015). Kiril Tomoff also documents the constitution of elite status and hierarchies in the Soviet music world (*Creative Union*, esp. 235-267).

the art that resulted gained unprecedented popularity with domestic Soviet audiences and later, with rapturous audiences abroad.

Definitions and Decisions: Ballet, GABT, and Versions of *The Red Poppy*

In the context of this dissertation, "ballet" refers to a professional theatrical art form performed by dancers trained in classical (or academic) ballet technique as well as "character dance," acting, and music. While dance training was crucial to staffing professional ballet companies, the operations of the Soviet Union's government ballet schools lie outside the scope of this project.[24] My focus is on the productions at one of the Soviet state academic theaters of opera and ballet. Admittedly, the Soviet state theaters were not the only venues where ballet dancers performed. Many Soviet dancers and choreographers worked in allied genres, including operetta/musical comedy and variety shows (*estrada*); some combined careers in the "academic" theaters with their *estrada* work.[25] A wide variety of Soviet enterprises sponsored classes and dance circles (*kruzhki*), some of which offered ballet training for amateurs, but my focus is on a professional theatrical institution.

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[24] Brief mention of the ballet training traditions and curricula can be found in Chapter 1. I reserve more detailed study of ballet pedagogy and training institutions for a future project.

[25] For discussion of *estrada* dance, see N. V. Sheremet'evskaia, *Tanets na estrade* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1985) and Elizaveta Uvarova, ed., *Russkaia sovetskaia estrada, 1917-1929* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1976).

This project focuses on ballet productions and ballet production processes at the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (GABT). For most of the decades considered here, GABT was an institution that included two stages. The main stage, usually called the Bolshoi Theater, was located in the famous nineteenth-century columned building. I use the term "Bolshoi Theater" to refer to the main stage.[26] The precise location of the second stage varied as GABT absorbed and surrendered a succession of several smaller venues near the building with the famous façade. The name of the second stage also varied—it was called the Experimental Theater or the GABT Filial (and even briefly the Second State Theater of Opera and Ballet). GABT gained and lost a dizzying array of appellations, especially in the 1920s, but most of the name changes had little impact on the operations of the theater. In fact, contemporary documents do not always agree on what the theater or theatrical institution was called. I use "GABT" consistently, even when contemporary documents temporarily refer to the institution by other names and corresponding acronyms.

As of November 4, 1940, GABT employed a total of 2,147 people.[27] The institution was comprised of, Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Vasil'evich

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[26] Because all three versions of *The Red Poppy* happened to be part of the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theater, this project does not focus equally on the two stages.

[27] Report on salaries by collective sent from GABT to Glavnoe Upravlenie Teatrov (November 11, 1940): Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva or RGALI) f. 648, op. 5, d. 41, l. 65.

Lunacharskii once wrote, "as many laborers as would make up a small district town."[28] I use the acronym GABT to refer to the institution as a whole: administrators, opera soloists' collective, chorus, ballet company (corps de ballet, soloists, principal dancers, mime artists), mime ensemble, orchestra musicians, conductors, rehearsal pianists, costumers, wigmakers, make-up artists, designers, janitors, cafeteria servers, medical staff, massage therapists, front-of-house staff, two stages with technical crews for each, workshops and their staff, child care facilities and their staff, and employees in a myriad of other sectors that helped produce performances and maintain the network of buildings under GABT's purview.

I use the acronym to emphasize the complexity of GABT as an institution. Decisions about ballet repertoire affected and were affected by the fact that the opera and ballet collectives shared stages, orchestras, workshops, and other human and physical resources. When the theatrical administrators made decisions, they had to account for, among other things, effects on the rest of GABT's collectives and sectors. Decisions about opera impacted ballet, decisions about the Bolshoi Theater affected operations at the Filial, and so on. The number of hours in a day, the number of rubles in the budget, chance, human foibles, red tape, evolving ideologies and sometimes conflicting directives, artistic conventions and innovations, changes in educational curricula, human and material resources

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[28] Letter from Lunarcharskii to Vladimir Il'ich Lenin (January 13, 1922), reproduced in English translation in Katerina Clark et al., 25-27 (quote from 27).

available, whether the opera company fell behind or not on its newest production—the environment for ballet production at GABT was marvelously complicated. Logistical obstacles often impeded realization of the theater's repertoire plans, and accounting for the everyday operations of such a massive theatrical institution helps explain its artistic productions. What was performed and when (or if) a production was given to the public depended on the cooperation of many sectors and workers. In other words, while ideological considerations mattered in the Soviet context, GABT administrators rarely made purely ideological decisions. They were always juggling ideological and artistic priorities with logistical realities, and I endeavor to bring these logistical realities to light.

This project focuses on ballet at GABT because after the Bolsheviks shifted the capital to Moscow, GABT became the country's most prominent theater of opera and ballet. GABT was the lyric theater most frequented by high-ranking members of the Communist Party and foreign delegations. It was a destination for Soviet visitors to the capital, too. GABT received more resources than any other theater, and it also received more scrutiny for its use of those resources. GABT became a model as the Soviet government set up a network of more than thirty theaters of opera and ballet around the country. GABT's successful productions were celebrated as examples for other theaters to emulate, and its failures were publicized as warnings so that other theaters could try to avoid making similar mistakes. Therefore, understanding the production processes and ballet

productions at GABT provides a vital perspective for comparison with operations and productions at other Soviet theaters.

In analyzing the history of Soviet ballet, the theater is one of the most important institutions. In the period that I study, there was not a Soviet journal dedicated to analysis, criticism, or history of ballet. Ballet was covered sporadically in the arts press in this period, but dancers, choreographers, and other ballet professionals did not have a regular forum for debate in print. Beginning in the 1930s, several genres, including literature, visual arts, architecture, and music, had creative unions which facilitated discussion of professional matters. Some theatrical workers joined Rabis, the union for workers in the arts, but ballet did not have its own union or a major presence in any of the other unions. As a result, much of the debate about what to do with Soviet ballet's prerevolutionary inheritances and how to make ballet "Soviet" occurred either within the theaters of opera and ballet or at meetings to which theaters sent representatives.

Another reason to study a theater is that evening-length ballets with purposely constructed sets, costumes, music, and choreography require significant theatrical infrastructure. The types of productions in the repertoires of the Soviet state theaters of opera and ballet could not have been produced without the human and physical resources amassed within the theatrical institutions, and ticket sales never covered operating expenses. The theaters of opera and ballet could not have remained open and continued building their repertoires without government

subsidy. Staffing the theaters with trained artists and other personnel, plus keeping the buildings lit and heated and paying for new productions required significant state support. GABT and the other Soviet state theaters of opera and ballet received government investment in recognition of their potential to contribute to the cultivation of Soviet citizens.

Some existing scholarship on Soviet ballet privileges the former Mariinsky Theater (eventually known as the Kirov Theater) in Petrograd/Leningrad. Christina Ezrahi's *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* includes one chapter on the Bolshoi Ballet's 1956 tour to London as well as discussion of GABT's productions of the ballet *Spartacus* in 1958, 1962, and 1968.[29] Much of the rest of her book focuses on operations at the Kirov Theater. Elizabeth Hannah Stern's dissertation, "Politics in Pointe Shoes: The Genesis and Afterlives of Stalinist *Drambalet*," also focuses on the former Mariinsky Theater.

Other scholars have examined ballet at GABT in the early Soviet period. Simon Morrison's *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* covers a much longer period from the late eighteenth century through the early twenty-first century. He looks at the history of the Bolshoi Ballet through the lens of scandal.[30] I focus more on the theater's everyday operations

[29] Ezrahi, 137-168 (tour) and 201-231 (*Spartak*).

[30] Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016).

than on its most ignominious moments. Douglas Priest's dissertation, "The Bolshoi Meets Bolshevism: Moving Bodies and Body Politics, 1917-1934," examines a shorter period. There is temporal and conceptual overlap between Priest's dissertation and my project. However, because I gathered a broader source base and researched a longer time period, I am able to identify patterns in GABT's ballet productions that were not fully apparent by the end of Priest's temporal scope.

The most important existing study of Soviet ballet for my project is Elizabeth Souritz's *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*. Souritz's book covers ballet productions at the former Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet in both Moscow and Petrograd/Leningrad. Among numerous other ballets, she provides extensive details on the Bolshoi Theater's first production of *Red Poppy* in 1927. In fact, *Red Poppy* is one of the last productions that Souritz discusses.[31] My project begins with this ballet and follows it for more than three decades through its next two versions at the Bolshoi Theater.

I chose *Red Poppy* because it was the first original ballet produced after the revolutions of 1917 that remained in the repertoire for years after its premiere. Following conventions of the period about which I write, repertoire is defined as the group of productions authorized and prepared for repeated presentation at a theater in a particular season. One performance generally did not constitute being

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[31] Elizabeth Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*, trans. Lynn Visson, ed. Sally Banes (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 231-254.

in repertoire. Also, if a production was show to the public but subsequently banned, that production was not considered part of the repertoire.

Soviet bureaucrats and theatrical administrators classified ballet and opera repertoire based on the composer's identity.[32] The categories were "Soviet," "Russian classic" (usually nineteenth-century), and "Western European classic" (often nineteenth-century). For most of this period, for the purposes of repertoire planning, productions by Soviet composers were in highest demand, though in practice the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theater consistently featured a majority of Russian and Western European classics for both ballet and opera; productions by Soviet composers did not come close to overtaking the sheer number prerevolutionary titles in regular rotation. It is also important to remember that the prerevolutionary ballets and operas were all restaged by Soviet directors and choreographers—the productions themselves were often significantly revised. Soviet productions of "classics" looked and sounded much different from the prerevolutionary versions with the same titles that had graced the Bolshoi Theater's stage.[33] Acknowledging that most performances in this period were of versions of "classics," I have chosen to focus on one of the most popular, most frequently produced, and most frequently performed Soviet ballets, *Red Poppy*.

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[32] Christina Ezrahi applies her own classification scheme that is not based on the composer's identity: classic, Soviet based on literary source, and Soviet based on contemporary theme (87-90).

[33] Elizabeth Stern discusses the process of Sovietizing *Swan Lake* at the former Mariinsky Theater (166-184).

Red Poppy is interesting because, after its initial and very successful run, it was restaged twice at the Bolshoi Theater (1949 and 1957). The first two versions (1927 and 1949) had the same title in Russian: *Krasnyi mak*. I distinguish between the first two Bolshoi Theater productions through slight variations on the title: I translate the title of the 1927 production as *Red Poppy* because of the association between "red poppy" and the ostensible name of the Chinese heroine in that production. The title of the original production, I believe, referred primarily to the heroine, rather than to a flower. I translate the title of the 1949 production as *The Red Poppy* because significant revisions to the libretto shifted the focus from the heroine's name to a flower blossom (a theatrical prop and symbol: "the red poppy"). In 1957, the Russian title changed to *The Red Flower* (Krasnyi tsvetok). The different titles in English translation underscore my argument about change over time in different versions of the ballet.

The temporal scope of this project is derived from the lifespan of (*The*) *Red Poppy/The Red Flower* in the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire. As a result, my findings contribute to scholarly conversations about Soviet culture from the 1920s through the 1950s. *Red Poppy* was in the repertoire from Spring 1927 through Spring 1936. *The Red Poppy* was in the repertoire from Fall 1949 through Fall 1954, and *The Red Flower* was in the repertoire from Fall 1957 through Spring 1960. In between, dancers, choreographers, bureaucrats, librettists, critics, and others debated what was appropriate for "Soviet" ballet, and *Red Poppy* was often

referenced in these debates as both a positive and negative exemplar. Artists at the time lauded *Red Poppy* for rescuing the genre of ballet, which otherwise might have been sloughed off as a pointless or even dangerous waste of government resources, a malignant vestige of court and bourgeois culture. After *Red Poppy*, the question of whether the Soviet government should support ballet was answered in the affirmative, thus this is a ballet that historians of Soviet culture should understand.

Because the ballet was subsequently revised, *Red Poppy* provides an excellent case study for understanding change over time and the Sovietization of ballet. A key assumption for this project is that, even when the same title appears in the repertoire of one theater or in the repertoire of many different theaters, each production of a ballet is different from others that came before, at the same time in different places, or after it. I will use the terms "production" and "version" interchangeably to denote specific instances of ballets. Implicit in the structure of this project is the idea that the 1949 version of *The Red Poppy* was substantively different from the production of *Red Poppy* that premiered at the Bolshoi Theater in 1927. Similarly, the 1957 ballet *The Red Flower* differed (and not only in title) from the Bolshoi Theater's 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*.

Attention to versions of ballets connects my research to professional ballet practice: most ballets performed today are versions of earlier ballets. A completely original ballet (that is, something that has never been a ballet before) is

comparatively rare. However, this process of remaking existing ballets has not always been the focus of historical inquiry. Much detailed historical research about ballet focuses on premieres without following particular ballets through later reproductions across time and space. Marian Smith documents the milieu of the first production of *Giselle* in Paris in 1841, focusing on environment of the original production.[34] Judith Chazin-Bennahum and Susan Leigh Foster analyze even earlier French ballets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but most of the ballets that they consider are no longer reproduced by twenty-first century ballet companies.[35] Akin to the historians above, Elizabeth Souritz focuses on the ballets that a few choreographers produced within a decade, examining a relatively brief period of time and the array of ballets that were staged during that period.[36] Souritz does, however, observe change over time in some ballets. She discusses, for example, changes among choreographer Aleksandr Alekseevich Gorskii's Moscow productions of *Giselle* between the 1900s and the 1920s.

There have been more focused attempts to understand how later productions were different from original versions of ballets. Roland John Wiley's *Tchaikovsky's Ballets: Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Nutcracker* includes substantial

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[34] Marian Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of* Giselle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[35] Judith Chazin-Bennahum, *Dance in the Shadow of the Guillotine* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988) and Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

[36] Elizabeth Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*.

discussions of the first production of each of the three ballets and an equally substantive analysis of the version of *Swan Lake* that premiered in St. Petersburg almost twenty years after the world premiere of *Swan Lake* in Moscow.[37] Wiley treats the St. Petersburg version, with new choreography, libretto, and revised score, as a new production that warrants fresh analysis. Similarly, Tim Scholl takes up twentieth-century versions of *The Sleeping Beauty* in *"Sleeping Beauty," a Legend in Progress*, examining how different from each other were versions of *The Sleeping Beauty* in the Imperial Russian, Soviet Russian, and post-Soviet Russian Mariinsky/Kirov Theater.[38] Jennifer Fisher's *Nutcracker Nation* is, in part, a history of different productions of *The Nutcracker* in the twentieth-century United States and Canada.[39] As mentioned above, Christina Ezrahi analyzes three versions of *Spartacus* at GABT.[40] And Elizabeth Stern examines the original production of *The Flames of Paris* in Leningrad (1932) followed by a version of *The Flames of Paris* staged in Leipzig, German Democratic Republic (1953).[41]

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[37] Roland John Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets: Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Nutcracker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[38] Tim Scholl, *"Sleeping Beauty," a Legend in Progress* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

[39] Jennifer Fisher, *Nutcracker Nation: How an Old World Ballet Became a Christmas Tradition in the New World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

[40] Ezrahi, 207-231.

[41] Stern, esp. Chapters 2 and 3.

With reference to Soviet literature, Xenia Gasiorowska notes in passing that "it is customary for Soviet works to be revised in subsequent editions in conformance with political changes."[42] But in her analysis, Gasiorowska focuses on new works rather than the substance of those revisions. In other words, she only analyzes the first version of a work, even though she notes that later versions were produced and distributed. This suggests an assumption the revision process was mechanical. Perhaps changes were demanded by censors, and authors complied. My research suggests that ballet artists themselves were interested in changing their repertoire. The discussions about how to change the repertoire and revise specific productions reveal both artists' agency in these production processes and change over time in what constituted "Soviet" ballet.

In order to illuminate change over time, I follow a single ballet through three productions at a single theater. One ballet and one theater hold some variables constant. Even so, there are innumerable other variables, including rapid changes in Soviet society over this period of more than thirty years. Still, concentrating on versions of *The Red Poppy*, all staged at the Bolshoi Theater, enables me to home in on how ideas about what was appropriate for "Soviet" ballet were refined and put into professional practice.

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[42] Xenia Gasiorowska, *Women in Soviet Fiction, 1917-1964* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 8.

It is important to note that GABT did not attempt to "reconstruct" *Red Poppy* or most of its other ballets in this period.[43] "Reconstruction" projects involving professional ballet companies around the world have become quite fashionable. Twentieth-century examples of ballet reconstructions include various productions of the Royal Ballet that are based on Stepanov notations of Imperial Russian ballets carried out of Russia shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution and the reconstruction projects of Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer (especially ballets by Vaslav Nijinsky, George Balanchine, and Jean Börlin).[44] Doug Fullington of Pacific Northwest Ballet (*La Fille du Pharaon*, *Paquita, Le Corsaire, Giselle*); Alexei Ratmansky, Artist in Residence at American Ballet Theatre (*Harlequinade, The*

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[43] There was a related process in the early Soviet period, which was conceived as stripping away accretions that had accumulated over decades to reveal a forgotten facet of original artistic intent, usually of the composer. Both ballets and operas were subjected to this process, and a common result was the revelation that the composer's original intent privileged the spirit of the people/masses, whereas years of performances in the Imperial Theaters had neglected this aspect of the ballet or opera. Operas that had glorified monarchy in the nineteenth century became, effectively, people's dramas. I see this process as related more to what Pauline Fairclough refers to as the "marketing" of nineteenth-century classics than to twentieth or twenty-first-century "reconstructions" of lost ballets (Pauline Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses: Shaping Soviet Musical Identity under Lenin and Stalin* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016], 26). In particular, most of the classics which were stripped of what Soviet artists deemed their accumulated baggage were not lost—they were still being performed—whereas "reconstructions" often (though not always) try to recreate ballets or sections of ballets that have fallen out of the repertoire. Soviet artists did not see a contradiction between stripping away accumulated dead weight and reimagining ballets and operas for contemporary audiences; these goals were part of the same process.

[44] On the Stepanov notation system, see Aleksandr Alekseevich Gorskii, "Two Essays on Stepanov Notation," trans. Roland John Wiley (New York: Congress on Research in Dance, 1978). On notations used as the basis for the repertoire of what became the Royal Ballet, see Roland John Wiley, "Dances from Russia: An Introduction to the Sergejev Collection." *Harvard Library Bulletin* 24, no. 1 (January 1976). On reconstructions by Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, see their website: "Hodson Archer: Ballets Old & New," http://www.hodsonarcher.com/ (accessed May 14, 2021).

Sleeping Beauty, Paquita, Swan Lake); and Pierre Lacotte (*La Fille du Pharaon*, *Marco Spada*, *La Sylphide*) have undertaken numerous reconstruction projects individually and sometimes collaboratively. There have also been ballet masters in post-Soviet Russia who reconstruct pre-Soviet Russian ballets; Sergei Vikharev was the most prolific (*Coppélia, The Sleeping Beauty, Petrushka, La Bayadère, Karnaval,* "Polovtsian Dances," *Chopiniana,* and *Raymonda*). All of the choreographers and historians involved in reconstruction projects theorize differently their aims in terms of authenticity to previous versions.

Reconstructors in the twenty-first century often try to resurrect elements of dances, mise-en-scène, and mime passages from nineteenth- or early twentieth-century ballets. In the process, they frequently undo Soviet choreographers' alterations of classical and romantic ballets.[45] Some variations may have drifted in unconsciously. But many of the modifications were intentional. The typical Soviet practice was to remake existing ballets from the perspective of the present, to update the repertoire for new generations of artists and audiences. Therefore, "reconstruction" is not a useful framework for understanding Soviet versions of earlier ballets. "Reconstruction" is inherently backward-looking, while Soviet choreographers were focused on the present and future. They did not want to

[45] The need to undo Soviet choreographers' revisions evidences change over time in ballet in the Soviet period. If Soviet ballet masters had operated in a purely preservative mode, there would not be much demand for "reconstruction." If Soviet artists had preserved their inheritances precisely, the prerevolutionary repertoire could simply have been taught to any interested ballet company by the last generation of Soviet artists. The nineteenth-century notations would be much less in demand.

repeat works of the past. They wanted to take what was valuable from past and improve upon it.[46]

Methodology and Sources

My research approach combines a historian's assembly of archival traces with a dance studies scholar's inquiry into how dancing bodies make meaning. Archival collections from the Soviet period are vast and have facilitated research by several generations of social and cultural historians.[47] However, access to Russian archives is a privilege. As Elizabeth Stern observes, "institutional affiliation, university support, and degree qualifications, not to mention possession of the 'right' passport and visa, financial means, and the requisite language skills" are necessary to conduct research in Russian archives.[48] As a citizen of the United States, a PhD student from an American research university with fellowship funding and an adviser who helped me secure the correct visas, I was allowed access upon request to most of the archival collections I sought to explore. To Stern's list I

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[46] Katerina Clark terms this process the "Great Appropriation" in *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 8.

[47] According to Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, in "Soviet usage, 'archives' are institutions that serve as depositories for noncurrent government or other institutional records, but they can also be repositories that collect personal papers, films, folklore, or other documentary collections" (*A Handbook for Archival Research in the USSR* [N.p.: International Research and Exchanges Board, 1989], 8). I follow the Soviet usage of "archives" to refer to repositories of (mostly) unpublished textual documents and photographs as well as film footage that is not in the public domain or commercially available. In some cases, such as the published libretti described below, the materials were published as ephemera; they were published, but not in the same sense as a book or journal.

[48] Stern, 20.

would add the necessity of understanding both Soviet and twenty-first-century Russian bureaucracies.[49]

In their day-to-day operations, Soviet government and Communist Party institutions generated an overwhelming quantity of paperwork. Some items may have been lost or destroyed over time (especially pre-World War II materials). Others survive but are not available to researchers.[50] Still, the federal museums and archives in Moscow contain a tremendous wealth of sources related to the history of ballet and the operations of GABT. Even if it is not possible to trace the provenance of every single document back through all of its handlers to its creator, it is possible to cross-reference many items to build as complete as possible a picture of what the historical actors understood and how they made decisions about the future of "Soviet" ballet. I follow the model of many social and cultural historians of the Soviet period by "approaching [the Soviet] system first and

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[49] Visas, research grants, and even language skills would not have gotten this research project off the ground were it not for Kiril Tomoff's meticulous explanation of how to register and orient myself in several of the key repositories for this project, including RGALI, RGASPI, and the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI). I also benefitted from reference to Samantha Sherry, Jonathan Waterlow, and Andy Willimott, eds., "Using Archives and Libraries in the Former Soviet Union," (N.p.: British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies, 2013); Patricia Kennedy Grimsted's *Archives and Manuscript Repositories in the USSR: Moscow and Leningrad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); and Sheila Fitzpatrick and Lynne Viola, eds., *A Researcher's Guide to Sources on Soviet Social History in the 1930s* (repr., 1990; Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992).

[50] Some federal archives in the Russian Federation containing records from the Soviet period remain closed to almost all researchers. These include the Presidential Archive, the Russian Foreign Ministry Archives, and the archives of the Internal Affairs (secret police) organizations. These institutions' holdings would likely have little bearing on my project, which focuses on Soviet domestic cultural production (Kiril Tomoff, personal communication, May 19, 2014).

foremost from the middle," which "yields a richer and more complex texture in understanding other levels."[51] This is not high-level political history, though members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party did sometimes get involved with GABT's operations. Neither is this the story of people repressed or ignored by the Soviet government and Communist Party; GABT artists, who performed for both working-class audiences and world leaders, were among the Soviet Union's cultural elite.

Because of the enormous quantity of potentially relevant materials and because these materials are spread among multiple archives and museums, my research did not exhaust the available sources. In particular, my focus on GABT's productions of a ballet created some problems. By contrast with my approach, much of the history of ballet in Russia is written through the lives and careers of individual choreographers, composers, and dancers.[52] In terms of Russian archives,

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[51] Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

[52] A few examples from the history of Russian ballet: Natal'ia Vladimirovna Kiseleva, "Balety R. M. Gliera v istoriko-kul'turnom kontekste" (Kand. diss., Akademiia russkogo baleta im. A. Ia. Vaganovoi, 2016); V. Bogdanov Beresovsky, *Ulanova and the Development of the Soviet Ballet*, trans. Stephen Garry and Joan Lawson (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1952); Robert Ignatius Letellier, *The Ballets of Ludwig Minkus* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008); Joel Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko*; Nadine Meisner, *Marius Petipa: The Emperor's Ballet Master* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Simon Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Janice Ross, *Like a Bomb Going Off*; Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*; E. Surits and E. Belova, eds., *Baletmeister A. A. Gorskii. Materialy. Vospominaniia. Stat'i* (Saint Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999); Mary Grace Swift, *A Loftier Flight: The Life and Accomplishments of Charles-Louis Didelot, Balletmaster* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1974); Roland John Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets* and *The Life and Ballets of Lev Ivanov: Choreographer of* The Nutcracker *and* Swan Lake (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Books devoted to artists who made their careers outside of Russia (including Russian artists who

the latter approach is more efficient because it better aligns with some aspects of the archival classification system.

People's personal papers are usually catalogued and indexed by the person whose papers they are and then perhaps by people involved (correspondents, those pictured in photographs, and similar).[53] Production titles may or may not be mentioned in the *opisi* which describe the archival materials; because *The Red Poppy* was such a famous ballet, it was more likely to appear in descriptions than lesser-known ballets, which helped with my research. However, given the number of people involved in each ballet production, it was impossible to track down all of the related materials even among those collections which are held in federal archives and museums (rather than in private collections).

Another barrier to exhaustive research on a particular ballet is the practice in Russian museums of organizing photographs by the names of the people pictured rather than the name of the production. This made it challenging to order all of the extant photographs of a particular ballet. Even when I did find files of

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participated in Diagilev's Ballets Russes and then settled abroad) further illustrate how common the individual approach is.

[53] On the subject of personal papers, it is worth noting that most (though not all) of the personal papers received by the federal archives and museums in Moscow came from male ballet artists. The collections are often received from the artists' widows. Sometimes, when the widows were artists themselves, some of their papers were included and catalogued in their husbands' *fondy*. Be that as it may, there does seem to be a gender bias in the acquisition and assembly of personal papers from this period. Also, if an artist had been married multiple times, his wives and children sometimes gave parts of his papers and other effects to different repositories. For example, choreographer Aleksandr Gorskii's professional effects are divided among RGALI, the Bakhrushin Museum, and the Museum of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater. Just because an artist has a *lichyi fond* at RGALI or the Bakhrushin Museum does not mean that that *fond* contains all of their personal papers.

photographs for *The Red Poppy*, some of them were not separated by version and many are not dated. In particular, some photographs for *The Red Poppy* and *The Red Flower* were combined into one file because the museums do not consider the two productions to be separate. I tried to compensate for the lack of information about individual photographs by tracking in theatrical programs the names of dancers who performed the principal roles and matching the years of their performances with the years in repertoire of *The Red Poppy* and *The Red Flower*. However, this strategy is not a perfect replacement for more precise catalog information; some dancers performed the same roles in both productions and thus their presence does not help in dating the photographs. At the dissertation stage, I have confined my analysis to photographs and film fragments for which I am reasonably sure of the dates.

Sources for this project are held in several repositories. Most of GABT's administrative records for the 1920s through the 1950s are held at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI). RGALI also holds the records for Soviet government institutions that oversaw the arts, including the Main Repertoire Committee (Glavrepertkom), the All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs, and the Soviet Ministry of Culture. Additionally, some artists' personal papers are part of RGALI's collection, including those of choreographers Leonid Mikhailovich Lavrovskii and Vasilii Dmitrievich Tikhomirov. Copies of some of GABT's earlier administrative records and additional collections of personal papers can be found

in the manuscript collection at the A. A. Bakhrushin Central State Theatrical Museum. I found the collection of theatrical programs at the Museum of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater to be extremely helpful in understanding what ballets were presented to the public and how the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theater changed over time.[54] Finally, the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) maintains records from Central Committee of the Communist Party departments that were concerned with theatrical operations, including the Department of Agitation and Propaganda. RGASPI also holds the personal papers of some Central Committee members who were very engaged with GABT's operations in the 1920s and early 1930s, including Anatolii Lunacharskii, Viacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, and Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov.[55]

Many of the sources for this project are handwritten or typewritten documents. In order to understand everyday theatrical operations, I consulted a lot of GABT's intra-institutional correspondence as well as inter-institutional correspondence between GABT and the various government and Communist Party institutions that oversaw the theater's operations. I also examined directives that GABT received from government and Party oversight institutions.

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[54] The Bakhrushin Museum's collection of theatrical programs was closed during two of my three research trips, and I was therefore not able to make use of it.

[55] RGASPI's holdings have not been brought to bear in previous studies of Soviet ballet.

One of the most important types of sources that I utilize is the stenographic record. Meetings in Soviet institutions often included a stenographer who recorded the participants' remarks and discussion. The stenographic records were often typed, duplicated, and circulated to participants and other interested parties. Speakers sometimes had the chance to correct their remarks. Eventually, the stenographic records were archived, often with institutional records and sometimes in collections of personal papers. The stenographic records I cite represent a variety of formats: from handwritten and full of abbreviations to typed with many handwritten corrections to clean typed copies. Some are from internal meetings at GABT with only a few participants. Others are from multi-day all-union conferences with hundreds of representatives from GABT and around the country; these consist of hundreds of typed pages. Of course, the stenographic records cannot be assumed to be exhaustive transcripts. Even if imperfect, the stenographic records offer valuable insights into theatrical operations and artists' contributions to the production processes. The artists voices come through especially strongly in the stenographic records.

In order to analyze change over time in the art form, I also consulted numerous photographs from the period and a few surviving film fragments. I studied archival photographs and books containing photographs at the M. N. Ermolova Museum. Additional photographs come from RGALI and the Museum of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater. The Bakhrushin Museum collections of set

designs and moving pictures offered access to some visual materials. The most significant surviving film fragments for this project are held at the Russian State Archive of Documentary Film and Photography.

Like the written documents, the photographs and film fragments have limits as sources. Both types of visual sources were created (and usually also archived) with focus on the principal dancers. I think that these materials focus on principal dancers because the photographs and film segments were made as part of publicity for ballets. The film footage often comes from newsreels, sometimes from around the time of the premiere and sometimes from coverage of diplomatic delegations' visits to the Bolshoi Theater. I located very few photographs or film clips that prominently feature the corps de ballet and mime ensemble. These realities limit my analysis of the supporting roles.

In order to study productions of *The Red Poppy* for which no full-length film recording and few photographs have come to light, I rely heavily on the published libretti for the ballets. Ballet libretti are relatively brief narrations of the action, and I have included my full translations of the published libretti for *Red Poppy* (1927), *The Red Poppy* (1949), and *The Red Flower* (1957) as appendices herein. Prior to publication for sale at GABT, each libretto went through multiple drafts, some of which survive in the collections of RGALI and the Bakhrushin Museum. I limit my comments on the draft libretti because these drafts were not made available to audiences. By concentrating on change over time from one published libretto to

the next, libretti constitute a comparable source across all three productions as well as a source that would have been available to some audience members at the time of the ballets' live performance.[56]

Libretti, of course, are not full records of the performances. Edward Nye observes that programs for eighteenth-century *ballet d'action* performances existed "on the fringe of the main work forming a bridge between it and the public."[57] The eighteenth-century programs, like the twentieth-century Soviet libretti, provided "more or less overt signals guiding or even enabling interpretation by the reader," containing "sufficient textual information about characters, situation, and language for the action to be understood."[58] Edward Tyerman justifies his recourse to libretti for *The Red Poppy* because "they offer evidence of the message the ballet's creators believed their production ought to convey."[59] In her research on the former

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[56] In this period, ticket purchases at GABT did not come with programs. Cast lists and libretto booklets had to be purchased separately.

[57] Edward Nye, *Mime, Music, and Drama on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: The Ballet D'Action* (2011; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 216. The programs that Nye describes were distributed farther in advance of the performances than the libretti I analyze, but the content and some of the functions were similar. Nye uses the term "paratext" from Gérard Genette's literary analyses to describe the eighteenth-century ballet d'action programs. Genette defines "paratexts" as "part of the totality of the literary work," including "a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic" (Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997], 3). Nye also compares his programs to Hollywood movie pitches (218).

[58] Nye, 218.

Mariinsky Theater's ballet production processes, Elizabeth Stern also notes that libretti were used "to influence the perception of a given work" because "[the libretti] related not only the story of a given ballet, but also provided an ideologically-grounded interpretation of it."[60] I find the libretti valuable for these reasons: they were created to shape audiences' reception of the live performances, and they are the closest elements to these very influential performances that have survived. I read the libretti for change over time in ballet's plot. I also scour the libretti for clues as to how dance functioned within the performance, even in the absence of recordings of moving bodies.

The Relationship Between Dance and Society: Theoretical vs. Documentable

A fundamental assumption in the field of critical dance studies is that "dance can provide a critical example of the dialectical relationship between cultures and the bodies that inhabit them."[61] In other words, dance is influenced by the environment in which it is produced, and dance, in turn, has the capacity to change its environment. Theoretically, the relationship between dance and the society that produces it involves two-way influence. Practically, whether at the

[59] Edward Tyerman, "Resignifying *The Red Poppy*: Internationalism and Symbolic Power in the Sino-Soviet Encounter," *Slavic and East European Journal* 61, no. 3 (2017), 458. Tyerman utilizes both published and unpublished drafts of libretti for multiple versions of *The Red Poppy*.

[60] Stern, 129.

[61] Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 3.

level of individuals or of groups of people, it is much harder to document historical influence of dance on its society than influence of a society on its dance.

Sources for two types of reception are notably scarce in this project. Elizabeth Souritz, Christina Ezrahi, and Elizabeth Stern all weave together reviews and articles about ballet in their histories of Soviet ballet. I focus more on the production processes and the cultivation of repertoire than on reception of ballets in the press.[62]

Secondly, audience reception data for this period is elusive. There was an assumption on the part of Soviet officials that if they commissioned art, they could create builders of socialism, and the builders would then build (and enjoy) socialism/communism. Unhappily for historians, officials were so sure this would work that they usually did not measure the effectiveness of the artistic ministration.[63]

Scholars who study adjacent genres report similar difficulties in assessing reception by mass audiences. With respect to dramatic theater, Mayhill C. Fowler notes that "very little documentation remains to flesh out exactly how spectators reacted to, interpreted, or experienced the theatre."[64] In music, Pauline Fairclough

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[62] Tim Scholl's *"Sleeping Beauty," A Legend in Progress* is an example of ballet history told largely through journalistic reception. Many analyses of Sergei Pavlovich Diagilev's Ballets Russes are also based on press coverage of the company's tours.

[63] For example, Fairclough (42) and I have found evidence that there were audience surveys in the early 1930s, but locating the results of those surveys decades hence has been more challenging.

attests that "those accounts of these activities that remain, both published and unpublished, tend to come only from the perspective of those delivering art to the 'masses' rather than from those on the receiving end."[65] And in visual culture, Victoria Bonnell laments, "Unfortunately, the evidence concerning contemporary reactions to posters is quite limited."[66] Elizabeth Stern found the unpublished diary of an engineer who attended performances at the former Mariinsky Theater in the early 1930s and wrote about his experience.[67] But these sources on individual audience members' experiences are much harder to locate and amass than the institutional sources and the personal papers of the artists who were creating art for Soviet audiences. I was able to locate some stenographic records of meetings where workers provided feedback to GABT. Spectators also wrote letters about their reactions to theatrical performances, some of which were dispatched to newspapers and others of which went directly to the theater or the artists involved. These individual engagements with GABT's artistic production demonstrate the popularity of ballet and opera with wide audiences as well as the duty that spectators felt to inform GABT when they thought the performances or productions were unsuitable. There are limits, though, to how much actual transformation of

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[64] Fowler, 21.

[65] Fairclough, 42.

[66] Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (1997; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 12.

[67] Stern, 125-128.

consciousness can be read through these sources and attributed to audiences' experiences at the theater.

Overview

Many scholars have identified prerevolutionary sources for Soviet culture.[68] It almost goes without saying that these forms of inherited and appropriated culture changed over time in the Soviet context. For example, in literature, nineteenth-century romanticism and critical realism were combined into "socialist realism" in the 1930s. In music, the tradition of nineteenth-century Russian nationalist opera was repurposed to promote the development of cultural life on the Russian model in the non-Russian Soviet republics.[69] However, Christina Ezrahi asserts that ballet dancers and choreographers resisted the Sovietization of ballet.[70] That is, artists of the Soviet state theaters enacted what Ezrahi terms "artistic repossession:" they "repossessed" ballet in order to protect it from contamination by Bolshevik influences. According to Ezrahi, Soviet artists used the resources of the Soviet

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[68] See, for examples, Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Régine Robin, *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*; Pauline Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses*; Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel, St. Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), and *Moscow, The Fourth Rome*; Evegeny Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); and Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (1992; repr., London: Verso, 2011).

[69] Marina Frolova-Walker, "'National in Form, Socialist in Content': Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51, no. 2 (Summer 1998), 331.

[70] Ezrahi, 6, 86, 87, 201, 237.

government to further purely artistic, non-socialist agendas.[71] Ezrahi concludes, "Ultimately, ballet proved stronger than politics."[72]

I argue that Soviet ballet was made popular by artists who aligned their creative labor with the Soviet cultural project; in other words, ballet and ballet artists were not in opposition to "politics"—ballet and ballet artists served and were served by political institutions and goals. By contrast with *Swans of the Kremlin*, this project demonstrates that ballet was, in fact, changed in the process of becoming a Soviet art form.

Chapter 1 describes the institutional, pedagogical, dance, choreographic, design, theatrical, and musical inheritances that provided the foundations from which artists developed ballet as a Soviet art form. This chapter establishes a baseline for analysis of change over time in Soviet ballet. I also show how ballet's survival in the context of state socialism was not guaranteed for nearly a decade after 1917. Considering how central ballet became to the Soviet Union's domestic cultural production and cultural diplomacy the world over, it is amazing to see how close the genre came to being abandoned in the early 1920s.

One overarching argument of this project is that Soviet ballet was a form a popular culture because it was accessible to, interesting for, and beloved by mass

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[71] Ezrahi, 7.

[72] Ezrahi, 9.

audiences in the Soviet Union. But working-class audiences were not simply ordered to go to the theater. Chapter 2 outlines what I call audience development strategies that GABT and the Soviet government designed to make ballet and opera more accessible to working-class audiences. These strategies were designed to reduce economic barriers, educate prospective audience members about theatergoing as well as specific productions, involve workers in theatrical staging processes, and engage audiences of children and youth. These outreach strategies combined with changes in the art itself to make ballet a form of popular culture.

Chapter 3 introduces the first production of *Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater, offering a glimpse into the logistical hurdles that delayed the premiere until June 1927. *Red Poppy* was set in revolutionary China; it dramatized the Chinese heroine's consciousness-raising and conversion to the Soviet ideals of humane treatment of workers and gender equality. I compare and contrast the libretto and choreography for the *Red Poppy* with those of canonical nineteenth-century ballets in order to demonstrate how Soviet artists took up the challenge of making a "Soviet" ballet. This was the first ballet in Russia to feature a contemporary setting and contemporary characters. I argue that *Red Poppy* cemented the genre's place in Soviet culture by changing perceptions of what kind of stories ballet could tell and beginning to explore new embodied methods for storytelling. I also show how the ballet's representation of revolutionary

womanhood complemented gendered representations in other areas of Soviet culture, especially those in contemporary literature and film.

Chapter 4 documents discussions in the 1930s among ballet artists and other stakeholders about how to make ballet's narratives and choreography more accessible to mass audiences. These debates reveal the principles of enlightening subject matter, a well-crafted narrative, and embodied storytelling that artists continued to refine for at least the next thirty years. This chapter features artists as vital agents in the process of determining how to make ballet "Soviet." I argue that the artists were committed to the pedagogical mandate for Soviet arts, and they used their professional expertise to develop genre-specific strategies to make ballet more accessible. The All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs recognized the value of the artists' expertise in determining how to make ballet socialist and realist.

Chapter 5 focuses on the production process for *The Red Poppy* in 1949. The principles debated in the 1930s with regard to making more accessible ballets framed the discussions about the second version of *The Red Poppy* at GABT. The restaging was accomplished very quickly thanks to GABT's collaborative approach. However, in a dispute over authorship of the libretto for *The Red Poppy*, tension arose between GABT's institutional structures for collaborative production and Soviet mechanisms for rewarding individual creative labor. Given the paucity of historiography describing collaborative production in the history of ballet, this chapter documents an important historical precedent that challenges prevailing

stereotypes of individual genius choreographers, dancers as mere vessels for choreographers' creativity, and ballet as a genre that essentially excludes women's voices.

In Chapter 6, I analyze revisions to the ballet's libretto, contrasting the published libretto from the 1927 production with that of the 1949 production at GABT. The new libretto bears clear evidence of its conception during the early years of the Cold War. I argue that the second version of *The Red Poppy* realized the principles that came to define Soviet ballet in the 1930s and 1940s (as discussed in general in Chapter 4 and with respect to *Red Poppy* in Chapter 5). The new production had edifying subject matter and a stronger dramatic through-line. However, to improve the ballet's dramatic logic, the character of the heroine was diminished; she was upstaged by a new male hero. I also examine the function of dance in the story and contend that the diffusion of opportunities for dancing throughout the plot was a step towards the through-danced ballets of the Thaw and beyond. Finally, I discuss *The Red Poppy*'s official commendation with reference to the production's receipt of a Stalin Prize.

Chapter 7 provides context for GABT's third production of *The Red Poppy*. In the years immediately following Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin's death, Soviet society was gripped by uncertainty. In this environment, the newly established Soviet Ministry of Culture embarked on a campaign to de-centralize repertoire planning in state theaters. An unintended consequence of the Ministry of Culture's

mixed signals about de-centralization, I argue, was paralysis at GABT. After two years of failing to satisfy the Ministry of Culture's conflicting directives about repertoire planning, GABT finally resurrected *The Red Poppy* as *The Red Flower*. The new production satisfied the Ministry of Culture and resulted in monetary bonuses for GABT administrators.

Chapter 8 documents the production process for *The Red Flower*, which involved advice from Chinese spectators, further discussions within GABT, and exchanges between GABT and Soviet government and Communist Party oversight bodies. Again, the production process was collaborative. Discussions were lively, principled, and professional exchanges where participants sought to negotiate ideological, artistic, and practical priorities. In this chapter, I also analyze changes made between *The Red Poppy* (1949) and *The Red Flower* (1957). With reference to the published libretti and a few surviving film fragments of the 1957 production, I argue that GABT's artists and administrators prioritized making a Soviet ballet for Soviet audiences. The new libretto reflected Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence with capitalist countries (especially the United States) and the main characters were further tweaked to enhance the plausibility of the plot. I also show that the choreography included vernacular gestures as well as classical dancing. I argue that the replacement of conventional nineteenth-century ballet mime gestures with more quotidian movements and the continued centrality of dancing to storytelling in this ballet constitute an intermediate stage en route to

ballets of the rest of the twentieth century which would tell stories exclusively through dance.

Chapter One

Soviet Ballet's Inheritances and Institutional Threats in the Early 1920s

Chapter Introduction

In order to understand change over time in Soviet ballet, it is important to understand ballet's constituent traditions. This chapter describes Soviet ballet's inheritances in order to provide readers a basic understanding of the state of ballet in Russia in 1917. It outlines the design, musical, pedagogical, choreographic, and institutional inheritances from which Soviet artists developed Soviet ballet in the 1920s through the 1950s. It breaks down the synthetic genre of ballet into its components to show how ballet is inherently implicated in many of the same debates as the genres of music, visual arts, film, and theater as well as education and organizational studies. The way that ballet's constituent traditions developed in the Soviet context reflected both the ideological goals of the Soviet government and Communist Party and the practical realities in which artists labored. This chapter also offers an overview of some of the existential threats to the Bolshoi Theater in the first decade after the October Revolution, highlighting the fact that ballet was not initially or universally accepted as part of Soviet culture. In the early 1920s, there were many alternative artistic and movement practices that might have developed in ballet's stead, and there were repeated attempts by Soviet leaders to put an end to the very institutions in which Soviet ballet eventually

developed. The fact that ballet did survive and prosper in subsequent decades was not a foregone conclusion.

Soviet Ballet's Inheritances

Soviet artists inherited early twentieth-century Russian traditions for designing ballet sets and costumes; Russian and French traditions of musical composition for ballet; nineteenth-century ballet productions; the choreographic formula for evening-length multi-act story ballets; the lexicons of classical dance, character dance, and mime from which nineteenth-century ballets were choreographed; Russian and Western European approaches to teaching ballet technique; two former Imperial Ballet Schools; and two former Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet. Each of these inheritances was discarded or developed (especially in relation to adjoining genres, such as music, painting, and education) during the Soviet period. The fates of these inheritances contributed to what became Soviet ballet.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, designing for ballet at the Russian Imperial Theaters gained stature as an artistic pursuit. For many decades, sets and costumes for ballets at the Imperial Bolshoi Theater were regularly recycled from current and former opera and ballet productions rather than commissioned and constructed anew for each premiere. But by the early twentieth century, more attention was paid to sets and costumes in Petrograd and Moscow as artists such as Lev Samoilovich Bakst and Aleksandr Nikolaevich Benua were

engaged by the Imperial Theaters and private enterprises, including that of Sergei Pavlovich Diagilev.[1] In the 1910s, the Imperial Bolshoi Theater began to transition away from its reliance on haphazardly repurposed theatrical properties; soon, the Bolshoi Theater's ballet repertoire included designs by respected painters and theatrical designers Konstantin Alekseevich Korovin and Aleksandr Iakovlevich Golovin.[2] Set and costume designs had come to be seen as integral parts in the overall conceptions of ballet productions. Soviet state theaters went on to employ designers who created original set and costume designs for Soviet ballets.

A few decades before respectable painters had been enlisted to design for the Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet, the prestige of musical composition for the ballet stage had also begun to rise. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, ballet as a genre of musical composition had quite a lowly reputation in Russia; ballet scores were sometimes cobbled together from music written for earlier productions and snippets that composers had at hand, and dancers and choreographers swapped pieces of music from one ballet to another without regard

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[1] Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 166.

[2] Korovin served as Chief Designer for the Moscow Imperial Theaters beginning in 1910 (V. I. Zarubin, *Pervye postanovki baletov na russkoi stsene 1825-1997* [Moscow: Ellis Luck, 1998], 384), though he began to design for ballets at the Bolshoi Theater as early as Aleksandr Alekseevich Gorskii's 1902 production of *Esmeral'da* (Zarubin, 111). See also collected programs from 1922 at the Museum of the State Academic Bol'shoi Theater (Muzei Gosudarstvennogo Akademicheskogo Bol'shogo Teatra, hereafter Muzei GABT). In a few cases, GABT was able to procure the rights to designs for ballets originally staged elsewhere. For example, GABT negotiated and paid for copies of Aleksandr Benua's sketches for *Petrushka* in 1919: A. A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatrical Museum (Gosudarstvennyi Tsentral'nyi Teatral'nyi Muzei imeni A. A. Bakhrushina, hereafter GTsTM) f. 154, dd. 481-736, ll. 82-82ob., 85, 87-87ob., 112-112ob., 307-308.

for the musico-dramaturgical effects of their interpolations. However, nineteenth-century French composers, including Adolphe Adam and Léo Delibes, had shown that ballet music could be tuneful, danceable, musically coherent, and illuminated by leitmotifs and other conventions to identify characters and setting, and their ballets were mainstays in the repertoires of the Russian Imperial Theaters. With the ballets of Petr Il'ich Chaikovskii and then Aleksandr Konstantinovich Glazunov, the Russian Imperial Theaters bore a burgeoning tradition of musical composition for ballet that approached the more respected (in Russia) traditions of operatic and symphonic musical composition. Soviet composers would go on to pattern their ballet scores in part on the ballets of Chaikovskii and Glazunov, and Soviet critics lauded new Soviet ballet scores for continuing the lineage of these great Russian ballet composers.[3]

Soviet artists inherited not only the traditions of musical and visual artistic composition but whole ballet productions from the repertoires of the Imperial Russian Theaters: music, designs, libretto, and choreography for romantic and classical ballets. The ballets of choreographers Marius Ivanovich Petipa, Lev

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[3] See, for example, Viktor Petrovich Iving's praise of Reinkhold Moritsevich Glier's score for *Red Poppy* in an article published in the 1930 libretto booklet for GABT's production (GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 12). Ballets with music by Adam (*Giselle*, and less often *Le Corsaire*) and Delibes (*Coppélia* and *Sylvia*, the latter under the title *Fadetta*) were also included in the repertoires of some of the state theaters throughout the Soviet period. See, for example, list of ballets in the repertoires of Soviet state theaters of opera and ballet in 1947-1949: Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, hereafter RGALI) f. 962, op. 11, d. 483, l. 333. See also collected programs at Muzei GABT for the Bolshoi Theater's ballet repertoire during the Soviet period.

Ivanovich Ivanov, and Aleksandr Gorskii contributed choreography (i.e., specific passages of dance and/or mime) to the repertoires of Soviet theaters.[4] The choreography of Mikhail Mikhailovich Fokin also comprised a portion of Soviet ballet's inheritance; however, Fokin's influence was greater in Petrograd/Leningrad. Fokin's choreographic compositions were rarely performed in Moscow, where he came to represent inadvisable and un-Soviet approaches to choreography in discourses about ballet.[5] Most of the ballets presented at the former Mariinsky and Bolshoi Theaters in the first fifteen years after the October Revolution were inherited productions with prerevolutionary music, sets, costumes, libretti, and choreography.[6] These productions nurtured the first postrevolutionary generation of professional dancers and served as mass audiences' entrée to ballet.

Though specific choreographic compositions by Petipa, Ivanov, Gorskii, and Fokin were inherited and danced by artists of the Soviet state theaters, Petipa's

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[4] For more on the ballets of Petipa, Ivanov, and Gorskii, see Nadine Meisner, *Marius Petipa: The Emperor's Ballet Master* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Roland John Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets: Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Nutcracker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) and *The Life and Ballets of Lev Ivanov: Choreographer of* The Nutcracker *and* Swan Lake (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and E. Surits and E. Belova, eds., *Baletmeister A. A. Gorskii. Materialy. Vospominaniia. Stat'i* (Saint Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999).

[5] Mikhail Mikhailovich Fokin (or Michel or Michael Fokine) was a Russian-born choreographer most famous for his early twentieth-century ballets, especially as performed by Sergei Diagilev's Ballets Russes. The discussion at a meeting convened in November 1936 by the All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs (VKpDI) to discuss the state of Soviet ballet and its current objectives exemplifies the trend toward an early Soviet consensus that Fokin's choreography did not constitute salvageable inheritance for Soviet ballet (RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, ll. 26-32, 50-52, 58-79).

[6] See collected programs at Muzei GABT.

more significant contributions took the form of the ballets he either created or made famous (or both) in the late nineteenth century, which were subsequently rechoreographed by Gorskii and other Soviet choreographers. In Moscow, these ballets included *La Bayadère*, *Le Corsaire*, *Don Quixote*, *Raymonda*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Swan Lake*. These are examples of what I call "classical ballets."[7] A classical ballet, or what Elizabeth Souritz calls an "academic full-length ballet,"[8] has a minimum of three or four acts and constitutes a full evening's theatrical program. Usually, at least one act was set in a fantastic land or a dream scene that contrasted with the other more realistic settings. According to Souritz, "The construction of each act, the sequence of the dances—solo, group, ensemble—all followed an identical order. The triumphant coda and apotheosis of the last act was an indispensable element."[9] In other words, classical ballets were formulaic, and Soviet choreographers inherited the formula; they replaced the choreography and adapted the prerevolutionary stories, then they took the formula and applied it to music by Soviet composers with original Soviet-era stories.

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[7] "Classical ballet," as a singular noun (interchangeable with "classical dance"), also refers to the lexicon of ballet steps that were commonly performed in classical ballets such as *Le Corsaire* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. "Classical dance" is sometimes opposed to "character dance," though movement vocabulary of both types was included in such famous nineteenth-century classical ballets as *Swan Lake* and *Raymonda*.

[8] Elizabeth Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*, trans. Lynn Visson, ed. Sally Banes (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 21.

[9] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 21.

In a formulaic classical ballet, dancing scenes were stitched together with scenes of ballet-specific pantomime. During the mime scenes, dancers had conversations and issued pronouncements with a set vocabulary of gestures. The mime scenes revealed the events of the plot and relationships among the characters. Specific gestures illustrated how "handsome" was the "prince" and how "beautiful" the "maiden" who were either going "to die" or "to marry" (or both).[10] Because many of the characters and situations were similar from one ballet to the next, the lexicon of mime gestures was relatively small and easily learned by both the artists on stage and audience members who attended more than a couple of performances. Both the structure of alternating dance and mime scenes and the vocabularies of mime gestures and dance steps were available to early Soviet artists. Shortly thereafter, Soviet artists eschewed ballet mime gestures as old-fashioned. Eventually, Soviet choreographers and composers also abandoned the structure of alternating mime and dance scenes to create through-danced productions.

Dance scenes in classical ballets were comprised of either "classical dance," "character dance," or a mixture of the two. Classical dance is the movement vocabulary at the heart of pre-professional and professional dancers' daily technique class. The vocabulary of classical dance is comprised of positions of the

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[10] For more on the vocabulary of nineteenth-century ballet mime, see Beryl Morina, *Mime in Ballet* (Winchester Hants: Woodstock Winchester Press, 2000).

feet, legs, arms, head, and torso; connecting movements; jumps; turns; and gendered vocabularies for women (especially incorporating pointe shoes) and men (especially incorporating bravura turns and jumps). Elizabeth Souritz notes that Marius Petipa presided over the separation of classical dance vocabulary from the "everyday movement" of non-professional dancers and an "aspiration to virtuosity" in the realm of classical dance.[11] Gail Grant notes that character dance could be "[a]ny national or folk dance, or a dance based on movements associated with a particular profession, trade, personality or mode of living."[12] For the most part, "character dance" refers to a subgenre in ballet that is based on folk or social dances. By the end of the nineteenth century, though, much as classical dance had been completely separated from aristocrats' bodily carriage at court, character dances bore little resemblance to dances performed by folk outside of the Imperial Theaters. Character dances blended elements of regional dances with the positions and dynamics of classical ballet to create dances that helped to identify characters as Tyrolian, Cracovian, Neapolitan, etc. Music and costumes combined with characteristic arm movements and other corporeal and rhythmic stereotypes to communicate characters' social class or national/regional identity.[13] Soviet ballet

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[11] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 21. For a general history of ballet, see Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet* (New York: Random House, 2010).

[12] Gail Grant, *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet*, 3rd rev. ed., s.v. "Danse de caractère."

inherited the lexicons of classical dance and character dance from late nineteenth-century classical ballets.

Soviet ballet also inherited the two former Imperial Ballet Schools in Petrograd and Moscow. In the nineteenth century, dancers, choreographers, and pedagogues trained in France, Italy, and Denmark passed through or settled in to perform and teach at the Russian Imperial Theaters and their associated ballet schools. These dancers and teachers brought different approaches to ballet performance and teaching that were incorporated with Russian traditions. The French style emphasized "soft and graceful" positions, while the Italian style contributed steely virtuosity.[14] From the Danish ballet tradition, Russian dancers and teachers inherited precise jumps and nuances of coordination for the limbs, head, and torso. In amalgamating other European ballet traditions' strengths, the resulting Russian approach acquired a technical foundation significantly greater than the sum of its parts.

To some extent, by 1917, Russian dancers had already "'smoothed out'" the Italian style and shrugged off the most affected graces of the French style.[15] In her

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[13] For more on how music and dance characterized characters in nineteenth-century romantic ballets, see Lisa C. Arkin and Marian Smith, "National Dances in the Romantic Ballet," in *Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet*, ed. Lynn Garafola (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), esp. 20-30.

[14] V. Chistyakova, introduction to *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet: Russian Ballet Technique*, by Agrippina Vaganova, trans. Anatole Chujoy, 2nd English ed. (New York: Dover, 1969), vii.

[15] Chistyakova, quoting Vaganova (on Enrico Cecchetti's Russian students in St. Petersburg), viii.

1934 book *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet*, leading Soviet pedagogue (and former ballerina of the Russian Imperial Theaters) Agrippina Iakovlevna Vaganova proceeded to articulate this process of combining what she considered to be the best aspects of each of the European ballet traditions into what became the Soviet style of ballet dancing and a framework for teaching ballet in Soviet state ballet academies. In the line drawings from her book, the "Russian" position of attitude effacée combines the softly bent knee (of the raised leg) from the French school with the upright torso of the Italian school and moderates the position of the shoulders in order to make it easier for dancers to balance in attitude effacée, especially while turning or jumping.[16] In the process of making ballet Soviet, pedagogues such as Vaganova appropriated technical traditions from Western Europe and the Imperial Russian Theaters in order to create a new Soviet approach to ballet technique. The Soviet technique became famous, characterized by virtuosic athleticism—space-conquering jumps, complex beats, elaborate turns, and high leg extensions.

No less important than the technical innovations were the ballet schools themselves. The first state-sponsored ballet school in Russia was established in St. Petersburg in 1738, and what became the Imperial Ballet School in Moscow began in 1773. At the time of the revolutions of 1917, the former Imperial Ballet Schools

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[16] Agrippina Vaganova, *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet: Russian Ballet Technique*, trans. Anatole Chujoy, 2nd English ed. (New York: Dover, 1969), 55-56.

in Petrograd and Moscow were equipped to provide girls and boys with both general and ballet-specific education over the course of eight or nine years. Children studied classical dance, character dance, social dances, ballet mime, music, math, French, and other subjects.[17] The school in Petrograd also had a dormitory on site for boarding students, and this institution became the model for Soviet state ballet schools that were eventually established in each republic and in cities around Russia. The ballet schools trained generation after generation of professional dancers to staff the Imperial Russian Theaters; then, professional dancers returned to the ballet schools to teach. Therefore, the ballet schools and the professional theaters helped sustain each other. Though professional ballet dancers begin training in childhood and often retired in their forties, the institutional framework through which children trained at the school, danced at the theater, and cycled back to teach at the school made possible life-long careers in ballet for some artists. Soviet ballet inherited this symbiotic relationship between the ballet schools and the theaters and all of the institutions involved.[18]

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[17] A partial description of the Petrograd school's curriculum from the 1910s appears in Elizabeth Kendall's *Balanchine and the Lost Muse: Revolution and the Making of a Choreographer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 47-49.

[18] The expansion in the first half of the Soviet period from two Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet (and two Imperial Ballet Schools) to more than thirty theaters of opera and ballet also meant that there was increased demand for ballet teachers (*pedagogi*) and coaches (*pedagog-repetitery*) in the Soviet period. More retired dancers were needed to staff the growing network of theaters and associated ballet schools.

Perhaps most importantly, Soviet ballet inherited theaters themselves: the late Imperial Russian Theaters of Opera and Ballet in Petrograd and Moscow.[19] The theater complexes included stages, rehearsal halls, studios, workshops, and numerous other properties. They also came with material resources, including existing stage machinery, sets, costumes, props, musical instruments, and sheet music.[20] And the theaters came with personnel. There were crew members who worked backstage; designers and their assistants who created sets, costumes, and props for ballets and operas; and staff who maintained the properties and cared for the artists. Then there were the performing personnel. The theaters of opera and ballet had large professional orchestras, staff conductors, accompanists for rehearsals, opera soloists, scores of choristers, mime artists (who neither sang nor danced professionally but filled out crowd scenes in operas and ballets), and full-time ballet dancers and choreographers. Even though some artists left Soviet Russia in the late 1910s and early 1920s, the newly nationalized state theaters of opera

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[19] Prior to 1917, some ballet performances were held outside of the Imperial Theaters. Hannah Järvinen observes that "[b]allet was performed in provincial theatres, fairs, marketplaces, circuses, and popular theatre such as the St. Petersburg Narodny Dom" ("'The Russian Barnum': Russian Opinions on Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, 1909-1914," *Dance Research* 26, no. 1 [Summer 2008]: 35n3). See also E. Anthony Swift, *Popular Theater and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) and Vladimir Alexandrov, *The Black Russian* (New York: Grove Press, 2013). In the Soviet period, some ballet performers also participated in cultural life outside of the state academic theaters; however, variety stages and other venues lie outside the scope of this project.

[20] GABT was still using letterhead from the Russian Imperial Theaters as late as 1933 (RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 745, l. 36).

and ballet were able to replenish their troupes with graduates from the music conservatories and ballet schools in the years following the October Revolution.[21]

The structure of the former Imperial Theaters, with their staff artists and other human resources, was an important part of Soviet ballet's inheritance and more significant than any individual artist or employee. Soviet ballet productions evolved from the model of the late nineteenth-century Russian classical ballets, which were evening-length performances. These large-scale productions were made possible by the theatrical institutions that Soviet ballet inherited from the Russian Imperial Theaters. Multi-hour, multi-act story ballets with on-stage casts numbering more than 100 and several hundred costumes for each performance, accompanied by live orchestra (and sometimes also chorus), were only feasible in the context of theaters staffed by hundreds of performers and hundreds of backstage and off-stage personnel.

Thus, Soviet ballet inherited traditions of design and musical composition for ballet; nineteenth-century ballet productions; a choreographic formula for evening-length, multi-act story ballets; vocabularies of ballet mime, classical dance, and character dance; an amalgamation of pedagogical traditions; and institutions in the forms of the former Imperial Ballet Schools and Imperial Theaters

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[21] The Petrograd ballet company's roster was less than complete in the late 1910s as many dancers and choreographers emigrated. Fewer dancers and choreographers from Moscow emigrated, though there was a shortage of conductors at the Bolshoi Theater (GTsTM f. 154, dd. 481-736 and RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 745, ll. 176-442, 461-472).

of Opera and Ballet in Petrograd and Moscow. Each of these ingredients was vital in the development of Soviet ballet. Some, like ballet mime, were de-emphasized in the process of making ballet Soviet. Others, like ballet pedagogy and the choreographic formula for story ballets, were revised and reinvigorated in the Soviet context. The theatrical institutions, in particular, helped make possible the ultimate form of Soviet ballet.

Institutional Threats and Competition in the 1920s

Even though Russian ballet had many robust traditions in the decades leading up to the revolutions of 1917, for people in Petrograd or Moscow in the late 1910s and early 1920s—whether government bureaucrats, high-ranking Communist Party members, members of the corps de ballet at the former Imperial Theaters, or factory workers listening as their comrades read aloud from newspapers—it would have been far from clear that ballet was going to someday emerge as one of the most recognizable symbols of Soviet power. Ballet's fate in Russia in the first decade after the Bolshevik Revolution was uncertain due to its uneasy relationship with the new Bolshevik government and the government's precarious position. Despite its name, the majority of people in Russia did not support the Bolshevik Party. ("Bolshevik" comes from the same root as the Russian word for "majority.") And the Party, preoccupied with maintaining political power, did not immediately anoint ballet as a favored form of cultural production; in fact, there were strong arguments at the highest levels of the Soviet government for

closing the former Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet and disbanding the ballet troupes. Among the chaos of material deprivations and thrilling possibilities in the wake of the revolutions of 1917, ballet was just one of many movement practices available for experimentation and consumption. Especially because of the existential threats to ballet's institutional centers, it would have been hard to predict that ballet would survive the decade, let alone thrive in Soviet Russia. A Communist Party decision on literature in mid-1925 had the perhaps unexpected benefit of shielding the Bolshoi Theater and the genre of ballet from elimination long enough for the Bolshoi Theater to produce "the first Soviet ballet," *Red Poppy*, in 1927.[22]

The period between the October Revolution and the late 1920s was characterized by revolutionary dreams and harsh realities. Russia was entangled in World War I when the Bolsheviks came to power, and shortly thereafter the Russian Civil War (1917-1922) broke out. Millions of people died as a result of the wars and attendant shortages of food and fuel for heating; people weakened by hunger and cold succumbed to infectious diseases. The New Economic Policy (NEP, 1921-1928) temporarily legalized small-scale manufacturing and private trade in agriculture, among other sectors. In this period, manufacturing and agricultural production were rebuilt to roughly pre-World War I levels.

[22] After *Red Poppy*, calls to close the Bolshoi Theater ceased to garner support among Soviet leaders. Even during the Cultural Revolution of the late 1920s and early 1930s (see Chapter 4), the Bolshoi Theater was not confronted with imminent closure as it had been in the early 1920s.

Meanwhile, the culture of politics and the politics of culture developed in divergent ways. In the political realm, the Bolsheviks sought to eliminate real and potential opposition. First, they outlawed other political parties, and then they proscribed factions within their own party. Still, as the Communist Party expanded its membership and its reach into farther-flung regions of the country, it fostered a remarkable plurality of cultural experimentation. The June 1925 Central Committee Decision "On the [Communist] Party's Policy in the Field of Literature" specified that Communist Party supported not only literary production by proletarian writers and peasant writers but also the recruitment of "highly qualified 'specialists' in literary technique" who could be persuaded to "switch to the side of Communist ideology."[23] While proletarian and peasant writers may have had valuable life experience to convey, they were judged lacking in facility to communicate that content with readers. According to the decision, "If now the proletariat has in its hands unerring criteria for the social and political content of any literary work, it does not have the same kind of precise answers to all questions regarding artistic form."[24] Therefore, the Party's official position was prevent a

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[23] Decision reproduced in translation in Katerina Clark et al., eds., *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 40-44 (quotes from 42-43). Decision published in Russian in Andrei Artizov and Oleg Naumov, eds., *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia: Dokumenty TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b), VTsK-OGPU-NKVD o kul'turnoi politike. 1917-1953 gg.* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond "Demokratiia," 2002), 53-57.

[24] Decision reproduced in translation in Clark et al., quote from 42.

"monopoly" of proletarian or any other class of writers in favor of supporting all writers who had something—content, form, or both—to contribute to Soviet literature.[25] In the 1920s, in contrast with their circumscription of political perspectives, the Communist Party and Soviet government accommodated a broad range of cultural production in literature and other genres.

As a result, the 1920s were a most exciting time for artists and artistic enthusiasts. Prerevolutionary "high art" such as ballet, opera, classical music, dramatic theater, and classical literature was made available to mass audiences. Workers could go to performances of all kinds and also participate in amateur artistic circles and clubs, where they learned to dance, act, sing, play instruments, and discuss literary classics.[26] Newer artistic approaches also flourished. There were avant-garde poets, stage directors, and filmmakers.[27] There were symbolists,

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[25] Decision reproduced in translation in Clark et al., 44.

[26] See, for examples: Neil Edmunds, *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000); Pauline Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses: Shaping Soviet Musical Identity under Lenin and Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Lynn Mally, *Revolutionary Arts: Amateur Theater and the Soviet State, 1917-1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) and *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004); Lidiia Alekseevna Pinegina, *Sovetskii rabochii klass i khudozhestvennaia kul'tura (1917-1932)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1984); and Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

[27] See, for examples: Katerina Clark, *St. Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); George Gibian and H. W. Tjalsma, eds., *Russian Modernism: Culture and the Avant-garde 1910-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society: From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001); Robert Leach, *Revolutionary Theatre* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994); Nils Ake Nielsson, ed., *Art, Society, Revolution: Russia, 1917-1921* (Stockholm: Amqvist & Wiksell International, 1979); Nancy

cubists, constructivists, formalists, futurists, modernists, jazz practitioners, and artists who sought inspiration in everything from folk sources to factory machinery and industrial sounds.[28] Art for art's sake coexisted with art for the sake of agitation and propaganda.

As with other genres, urban Russians could partake in or marvel at myriad dance practices in the 1920s. American modern dance choreographer and dancer Isadora Duncan performed in Soviet Russia and established a school in Moscow in 1921.[29] German modern dance (*Ausdruckstanz*), eurythmics, other forms of

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Perloff, *Explodity: Sound, Image, and Word in Russian Futurist Book Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2016); Gleb Struve, *Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin 1917-1953* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); and Denise J. Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era, 1918-1935* (1980; repr., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).

[28] The literature on Soviet culture in the 1920s is vast. See, for examples: Nancy Van Norman Baer, ed., *Theatre in Revolution: Russian Avant-Garde Stage Design, 1913-1935* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992); John E. Bowlt, ed. and trans., *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism, 1902-1934* (New York: Viking Press, 1976); Richard Chapple, *Soviet Satire of the Twenties* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1980); Herman Ermolaev, *Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934: The Genesis of Socialist Realism* (1963; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1977); Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art, 1863-1922*, rev. and ed. Marian Burleigh-Motley (1986; repr., London: Thames & Hudson, 2002); Pamela Kachurin, *Making Modernism Soviet: The Russian Avant-Garde in the Early Soviet Era, 1918-1928* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013); Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); A. K. Nikitina, ed., *Bol'shoi teatr: Istoriia velikovogo teatra i ego vozrozhdenie: Eksperimenty, 1917-1932: Khudozhniki avangarda na stsene Bol'shogo teatra* (Moscow: Krasnaia ploshchad', 2011); Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1981* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Marc Slonim, *Russian Theater from the Empire to the Soviets* (New York: Collier Books, 1961); S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1994); Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Robert C. Williams, *Artists in Revolution: Portraits of the Russian Avant Garde, 1905-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

[29] Duncan had toured to Russia in 1904-1909, influencing Mikhail Fokin and others from the Mariinsky Theater and Sergei Diagilev's circle (Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, 39-42). For more on Duncan's Soviet Russian years, see Irma Duncan, *Isadora Duncan's Russian Days and Her Last Years in France* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1929); Elena Iushkova, *Aisedora Dunkan i vokrug:*

gymnastics, fizkul'tura (*fizicheskaia kul'tura* or "physical culture," a form of calisthenics often performed in groups), folk dances, acrobatics and circus arts, vaudeville and music hall styles, and social dances imported from Western Europe and the United States were all represented in Moscow and Petrograd.[30] These practices overlapped with each other and with other genres, including biomechanics as explored by actors and stage directors in dramatic theaters, chronophotography and animation, and movement studies associated with Taylorism in manufacturing plants and the Central Institute of Labor.[31] In fact, choreographers, dancers, and pedagogues at the former Imperial Theaters and their

novye issledovaniia i materialy (Ekaterinberg: Kabinetnyi uchenyi, 2019); Nataliia Petrovna Roslavleva, *Prechistenka 20: the Isadora Duncan School in Moscow* (New York: M. Dekker, 1975); Ilya Ilyich Schneider, *Isadora Duncan: The Russian Years*, trans. David Magarshack (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1968). Duncan left Russia in the mid-1920s, but her school continued to operate until 1949.

[30] For an overview of dance and associated practices in Soviet Russia in the 1920s, see Sally Banes, introduction to Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 14. For studies of movement practices and movements outside of ballet at the former Imperial Theaters, see Nicoletta Misler, *Vnachale bylo telo: Ritmoplasticheskie eksperimenty nachala XX veka* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 2011); Ana Olenina, "Moto-Bio-Cine-Event: Constructions of Expressive Movement in Soviet Avant-Garde Film," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, ed. Douglas Rosenburg, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 79-104; N. V. Sheremet'evskaia, *Tanets na estrade* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1985); Irina Sirotkina and Roger Smith, *The Sixth Sense of the Avant-Garde: Dance, Kinaesthesia and the Arts in Revolutionary Russia* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Irina Sirotkina, *Svobodnoe dvizhenie i plasticheskii tanets v Rossii*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012) and "Biomekhanika mezhdu naukoi i iskusstvom," *Voprosy istorii estestvoznaniia i tekhniki* 1 (2011): 46-70; Elizaveta Uvarova, ed., *Russkaia sovetskaia estrada, 1917-1929* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1976); Elena Zhbankova, "*Iskusstvo dvizheniia" v russkoi kul'ture kontsa XIX veka—1920-kh godov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovogo universiteta, 2003); and numerous contributions to the journal *Experiment: A Journal of Russian Culture* (1995-present), especially volumes 2 (1996) and 10 (2004).

[31] Elizabeth Hannah Stern, "Politics in Pointe Shoes: The Genesis and Afterlives of Stalinist *Drambalet*" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2019), 35-36.

associated ballet schools experimented with changing ballet's movement vocabulary by adding elements of modern dance, social dances, and acrobatics.

With so many other possibilities vying for limited government resources and audiences' attention, there were genuine debates as to whether ballet should be preserved, updated, and/or abandoned altogether. Performances at the former Imperial Theaters were not long suspended during the revolutions,[32] but many commentators penned "ironic 'obituaries'" for ballet.[33] People argued that ballet should be tossed out of Soviet Russia with the tsarist system that had supported ballet for centuries, that ballet was corrupted for all time because of its genesis in European courts. They claimed that ballet should be replaced with new forms of dance for the new socialist society. And, once the former Imperial Theaters had been nationalized, some Soviet leaders wondered if the government did not have more important things to do with its scarce resources than subsidize the former Imperial Ballet companies.

On August 26, 1919, the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (SNK RSFSR) decreed all theatrical properties—from buildings to stage props, and including properties of the former Imperial

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[32] For background on the immediate aftermath of the revolutions in the former Imperial Theaters see Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 37-44; and Richard G. Thorpe, "The Management of Culture in Revolutionary Russia: The Imperial Theaters and the State, 1897-1928" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1990), 51-127.

[33] Stern, 35.

Theaters of Opera and Ballet—to be property of the government.[34] This meant, in practice, that it was up to the Bolsheviks to determine whether the theaters should continue to operate as theaters of opera and ballet, whether the theatrical properties (including collections of historical musical instruments, expensive fabrics, etc., as well as the buildings themselves, adorned with gold and lavishly furnished) should be sold off for much-needed currency.

While NEP relaxed the economic strain on some people in the vast Russian countryside, it left the Bolshoi Theater critically underfunded.[35] In August 1921, right at the beginning of the 1921-1922 theatrical season, Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Vasil'evich Lunacharskii ordered the Director of the Bolshoi Theater to fire the theater's entire staff and suspend the theater's operations.[36] This was not supposed to be a permanent closure but a temporary halt to reorganize and reduce the staff (and, therefore, payroll expenses) so as to keep the theater running for the long term. Still, the threat of closure thoroughly rattled the artists and administrators at GABT and contributed to the atmosphere of uncertainty about the future of the former Imperial Theater (and, by extension, opera and ballet) in Soviet Russia.[37]

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[34] GTsTM f. 154, d. 496, ll. 33-35ob. See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 143-146.

[35] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 45; Thorpe, 217-224.

[36] Narkompros RSFSR Prikaz #6022: RGALI f. 645, op. 1, d. 204, l. 13.

Then, in October 1921, the Bolsheviks formed a commission chaired by Iurii Larin to conduct an audit of all branches of SNK RSFSR. The Larin Commission determined that the Bolshoi Theater, "'in view of its insignificant artistic value and the huge sums of money demanded for it', should be closed."[38] The Moscow Council of Trade Unions was simultaneously angling to close the Bolshoi Theater, despite the city Council of Trade Unions not having direct institutional oversight of the Bolshoi Theater.[39] Lunacharskii, who did have authority over the Bolshoi Theater as head of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (*Narodnyi Komissariat Prosveshchenniia*, or Narkompros), opposed the Larin Commission's conclusion and the Moscow Council of Trade Unions's interference. He argued that the Bolshoi Theater was operating with significantly reduced ticket prices and massively reduced government subsidies, as compared with the theater's prerevolutionary financing, and should be allowed to continue its work.[40] By early 1922, Lunacharskii managed to convince the Council of People's Commissars to keep the Bolshoi Theater open.

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[37] Further research is needed to determine precisely what happened in the short term. It appears that, after reshuffling among GABT administrators and the return of Elena Konstantinovna Malinovskaia as GABT Director (promising to save every possible *kopek*), the theater opened its new season with off-stage and on-stage personnel largely intact.

[38] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 268. Iurii Larin was a member of SNK RSFSR's central planning committee. For more on the Larin Commission, see Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 150, 156.

[39] Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 269; Thorpe, 226-228.

[40] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 45-46.

Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, the Chairman of SNK RSFSR, was out sick from a few meetings in January 1922.[41] Politbiuro member Lev Borisovich Kamenev told Lenin that SNK RSFSR had passed Lunacharskii's proposal to preserve the former Imperial Bolshoi Theater. Convinced that the Soviet government had more important things to do, Lenin fired off a memorandum to Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (TsK RKP[b]) Viacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov regarding the "utterly indecent proposal to preserve the Bolshoi Opera and Ballet."[42] Lenin's memorandum demanded that the All-Union Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) reverse the SNK RSFSR resolution and "leave just a few artists from the opera and ballet for Moscow and Petersburg so that their performances (both operas and dancing) can pay for themselves, i.e., eliminate any major expenses for sets and such." The memorandum also specified that "at least half" of the money saved from curtailing the former Imperial Theaters' operations going forward should be used "to wipe out illiteracy and for reading rooms."[43] The Politbiuro immediately acted

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[41] Clark et al., 23.

[42] Memorandum from V. I. Lenin to V. M. Molotov reproduced in translation in Clark et al., 24. The memorandum is also published in Russian in Artizov and Naumov, 30-31. Note that Simon Morrison quotes Lenin defending the Bolshoi Theater in 1918-1919 (*Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* [New York: W.W. Norton, 2016], 213-214). It seems that Lenin's priorities shifted over time. See also See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921* (1970; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 143.

[43] Memorandum from V.I. Lenin to V.M. Molotov reproduced in translation in Clark et al., 24. Lenin's footnote explains, "For example, pay for themselves by having opera singers and ballerinas participate in all different kinds of concerts and such" (Clark et al., 473n2.1). This does not seem to have been a particularly realistic plan: it would probably have been difficult that winter for the

"'to instruct the VTsIK Presidium to rescind the SNK resolution on preserving the Bolshoi Opera and Ballet.'"[44]

Both Commissar of Enlightenment Lunacharskii and Chairman of the VTsIK Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin protested to the members of the Politbiuro. Lunacharskii elucidated economic and ideological arguments for preserving the Bolshoi Theater, ranging from the lack of real financial savings to be realized to the public relations disaster of having to break contracts with the Bolshoi Theater's 1,500 artistic and other personnel in the middle of the theatrical season (and the middle of winter) and the benefits of operating a world-class theater of opera and ballet to both working-class audiences in Moscow and the Bolsheviks' reputation abroad.[45]

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artists earn enough from concerts (even if they were paid by local organizations in food and fuel) to "pay for themselves."

[44] Quoted in translation in Clark et al., 24. See also Artizov and Naumov, 31.

[45] Lunacharskii's letter to Lenin is reproduced in translation in Clark et al., 25-27: Lunacharskii pointed out that firing the dancers, singers, and mime artists but keeping the Bolshoi Theater's orchestra intact would actually require more state subsidy than the Bolshoi Theater was presently slated to receive. (According to Lunarcharskii, "Even Com. Larin's commission, which resolved to shut down the Bolshoi Theater, felt it necessary to keep its orchestra as the top European entity of European importance in Russia.") He also observed that the Soviet government had to somehow pay for the upkeep of the Bolshoi Theater as the site for major government meetings, and cutting off revenue from the box office would mean reducing the current source of funding for maintenance of the building. Lunacharskii commented that all of the smaller properties of the theater (sets, costumes, props, furniture, musical instruments, etc.) would need to be maintained, and they would not be able to pay for themselves if the properties were not being used for revenue-generating performances. He also appealed to the idea of Soviet Russia as a dictatorship of the proletariat, reminding Lenin and the other leaders that there were at least 1,500 workers at the Bolshoi Theater whose contracts would be broken (and would have to be bought out, an additional expense), if the decision to preserve the theater was reversed. Lunacharskii went on to assert that the theater in its current operations was public relations boon for the Bolsheviks, since foreign opinions of its productions were high, and the theater was giving away one fourth of its tickets for every performance to workers. Clark et al. note that Lunacharskii's reasoning was distributed to the Politbiuro; they suggest that Viacheslav Molotov had a hand in making sure that the rest of the

Kalinin accepted Lunacharskii's analysis of the lack of economic benefit to the government of closing the Bolshoi Theater. He argued that "[t]he Bolshoi Theater without a doubt plays no less of an educative role for its visitors than the public library does" and that the Bolsheviks should not put themselves in the position of being remembered for destroying a centuries-old cultural institution. Kalinin suggested that one such rash decision could obscure the rest of the Bolsheviks' socio-cultural accomplishments.[46] Within a couple of days, the Politbiuro softened its position, and the Bolshoi Theater remained open.

In November 1922, though, the Politbiuro passed a resolution noting that the Bolshoi and former Mariinsky Theaters could not finance their operations fully with box office receipts and revenue from properties. The resolution proposed reducing the state subsidy for these theaters (while "allocating the necessary funds to preserve the theater property and theater buildings"), redirecting the money budgeted for the theaters to the campaign to increase literacy rates among children and adults, and appointing a commission to explore whether there could be alternatives to closing the former Imperial Theaters.[47] Two weeks later, Lenin

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Politbiuro received Lunacharskii's plea (28). Lunacharskii's letter is published in Russian in Artizov and Naumov, 31-33.

[46] Excerpt from Kalinin's letter, which was distributed to members of the Politbiuro, reproduced in translation in Clark et al., 28-29. Kalinin taunted his colleagues, "I think it was the king of Persia or some other country who burned down a Greek temple of art in order to win his fame in history. I think that the [Central Committee of the Communist Party] has enough positive work to its credit not to have to resort to such dubious means, and I hope that the Politburo will reconsider and rescind its decision [to shut down the Bolshoi Theater]."

corrected, approved, and signed off on a secret Politbiuro decision to further reduce government subsidies for the state theaters and liquidate some theatrical properties to raise funds.[48] The next day, the Narkompros theatrical administrators in Moscow and Petrograd were informed that the Bolshoi and former Mariinsky Theaters would be closed and all employees laid off as of December 1, 1922.[49] GABT Director Elena Konstantinovna Malinovskaia issued a brief directive to the theater's employees, informing them of the situation; she concluded, "Please continue to work with the usual conscientiousness and maintain discipline until the end."[50] At the last minute, on November 30, 1922, Malinovskaia sent out another directive, informing GABT employees that the order to close the theater had been revoked and thanking everyone for their "exceptional diligence and discipline."[51] The theaters of opera and ballet continued to operate under constant threat of closure.[52]

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[47] Resolution reproduced in translation in Clark et al., 30. Also published in Russian in Artizov and Naumov, 43-44.

[48] Excerpts from Politbiuro meeting minutes with Lenin's emendations published in Leonid Maksimenkov, ed., *Muzyka vmesto sumbura: Kompozitory i muzykanty v strane sovetov, 1917-1991* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond "Demokratiia," 2013), 41-43.

[49] Published in Maksimenkov, *Muzyka vmesto sumbura,* 44.

[50] Published in Maksimenkov, *Muzyka vmesto sumbura,* 44.

[51] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 185, l. 2.

[52] Maksimenkov suggests that the former Imperial Theaters remained open because Lenin's health declined before he could oversee their complete dismantlement; had Lenin's health been better in late 1922, Maksimenkov speculates, the Bolshoi and former Mariinsky Theaters would have been closed (*Muzyka vmesto sumbura,* 45-46). Lenin died in January 1924, though he was unable to speak or actively participate in decision-making for much of the previous year.

Finally, in July 1925, a Politbiuro commission reported that preserving the theatrical properties was (as Lunacharskii had predicted in January 1922) more expensive than subsidizing the theaters' operations as theaters of opera and ballet. The Politbiuro resolved to extend government subsidies to the Bolshoi Theater but to dissolve the former Mariinsky Theater's ballet company before the fall season.[53] And, finding that even terminating one of the existing ballet companies was more expensive than subsidizing its operations, the Politbiuro reversed that decision, too.[54]

These decisions came shortly after the June 1925 Central Committee Decision "On the Party's Policy in the Field of Literature," which protected "specialists" in literary production (i.e., writers with formal literary education). I would like to suggest that the easing of pressure on specialists in literature also lessened the urgency at the highest levels of the Soviet government to close the theaters of opera and ballet. After all, the opera and ballet artists, with their years of formal artistic training, constituted another category of "specialists." In other words, with the decision on literature, the Communist Party signaled its willingness to sponsor the contributions of ballet and opera specialists, too.

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[53] Resolution reproduced in translation in Clark et al., 31, and in Russian in Artizov and Naumov, 58.

[54] Excerpt of resolution reproduced in translation in Clark et al., 31, and in Russian in Artizov and Naumov, 59.

Even though they had not yet produced successful "Soviet" operas or ballets, both of the former Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet continued to operate as state-sponsored theaters of opera and ballet. But for the first eight years of Bolshevik rule, it was very unclear that these inherited Imperial institutions and the genre of ballet would survive in the world's first socialist country.

Chapter Conclusion

Valerii Iakvolevich Briusov, member of one of the several commissions appointed to investigate GABT's operations in the early 1920s had a generous evaluation of the limited aesthetic reforms accomplished between late 1917 and early 1924. He observed that the changes in the repertoire, so far, were minor enough as to be hardly discernible to the general population (e.g., withdrawing expressly anti-Communist productions and restoring sections of prerevolutionary productions that had been cut by tsarist censors); in other words, GABT had not managed to develop new, Soviet repertoire. However, Briusov emphasized that the material resources and the operational environment cultivated by the institutions responsible for overseeing GABT fully explained its lack of progress with the repertoire; therefore, the practical reality at GABT was not directly comparable with Soviet dramatic theaters, some of which had already cultivated new, Soviet repertoire. Briusov commented that "the government institutions' vacillations on the question of whether to preserve the B[olshoi] Theater or shut it

down for good, also cannot *not* be reflected in GABT administration's activities."[55] The threats to the Bolshoi Theater's existence were palpable until approximately 1925. Neither the theater's administration nor government officials nor artists nor audience members could have been sure that GABT would survive. Soviet culture might well have developed without large-scale professional ballet productions, if any of the various plans to close the former Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet in the early 1920s had been realized, since these two prerevolutionary theaters of opera and ballet became the models for more than two dozen new Soviet state theaters of opera and ballet established between the late 1920s and the late 1940s. This chapter shows that the survival of two of the key institutions in the

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[55] Valerii Briusov, Proekt Rezoliutsii po voprosam Komissii TsKK po obsledovaniiu B.Teatra (January 9, 1924): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 339, ll. 1-2ob (quote from l. 2). Italics mine. Note that Simon Morrison describes Briusov's draft resolution for the Central Control Commission (*Tsentral'naia Kontrol'naia Komissiia*, or TsKK) on the subject of the Bolshoi Theater as "aesthetically radical" (*Bolshoi Confidential*, 229-230). My interpretation of the document is different. In my reading, Briusov observes that the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theater has not been filled with new, revolutionary productions but also that GABT administration is doing the best that it can under the circumstances. So far, with inadequate funding for new productions and the constant threat of closure (plus the incoherence of the official line on the arts, i.e., the aesthetic pluralism and the government/Party's reticence to endorse one direction for artistic production over others), the Bolshoi Theater has done what it could do (1ob.). Briusov observes that next, the Bolshoi Theater needs to turn to bringing its repertoire up to date (2ob.). In my reading, this position is fully in line with the position of on-and-off GABT Director Malinovskaia and others in GABT administration. In other words, Briusov's evaluation does not seem to me to be "aesthetically radical" or even a surprising appraisal of GABT's work. If anything, Briusov's description is generous to GABT administration, suggesting that GABT administration need not be punished for material circumstances beyond its control. Note that this draft resolution is only a partial draft; Briusov indicates that his points are to be understood in combination with GABT administration's own plan and another draft resolution by P. S. Kogan; I have not yet located these other materials. (P. S. Kogan likely refers to Petr Semenovich Kogan.)

development of Soviet ballet was not secured until almost a decade after the October Revolution.

There are always many moving parts in the history of ballet. At any point, the directions for ballet's development might have veered off on different courses from the ones ultimately realized. This chapter defines some of those moving parts in the Soviet context. It sets the stage for analysis that shows that "Soviet" ballet was different from prerevolutionary Russian ballet by elucidating the musical, design, pedagogical, choreographic, and institutional inheritances available to Soviet artists in the first decade after the October Revolution. "Soviet ballet" was not imported whole from any pre-existing tradition, though its development was contingent upon the combination of inherited institutional, technical, and choreographic traditions with a new pedagogical mandate from the Soviet state. Tracing the development of the different inherited traditions in their Soviet context enables a more nuanced understanding of how ballet came to be a Soviet art form and a richer understanding of cultural life in the Soviet Union. To this end, though this project cannot explore each of the inheritances in equal depth, this chapter also reveals multiple dimensions of Soviet ballet that are ripe for future research.

Douglas M. Priest argues that ballet became a symbol of Soviet cultural power after World War II as the result of the continuing operation of the Bolshoi Ballet School (with a curriculum emphasizing classical dance) and the Bolshoi Theater's performance of prerevolutionary classical ballet productions in the

decade following the October Revolution.[56] I would like to broaden the conversation about ballet's inheritances and how inherited traditions and institutions were reworked in the early Soviet period. The former Imperial Ballet Schools in Petrograd and Moscow were important components of Soviet ballet's inheritances, as were classical ballets. However, the ultimate form of Soviet ballet as artists developed it in the late 1920s through the 1950s and beyond was determined by more than the ballet schools and the prerevolutionary repertoire. I would like to suggest that the theaters themselves served an incredibly important role in cultivating "Soviet" ballet, at least as important as the role of the ballet schools.[57] Further, in the 1920s through the 1950s, Soviet ballet's embodied methods for telling stories changed. The remainder of this project concentrates on the operations of GABT as an institution and how the choreographic formula for story ballets changed from the 1890s to the 1920s, the 1920s to the 1950s, and beyond. These institutional and choreographic inheritances, in particular, combined with ballet's new pedagogical imperative in the Soviet context to create

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[56] Douglas M. Priest, "The Bolshoi Meets Bolshevism: Moving Bodies and Body Politics, 1917-1934" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2016), 292. Priest also argues that the anti-formalism campaigns deflected attention from ballet technique (as a fundamental part of ballet's form) and thus allowed the ballet school to preserve the technique in its curriculum because no one was allowed to criticize "form" (32).

[57] I also contend that Priest's conclusion that "[t]he Bolshoi fell back on what it knew how to do best—classical ballet" (27) obscures the change over time in Soviet ballet practice from the 1920s through the 1950s. Though it is not a primary focus of this project, it is important to note that ballet technique and pedagogy were not merely "preserved" in the Soviet context, as Priest assumes, but reworked.

a tradition of narrative-driven, evening-length ballets that were accessible to and beloved by mass audiences.

The idea that theater could be used to teach people is another example of an inheritance from prerevolutionary Russia, though its association with ballet was new in the Soviet context.[58] Murray Frame traces the idea that theater was more than a mere diversion back to Russian theater in the eighteenth century. In *School for Citizens: Theatre and Civil Society in Imperial Russia*, Frame reports that the Russian state in the late eighteenth century believed that theater could be a medium for acculturating elite audiences.[59] He also finds that the Russian intelligentsia in the latter half of the nineteenth century promoted dramatic theater as a mechanism for educating peasants and working-class people.[60] Frame argues that Russian theater, in practice, diverged from these ideals of a "school for morals"

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[58] There was a related inheritance in the field of music. Lynn M. Sargeant notes,

> Before the revolution, factory owners sponsored choirs, wind bands, and orchestras for their workers, primarily as a means of social control and moral hygiene, but also in the hopes of elevating the taste, and the mores, of their employees. The musician-specialists who guided these efforts, along with those who guided the related efforts of temperance societies to establish choral groups in the villages, were motivated by deeply held beliefs about the need to provide the toiling masses with access to, and the means to understand, the rich cultural and musical heritage of Russia and of Western Europe. As utopian and idealistic as their Soviet counterparts, these would-be culture-bringers hoped to transform Russia by transforming Russians. (*Harmony and Discord: Music and the Transformation of Russian Cultural Life* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 279)

The targets for transformation varied between theater and music, and the institutions involved were different, but the impetuses and theories of transformation were akin.

[59] Murray Frame, *School for Citizens: Theatre and Civil Society in Imperial Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 2.

[60] Frame, 2.

from the perspective of the imperial court and a "school for people" from the perspective of the intelligentsia; Frame concludes that Russian theater in the nineteenth century became instead a "school for citizens," where the primary lessons of social participation and association were learned by professional theater people rather than by audiences who attended performances.[61] Nevertheless, Soviet theaters inherited the "widespread conviction amongst educated Russians that the stage, as a public forum, had a vital didactic role to perform."[62] Soviet leaders, like generations of Russian officials and members of the intelligentsia, assumed that theater could and was obligated to participate in the education of the population. At least in theory, the Soviet government and Communist Party promoted theater and other forms of cultural production for the art forms' potential to not only entertain but also to enlighten Soviet citizens.

In the Soviet context, ballet, too, garnered a responsibility to enlighten its audiences. Soviet ballet developed through the combination of inherited traditions from the Russian Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet and its new pedagogical mandate from the Soviet state. The development of Soviet ballet involved neither getting rid of all of Soviet ballet's inheritances nor preserving all of ballet's

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[61] Frame, 8, 197.

[62] Frame, 198.

prerevolutionary resources. Rather, Soviet artists adapted their inheritances and created new traditions.

Chapter Two

Audience Development: Ballet and Opera for the Masses at the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the USSR

Chapter Introduction: Cultivating Mass Audiences for Ballet and Opera

How did the Bolshoi Theater, one of the former Imperial Russian Theaters of Opera and Ballet, cultivate mass audiences? It is true that before 1917, the Bolshoi Theater was court theater with a fairly elite audience, which included the tsar's family and sometimes the tsar himself. As Christina Ezrahi describes, the prerevolutionary audiences "consisted for the main part of members of the nobility, ambassadors, military officers, and the grand bourgeoisie," plus "lesser officials, students, and on matinee days, children."[1] More than its name changed as the Imperial Bolshoi Theater became the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (GABT). Its arts and its audiences changed as well.

Using GABT as a case study, this chapter surveys some of the strategies that GABT and the Soviet government employed to engage new, mostly working-class, audiences in the first four decades after the October Revolution. I divide these strategies roughly into four categories: reducing economic barriers to accessing performances; reducing barriers of ignorance about theatergoing, ballet, and opera; outreach performances for factory workers, soldiers, collective farm laborers, and

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

mass audiences at stadiums; and performances for children at GABT. I argue that these audience development activities were crucial to the collapse of "high" and "low" art classifications in the early Soviet period. Through a combination of outreach strategies and changes in the art forms themselves, ballet and opera became forms of genuinely popular Soviet culture.

Many of these mechanisms that were successful in attracting and maintaining mass audiences for ballet and opera in the Soviet period have been ignored by historians who assume that "elite" forms of cultural production are somehow less revealing objects of study than forms of "popular" culture. For example, ballet and opera do not figure into Richard Stites's definition of "Russian popular culture" in the twentieth century.[2] His definition includes "pulp fiction, mass graphics, the variety stage, radio, television, popular songs, dances, and the movies."[3] Perhaps this is because Stites writes for a mostly American and British audience for whom ballet and opera would not seem to fit the definition of "popular culture" in their native countries. This cross-cultural blind spot obscures the extraordinary emotional and intellectual investments that regular Soviet people

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[2] Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). In Stites's survey, the ballet-trained dancer and choreographer Igor Aleksandrovich Moiseev founds his eponymous professional folk dance troupe (78) as part of Soviet popular culture's folkloric strand and ballet dancers joined other artists in performances for the Red Army during World War II (108). Otherwise, the work of the professional theaters of opera and ballet and the work of amateur ballet circles are explicitly excluded from Stites's definition of "popular culture."

[3] Stites, *Russian Popular Culture*, 3.

made in becoming literate in ballet and opera in addition to ignoring the significant government resources expended on ballet and opera productions and institutions and the labor of generations of artists who participated in audience development and outreach. It is true that ballet and opera performers were decorated members of the Soviet elite, but audiences for ballet and opera were drawn from all urban walks of life and ballet and opera performances were must-see events for rural visitors to Soviet cities.

GABT's outreach activities were not the only means for popularizing what might (in other contexts) be termed "high culture." Proletkul't studios and a variety of circles (*kruzhki*) sponsored by the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (Narkompros), the Communist Party, trade unions, the Red Army, and local councils made many thousands of industrial workers, white collar employees, peasants, and others aware of prerevolutionary art, including ballet and opera.[4]

Indeed, there is some research about the development of mass audiences for classical music in the Soviet Union. Pauline Fairclough analyzes early Soviet efforts to expose mass audiences to compositions by Western European composers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Russian composers from the nineteenth century, and early twentieth-century Western European, Russian, and

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[4] Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). "Proletkul't" was a movement named for the contractions of the Russian words for "proletarian" (*proletarskaia*) and "culture" (*kul'tura*). The organization aimed to raise the cultural literacy of proletarians and/or to develop forms of proletarian culture to replace the prerevolutionary "bourgeois" forms of culture.

Soviet composers. She notes that, in music, the tradition of providing working-class audiences with symphonic and operatic concerts was well-established in urban areas of Russia in the nineteenth century.[5] Fairclough mentions outreach activities organized by the Moscow-based symphony orchestra Rossiiskaia filarmoniia: "The concert bureau and mass work department worked in tandem, with the concert bureau (or 'club bureau' as it was called until 1950) arranging lectures in clubs, parks and schools, and the mass department taking care of introductory lectures and exhibitions."[6] However, much of Fairclough's analysis focuses on the "marketing" of prerevolutionary classical music through emphasis on composers' revolutionary credentials or other biographical details that could transform eighteenth- and nineteenth-century court composers into heroes of the burgeoning Soviet proletariat.[7] In this chapter, I examine not the marketing of particular composers but efforts to make the genres of ballet and opera accessible to working-class audiences (and eventually peasants and others), especially through audience education and outreach performances.

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[5] Pauline Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses: Shaping Soviet Musical Identity under Lenin and Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 14-15. For more on prerevolutionary efforts to popularize classical music with mass audiences, see Lynn M. Sargeant, *Harmony and Discord: Music and the Transformation of Russian Cultural Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[6] Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses*, 58.

[7] Fairclough, starting with 26. Similar Soviet marketing efforts are also the subject of Jiri Smrz's *Symphonic Stalinism: Claiming Russian Musical Classics for the New Soviet Listener, 1932-1953* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011) and similar efforts in the German Democratic Republic are the subject of Elaine Kelly's *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic: Narratives of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

There are also studies of amateur musical and theatrical activities in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s; these projects frequently illuminate how workers were engaged in studying and performing as part of musical and theatrical collectives.[8] In the 1920s, amateur and professional artistic practices exploded in Soviet cultural life. I use the term "amateur practices" to refer to circles, societies, evening courses, and other venues where factory workers, bureaucrats, journalists, peasants, and others could participate in music, theater, visual arts, literature, dance, and other genres. In other words, the category of "amateur artistic practices" encompasses situations where the practitioners or performers did not earn their livings as performers in the genre at hand, though they may have been led or trained by professional artists. "Professional artistic practices," then, include performances by artists who made their living as artists in the genre at hand; the Bolshoi Ballet company was a professional artistic endeavor because its artists earned their salaries by performing as ballet dancers. Historians have paid little attention to how professional theaters of opera and ballet attracted workers and other segments of their new audiences to performances.[9] This chapter begins to fill

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[8] Neil Edmunds, *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), esp. 124-136; Lynn Mally, *Revolutionary Arts: Amateur Theater and the Soviet State, 1917-1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), esp. 114-120. Fairclough also discusses amateur music-making in *Classics for the Masses*, especially in "Propagandizing the Classics," 39-49; her discussion combines professionals' concertizing for working-class audiences and amateur activities.

this gap in the historiography and in our understanding of the means through which ballet and opera became forms of Soviet popular culture.

Archival administrative records from GABT serve as the primary source base for this chapter. Such records include internal memoranda, internal meeting minutes, minutes from meetings involving working-class audience members, financial plans and reports, and external correspondence (between GABT and other government institutions or the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union). I also consulted repertoire lists, theatrical programs, and letters from spectators. Additional sources include directives from the All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs (VKpDI) and the Soviet Ministry of Culture as well as decisions and orders of the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union (SNK SSSR) and its successor, the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union (SM SSSR). Of course, directives did not guarantee implementation; for outreach strategies discussed in

[9] Philip Ross Bullock summarizes some of GABT's audience education and outreach activities in the early 1930s in "Staging Stalinism: The Search for Soviet Opera in the 1930s," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 1 (2006): 88. This chapter fleshes out the wide variety of activities and measures that GABT undertook in service of engaging broad audiences from the late 1910s through the 1950s. In "(Pre)scripting Dance: Approaches to the Soviet Ballet Crisis," Elizabeth Hannah Stern discusses diary entries of an engineer, Nikolai Aleksandrovich Kondrat'ev, in Leningrad who participated in outreach activities at the former Mariinsky Theater in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The activities that Kondrat'ev describes are broadly similar to some of those discussed in this chapter with respect to GABT in Moscow ("Politics in Pointe Shoes: The Genesis and Afterlives of Stalinist *Drambalet*" [PhD diss., Princeton University, 2019], 125-128). Kondrat'ev's diary provides a valuable individual perspective on how and why a Soviet person availed himself of opportunities to attend and learn more about ballet performances; the perspective of my survey is institutional rather than personal. Stern generously shared her dissertation with me after I completed the draft of this chapter.

the body of the text, I tried to cross-reference the directives with other archival documents evidencing that the directives were, in fact, put into practice.

Making the Theater an Affordable, Available Pastime: Reducing Economic Barriers

In the late 1910s and 1920s, GABT undertook a variety of efforts to bring working-class audiences to the theater for performances. One of the most straightforward practices involved providing workers with free or discounted tickets. While the precise mechanisms and segments of the audience targeted changed over time, efforts to keep the cost of theater tickets from becoming a barrier to attendance continued through the 1950s. The Soviet government took additional steps to ensure that theater tickets were not only affordable but also accessible and available to workers and broad swaths of the population.

GABT's first strategy was to hand out free tickets (or steeply discounted tickets) to factories, workers' committees, and other organizations. Christina Ezrahi calculates that 84.5% of the seats for GABT performances in the 1919-1920 season were distributed for free or at a discount and in the 1920-1921 season that percentage rose to 96.8%. She puts the total number of tickets distributed (rather than sold at face value) in these two years at well over 880,000 seats.[10] That number includes only free or discounted tickets for GABT performances; it does not include other theaters in Moscow or theaters in other Russian cities. Ezrahi notes

[10] Ezrahi, 15.

that the policy of handing out free or discounted tickets to workers was discontinued with the advent of the period of New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921.[11] However, it appears that other discount ticket programs did operate during NEP. Sheila Fitzpatrick reports, "In September 1921, [the All-Union Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets] instructed the Bolshoi theatre—which had previously distributed 25% of places free to unions and the Red Army—to distribute only 15% of places at half the normal price, at the same time raising prices of seats in the rest of the house."[12]

Internal correspondence at GABT from October 1926 calculates that up to 80% of GABT seats were sold either through discounted subscription series or a discounted section designated for workers. The discounted section (*l'gotnaia polosa*) was set aside for workers and members of trade unions, who could buy tickets at the Central Theatrical Box Office for 50% off the face value of the ticket. After the subscription sales and the discounted section reserved for workers, just 20% of GABT's tickets were sold at the regular price to the general public.[13] Even

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[11] Ezrahi, 15.

[12] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921* (1970; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 266-267.

[13] Internal correspondence from the finance and accounting department at GABT (October 19, 1926): Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, hereafter RGALI) f. 648, op. 2, d. 483, ll. 54-54ob. According to the memorandum, the primary selling point of the subscription series was that the price per performance was much lower than for tickets purchased separately for the same performances. For this benefit, people were willing to pay for a full season of performances in advance. The memorandum also notes that there

if the method of administering the discount for workers shifted, there were clearly measures to keep the cost of attendance affordable well into the years of NEP. In a presentation at a workers' club in August 1929, GABT Director Sergei Vasil'evich Aleksandrovskii bragged about the "*rabochaia polosa*" at GABT, which is evidence that the "workers' strip" arrangement may have in some form outlasted even NEP.[14] And after NEP, as of the early 1930s, GABT still provided a lot of discounted and free tickets specifically to workers. It opened six satellite box office locations in areas outside of downtown Moscow which sold discounted tickets for workers.[15] The tickets sold through the workers' box offices amounted to 40-45% of the seats for each performance. GABT also regularly distributed another 40% of its tickets to shock workers from the largest enterprises in the city.[16] These procedures suggest that GABT was making a concerted effort to bring in working-class audiences by

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was a reduction in some ticket prices at the beginning of the 1926-1927 season (l. 54), which is further evidence that GABT and/or Narkompros were trying to keep ticket prices affordable. As an all-union institution, GABT was overseen by the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment in the 1920s.

[14] Protokol #1 Sobraniia rabochikh i sluzhashchikh prikreplennykh predpriiatii k klubu im. Rusakova: RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 553, l. 15.

[15] Vypiska iz offitsial'nogo dokumenta Narkomprosa za podpis'iu Narkoma A. V. Lunacharskogo i Zaveduiushchego Glavnaukoi Petrova, o sostoianii Ak. teatrov v 1924 goda: Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii, hereafter RGASPI) f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, ll. 87ob.-88.

[16] Direktsiia GABTa (E. K. Malinovskaia)—Predsedateliu Pravitel'stvennoi Komissii po rukovodstvu Bol'shim Teatrom t. A. S. Enukidze: RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 734, l. 86. "Shock workers" were those who had been identified as the most productive workers in their industries. They were entitled to rewards for their productivity.

offering free or discounted tickets for workers from the late 1910s well into the 1930s.

As time went on, the Soviet government made efforts to keep ticket prices at GABT and other theaters within the reach of mass audiences. By the 1940s, the definition of mass audiences expanded to include not only industrial workers but also housewives and families not directly linked to manufacturing enterprises. In a May 1941 directive about improving ticket sales for theaters, circuses, and concert organizations, VKpDI ordered theaters to make tickets more accessible to patrons by instituting subscription packages with a discount of 10-20% off the face value of the tickets depending on how many performances were included. Subscriptions were to be made more available to households and groups of politically active housewives.[17] This directive was amended the following month with provisions for reducing average ticket prices by 20-25%, on the orders of the Council of People's Commissars.[18] Both of these directives show that the government had broadened its definition of the audience it sought to attract; no longer only targeting industrial workers, affordable tickets were mandated for broader audiences. The directives

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[17] VKpDI Prikaz #275 (May 13, 1941): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 54, ll. 182-183. It also included a provision whereby all-union theaters could petition GUT for approval to raise ticket prices by 25% for the first five performances (premiere) of a new production. Note that at GABT, subscriptions were not offered every season in the period under consideration. Sheila Fitzpatrick notes that subscriptions were prohibited in the 1919-1920 season (*The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 265). But subscriptions were subsequently reintroduced.

[18] VKpDI Prikaz #277 (June 2, 1941), based on Rasporiazhenie SNK SSSR #0-44-87: RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 54, l. 184.

evidence a concerted effort to make sure that theatrical ticket prices did not spiral out of reach of mass audiences.

Some of the government's strategies had less to do with the price of the tickets and more to do with making it easier for potential patrons to purchase tickets. The May 1941 directive included a provision for new box office locations so that ticket purchases would be more convenient and require less travel.[19] Similarly, a VKpDI directive in April 1943 was intended to improve theaters' services for workers in manufacturing plants. The directive included the establishment of satellite box office locations in major factories to make it easier for workers to buy tickets for performances and concerts. These satellite box office locations may have marginally reduced the cost of buying tickets by cutting down on transportation costs, but they likely made a significant reduction in the amount of time that people had to invest in purchasing theater tickets by reducing the time required for traveling to and queuing at the central box office or the box offices of individual theaters. Additionally, having legitimate ticket outlets closer to home or work may have reduced the temptation for people to turn to scalpers, thereby constraining illegal ticket sales and ensuring that most patrons were paying not more than the face value of the ticket.

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[19] VKpDI Prikaz #275 (May 13, 1941): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 54, ll. 182-183.

Another way that the government sought to make theater tickets more accessible was by intervening to make sure that the supply of tickets available for sale to the general public was adequate. By October 1946, VKpDI determined that Directors of some of Moscow's most famous theaters (including GABT) were improperly siphoning off tickets that should have been sold to the public. VKpDI accused the Directors of exchanging tickets for supplies from other institutions or giving tickets that should have been available for public sale to theatrical employees. As a result, it appeared that all performances of some productions were sold out before a single ticket had gone on sale to the public. In response, VKpDI forbade the Directors' shady ticket distribution practices and ordered that 90% of the seats for each performance be made available for public sale, including through the Central Theatrical Box Office, the theaters' own box offices, and at satellite box office locations in factories, educational institutions, and other places convenient to patrons' work or school.[20] The following month, VKpDI ordered the implementation of standardized operating hours for public ticket sales at the box offices in Moscow (and wide publicity of these hours in the press) in order to make

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[20] VKpDI Prikaz #554 (October 5, 1946): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 92, ll. 57-58. The percentage of tickets reserved for government ministers and their deputies, academics, generals, and federal government workers was not to exceed 5% of the tickets at each Moscow theater; each government minister, government minister's deputy, and federal government worker was limited to no more than twelve tickets per month. An additional 2% of tickets were to be set aside for the security and diplomatic services: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of State Security, the diplomatic corps, and Mossovet, the Moscow city government. The other 3% of tickets at each theater was to be reserved for the discretion of the theater Director and VKpDI (l. 58).

ticket-buying a more reliable and convenient process for the public.[21] These are further examples of government intervention to make sure that mass audiences could access tickets to theatrical performances. In these cases, the problem was the lack of tickets for sale or opacity regarding when tickets would be available, rather than the ticket prices.

Still, from time to time, ticket prices became problematic. In the 1950s, the Soviet government took steps to restrain the inflation of ticket prices at all-union theaters. A September 1956 directive from the Ministry of Culture,[22] in reaction to a decision from the Council of Ministers, ordered all-union theaters to reduce their ticket prices for evening performances, on average, by 17%.[23] The all-union theaters were to set matinee performance ticket prices up to 25% less than the newly reduced prices for evening performances. According to the directive, the Ministry of Culture was prepared to cover the operating losses entailed by reducing ticket prices in the middle of the budget year 1956 and would consider additional subsidies to make up for the ongoing lower box office receipts in 1957.[24] With the

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[21] VKpDI Prikaz #638 (November 28, 1946): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 92, l. 64.

[22] The Ministry of Culture (*Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR*) replaced VKpDI in 1953 as the Soviet government's highest authority for artistic oversight.

[23] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #629 (September 14, 1956), based on SM SSSR Postanovlenie #1265: RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 203, ll. 101-102. The Bolshoi Theater was exempted from the 17% price reduction, but the GABT Filial was included. The Directors of all-union theaters had the right to raise ticket prices by up to 25% for premieres, benefit performances, and appearances by "famous artists" (*izvestnykh artistov*) (l. 101).

[24] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 203, ll. 101-102.

Ministry of Culture taking responsibility for the financial shortfall, theaters had little excuse for not swiftly putting the directive into practice. This strategy is evidence that the Soviet government was trying to keep ticket prices at the country's most prestigious theaters within the reach of mass audiences.

While this is far from an exhaustive survey of ticket pricing and accessibility at GABT (let alone other theaters), these brief examples are indicative of ongoing efforts to make theatrical tickets affordable and available for workers and more broadly-defined mass audiences in Moscow from the late 1910s through the 1950s.[25] Affordable, accessible, available tickets were the most effectual strategy for encouraging mass audiences to attend performances at GABT. But while tickets were fundamental to making it possible for mass audiences to attend performances at GABT, mass audiences faced barriers to attendance that were not strictly financial. To surmount these other obstacles, GABT developed an array of audience education strategies.

Do Not Discard Your Sunflower Seeds Here: Educating New Audiences

GABT introduced a series of strategies to inform working-class audiences about the theater's work, familiarize workers with the theater and theatergoing, and

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[25] In addition to these general strategies, entire performances were sold to or contracted with a single enterprise (RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, l. 87ob.). Other times, GABT artists and stagehands performed without salary for audiences from the Red Army or other groups. Or, GABT artists and stagehands contributed their labor to performances where the ticket sales went to benefit the Red Army or other groups (RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, l. 88ob.). See Prikaz po GABTu #201 (December 9, 1938) for a military benefit performance in late 1938 (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 60, l. 47).

help new audiences understand and appreciate performances at GABT. In these efforts, GABT reached out to workers at their factories, brought workers for "excursions" (*ekskursii*) to GABT, and provided educational environments and materials for workers who attended performances. These strategies likely served to pique the interests of new audience members, help break down barriers of ignorance in terms of theatergoing etiquette and the content of the performances, and generally to make workers feel welcome and part of the audience community. Such strategies were part of GABT's efforts to cultivate a diverse postrevolutionary audience.

Like other Moscow institutions in the early 1930s,[26] GABT formed patronage relationships with factories and military units. GABT artists advised the amateur artistic circles for the Red Army's First Rifle Regiment and led the riflemen to victory over other military amateur artistic collectives. GABT also had charitable relations with two collective farms, one state farm, the Air Force Academy, a brake factory, the 27th labor school, and two ships: "GABT" and "Grigorii Pirogov."[27]

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[26] Richard Stites discusses various "tutorial" relationships between urban and rural groups (*smychka*, or "a moral alliance of workers and peasants") and among urban groups (*sheftsvo*, or "patronage") in the 1920s in *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 116. Lidiia Alekseevna Pinegina describes the *sheftsvo* of the Malyi and other dramatic theaters with respect to local factories and other organizations in *Sovetskii rabochii klass i khudozhestvennaia kul'tura (1917-1932)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1984), 178.

[27] RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, l. 88ob. Grigorii Stepanovich Pirogov was an opera soloist at the Moscow Bolshoi Theater, among other enterprises. He died in 1931 (https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enc_biography/101073/Пирогов, accessed July 16, 2019).

According to one report, GABT had established a Bolshoi Theater Corner at the Hammer and Sickle factory and was preparing similar Bolshoi Theater Corners at two other factories.[28] These relationships were a form of community service as well as community engagement. They brought GABT into the everyday lives of soldiers and workers and acquainted potential audience members, who may not have known much about ballet or opera, with the theater's work.

In terms of direct outreach, GABT publicized its productions and other activities through factory newspapers,[29] radio, and in-person meetings with workers at their workplaces and at workers' clubs.[30] These efforts also brought GABT operations closer to the everyday lives of workers in Moscow. In August 1929, GABT Director Aleksandrovskii met with a group of workers at the Rusakov Workers' Club to discuss the recent "reorganization" of the theater[31] in the wake of a scandal in which conductor Nikolai Semenovich Golovanov was implicated.[32] Aleksandrovskii's co-presenter was a worker named Kozlov; Kozlov was a tram

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[28] RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, l. 88.

[29] RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, l. 88.

[30] Protokol zasedaniia massovoi komissii khudozhestvennogo politicheskogo soveta (December 14, 1929): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 30, l. 6ob. Sometimes the meetings were planned for "red corners" (*krasnye ugolki*) or the areas within factories and other institutions that were devoted to improving workers' political education, literacy, and hygiene.

[31] For more on this attempted reorganization of GABT, see Douglas M. Priest, "Football at the Bolshoi: The Reorganization of the Bolshoi Theater," in *The Bolshoi Meets Bolshevism: Moving Bodies and Body Politics, 1917-1934* (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2016), 204-245.

[32] For more on the "Golovanovshchina" scandal, see Chapter 4.

conductor by profession who was serving as a member of GABT's Artistic Council. This type of meeting gave workers a chance to ask the GABT Director and members of the Artistic Council questions about how the theater was operating and to make suggestions.[33] Such meetings, as well as factory newspaper and radio publicity, brought GABT into the daily lives of workers and encouraged workers to be more involved with the theater, from attending performances to joining the Artistic Council. The in-person meetings, especially, provided a direct link between GABT and working-class audiences.

In addition to taking publicity and outreach to the workers, GABT made plans to bring workers to the theater. The GABT Artistic-Political Council's Commission for Outreach to Mass Audiences[34] planned for groups of workers to

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[33] It is worth noting that some of the workers' suggestions related to outreach strategies, such as "excursions" and portable sets suitable for performances at work sites, were incorporated into the plans of the Commission for Outreach to Mass Audiences (*Massovaia Komissiia*) upon constitution of the Artistic-Political Council (*Khudozhestvenno-Politicheskii Sovet*) in the fall of 1929. It appears that GABT really was listening to the workers in the area of outreach strategies. Further research will be needed to ascertain how much of the workers' creative feedback was incorporated into stagings of ballets and operas in this period. While not detailed in this chapter, GABT also took works-in-progress (ballets and operas) to factories and workers' clubs in order to solicit feedback from working-class audiences and sometimes brought thousands of workers to GABT for open rehearsals of works-in-progress (e.g., RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 698, l. 13). For one example from October 1929 of an off-site showing (attended by approximately 700 workers) of an opera-in-progress, see Protokol obshchestvennogo prosmotra-obsuzhdeniia v Tsentral'nom klube Mosk. oblastnogo otdela profsoiuza Kommunal'nikov po dokladu 1-go i 2-go GOTOB (i.e., GABT) o rabote teatra nad gotoviashcheisia k postanovke operoi "Proryv" Pototskogo: RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 31, ll. 3-4ob. These showings of works-in-progress began in the 1920s and ended by 1936.

[34] The *Massovaia Komissiia* and four other Commissions (*Repertuarnaia opernaia* [Opera Repertoire], *Repertuarnaia baletnaia* [Ballet Repertoire], *Postanovochnaia* [Production], and *Tekhnicheskaia* [Technical]) were organized during the first meeting of the *Khudozhestvenno-Politicheskii Sovet* (KhPS) on November 14, 1929. The KhPS was established as an intrainstitutional regulatory body by a Polozhenie approved by the Central Committee for the Union of Artistic

come to GABT for "excursions" consisting of a backstage tour, a meeting about the work of the theater, a discussion of the libretto of the opera or ballet that they were about to see, and a performance. As of December 1929, the Commission for Outreach to Mass Audiences projected that such tours could run three days per week.[35] These tours likely served as a particularly valuable introduction to the theater.[36] They allowed workers to come in groups, almost certainly groups organized within a single workshop or factory so that the participants in the excursions were not strangers to each other, even if going to the theater was a new experience. And the workers would have been guided through the theatergoing experience by a GABT employee. The backstage tour and meeting about the work of the theater might have given the workers an appreciation for the complexity of the theatrical institution. It also likely would have impressed upon worker-

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Workers (*TsK Rabis*) and Glaviskusstvo (*Glavnoe upravlenie po delam iskusstva*, a Narkompros organization for artistic oversight) on September 16, 1929 (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 29). The KhPS replaced the Artistic Council (*Khudozhestvennyi Sovet*). Each government theater was supposed to organize a KhPS, and Glaviskusstvo was responsible for approving the KhPS personnel for all-union institutions (including GABT) each season (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 29, l. 2). As a result of the formation of the Government Commission for the Management of the Bolshoi Theater (*Komissiia, obrazovannoi Prezidiumom TsIK Soiuza SSR dlia obshchego rukovodstva Gosudarstvennym Akademicheskim Bol'shim Teatrom*) in November 1930, GABT's KhPS was deemed redundant and dissolved (RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 396, l. 1).

[35] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 30, l. 6ob.

[36] In "'Novyi zritel'' kak problema: Izuchenie publiki 1920-x gg. v dokladakh Teatral'noi sektsii GAKhN, 1925-1928," V. V. Gudkova describes how "excursions" were deployed by theaters with the intent "to capture the public's interest" and to "broaden [people's] cultural horizon[s]" (*Mnemozina: Dokumenty i Fakty iz istorii otechestvennogo teatra XX veka* 6 [2014], 755). Gudkova also discusses how researchers from the State Academy for the Study of the Arts attempted to use excursions to generate data on working-class audiences' reactions to theatrical productions (749, 758-759). I thank Elizabeth Stern for sharing this source with me.

spectators the degree to which GABT operated like other Soviet enterprises and how many GABT workers labored to put on each ballet and opera performance. Worker-spectators would likely have been interested to see how GABT workers worked.[37] And the discussion of the libretto would almost certainly have helped workers follow the plot of the performance. All of these elements should have reduced the barrier of ignorance faced by first-time theatergoers. The various elements of the excursion likely combined to make workers' first trip to GABT less daunting and more enjoyable than they might have found the experience had they tried to organize their own trip without acquaintances or professional guidance.

Still, for workers who ventured to the theater outside the context of a guided tour, there were other ways that GABT sought to assure them that going to the theater was an accessible pastime. GABT tried to clarify the etiquette for theater attendance by posting a code of conduct in places clearly visible to the public: at the box office, at the entrance to the auditorium, and in the foyer.[38] This list of rules helped clarify how audience members should behave and also how they

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[37] This speculation is corroborated by Gudkova's published archival documents. One of the staff members from the State Academy for the Study of the Arts (*Gosudarstvennaia akademiia khudozhestvennykh nauk*) commented in a meeting on June 14, 1926, "Each group [of audience members] asks questions in accordance with their professions and level of culturedness (*stepenii kul'turnosti*)" (782).

[38] On March 25, 1926, the Bolshoi Theater administration received a clipping from a local newspaper called *Izvestiia Doms* (March 18, 1926). The clipping contained a list of rules for theaters, circuses, and other social gathering places in the city of Moscow with suggestions for where to post the list. The marginalia on this copy indicate that S. G. Sorokin, a GABT administrator, agreed with the content and ordered the rules to be reproduced and hung up in appropriate locations around the Bolshoi Theater (RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 483, l. 141).

should expect to be treated by other patrons and by the theater itself. The list is worth quoting at some length:

> 1. In the context of public attendance at theaters, circuses, cinemas, concert halls, and similar places of social gathering, the following are forbidden:
> 1) to enter the auditorium without tickets
> 2) to occupy seats which do not correspond to the tickets you have
> 3) to stand during the performance between rows of seats, in the aisles, or in the doorways
> 4) to add chairs in the auditorium aisles
> 5) to throw on the floor cigarette butts, remnants of fruit, sunflower seeds, or similar
> 6) to converse loudly or make noise in the auditorium during the performance
> 7) to smoke or start a fire in any part of the theaters and other common spaces, with the exception of spaces designated for that purpose
> 2. Shows and entertainments (performances, concerts, film screenings, lectures, etc.) should start precisely at the time advertised on the posters.
> 3. Buying tickets for the purpose of reselling them at a higher price is forbidden, as is selling any tickets to any type of show, gathering, or entertainment at a higher price than is marked on the ticket. [39]

In theory, this type of list posted at the theater and published in a local newspaper functioned like a contract between audiences and theaters. The rules empowered audiences by requiring that theaters enforce the rules among patrons and respect the audiences in other ways, such as by starting the performance at the advertised time and punishing ticket scalpers. People needed to be able to trust that the theater would maintain order such that even attendees who did not learn the rules in advance would during performances be prevented from infringing upon the

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[39] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 483, l. 141. The fourth point enumerates fines for organizations and individuals who violate the aforementioned rules.

experience of other audience members (by smoking, shouting, blocking their view, littering, etc.), that the theater would ensure that performances ran on time (so that workers and students would not be late the next morning) and that tickets would be sold only at their designated prices. In effect, the list of rules was a patrons' bill of rights in addition to clarifying how people should conduct themselves at the theater.

The more direct effect of the posted rules was to break down the barrier of ignorance about how to conduct oneself at the theater. Audiences, at least those members who were literate, could read the rules in the newspaper, at the box office when they went to purchase their tickets, or in the theater when they arrived for a performance, and they would know what to do and what not to do. The rules established the most basic expectations for order in public gatherings: the seats are reserved—sit only in the seat designated on your ticket, do not enter without a ticket, do not stand up or add seats to try to get a better view, do not throw sunflower seeds on the floor, and so on. The publication of the rules, however, also points to the likelihood that all of the practices listed as forbidden were frequent enough that they interfered with theatrical operations and audience experiences; the rules can be assumed to be reactive to the situation in theaters, circuses, cinemas, concert halls, and other venues rather than entirely proactive. The published and posted rules helped acculturate new audiences by letting novice theatergoers know what to expect so that they would not feel that theater was only

for people who had experience going to theaters. The publicization of these rules helped illuminate the expectations for theatergoers in order to make the theater more accessible to new audiences.

In another attempt to make performances more accessible, by the early 1930s, GABT had begun to print programs with brief plot summaries for all of its productions and to sell them at each performance.[40] These brief plot summaries helped to orient spectators and listeners who had no previous experience with a particular ballet or opera. While the scenarios of new ballets and operas might have been printed in newspapers or otherwise covered in the press, the scenarios of the prerevolutionary repertoire might have been farther from novice theatergoers' fingertips. GABT also printed collectible booklets and brochures to accompany new productions.[41] These booklets contained additional information (and sometimes illustrations) that helped audience members make sense of the production.

Perhaps even more effective at providing guidance about specific productions, GABT instituted workers' corners (*ugolka rabochego zritelia*) as an outreach strategy in the 1929-1930 season. The workers' corners were gatherings held in the theater during intermissions. Since performances had multiple

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[40] RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, l. 88. See RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 2438 for examples of such programs. In the Soviet Union, as in most Moscow theaters today, ticket purchase did not entitle a patron to a program. Cast lists and scenarios had and have to be purchased separately.

[41] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 734, l. 86.

intermissions, GABT tried different formats: experts either presented an explanation of the plot or facilitated discussion among the workers about the performance.[42]

GABT first held workers' corners as part of a performance of the opera *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* at the Bolshoi Theater on October 30, 1929. The experts included Sergei Alekseevich Bugoslavskii, a music critic; Vladimir Leonardovich Nardov, a stage director (*rezhisser*); and Fedor Fedorovich Fedorovskii, the designer for this production.[43] Afterwards, several GABT employees met with a group of worker-correspondents from the Association of Theatrical Worker-Correspondents (*Ob''edinenie teatrabkorov*). Theatrical worker-correspondents were workers who served as amateur reporters on theatrical life and liaised between theaters and working-class audiences. They reported for the newspapers published and wall newspapers (*stengazety*) organized by the factories and other enterprises in which they worked and by their trade unions. Overall, the worker-correspondents praised the concept of the workers' corner. One observed that workers found the opera difficult to follow and going to the workers' corner helped them understand what was happening on stage. Another added that, at each intermission, more and more workers found their way to the workers' corners.

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[42] Protokol soveshchaniia uchastnikov provedeniia ugolki rabochego zritelia v 1-m GOTOB (i.e., Bolshoi Theater) 30 oktiabriia 1929 g. na sp. op. "Meisterzingery:" RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 31, ll. 5-5ob.

[43] Informatsionnoe pis'mo #1 Direktsii 1-go i 2-go Gosudarstvennykh Teatrov Opery i Baleta (i.e., GABT): (November 26, 1929): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 698, l. 13.

In all, the worker-correspondents gathered opinions from more than one hundred workers in the audience who participated in the workers' corners.[44]

Head of GABT's repertoire section Boris Evseevich Gusman was pleased with the results of this first instance of the workers' corners. He determined that GABT should continue to organize workers' corners, holding the gatherings in the Bolshoi Theater's foyer in order to make workers feel completely at home in the theater.[45] According to a report from 1933, workers' corners were implemented for all performances at GABT. These later versions of the workers' corners included explanatory discussions and exhibits.[46] The workers' corners, especially in combination with printed programs, had great capacity to engage workers who were attending their first ballet or opera performance (or a particular ballet or opera for the first time). The workers' corners offered the chance for workers to hear lectures on the storyline of the production they were experiencing and to ask questions of experts. The programs gave them a written plot summary to follow or to use as the starting point for asking questions during the discussions in the workers' corners. With the workers' corners and printed programs, GABT gave

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[44] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 31, l. 5.

[45] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 31, l. 5ob. According to meeting minutes from GABT's *Massovaia Komissiia Khudozhestvenno-Politicheskogo Soveta*, additional workers' corners were held in the 1929-1930 theatrical season and the commission planned to organize a workers' corner even at a public showing of the opera *Proryv* at GABT (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 30).

[46] RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, l. 88. The tone of this report is excessively laudatory. It may exaggerate.

new audience members a lot of opportunities to engage with the artistic production without assuming that new audience members knew anything about the production beforehand. In other words, GABT provided new audience members all the information they needed to follow the production on site. GABT made it relatively easy for literate audience members to get up to speed on what was happening on stage; and even illiterate audience members could benefit from the lectures and discussions during the workers' corners. But GABT's outreach activities also went far beyond the walls of the theater.

Outreach Performances: Taking GABT to Mass Audiences

Opera and ballet performances and concert performances constituted a growing segment of GABT's outreach activities from the early 1930s through the 1950s. At first, the performances were mostly organized to engage working-class audiences in the city of Moscow. In the early 1930s, the target audiences for GABT outreach performances grew and broadened. As the Soviet Union mobilized more and more military forces in preparation for World War II, outreach performances were increasingly geared toward the Red Army. Then, as the need for performing brigades at the front tapered off in the early days of the Cold War, outreach performances were organized for much wider audiences: workers, students, agricultural areas, outlying industrial cities, and mass audiences in stadiums and cinemas. Outreach performances were important because they gave audiences outside of the theater the opportunity to experience professional ballet

and opera performances. Off-site performances often reached much larger audiences than even the Bolshoi Theater's capacious auditorium could accommodate. They also reached audiences who found themselves (whether temporarily or permanently) too far from the center of Moscow to attend a live performance at GABT. Outreach performances brought the art and the artists to mass audiences, perhaps serving as an introduction to these genres and attracting diverse audiences to GABT (or other theaters) for regular performances.

In 1931, GABT planned eighteen outreach performances in Moscow.[47] By 1933, GABT planned twenty-five off-site performances.[48] The artists performed mostly at workers' clubs, palaces of culture, and smaller outlying theaters.[49] GABT artists also gave free concerts at factories and for other organizations in Moscow. Occasionally, GABT dispatched performing brigades to areas beyond the city.[50] These performances were intended to reach audiences who were not already regularly attending performances at GABT, mostly working-class audiences somewhat removed from the city center.

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[47] Finplan Gosudarstvennogo Akademicheskogo Bol'shogo Teatra Soiuza SSR na 1931 god (May 25, 1931): RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 398, l. 11ob. These were designated "*raionnye spektakli*." It is not clear from the financial plan whether they were to be all in the same district or throughout the city.

[48] Gosud. Akadem. Bol'shoi teatr Soiuza SSR FINPLAN na 1933 god (October 26, 1932): RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 401, l. 7. I assume that these figures refer to performances of regular repertoire, not works-in-progress.

[49] RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, l. 87.

[50] RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, l. 88ob.

GABT's outreach activities in the 1930s and 1940s also included the dispatch of brigades of artists to perform for the Red Army. For example, in 1934, GABT sent a brigade to perform for the Red Army in the Far East Region.[51] During World War II, Soviet theaters were required to prepare brigades of artists for cultural ministration for Red Army units stationed within Moscow and farther afield. The brigades were supposed to be equipped with portable sets and other materials to present short productions or concerts.[52] In August 1941, VKpDI ordered mixed brigades from Moscow's musical and dramatic theaters (including GABT) to prepare concert programs for military personnel passing through the city of Moscow.[53] In October 1942, GABT ballerina Ol'ga Vasil'evna Lepeshinskaia was part of a brigade that reportedly gave twenty-five concerts in six days for frontline troops.[54] Often, VKpDI planned the brigades' tours such that every major theater would send at least one brigade out for several weeks each quarter during

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[51] Vypiska iz protokola zasedaniia Partiinogo Komiteta VKP(b) Gosudarstv. Akademicheskogo Bol'shogo Teatra Soiuza SSR #12 (June 15, 1934): RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, ll. 124-126ob. The dancers' repertoire included selections from *Red Poppy*. See also Otchet o poezdke na dal'nii vostok brigady im. Narkoma Oborony t. K. E. Voroshilova vydelennoi Gosudarstvennym Akademicheskim Bol'shim Teatrom Soiuza SSR (September 5, 1934): RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 394, 134-160.

[52] Direktivnoe pis'mo Komiteta po delam iskusstva pri SNK SSSR (July 6, 1941): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 54, ll. 199-200.

[53] VKpDI Prikaz #433 (August 15, 1941): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 54, ll. 208-209.

[54] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 68, ll. 7-8ob.

the war.[55] Even after World War II hostilities abated, GABT was responsible for sending brigades to perform for Soviet troops stationed abroad. One such brigade was to travel for forty-five days beginning November 1, 1946.[56] The performing brigades provided a major morale boost for the Red Army and for many of the artists who participated. The brigades reached out and brought GABT right into the midst of Soviet soldiers.

In the 1950s, VKpDI broadened the distribution of performing brigades. Instead of concentrating outreach on soldiers and sailors, theaters were instructed to send brigades to agriculturally important rural areas, collective farms (*kolkhozy*), and state farms (*sovkhozy*), and outlying industrial cities.[57] Brigades of artists from Moscow's opera and dramatic theaters, including GABT, were ordered to perform in agricultural areas in support of Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev's Virgin Lands project in 1955 and 1956.[58] Khrushchev's article "In the Name of the Close

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[55] See, for examples, VKpDI Prikaz #507 (November 23, 1943): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 72, ll. 31-33. GABT was responsible for organizing one brigade in February 1944. While the theater was evacuated, the brigades from all over the Soviet Union were required to present their repertoire for inspection in Moscow prior to their travel to perform for the Red Army and Navy. See also VKpDI Prikaz #442 (August 18, 1944): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 77, ll. 64-65. GABT was responsible for organizing one brigade to perform for the Red Army and Navy in the fourth quarter of 1944 (October).

[56] VKpDI Prikaz #521 (September 19, 1946): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 92, l. 56-56ob. An earlier brigade was set to travel in May 1946: VKpDI Prikaz #157 (March 22, 1946): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 92, ll. 11-11ob.

[57] VKpDI Prikaz #67 (January 23, 1950): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 155, ll. 10-11.

[58] Glavnoe upravlenie teatrov i muzykal'nykh uchrezhdenii Prikaz #355 (October 15, 1954): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 291, ll. 31-37; Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #183 (March 26, 1956): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 203, ll. 44-46. The Virgin Lands project was Khrushchev's effort to alleviate food shortages by vastly expanding the acreage of cultivated land in the Soviet Union. Kathleen E. Smith

Association Between Literature and Art and the Life of the People" prompted the Ministry of Culture to elucidate practical steps that theaters could take to promote a closer bond between art and mass audiences. As part of this effort, theaters were encouraged to increase their touring activity, especially to the Urals, Siberia, Central Asia, and the Donbass and Karaganda regions. They were also expected to ramp up performances in clubs for manufacturing and agricultural workers, at factories, at collective farms, at state farms, and for other workers' collectives. And theaters were encouraged to make use of large stages and stadiums.[59] There, the theatrical performers could reach larger audiences than they could in the clubs or on their home stages. In the 1950s, the Ministry of Culture consistently called for GABT and other theaters of opera and ballet to present performances beyond the walls of their home theaters, reaching the broadest possible audiences around the country.

In the late 1950s, to reach even larger audiences than in any single stadium, the Ministry of Culture planned to increase and systematize production of films of

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reports that "[b]etween 1954 and 1956 the Komsomol sent more than three hundred thousand settlers to the Virgin Lands" and additional students were sent out to help with harvests (*Moscow 1956: The Silenced Spring* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017], 214). For more on the Virgin Lands project, see Martin McCauley, *Khrushchev and the Development of Soviet Agriculture: The Virgin Land Programme 1953-1964* (London: Macmillan, 1976).

[59] Postanovlenie Kollegii Ministerstvo Kul'tury (November 2, 1957): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 235, ll. 46-51, especially l. 48ob. See also Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #81 (February 1, 1958): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 267, ll. 29-34. According to the latter, GABT was supposed to systematically present its ballet repertoire—featuring its finest performers—at the Palace of Sport of the V. I. Lenin Central Stadium in Moscow.

the best ballets from Soviet theaters' repertoires.[60] A feature-length film had been made of the Bolshoi Theater's production of *Romeo and Juliet* (Mosfil'm, 1954), and abridged versions of *Swan Lake*, *The Flames of Paris*, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, and other ballets from GABT's repertoire were also recorded as part of feature-length releases.[61] Since cinemagoing was a popular pastime in the Soviet Union in these decades, showing professional ballet performances in cinemas would have offered mass audiences a taste of GABT's ballet repertoire in a familiar environment: the cinema. People would likely have felt less self-conscious going to see a film-ballet than they might have going to GABT for the first time for a live performance. The film-ballets were followed by televised performances, bringing the Bolshoi Ballet directly into people's homes around the Soviet Union. From the 1950s onward, many Soviet citizens were introduced to ballet not through live performances but through frequently screened film and television features.[62] These technologies helped to further popularize ballet with mass audiences by reducing any lingering financial barriers to theatrical attendance, obviating geographic

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[60] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #772 (December 31, 1957): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 235, l. 90.

[61] See, for examples, *Bol'shoi kontsert* (Grand Concert) (Mosfil'm, 1951) and *Mastera russkogo baleta* (Masters of Russian Ballet) *(*Lenfil'm, 1953).

[62] Sergy Yekelchyk discusses televised opera performances in the early 1950s in "Diktat and Dialogue in Stalinist Culture: Staging Patriotic Historical Opera in Soviet Ukraine, 1936-1954," *Slavic Review* 59, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 611-612, 615, 622.

obstacles, and allowing people to experience professional ballet performance in familiar, comfortable environments.

GABT's outreach performances, a mix of ballet and opera performances and concert programs by GABT artists, became one of the theater's most visible forms of audience development from the 1930s through the 1950s. During and after World War II, dozens of performing brigades from GABT toured to provide "artistic ministration" (*khudozhestvennoe obsluzhivanie*) for Soviet soldiers and sailors. Before and after the war, GABT artists traveled to local factories to perform for workers and then further afield to perform in agricultural areas and smaller industrial cities. In the 1950s, GABT took advantage of large stages like that of the Palace of Sport of the V. I. Lenin Central Stadium in Moscow to reach massive, diverse audiences. These outreach performances engaged segments of the population who could not easily access regular performances at GABT. Outreach performances were the most powerful form of artistic ministration, bringing ballet and opera into the midst of mass audiences.

Children's Performances: Cultivating the Next Generation of Spectators

In addition to outreach performances outside of GABT and regular performances (usually six days per week) at the Bolshoi Theater and the Filial, there were extra performances at GABT for children and students. These performances targeted a narrow but important segment of mass audiences. Children who attended these performances were introduced to GABT, to opera, and to ballet at a

young age and became used to theatergoing. They had the opportunity to learn about the productions and about theatergoing etiquette and to develop a taste for the genres. Then, they likely grew up to attend regular performances and raise their own families to understand, appreciate, and enjoy ballet and opera. GABT and the Soviet government made provisions to ensure that there were performances especially for children. In this period, the repertoire for children's performances at GABT was typically taken from the standard repertoire for the season. (In later years, GABT produced ballets and operas *for* children, such as the ballet *Chipollino*.) While these performances were not attended by as many people as GABT's outreach performances, the children's matinees probably had a lasting impact on the cultivation of generations of Soviet and post-Soviet Russian theatergoers.

From at least the mid-1930s through 1960, GABT planned special performances for schoolchildren and students during school vacation periods. For example, in 1934, GABT presented *Sadko* at the Bolshoi Theater and *The Tsar's Bride* and *La Fille Mal Gardée* at the Filial during school holidays. The two operas and one ballet were given as matinee performances on top of GABT's regularly-scheduled evening and matinee performances. GABT worked out the provision of these extra performances in conjunction with the Moscow City Bureau for People's Education (GorONO).[63]

After the establishment of VKpDI in late 1935, VKpDI and its subsidiary, the Main Administration for Theaters (GUT), regularly ordered extra matinee performances during vacations for schoolchildren and students. GABT was often exhorted to give its best productions during these added matinees (but simultaneously to make sure that the repertoire was age-appropriate). Sometimes artists were asked to give brief presentations for the young people before the performances.[64] After World War II, evening performances targeted at the best students (*otlichniki*) in the higher grades were added to the directives.[65] Sometimes, the theater was expected to arrange meetings between its artists and young spectators.[66] With extra matinee and evening performances and activities for children and students, GABT engaged in providing cultural recreation and reward for young people during their school vacations.

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[63] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 734, l. 87. GABT Director Elena Konstantinovna Malinovskaia expressed regrets that GABT could not add extra matinee performances for children throughout the season. She cited both financial and logistical barriers to additional matinees.

[64] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 28, ll. 27 (students), 28 (students and schoolchildren). These instructions were issued in December 1939 for vacations in December 1939-January 1940 (schoolchildren) and January-February 1940 (students).

[65] VKpDI Prikaz #621 (December 17, 1945): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 84, l. 79; GUT Prikaz #105 (March 14, 1946): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 92, l. 7. Sometimes, the *otlichniki*'s teachers were also included: VKpDI Prikaz #673 (December 18, 1946): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 92, l. 68; GUT Prikaz #277 (December 17, 1947): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 102, l. 106. An additional free matinee performance for children orphaned by the war was also suggested: VKpDI Prikaz #621 (December 17, 1945), VKpDI Prikaz #673 (December 18, 1946).

[66] VKpDI Prikaz #621 (December 17, 1945): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 84, l. 79; VKpDI Prikaz #673 (December 18, 1946): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 92, l. 68; GUT Prikaz #277 (December 17, 1947): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 102, l. 106.

During schoolchildren's spring vacation in 1950, GABT presented the operas *Demon, Faust, The Barber of Seville, The Bartered Bride*, and *Ivan Susanin*, plus the ballets *The Little Humpbacked Horse* and *The Little Stork* at children's matinee performances. As part of the cultural program for the schoolchildren, there was also an exhibition on the musical and staging history of *The Little Humpbacked Horse* in the foyer of the Bolshoi Theater. There were exhibits in the foyer of the Filial providing young spectators background on *Demon, The Little Stork*, *Faust*, and *The Barber of Seville*, too. Artists sometimes gave a brief pre-performance talk. Performers in costume and make-up came out to the foyer during intermission or after the final act to meet the children.[67]

The following year, VKpDI ordered theaters to mark schoolchildren's spring vacation with "performances depicting Soviet heroism and feats of labor and the friendship among the Soviet peoples in order to cultivate in the next generation the best qualities of the Soviet person: love for the motherland and for labor and whole-hearted allegiance to the cause of Lenin and Stalin."[68] Classical repertoire was recommended for older children and fairy-tale productions for the youngest spectators. Theaters were instructed to cast their best artists of all ages in the

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[67] Otchet o rabote Bol'shogo teatra v dni vesennikh shkol'nykh kanikul: RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 170, ll. 31-32. This report summarizes activities undertaken in March 1950.

[68] VKpDI Prikaz #202 (March 22, 1951): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 183, l. 6. Note that the prikaz was issued just three days before the start of the festival. Programming would have had to have been mustered on very short notice.

performances for children.[69] Clearly, the performances for children were part of the Soviet government's project of acculturating young people.

Toward the end of its existence, VKpDI reiterated the importance of organizing opportunities for "cultural relaxation" (*kul'turnyi otdykh*) for students during their school breaks. VKpDI ordered theaters to present the best examples of Soviet dramaturgy and also Russian and foreign classics during students' holidays. In addition to evening performances, theaters were expected to organize additional weekday afternoon performances at the price of matinees; meetings for students with leading artists, directors, composers, and musicians; and exhibits in the foyers celebrating Stalin-prize-winning productions[70] and the best productions of the current repertoire. Theaters were instructed to cast their best leading artists and creative youth in the performances for students. Applications for school groups for blocks of tickets were to be given first priority during holiday weeks, and individual and group tickets were to be sold widely at educational institutions and performance venues.[71] The Ministry of Culture issued almost identical instructions for subsequent years.[72] By 1958, special radio and television broadcasts from

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[69] VKpDI Prikaz #202 (March 22, 1951): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 183, l. 6.

[70] For background on Stalin Prizes, see Chapter 5.

[71] VKpDI Directive #1477-a (December 31, 1952): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 225, ll. 36-37.

[72] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #2186 (December 22, 1953): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 254, ll. 13-14; Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #800 (December 17, 1955): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 313, ll. 140-142 (students) and Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #805 (December 19, 1955): RGALI f. 648,

theaters were added to the events geared toward the artistic service for students during their school holidays.[73] And for the edification of children and youth, all theater directors were asked to program special matinee performances that were particularly educational on Sundays and holidays.[74] In the 1950s, VKpDI and then the Ministry of Culture redoubled efforts, ongoing since the mid-1930s, to engage young people in particular as part of building mass audiences for opera and ballet.

For decades, GABT and the Soviet government made a concerted effort to provide children with opportunities for "cultural relaxation" and educative theatrical experiences during their school holidays. Most of the performances for children were additional performances of GABT's regular repertoire, which introduced children to Soviet versions of classic prerevolutionary operas and ballets. This familiarized children with ballet and opera repertoire and was probably intended to develop children's tastes for these genres. Children who attended the special matinees were often treated to interactions with performers and exhibits with photographs, models, sketches, costumes, and other artefacts of the productions. These extras were designed to enhance children's experiences of the performances and engage them more deeply in the theatergoing experience.

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op. 5, d. 313, ll. 143-144 (schoolchildren); Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #17 (January 7, 1958): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 267, ll. 10-11.

[73] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #17 (January 7, 1958): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 267, l. 10.

[74] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #81 (February 1, 1958): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 267, ll. 29-34, especially 33-34.

The children's matinees emphasized from childhood the value that the Soviet government and its institutions placed on the genres of opera and ballet as appropriate pastimes for mass Soviet audiences.

Chapter Conclusion: Ballet and Opera for the Masses

Between the late 1910s and the late 1950s,[75] GABT engaged in a range of what I refer to as outreach and audience development activities. GABT cultivated mass audiences by reducing economic barriers to theatrical attendance; reducing barriers of ignorance about ballet, opera, and theatergoing; taking performances to mass audiences outside the theater; and bringing young audiences into the theater for dedicated children's performances. At first, the outreach activities were aimed mostly at urban working-class audiences. Later, outreach performances targeted workers on collective farms, military audiences, schoolchildren and students, and finally mass audiences, including both urban and rural populations. This array of outreach activities and audience development strategies was key to the integration of Moscow's former Imperial Theater of Opera and Ballet into Soviet socialist cultural life and essential to the transformation of ballet and opera from elite exempla of "high culture" into forms of genuinely popular culture among domestic audiences in the Soviet period.

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[75] My dissertation research stopped with the year 1960. Further research will be required to explore what outreach strategies GABT deployed in later years. In other words, 1960 is not a breaking point in outreach activities, as far as I can tell. However, 1960 is the end of the period for which I examined GABT's archival records.

Rather than examining the popularization of specific works of art or artists, this chapter brings to light non-aesthetic strategies that aimed to make entire art forms more accessible to mass audiences. This chapter uncovers ways in which swaths of the Soviet population who had not previously had access to evening-length ballet and opera performances were able to experience such performances in person or through large and small screens and were drawn into GABT's operations through the theater's outreach activities such as meetings, open rehearsals, and backstage tours. The successful cultivation of mass audiences for the formerly elite genres of ballet and opera demonstrates how the lines between "high" and "low" culture were blurred in the Soviet Union. Artists, bureaucrats, and Communist Party leaders integrated ballet into the Soviet cultural project as neither a "high" nor a "low" art but with characteristics of both. Ballet's history as an elite art form was part of its allure and value in the Soviet period. And Soviet institutions took pride in the opening of formerly elite art to mass audiences. Soviet ballet retained ballet's power to glorify its sponsoring political regime, though the politics of the Soviet regime were different from those of European courts in which ballet had developed as a professional art form in previous centuries. Ballet was not separate from or opposed to politics in the Soviet Union; artists, bureaucrats, and Communist Party leaders incorporated ballet into Soviet culture, and Soviet audiences responded enthusiastically.

"[N]ot once have workers demanded that I increase their access to revolutionary theater, but instead infinitely often they demand opera and… ballet," wrote Anatolii Vasil'evich Lunacharskii, the Soviet Commissar of Enlightenment, in 1920.[76] Over subsequent decades, Soviet workers, students, teachers, and others wrote letters to the editors of newspapers and to the theater directly, brimming with praise, opprobrium, questions, and suggestions related to GABT's repertoire, casting, and other operations. From the fervent responses of workers at meetings and performances in the 1920s to detailed letters from spectators in the 1940s and 1950s,[77] it is clear that mass audiences were engaged in GABT's work.

I argue that the popularity of ballet in the Soviet Union was the result of overlapping approaches to making ballet accessible. This chapter focuses on accessibility from the perspective of structures and practices surrounding ballet: taking ballet to mass audiences and bringing mass audiences for ballet to the theaters, stadia, cinemas, and televisions. However, Soviet artists and officials also strove to make ballet accessible by changing the art form to make performances more interesting and comprehensible to mass audiences. Soviet ballet embodied new subject matter, and choreographers and dancers developed new ways for

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[76] A. Lunacharskii, "Teatr i revoliutsiia: glava IV" in *Teatr i revoliutsiia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1924), 38. The ellipsis is in the original, presumably to indicate incredulity that ballet (of all things!) could interest workers.

[77] See, for example, RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 264. Besides this example, there are more than a dozen other files of letters from spectators with comments on and questions about the performances, GABT's repertoire plans, and more.

Soviet ballet to tell stories. The next chapters examine Soviet experiments with ballet narratives and choreographic methods; these artistic innovations plus the audience development strategies combined to make Soviet ballet truly popular.

Chapter Three

Red Poppy (1927): Soviet Ballet's Turning Point

> "There's much more to say about this, but it seems to me that if I said any more now, it could only delay us from seeing that magnificent—already Soviet—creation, *Red Poppy*. [thunderous applause]"
>
> —the conclusion of Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin's speech at the Eighth All-Union Congress of the Komsomol in May 1928

Chapter Introduction

A series of international crises formed the backdrop for the Bolshoi Theater's first production of *Red Poppy*. Since the early 1920s, the Soviet Union had been aiding Chinese nationalist revolutionaries and pressuring the Chinese Communist Party to cooperate with the nationalist Guomindang in the hopes of shifting the revolutionary momentum toward socialism.[1] However, in April 1927, the Soviet military and trade offices in China were ransacked, and the Guomindang massacred thousands of members of the Chinese Communist Party.[2] Official relations between China and the Soviet Union disintegrated.[3]

The epigraph is from M. I. Kalinin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v chetyrekh tomakh*, *Tom 2, 1926-1932 gg.* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1960): 237. The Komsomol was the All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth, the youth wing of the Russian/Soviet Communist Party (1918-1991).

[1] Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States,* 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2011), 182.

[2] Alfred G. Meyer, "The War Scare of 1927," *Soviet Union/Union Sovietique* 5, pt. 1 (1978), 7.

[3] Suny, 182.

Official relations between the Soviet Union and Great Britain soured, too. Alfred G. Meyer reports that in a speech to the Fifth Moscow Regional Party Congress in January 1927, Politbiuro member and Chairman of the Communist International (Comintern) "[Nikolai Ivanovich] Bukharin identified England as the champion of the anti-Soviet bourgeoisie that had made unceasing attempts to encircle and destroy the USSR."[4] In May 1927, the British government raided Soviet trade offices in England before severing diplomatic and trade relations with the Soviet Union.[5] As Meyer describes, "Soviet citizens were told by their press that England was ready to invade their country."[6] Britain was billed as the primary enemy during the Soviet war scare of 1927.[7] Meanwhile, in June 1927 in Poland, "a Russian emigré by the name of Koverda shot and killed the Soviet diplomatic representative plenipotentiary in Warsaw, [Petr Lazarevich] Voikov."[8]

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[4] Meyer, 4.

[5] Meyer, 7. According to Meyer, "Canada followed suit by declaring her trade agreement with the Soviet Union null and void" (8).

[6] Meyer, 1.

[7] Based on archival research in the 1990s, N. S. Simonov argues that the war scare of 1927 was a pretext for stimulating domestic military manufacturing in the Soviet Union ("'Strengthen the Defence of the Land of Soviets': The 1927 'War Alarm' and Its Consequences," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 8 [1996]). In his monograph prepared in the late 1950s, Meyer argues that the 1927 war scare was "an object of outright political manipulation," that is, much more about the domestic power struggle at the highest level of the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) than about any immediate threat of international war (2). Meyer and Simonov agree that most Soviet leaders were not seriously expecting a war in 1927, though ordinary Soviet citizens may have been genuinely frightened by the prospect of imminent invasion or the outbreak of another world war.

[8] Meyer, 8.

The assassination of a Soviet representative in a foreign country, British aggression toward the Soviet Union, international tensions between the Soviet Union and Western European imperial powers, and the Guomindang's anti-Communist violence found their way into the libretto for *Red Poppy*. The ballet was set in a Chinese port city run by and for Western European capitalists. The Europeans were depicted living extravagantly off of the labor of local workers, while the coolies suffered. An assassination plot arose because the representatives of the Western European empires and their local Chinese allies worried that the crew of a visiting Soviet ship would incite a socialist revolution among the Chinese workers. In the ballet, one of the conspirators who plotted to assassinate the Soviet Captain was identified as a Chinese nationalist, and the mastermind behind the plot to assassinate the Soviet Captain was the British harbormaster.

As "the first Soviet ballet," *Red Poppy* has been the subject of considerable scholarly interest. Edward Tyerman includes *Red Poppy* in his study of Soviet attempts to develop what he calls "an internationalist aesthetics" for the purpose "of transmitting and disseminating sensory experiences of foreign, distant spaces through the media of print, picture, photograph, film and live performance."[9] Tyerman's analysis of symbolism in *Red Poppy* concludes that the ballet presented a vision of socialist imperialism, where the Soviet Union drugged the Chinese

[9] Edward Tyerman, "The Search for an Internationalist Aesthetics: Soviet Images of China, 1920-1935" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014), 6.

people with socialist ideology rather than opium.[10] Simon Morrison briefly addresses the music for *Red Poppy* in his catalog of scandals at the Bolshoi Ballet from the eighteenth through the twenty-first centuries.[11] My research focuses more on the theater's day-to-day operations leading up to *Red Poppy* and less on scandals or music. Douglas Priest compares *Red Poppy* with *The Red Detachment of Women* (1964), one of the most famous productions in the repertoire of the National Ballet of China.[12] My analysis focuses on change over time in ballet productions in Russia. Therefore, I contextualize *Red Poppy* in the history of Russian ballet before and Soviet ballet after 1927, not in the history of ballet in China. Elizabeth Souritz documents much of the ballet's production process and press coverage as one of the most conservative and most popular new ballets to premiere in Leningrad or Moscow in the 1920s.[13]

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[10] Tyerman, "The Search for an Internationalist Aesthetics: Soviet Images of China, 1920-1935," 349, 354.

[11] Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), 243-255.

[12] Douglas M. Priest, "The Bolshoi Meets Bolshevism: Moving Bodies and Body Politics, 1917-1934" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2016), especially "Revolutionary Directions: Imperialism, Gender, and *The Red Poppy*." See also Program Notes from National Ballet of China's 2015 performances of *The Red Detachment of Women* at the Lincoln Center Festival: http://pastseasons.lincolncenterfestival.org/past-seasons-files/2015/assets/img/downloads/07-11%20Red%20Detachment.pdf (accessed October 18, 2020).

[13] Elizabeth Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*, trans. Lynn Visson, ed. Sally Banes (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 231-254.

Morrison, Priest, and Souritz focus on the Bolshoi Theater's production of *Red Poppy* in 1927, while Tyerman assembles traces of a variety of different productions from the Bolshoi Theater and elsewhere spanning several decades to interpret a cultural product to which no contemporary audiences could have had access.[14] Based almost exclusively on archival documents from the 1920s, the present chapter focuses on the Bolshoi Theater's 1927 production of *Red Poppy* in order to understand that ballet in its historical contexts: its moment in Soviet history and its place in the history of ballet in Russia. This chapter also establishes a baseline for analysis; the 1927 production was the original *Red Poppy* and offers an important perspective from which to measure the ballet's change over time in terms of plot, characters, and choreographic strategies.

This chapter begins with ballet's precarious situation in Soviet culture in the mid-1920s. Prior to *Red Poppy*'s premiere, the question of ballet's continued existence in the Soviet Union was very much open; *Red Poppy*'s success could not have come at a more critical time for determining the future of ballet in the world's first socialist country. This chapter also offers a glimpse into the chaotic production

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[14] Zheng Yu's survey of contemporary press reception of *Red Poppy* as produced in Moscow (1927, 1949, and 1957) and Leningrad (1929, 1949, 1958) in the article "Razvitie predstavlenii o kitaikskoi kul'ture v obrazakh Tao Khoa v postanovkakh baleta 'Krasnyi mak' v Sovetskii period" highlights differences among the various versions of the ballet across time and space (*Mezhdurnarodnyi nauchno-issledovatel'skii zhurnal* 12, no. 66/2 [December 2017], https://doi.org/10.23670/IRJ.2017.66.028 [accessed August 25, 2019]). Zheng's sources include periodicals and memoirs, while my source base consists primarily of institutional archival documents.

process for *Red Poppy*, pulling back the curtains on the inner workings of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (GABT) and the many practical considerations that sometimes trumped even the most ideologically appropriate production plans. While politics mattered in Soviet repertoire decisions, political priorities did not always overdetermine theatrical productions. The behind-the-scenes machinations of *Red Poppy*'s production process underscore the value of looking at ballet production in the context of theatrical institutions rather than, for example, those of a particular choreographer or composer's creative trajectory.[15]

Next, I compare and contrast *Red Poppy*'s libretto and choreography with those of canonical nineteenth-century ballets, illuminating *Red Poppy*'s borrowings from its antecedents on the Russian Imperial stages and also the ways in which *Red Poppy* changed what stories ballet could tell and how ballet told stories. This analysis shows that most Soviet artists did not resist their roles as employees of a

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[15] This is not an exhaustive list of extant literature on ballet in Russia through the lens of composers or choreographers: Natal'ia Vladimirovna Kiseleva, "Balety R. M. Gliera v istoriko-kul'turnom kontekste" (Kand. diss., Akademiia russkogo baleta im. A. Ia. Vaganovoi, 2016); Robert Ignatius Letellier, *The Ballets of Ludwig Minkus* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008); Nadine Meisner, *Marius Petipa: The Emperor's Ballet Master* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Simon Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Janice Ross, *Like a Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*; E. Surits and E. Belova, eds., *Baletmeister A. A. Gorskii. Materialy. Vospominaniia. Stat'i* (Saint Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999); Mary Grace Swift, *A Loftier Flight: The Life and Accomplishments of Charles-Louis Didelot, Balletmaster* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1974); Roland John Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets: Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Nutcracker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); and *The Life and Ballets of Lev Ivanov: Choreographer of* The Nutcracker *and* Swan Lake (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Further examples with respect to choreographers who made their careers outside of Russia illustrate the trend, including books and articles on ballets by George Balanchine, Robert Joffrey, Kenneth MacMillan, Bronislava Nijinska, Jerome Robbins, and Anthony Tudor.

socialist state, a reality thus far infrequently acknowledged in English-language historiography about Soviet ballet. *Red Poppy* is one example among many of Soviet artists finding creative ways to repurpose their artistic inheritance and experimenting with new narrative and choreographic strategies in order to make ballet more accessible to mass audiences. As is apparent from the undeniable enthusiasm for *Red Poppy* in the decade following its premiere, the artists and production team succeeded in creating a popular artistic production. Finally, I argue that *Red Poppy* was a significant addition to Soviet popular culture in the late 1920s because it offered audiences different gendered representations than were available in other artistic genres.

"Frightening Conservatism and Stagnation"

Two sentences in an eighteen-page internal report from the Main Repertoire Committee (Glavrepertkom) reveal a lot about the state of Soviet ballet in 1926, the state of ballet in relation to other performing arts genres, and contemporary expectations for Soviet ballet. Soviet bureaucrats who oversaw artistic production deemed the state of the art of ballet to be unsatisfactory. Glavrepertkom's report on its own activities from February 9, 1923, through July 1, 1926, acerbically observed: "In the realm of ballet, there is frightening conservatism and stagnation—the great stage [i.e., the Bolshoi Theater] gets by with 'royal' things and productions of the type of some kind of *Giselle*. Such interesting productions, like [Kas'ian Iaroslavich] Goleizvoskii's *Joseph the Marvelous*, drown in an ocean of old

clichés."[16] The "'royal' things" were productions of nineteenth-century classical ballets inherited from the Imperial Russian Theaters. The ballets were "royal" in the sense that they were staged first (or most famously) for the Imperial Theaters and also in the sense that they featured royal characters, such as Prince Siegfried in *Swan Lake* and Princess Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty* and their respective royal relatives and retinues. Thirteen of the fourteen ballets in the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire for the 1925-1926 season were either classical ballets or romantic ballets that had been remade in classical (and sometimes even later Soviet) versions.[17] The repertoire included: *Le Corsaire, La Bayadère, Giselle, Coppélia, The Little Humpbacked Horse, The Sleeping Beauty, Swan Lake, Raymonda, Don Quixote, Karnaval, La Sylphide, La Fille Mal Gardée, The Magic Mirror,* and *La Esmeralda*.[18]

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[16] Dokladnaia Zapiska O Deiatel'nosti Glavrepertkoma /s 9 fevralia 1923 g. po 1-y iiunia 1926 goda/: Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii, hereafter RGASPI) f. 17, op. 60, d. 808, l. 60ob.

[17] The period of romantic ballet corresponds to approximately the 1830s and 1840s, especially in France and Russia. The period of classical ballet followed ballet's romantic period, especially in Russia, in the second half of the nineteenth century. Marius Ivanovich Petipa, the most famous choreographer of the "classical" period, restaged romantic ballets such as *La Esmeralda* and *Giselle* in the second half of the nineteenth century; in so doing, Petipa updated the romantic-era choreography in accordance with the newer aesthetics of "classical" ballet. Lisa C. Arkin and Marian Smith allude to Petipa's practice of revising romantic ballets during the classical period in "National Dances in the Romantic Ballet," in *Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet*, ed. Lynn Garafola (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 53. Later Russian choreographers revised Petipa's revisions both before and after 1917. In other words, *La Esmeralda* and *Giselle* were staged differently in the 1880s than in the 1840s. And *Swan Lake* was staged differently in the 1920s than in the 1890s (or 1870s). Just because the titles were repeated in subsequent decades does not mean that the choreography, libretti, designs, music, and staging were the same.

[18] Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, hereafter RGALI) f. 648, op. 2, d. 471, l. 22. From a memorandum dated July 13, 1926,

Of these, the Moscow production of *Karnaval* was the only production without a clear link to one of Marius Petipa's original ballets or a ballet made famous in Petipa's late-nineteenth-century versions for the Russian Imperial Theaters.[19] Many of the ballets, including *Raymonda* and *Giselle*, featured noble characters, if not prominently "royal" ones. The authors of the Glavrepertkom report clearly felt that ballet had not progressed much in the years since the former Imperial Theaters had become the Soviet state theaters.

The fact that ballet warranted only two sentences in the report evidences how little Glavrepertkom officials thought of the genre and its progress. They deemed ballet (with the exception of *Joseph the Marvelous*) dreadfully

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wherein the State Academic Bolshoi Theater's (Gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii Bol'shoi teatr or GABT) administration informed the Administration of State Academic Theaters (Upravlenie gosudarstvennikh akademicheskikh teatrov, or UGAT) of the ballets in current repertoire that GABT planned to keep in repertoire for the 1926-1927 season.

[19] The 1925 programs for the Bolshoi Theater production of *Karnaval* (Carnival) that are preserved at the Museum of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater (Muzei Gosudarstvennogo Akademicheskogo Bol'shogo Teatra, hereafter Muzei GABT) indicate that the Moscow production included music by several composers. It was probably based on a 1913 production, also called *Karnaval* and utilizing music of multiple composers, by Aleksandr Alekseevich Gorskii (with additional choreography by Mikhail Mikhailovich Mordkin and Vasilii Dmitrievich Tikhomirov). In 1924, a one-act divertissement entitled *Karnaval* reemerged at the Bolshoi Theater, this time with choreography by Gorskii, Vladimir Aleksandrovich Riabtsev, and Tikhomirov; this one-act *Karnaval* was performed on the same program with the two-act ballet *Tshchetnaia predostorozhnost'* (*La Fille Mal Gardée*) or with other short ballets such as *Shekherazada* (Sheherezade) and *Ispanskoe kaprichchio* (Spanish Capriccio) to comprise a full theatrical evening (see bound programs from 1924 and 1925 at Muzei GABT). For more on the Moscow productions of *Karnaval*, see V. I. Zarubin's *Pervye postanovki baletov na russkoi stsene 1825-1997* (Moscow: Ellis Luck, 1998). These Moscow *Karnaval* ballets may have differed considerably from Mikhail Mikhailovich Fokin's ballet of the same name to music by Robert Schumann; Fokin's production was featured in early tours of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. On Fokin's production, see Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (1989; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1998) and S. L. Grigoriev, *The Diaghilev Ballet, 1909-1929*, trans. and ed. Vera Bowen (1953; repr., Hampshire: Dance Books, 2009).

unprogressive and recalcitrant, compared with other genres in Glavrepertkom's purview such as film, dramatic theater, and opera because the ballet theaters were still presenting the same old titles with the same old noble and royal characters. While some ballets, such as *Coppélia* and *Don Quixote*, featured characters who were commoners and *La Fille Mal Gardée* had no royal characters at all, ballet as an art form had not vaulted past the repertoire of the Imperial Theaters and into a realm of contemporary Soviet characters with whom Soviet audiences could identify. The authors of the report suggested that Goleizovskii's *Joseph the Marvelous*, with its constructivist set, non-classical movement vocabulary, and anti-monarchical theme,[20] was more appropriate for Soviet audiences than the rest of GABT's repertoire. However, they observed that innovative new productions, such as *Joseph the Marvelous*, were relegated to GABT's smaller, experimental stage or quickly dropped from the repertoire (or both); GABT's main stage continued to showcase the repertoire of decades past and this "ocean of old clichés" was overwhelming attempts at progress.

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[20] For more on *Joseph the Marvelous* (Iosif Prekrasnyi, also translated as *Joseph the Beautiful*), see Souritz's *Soviet Choreographers* (esp. 185-196) and Zarubin (esp. 140-143). *Joseph the Marvelous*, with libretto by Goleizovskii (after the Biblical story of Joseph), music by Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko, and designs by Boris Robertovich Erdman, was part of one of the most frequently-performed ballet programs on GABT's smaller, experimental stage from its premiere on March 3, 1925, to its last performance in Goleizovskii's original version on April 30, 1927; the original production was performed 42 times and then briefly revived by Leonid Alekseevich Zhukov for six showings in the 1928-1929 season (Zarubin, 143). Note that Goleizovskii's *Joseph the Marvelous* was not part of the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire; it was only performed in GABT's smaller theater.

Glavrepertkom's judgment regarding ballet, and Glavrepertkom's prizing of *Joseph the Marvelous* in particular, represent one of the prevailing schools of thought about Soviet art in the mid-1920s: namely that Soviet audiences had no use for remnants of pre-revolutionary arts and that Soviet art should break with as many pre-existing traditions as possible. From Glavrepertkom's perspective in the summer of 1926, ballet needed to get rid of its repertoire with pre-revolutionary roots in order to catch up with the times and other genres; according to officials at Glavrepertkom, this was the only way for ballet become a useful part of revolutionary Soviet culture.

But was this the only way? The position staked out by Glavrepertkom officials—for *Joseph the Marvelous* and against *Giselle*—was far from universal. In fact, *Red Poppy* would appropriate many more nineteenth-century ballet tropes than *Joseph the Marvelous*, en route to blazing a new path for Soviet ballet. Still, it is worth noting that less than a year before *Red Poppy*'s premiere, the state of the art of ballet was found to be poor and ballet was believed to be showing far less potential for innovation than were other artistic genres. While working-class audiences now had much greater access to the former Imperial Theaters, Glavrepertkom officials worried that the repertoire the new audiences were experiencing was not appropriately educational. Something else had to be done to make the ballets themselves more accessible if ballet was going to fulfil its responsibility to politically educate and enlighten mass audiences.

The Protracted Production Process of "The First Soviet Ballet"

GABT was a large, complex institution with thousands of employees, multiple internal collectives, and frequently conflicting priorities for the uses of limited time, money, and space. The following sketch of events leading up to the premiere of *Red Poppy* is largely based on GABT's internal meeting minutes. The production process for *Red Poppy* offers a glimpse into the dizzying array of practical obstacles to bringing a ballet (or opera) to the stage. GABT administrators and artists sought to embody contemporary political themes in their productions, but it is worth remembering that production processes were often overdetermined by logistics, not politics. In other words, in order to understand why a production was delayed or cancelled, it is necessary to look beyond its political content and also account for practical factors impacting its realization. *Red Poppy* had a very contemporary, even revolutionary theme, and yet its original production team was almost completed replaced, the premiere was delayed multiple times (in part because of GABT's simultaneous work to stage a new opera), and more than a hundred costumes were still unmade the day before the premiere. Even with an exemplary political subject, a production could for years be encumbered by logistical snarls.

Minutes from the Glavrepertkom meeting on August 10, 1925, provide the earliest evidence of the ballet that became *Red Poppy*. A ballet called *Port City* (Portovyi gorod) was commissioned from librettist Mikhail Petrovich Gal'perin and

composer Reingol'd Moritsevich Glier by the Administration of Academic Theaters (*Upravlenie akademicheskikh teatrov*). *Port City* was planned for simultaneous production at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow and the State Theater of Opera and Ballet in Leningrad (the former Mariinsky Theater).[21] According to Elizabeth Souritz, in addition to Gal'perin and Glier, the original creative team included Leonid Zhukov (choreographer), Sergei Sokolov (designer), and Valentin Smyshliaev (stage director).[22] Of these, only Glier was a constant member of the team from the production's earliest stages through the 1927 premiere.

The dizzying substitutions in the role of choreographer illustrate the churning within *Red Poppy*'s creative team. When Leonid Zhukov became unavailable due to touring commitments abroad, GABT made several attempts to bring choreographers from Leningrad to replace him before eventually reassigning the project to Vasilii Dmitrievich Tikhomirov.[23] As work on the ballet progressed, Tikhomirov gravitated toward the second act, with its fantastic scenes of the heroine's opium-animated dreams, and the variations for the heroine, danced by his frequent on-stage partner and off-stage wife, Ekaterina Vasil'evna Gel'tser. The more realistic first and third acts were choreographed by Lev Aleksandrovich Lashchilin. In addition to the interchangeable choreographers, Mikhail Ivanovich

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[21] Protokol No. 12 Zasedaniia Glavnogo Repertuarnogo Komiteta: RGASPI f. 17, op. 60, d. 752, l. 2ob.

[22] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 232.

[23] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 232, 234.

Kurilko replaced both Gal'perin as librettist and Sokolov as designer. Eventually, Aleksei Denisovich Dikii was officially contracted as stage director for *Red Poppy*, but he bailed out several months before the premiere.[24] It is amazing that the ballet was ever staged, given the frequent turnover in responsible artistic personnel.

But, despite the substitutions, the creative team forged ahead. As of the meeting of GABT's Artistic Council on July 23, 1926, the realization of *Red Poppy* was planned for early November 1926, the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.[25] Two months later, at the beginning of the 1926-1927 theatrical season, the then-members of the creative team for *Red Poppy*—Vasilii Tikhomirov, Ivan Vasil'evich Smol'tsov,[26] Reingol'd Glier, Mikhail Kurilko, Iurii Fedorovich Faier (conductor), and Lev Lashchilin, along with Grigorii Alekseevich Koloskov (GABT Director)—met to organize their work. Tikhomirov was put in charge of the production, with Lashchilin and Smol'tsov to serve as choreographers. According to the meeting minutes, the whole creative team was to meet daily for the purpose of staging the entire ballet in approximately one month and having the first act

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[24] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 235-236.

[25] Protokol zasedaniia Khudozhestvennogo Soveta Gosud. Akad. Bol'shogo teatra (July 23, 1926): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 471, l. 18ob.

[26] There were two brothers, Ivan Vasil'evich and Viktor Vasil'evich Smol'tsov, in the Bolshoi ballet company at this time. While the meeting minutes do not specify which Smol'tsov participated, I assume that it was Ivan Smol'tsov, who was older and already moving in and out of leadership positions in the ballet troupe in addition to dancing; Ivan Smol'tsov later became a choreographer. In 1927, Viktor Smol'tsov was a leading dancer.

ready for the anniversary of the October Revolution.[27] Aleksei Dikii was charged with ideological leadership of the production and absolutely required to attend all rehearsals from the beginning to the end of the production. It should be noted that Dikii was not in attendance at this meeting during which the others agreed that he should attend all of the rehearsals.[28] The ambitious one-month timeline proved impossible to achieve, especially give the sporadic engagement of key member of the creative team.

Dikii did attend a production meeting on October 23, 1926, along with Koloskov, Tikhomirov, Lashchilin, and Glier. They redistributed the authority, making Dikii responsible for the overall composition of the production, Tikhomirov responsible for the choreography, and Lashchilin responsible for character dances and mise-en-scène of Acts I and III. Lashchilin was also in charge of running the rehearsals, but Dikii was obligated to attend rehearsals at least twice a week. The first day of rehearsal, as scheduled by the GABT administrators, was to be October 25, 1926 (and no later than October 29). At this meeting, Lashchilin was tasked with immediately reporting to the theater's administration any obstacles to the

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[27] The meeting minutes actually specify that the ballet is to be prepared in one month in order to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, but I suspect that the "tenth" anniversary is a typographical error (it should be the "ninth" anniversary). *Red Poppy* premiered months ahead of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution though months behind this fall 1926 planned premiere.

[28] Protokol Soveshchaniia po voprosu o balete "Krasnyi mak" (September 28, 1926): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 471, l. 12.

production.[29] Approximately two weeks later, on November 5, 1926, Lashchilin sent a memo to Koloskov with the meeting minutes attached. Everyone except Dikii had signed the minutes, but Dikii refused to sign and intended to inform Koloskov personally about why. Lashchilin reported that his own work on Act I was proceeding more quickly than before but that Kurilko's absence was hampering progress. Kurilko had left them several options for the Act I set design, and the production team needed the final set design in order to finish the choreography.[30] The ballet's many moving parts depended on one another, and delays in one sector created cascading delays in other sectors, which threw the whole production even further off schedule.

At the GABT administration meeting on January 31, 1927, the production of *Red Poppy* took up much of the agenda. There was consensus that the ballet should premiere during the 1926-1927 theatrical season, and the date suggested was April 10, 1927. Now, it fell to Vladimir Apollonovich Losskii, an opera soloist and stage director who had recently been appointed GABT Deputy Director for Artistic Affairs,[31] to make sure that the production came together on schedule. The

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[29] Protokol Zasedaniia ot 23.10 s.g. po Postanovke "Krasnogo maka:" RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 476, l. 32.

[30] Lashchilin's handwritten sluzhebnaia zapiska to Koloskov: RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 483, ll. 44-44ob.

[31] By Narkompros Rasporiazhenie #13 (January 15, 1927): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 535, l. 176. The People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (Narodnyi Komissariat Prosveshcheniia) of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic was known as "Narkompros RSFSR" or simply Narkompros.

music was not yet finished, but Faier expected it to be ready by March 27, 1927, and this was deemed soon enough for an April 10 premiere! GABT administration took note of Lashchilin and Tikhomirov's request that all ballet rehearsals be suspended while *Red Poppy* was being finalized. Dikii agreed that the only way to finish *Red Poppy* on schedule would be to give the Bolshoi Theater's stage over to *Red Poppy* rehearsals six days per week through April 10, though that would require intensive work on the part of all participants.[32] The lack of a finished score created a new delay, and again, the timeline proved too ambitious.

Budgets for *Red Poppy* and Sergei Sergeevich Prokof'ev's opera *Love for Three Oranges* were on the agenda when GABT administrators convened on March 2, 1927.[33] As of March 19, 1927, the sets for Acts I and III of *Red Poppy* were underway, but there was not yet a contract for the set for Act II. The costume designs were mostly done; some designs were delayed, however, because the dances for those characters had not yet been composed, and the costume designs needed to be based on the characteristics of the characters' dances.[34] In the fall of

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[32] Vypiska iz protokola zasedaniia Direktsii (January 31, 1927): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 535, ll. 157-167 and Protokol #1 Zasedaniia Direktsii (January 31, 1927): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 553, ll. 1-2. At the meeting, Ekaterina Gel'tser requested an accompanist for her rehearsals, and Losskii was tasked with arranging for one.

[33] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d 535, ll. 135, 136.

[34] Vyvody Proizvodstvenno-Tekhnicheskogo Soveshchaniia po Postanovkam "Krasnyi mak" i "Liubov' k trem apel'sinam:" RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 553, l. 4.

1926, the lack of final set designs slowed down the choreographer, and now in the spring, the unfinished choreography was slowing down the costume designers.

Further complicating matters, there were not enough materials or employees in the workshops to complete the costumes and props, though the stocks of shoes and makeup were in better shape. Some work was going to have to be sent off-site in order to keep the ballet on schedule. The GABT workshops were simultaneously preparing for the premiere of *Love for Three Oranges*, which limited the amount of space and the number of workers that could be devoted to work on *Red Poppy*.[35]

Inching closer to the premiere, on March 28, 1927, there was a meeting with the designers Fedor Fedorovich Fedorovskii and Isaak Moiseevich Rabinovich and members of the electrical-technical sector to discuss the lighting for the new opera and for *Red Poppy*.[36] Also on March 28, 1927, GABT administrators met with the heads of the GABT sectors involved in the new ballet and opera productions, plus Tikhomirov, Kurilko, and Rabinovich, to discuss the preliminary budgets for *Red Poppy* and *Love for Three Oranges*.[37] There was still a lot to do before the ballet would be finished and ready for public performance.

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[35] Vyvody Proizvodstvenno-Tekhnicheskogo Soveshchaniia po Postanovkam "Krasnyi mak" i "Liubov' k trem apel'sinam:" RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 553, ll. 4-5ob. GABT brought three premieres to the stage within five months in Spring 1927: *Boris Godunov, Love for Three Oranges*, and *Red Poppy* (RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 544, l. 149).

[36] Protokol Zasedaniia po voprosu ob ustroistve dopolnitel'nogo sveta iz bokovikh lozh v Bol'shom i eksperim. teatrakh a takzhe dobav. oborudovaniia svetom postanovok "Liubov' k trem apel'sinam" i "Krasnyi mak:" RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 553, ll. 6-6ob.

On June 4, 1927, the GABT administration wrote to the Sun Yat Sen Institute, requesting that nine terms be translated and written out in Chinese calligraphy for use in the designs for the ballet *Red Poppy*. The nine terms were restaurant, tea shop, food stall, manufactory storage, opium parlor, All Hail the Soviets, USSR, socialist authorities, and red poppy. The request for "red poppy" was specifically for a dialect from Southern China.[38] Ten days before the premiere, the finishing touches on the sets could not be completed because the elements of Chinese calligraphy had only just been requested. But they were getting closer.

Less than a week before opening night, on June 8, 1927, workers from the lighting sector left twenty minutes prior to the conclusion of the rehearsal for *Red Poppy*. This was a violation of GABT's employee code of conduct and thwarted the rehearsal work.[39] Bringing the ballet to the stage required the active participation of so many people and institutions. On June 10, 1927, GABT sent memoranda to Glavrepertkom and the Council of People's Commissar's Integrated State Political Administration (OGPU). Because the dress rehearsal for *Red Poppy* scheduled for June 12, 1927, might be cancelled, representatives of Glavrepertkom

[37] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 535, ll. 116 (invitation to department heads with agenda) and 117 (separate invitation for Tikhomirov, Kurilko, and Rabinovich).

[38] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 541, l. 92. Edward Tyerman reports that some of the Chinese characters are found in Kurilko's designs for *The Red Poppy* (1927), though the characters are jumbled ("Resignifying *The Red Poppy*: Internationalism and Symbolic Power in the Sino-Soviet Encounter," *Slavic and East European Journal* 61, no. 3 [2017], 456-457).

[39] Rasporiazhenie po GABTu #85a (June 13, 1927): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 544, l. 144.

and OGPU were asked to attend the technical rehearsal on June 11, 1927, and to inform GABT how many people would be attending.[40] It was not simply a matter of getting hundreds of GABT artists and staff people to cooperate. Government agencies, including the secret police, also had roles to play.

One day to the premiere. On June 13, 1927, there was a meeting regarding required alterations to *Red Poppy*. Tikhomirov, Lashchilin, Kurilko, Glier, Leonid L'vovich Isaev, V. V. Panteleev, and V. M. Lapin signed the meeting minutes, and Vasilii Vasil'evich Fedorov also attended. Changes needed ranged from the production of at least one hundred chlamydes (long, loose garments) of simple construction for the apotheosis to actually staging the apotheosis; among other things at issue were technical aspects of the Soviet ship's departure and the flight of Ekaterina Gel'tser's double in Act II, Scene 4. A musical interlude was needed after Act II, Scene 2.[41]

Despite this seemingly substantial to-do list, *Red Poppy* finally premiered the following evening on June 14, 1927. *Red Poppy*'s convoluted course illuminates the practical complexities of staging a production at the Soviet Union's largest theater of opera and ballet. Despite the ballet's timely political subject, it took almost two years to realize the original production of *Red Poppy* at the

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[40] Memo from GABT to Glavrepertkom and OGPU: RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 545, l. 38. The memo does not specify why the dress rehearsal might not go ahead as planned.

[41] Protokol Zasedaniia (June 13, 1927): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 553, l. 9.

Bolshoi Theater, during which members of the creative team came and went, numerous logistical hurdles were surmounted, and new emphases and possibilities emerged for the art of Soviet ballet.

Red Poppy's Similarities with Classical Precedents

The structure for the ballet *Red Poppy* is in many ways similar to the structure of nineteenth-century classical ballets. *Red Poppy* shared with its predecessors an exotic setting for the glorification of contemporary Russian political ideals; a multi-act structure with an extended dream sequence separating two acts with more realistic settings; a profusion of events in the "real" world of the ballet that called for dancing; and mime scenes interspersed between dance scenes.

Red Poppy was set in a port city in Southern China in the late 1920s. A Soviet ship docks at the port.[42] When the Captain of the Soviet ship sees Chinese overseers beating the dockworkers in order to make the coolies unload the ship faster, he orders the overseers to stop the beatings and the Soviet sailors to unload the cargo. A local celebrity, a Chinese actress named Tao-Khoa (the libretto asserts that "her name means 'red poppy' in Chinese"[43]), observes the Soviet sailors

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[42] Simon Morrison traces the impetus for this version of *Red Poppy*'s libretto to two articles in *Pravda* on January 9, 1926. One article was about "Soviet-armed Chinese nationalists [clashing with] Japanese-backed warlords" in revolutionary China and the other was about "the detention of the Soviet steamer Ilyich (Lenin's middle name) in England." Morrison surmises that "Kurilko must have merged the details, placing the boat and the English police in China at the start of the civil war" (*Bolshoi Confidential*, 245, 459n79).

working side-by-side with the Chinese coolies. Never before has she seen Europeans and Chinese workers as equals. Tao-Khoa is impressed by the Soviet Captain's empathy for the Chinese workers.

Later, when the English harbormaster and his Chinese capitalist allies plot to assassinate the Soviet Captain to prevent his "'corruptive influence'"[44] on the Chinese workers, Tao-Khoa is conflicted. Her fiancé and her father are among the conspirators who plot to kill the Soviet Captain, and Chinese culture (as described in the libretto) has taught Tao-Khoa that "woman is an inferior being who should with all humility submit to the will of her male guardian."[45] And yet, Tao-Khoa's "instincts toward freedom"[46] had been awakened by the Soviet Captain's actions and the Soviet sailors' cooperation with the coolies.

In her confusion, Tao-Khoa dreams of a symbolic fight between good (Soviet principles) and evil (Chinese traditions, including Buddhism and women's subservience to men). By the end of her dream, Tao-Khoa abandons Chinese

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[43] A. A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatrical Museum (Gosudarstvennyi tsentral'nyi teatral'nyi muzei imeni A. A. Bakhrushin, hereafter GTsTM) f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 21. Edward Tyerman speculates about the various spellings of the heroine's name and their connections to Chinese words in "Resignifying *The Red Poppy*," 454-458. The spelling variations of the heroine's name are not germane to my analysis; therefore, I call her "Tao-Khoa" throughout, maintaining the awkward "kh" sound of the Russian pronunciation and ignoring the variable vowels to be found in different published and unpublished versions of the libretto from the 1920s through the 1950s. This choice has the effect of grounding readers' attention in the fundamentally Russian/Soviet nature of *Red Poppy*, even though the action of the ballet was set in revolutionary China.

[44] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 25.

[45] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 22.

[46] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 37.

traditions for Soviet ideals. She sabotages two attempts by English and Chinese conspirators to kill the Soviet Captain. For revenge, Tao-Khoa's fiancé shoots her. Tao-Khoa dies as peasant rebels sneak into the city to start a communist revolution.[47]

Much like nineteenth-century ballets that were set in exotic locales but celebrated the Russian autocracy, the first Soviet ballet was set not in Russia but in revolutionary China. Nineteenth-century Russian imperial ballet had a tradition of glorifying the monarchy through the staging of productions set in non-Russian courts. Lynn Garafola observes with respect to *Sleeping Beauty* (1890), *Swan Lake* (1895), and *Raymonda* (1898) that "what is really at stake in these ballets is the idea of autocracy itself," even though the ballets are all set outside of Russia.[48] Similarly, *Red Poppy* celebrated the Bolshevik revolution through staging political uprising in China. In *Red Poppy*, Soviet audiences had the added thrill of hoping that China would presently become the next socialist state. Yet, in both the nineteenth- and twentieth-century cases, the government in power celebrated its own "political vision" by proxy.[49]

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[47] The summary of the libretto for the 1927 production is based on an illustrated booklet sold at GABT in 1930 (GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, ll. 19-45). A complete translation of the published libretto is included as Appendix A.

[48] Lynn Garafola, "Russian Ballet in the Age of Petipa," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*, ed. Marion Kant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 158.

[49] Garafola, "Russian Ballet in the Age of Petipa," 159.

The three-act structure of *Red Poppy*—Act I in the port city, Tao-Khoa's dream filling most of Act II, and Act III back in the port city—seems to be drawn directly from nineteenth-century classical ballets. The first and third acts of *Red Poppy* took place on earth, while most of the second act was set in a fantastic realm. There were a number of nineteenth-century ballet precedents for such a structure.[50] For example, in Act II, Scene 2, of *La Fille du Pharaon* (1862), the Pharaoh's daughter Aspicia (*Aspichchiia*) leapt out of a cottage window and descended to the bottom of the Nile River. While underwater, Aspicia had a vision of her beloved beau, and she subsequently returned to the human realm for the rest of the ballet.[51] Likewise, at the end of Act I of *Raymonda*, Raymonda had a vision of her fiancé wherein they danced together before reality broke her reverie.[52] These classical ballets, like their romantic (two-act) precedents *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*, capitalized on the contrast between realistic and otherworldly settings in order to show a variety of character dances and classical dances. The creators of *Red Poppy* similarly appropriated the contrasting, multi-act structure, which provided occasion for a wide range of dances.

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[50] *Red Poppy* might have been the first ballet to depict a woman smoking opium. Opium triggered male characters' visions in *La Bayadère* and *The Pharaoh's Daughter*.

[51] *Doch' faraona* (La Fille du Pharaon or The Pharaoh's Daughter) was one of Marius Petipa's first major ballets for the Russian Imperial Theaters. For more on the production history of *Doch' faraona*, see Meisner, especially 99-105, 302.

[52] *Raimonda* (Raymonda) was one of Marius Petipa's last major ballets for the Russian Imperial Theaters. For more on the production history of *Raymonda*, see Meisner, especially 249-250, 316.

While the Act II dream scenes were dominated by classical dancing, Act I of *Red Poppy* featured a variety of quasi-character dances which provided embodied and musical information about characters' national identities. The Malaysian women danced to entertain patrons at the restaurant, and the coolies, Chinese women, and sailors from the trading vessel performed their respective nationally inflected dances in their free time. According to the libretto, the sailors from the trading vessel were Japanese, Black, Norwegian, American, and Melanesian.[53] Their dances recall the social-folk dances in nineteenth century ballets' harvest celebrations (*La Fille Mal Gardée*, *Giselle*), engagement parties (*La Sylphide, Swan Lake, Raymonda*), and weddings (*Don Quixote*). In these character dances, the combinations of music, costume, and movement vocabulary informed nineteenth-century audiences that the characters were denizens of present-day Germany, Scotland, Spain, Hungary, Poland, and elsewhere.[54] The main difference between the character dances of nineteenth-century ballets and the analogous dances in *Red Poppy* is the slate of nations represented. Most of the nineteenth-century Russian ballets did not feature Chinese, Japanese, Norwegian, Melanesian, Malaysian, or American characters. However, as in nineteenth-century ballets, dances in *Red Poppy* were used to communicate characters' national identities.

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[53] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 28.

[54] For more on how music and dance characterized characters in nineteenth-century romantic ballets, see Arkin and Smith, especially 24-26, 48-49.

Acts I and III of *Red Poppy* also featured a variety of social dances which communicated characters' socioeconomic class identities and, by extension, political-ideological persuasions. The English and other European characters danced ballroom dances (Charleston, foxtrot, tango, and Boston waltz), which were clearly marked as "bourgeois" in Soviet culture of the 1920s. Elizabeth Souritz describes exaggerated exhibitions of Western ballroom dances on the stages of both Soviet dramatic and musical theaters: "Everywhere that criticism and 'unmasking' were needed, the stupefying rhythm of the foxtrot was heard, people moved with a mechanical gait, and mannequin-people with dull, heavily made-up faces shuffled their feet."[55] Moscow audiences in the 1920s would have been familiar with the trope of ballroom dances which characterized ideological enemies. The Western European couples' ballroom dances contrasted with the exuberant all-male group dance by the Soviet sailors to the melody of the folk song "The Little Apple" ("Iablochko").[56] The Soviet sailors embodied socialist (anti-bourgeois) ideals, including solidarity among working-class people and the joy of cooperative labor. The collective energy of the group dance builds as the tempo

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[55] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 247.

[56] *Absoliutnyi slukh*, "Matrosskii tanets 'Iablochko'," YouTube, theartsmedia, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zngBCkTD4hU (accessed October 10, 2020). This brief overview of the history of "Iablochko" in Russian and Soviet culture traces the dance to British hornpipes and a Ukrainian *chastiushka*, which became a popular song and dance for the Soviet Navy. In 1927, Glier orchestrated the song and Lashchilin supplied choreography for the ballet stage.

accelerates toward the better communist future.[57] Like most ballet productions of the second half of the nineteenth century, *Red Poppy*'s realistic acts provided a wide array of opportunities for dancing that revealed key details about the characters' identities. In *Red Poppy*, though, these dances included a variety of socio-political identities new to Russian ballet.

In addition to partnered and group character and social dances, there were Chinese theatrical acts to entertain the Europeans in Act III, and Tao-Khoa herself was a performer; these elements afforded even more opportunities for dancing in *Red Poppy*. Many nineteenth-century ballets also contained a performance within a performance or were built around the trope of a dancer as the leading character. In Act II, Scene 4, of Marius Petipa's first production of *Don Quixote* (1869), Don Quixote settled in to watch a puppet performance at the gypsy camp.[58] Act I of *La Vestale* (1888) featured a pantomime performance with Roman gods and goddesses, another example of a performance within a performance.[59] Further,

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[57] For analysis of male comradeship in 1920s Soviet literature, see Eliot Borenstein, *Men Without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Russian Fiction, 1917-1929* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

[58] *Don Kikhot* (Don Quixote) premiered at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. For an English translation of the original libretto, see Letellier, 87-90. For more on the production history, see Letellier, 86-102, and Meisner, 304. Dates in parentheses for the nineteenth-century ballets reflect the first productions in Russia; some of the ballets, including *La Esmeralda* and *Giselle*, were originally produced in Western Europe and subsequently staged in Russia.

[59] The original libretto of *Vestalka* (*La Vestale*) appears in translation in Roland John Wiley, *A Century of Russian Ballet: Documents and Eyewitness Accounts, 1810-1910* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 324-349.

there were nineteenth-century precedents for having a dancer as the main character of a ballet. Esmeralda of *La Esmeralda* (1848) was a gypsy dancer.[60] The title character of *La Bayadère* (1877) was a *devadasi*, an Indian temple dancer.[61] Giselle, though a seamstress by profession, loved to dance (*Giselle*, 1842).[62] Tao-Khoa, the "red poppy" of *Red Poppy*, is described in the libretto as an actress (*aktrisa*)[63] or a performer (*artistka*),[64] and her performances included several solo variations. In the nineteenth-century productions, *Red Poppy*, and later Soviet ballets, the inclusion of main characters who were dancers and in-set performance scenes justified the inclusion of many and varied dance scenes, a hallmark of any ballet production that distinguished ballet from other genres.

In between the dance scenes of the nineteenth-century ballets and of *Red Poppy*, there were mime scenes that served to explicate the plot. For example, in the first act of *Giselle*, Duke Albrecht (*Al'bert*) swears that he will love Giselle forever by putting one hand over his heart and raising two fingers overhead with

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[60] The original libretto of *Esmeral'da* (*La Esmeralda*) used in its first Russian performance (1848) appears in translation in Wiley, *A Century of Russian Ballet*, 178-182. *La Esmeralda* was choreographed by Jules Perrot and premiered in London in 1844, more than four years before it was staged in Russia. For more on the production history of *La Esmeralda*, see Matthew Naughtin, *Ballet Music: A Handbook* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 2004), 212.

[61] The original libretto of *Baiaderka* (*La Bayadère*) appears in translation in Wiley, *A Century of Russian Ballet*, 293-303.

[62] Cyril W. Beaumont, *The Ballet Called Giselle*, (1994; repr., London: Dance Books, 1996), 79. *Zhizel'* (Giselle) premiered in Paris in 1841 and in St. Petersburg in 1842 (Beaumont 126, 128).

[63] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 19.

[64] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 20.

his other hand. Giselle tests his promise by picking some flowers and pulling the petals off, one by one ("he loves me, he loves me not..."). With some assistance from Albrecht, the flowers confirm that his love is true, and Albrecht and Giselle merrily dance together. Their dance is interrupted by Hilarion (*Gans*), the gamekeeper, who mimes to Giselle that he loves her. She replies in mime that she does not love Hilarion—she loves Albrecht, and so on. These mime scenes establish the relationships among the characters and explain the plot. Elizabeth Souritz observes that in *Red Poppy*, "[t]he action developed in pantomime scenes interrupted by dance divertissements."[65] The assassination attempts—the failed stabbing and the not-quite-successful poisoning—and even the Soviet Captain's message to Tao-Khoa that his duty to the Soviet revolution overrode potential romantic engagement were well within the possibilities of gestural communication. As in nineteenth-century ballets, dance scenes alternated with mime scenes. The mime scenes in *Red Poppy* did much to propel the plot forward.

In sum, *Red Poppy* shared structural similarities with nineteenth-century classical ballets. It featured a foreign setting for its praise of the contemporary political order in Russia; dream scenes that contrasted with scenes in more realistic settings; occasions for a wide variety of dancing during the realistic acts; and mime

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[65] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 240. Viktor Iving commented on the music for the mime scenes in his article in the libretto booklet from 1930, providing contemporary evidence that there were alternating dance and mime scenes (GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 13).

scenes interspersed among the dance scenes. However, even though critic Vladimir Ivanovich Blium caustically dismissed *Red Poppy* as "new wine [in] old wineskins," the ballet was more than that.[66] To be sure, *Red Poppy* incorporated continuities from its predecessors. But *Red Poppy* also embodied changes.

Changing What Stories Ballet Could Tell and How Ballet Told Stories

Despite its clear debts to paradigmatic nineteenth-century ballets, *Red Poppy* initiated a new era in Soviet ballet: it marked a change in what stories ballet could tell and a change in how ballet told stories. In nineteenth-century ballets, the plot had provided a frame and pretexts for dancing; by contrast, *Red Poppy* harnessed nineteenth-century ballet structures for the purpose of telling a story. And the story was about contemporary Soviet, Chinese, and British characters. For the first time, Russian ballet told a story about real people in the present day. Plus, the story that *Red Poppy* told was suffused with contemporary political ideas—political ideas that would have unnerved nineteenth-century ballet's imperial patrons. Even more interestingly, the choreographers of *Red Poppy* used dance to tell this new kind of story. From the scene of unloading the ship to the unhappy relationship between Tao-Khoa and Li Shan-fu to the grand classical dances of Tao-

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[66] Blium was not alone in his evaluation of *Red Poppy*. Blium's review, written under the name "Sadko," appeared in *Zhizn' iskusstva* (June 28, 1927). His review is reproduced in translation in Marina Frolova-Walker and Jonathan Walker, eds., *Music and Soviet Power, 1917-1932* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 193.

Khoa's dream, dance itself supplanted mime as the ballet's primary means for storytelling.

Red Poppy was innovative in that it brought a new kind of story to the ballet stage, one with a contemporary 1920s setting and contemporary characters. Nineteenth-century Russian ballets were often set in the vague and distant past and often starred mythical beings rather than real people. For example, Prince Siegfried in *Swan Lake* falls in love with a woman who is enchanted to be a part-time swan. By contrast, *Red Poppy* featured a contemporary setting (China, around 1927) with contemporary characters, including contemporary Soviet characters (the Captain and the Soviet sailors). In *Red Poppy,* for the first time in a ballet in Russia, ballet characters were real, present-day human beings.[67] Soviet audiences could identify both with the characters and the political ideas in *Red Poppy*.

Red Poppy foregrounded contemporary political ideas, including British imperialism in China, oppression of the working class, the subservient position of women in Chinese society, and socialist revolution. If the love lives of fairy tale princes and princesses seemed far distant from the experiences of Soviet workers, *Red Poppy* demonstrated that ballet could also tell stories about ideas that mattered to Soviet audiences and policymakers in the 1920s. As the first ballet suffused with

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[67] Sergei Pavlovich Diagilev's Ballets Russes company had produced ballets with contemporary settings and characters, including *Les Biches* and *Le Train Bleu*, but Ballets Russes did not perform these ballets in Russia.

a contemporary setting, contemporary characters, and contemporary political ideas, *Red Poppy* was a landmark production in the history of Soviet ballet. It expanded what stories ballet could tell.

But *Red Poppy* also expanded ballet's means for telling stories. Dancing had not been the primary conveyor of the plot in nineteenth-century ballets; the story was told with mime. In *Red Poppy*, however, dance sequences emerged that complemented the mime scenes and helped to communicate the story.

The scene of the unloading of the Soviet ship in Act I characterized the Chinese coolies as oppressed by their Chinese overseers (e.g., Tao-Khoa's father) who saw fit to work for European bosses. The scene of the unloading also characterized the Soviet sailors and their Captain as sympathetic to the plight of the Chinese workers and willing to exert themselves to help the coolies. Without any placards or words, the audience came to understand that the coolies worked under deplorable conditions, the members of the local European elite were content with this situation, and the visiting Soviet sailors would not stand idly by while the Chinese workers were oppressed. Soviet audiences likely identified with the Soviet Captain and Soviet sailors in the ballet, cheering the characters on and proudly assuring themselves that they would perform equally selflessly if presented with the opportunity to combat capitalist exploitation.

The Soviet sailors sprang into action to model the teamwork and rhythmic motion needed for the task of unloading their ship, and the coolies quickly picked

up on the Soviet example and found their places in the human conveyor line. While the language of classical dance was not brought to bear in this situation—there is no evidence that the sailors and coolies executed ballet steps or turns as they passed the crates from one hand to the next—ballet's means of telling stories without words was extended in this scene. The scene of the unloading of the ship furthered the plot, and it was told largely in the absence of conventional nineteenth-century mime gestures. The key concepts in the scene were conveyed through a specific movement vocabulary that had not been needed in earlier ballets, where unloading cargo ships was much less common than royal weddings or peasant celebrations. Yet, the key concepts were conveyed through embodied action. With *Red Poppy*, the producers took a significant step in developing the narrative potential of Soviet ballet by including content-specific mode of embodied storytelling suited to the ballet's new (for ballet) ideological content.[68] Perhaps with influences from the "machine dances" that proliferated in the Soviet capitals after the choreography of Nikolai Mikhailovich Foregger, agitprop theater groups such as Proletkul't and the Blue Blouses, and contemporary Soviet fascination with rationalized labor,[69] *Red Poppy*'s producers conceived of a new medium between pure dance and pantomime.

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[68] While Lev Lashchilin is credited with choreography for Act I, Elizabeth Souritz asserts that the stage director Aleksei Dikii was actually responsible for the scene of unloading the Soviet ship (*Soviet Choreographers*, 248).

In another important scene, dance was used to characterize the relationship between Tao-Khoa and her fiancé Li Shan-fu. The fight between Li Shan-fu and Tao-Khoa in Act I is described in the published libretto as a "half-classical" duet.[70] The audience came to understand Tao-Khoa's position at the mercy of her fiancé's whims through the "bitterly broken poses"[71] of this dance. Painfully unbalanced positions established a meaningful distance from the balanced positions and well-defined shapes of classical ballet vocabulary. The breaking and warping of ballet shapes illuminated for the audience the power dynamic between Li Shan-fu and Tao-Khoa: he could manipulate her in torturous ways, and she struggled to defend herself. In this case, the Captain stepped in to save her because she was unable to escape on her own. The use of a "half-classical, half-ballroom dance" *pas de deux* helped to clarify the relationship between Tao-Khoa and Li Shan-fu while marking the characters' ideological positions. Tao-Khoa's yearning for freedom and positive

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[69] For more on Foregger's choreographies, see N. V. Sheremet'evskaia, *Tanets na estrade* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1985) and Elizaveta Uvarova, ed., *Russkaia sovetskaia estrada, 1917-1929* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1976). For more on Proletku'lt, see Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) and Lidiia Alekseevna Pinegina, *Sovetskii rabochii klass i khudozhestvennaia kul'tura (1917-1932)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1984). For basic background information on *Siniaia Bluza* (Blue Blouse) collectives, see *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia* (BSE, 2012), s.v. "Siniaia bluza," https://slovar.cc/enc/bse/2041432.html (accessed October 4, 2020). For more on Soviet enthrallment with Frederick Winslow Taylor/Taylorism, Henry Ford/Fordism, and the Scientific Organization of Labor (*Nauchnaia organizatsiia truda*), see Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), especially 146-149, and Tijana Vujosevic, *Modernism and the Making of the New Soviet Man* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), especially 37-63.

[70] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 26.

[71] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 26.

socialist ideals—embodied in classical shapes and positions—fought against Li Shan-fu's commitment to negative, capitalist convictions—represented by movements akin to those of the European officers and their partners or contemporary (bourgeois) music halls.[72] If the traditional nineteenth-century classical *pas de deux* usually represented a man and a woman who were in love, *Red Poppy*'s "half-classical" *pas de deux* served to represent a mismatched relationship between Tao-Khoa and her partner in terms both romantic and political.

The most important fusion of narrative and choreographic innovation in *Red Poppy* came in Act II. While the scene of the unloading of the Soviet ship and the "half-classical" duet between Tao-Khoa and Li Shan-fu used dance to tell the story in instances where nineteenth-century choreographers might have relied on mime, neither of these scenes used what might have been called pure dance or academic vocabulary (i.e., the classical ballet lexicon). However, in Act II, Vasilii Tikhomirov appropriated the form of the large classical ensemble and imbued that form with narrative significance.

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[72] Translator Lynn Visson calls Li Shan-fu's dance in this scene "apache:" "Here, juxtaposed with ballet movements, were combinations recalling apache dances, which were widespread in music halls before the revolution and during the twenties: the duet of a brazen, crude man and a frightened woman, totally obedient to him, whom he turns, lifts and flings about" (Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 247). Visson previously referred to Li Shan-fu as "the apache" in translating a contemporary interview with Gel'tser (Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 245).

The grand classical dance during Tao-Khoa's dream is part of the symbolic fight between good (Soviet principles) and evil (Chinese traditions). Critic Viktor Petrovich Iving mocked the lack of sophistication in the symbolism of the second act, calling Mikhail Kurilko (as librettist) and Vasilii Tikhomirov's attempt to convey the symbolic struggle "naive and unconvincing."[73] Iving's reportage contained some doubt as to whether audiences would actually either be able to follow the symbolism or would find the symbolism to be thought-provoking. Nonetheless, in the Soviet context, Tao-Khoa's political enlightenment—her rejection of Chinese religious traditions, historical gender roles, and contemporary capitalist interests—was perhaps the most politically important event in the libretto. This enlightenment, sparked by the scene when the Soviet sailors helped the coolies unload cargo from the Soviet ship in Act I, was danced to its culmination in Act II. Whether audiences could understand the dancing as consciousness-raising is an open question, but as a choreographer, Vasilii Tikhomirov united communication of the major event of the plot with the language of classical ballet.

For the denouement of Act II, which already featured large groups of children from the Bolshoi Ballet School as well as male and female dancers of GABT's corps de ballet, Tikhomirov created a dance for Tao-Khoa and four male partners like the "Rose Adagio" in *The Sleeping Beauty*. The whole act echoed "Le

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[73] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 9.

Jardin Animé," a scene from *Le Corsaire*, which features dancing flora.[74] The geometrical patterns Tikhomirov formed with the dancers are reminiscent of Petipa's grand ballets.[75] And the finale, Tao-Khoa's rise above the weight of Chinese traditions, was danced in the language and structure of classical ballet. Elizabeth Souritz describes the choreography of Act II:

> The entire familiar set of dances was included. Tao-Hoa's adagio with four male dancers as phoenixes; the effective variation, based on jumps, of the "Chinese idol"; the groups of flitting butterflies—the female soloists with large white wings, the men in multicolored costumes; the corps de ballet taking tiny mincing steps on toe as the red poppies. The divertissement also included a traditional children's number (dandelions), and ended with an obligatory coda.[76]

Even though the patterns and the movement vocabulary and types of dances were not new, the meaning invested in the canonical ballet steps and the way that the classical scene functioned to further the narrative broke with ballet's nineteenth-century conventions.

Act II dramatized Tao-Khoa's decision to break with Chinese traditions in favor of the ideals embodied by the Soviet Captain and sailors. Tikhomirov took

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[74] Souritz observes that contemporary critics ridiculed the dancing flowers as evidence that ballet had not advanced beyond Aleksandr Gorskii's children's ballet *Vechno zhivye tsvety* (Ever Fresh Flowers) (*Soviet Choreographers*, 243). Souritz discusses Gorskii's 1922 production of *Ever Fresh Flowers* (*Soviet Choreographers*, 144-153).

[75] Some of Vasilii Tikhomirov's sketches are preserved in RGALI f. 2729, op. 1, d. 18. Edward Tyerman also cites another file of Tikhomirov's preparatory materials ("Resignifying *The Red Poppy*," 451n8): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 321, ll. 3-11.

[76] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 242.

the nineteenth-century grand classical dance with soloists and a large ensemble and used that form, not as an interlude between events of the story, but to stage the major turning point in the ballet's plot. Rather than pausing the story for some dancing, the dancing embodied Tao-Khoa's inner conflict. Over the course of Act II, scenes 3, 4, and 5, a series of dance scenes depicted Tao-Khoa's estrangement from Buddhist and indigenous religious traditions, her flight from patriarchal norms, and her resolve to commit herself to the revolutionary ideals symbolized by "a ship with red sails"[77] (which recalled the Soviet Captain and his upstanding crew) and a field of dancing red poppies in Act II, scene 5. The libretto described the process of Tao-Khoa's consciousness-raising:

> All of these visions from Tao-Khoa's dream, according to the author of the libretto and the producers of the ballet, are supposed to illustrate in vivid form Tao-Khoa's internal struggle, that dissonance in her inner world, which materialized as a result of the influence of meeting the Soviet Captain. The bonds of religious belief and popular superstitions press upon her. The producers tried to show this in several purely symbolic scenes: the procession to the Buddhist temple supposedly reveals to the audience that the living roots of old religion are still to be found in Tao-Khoa's soul, the phoenixes should represent ancestral traditions that inhibit Tao-Khoa's instincts toward freedom, the red poppies should stand for a revolutionary new beginning, and the butterflies, lotuses, grasshoppers, and the rest typify all that is obsolete in China.[78]

By the end of Tao-Khoa's dream, she resolved to leave the Chinese past behind. Tao-Khoa's danced transformation also marked a transformation in how ballet told

[77] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 36.

[78] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 37. The published libretto contains references to its authors in this paragraph.

stories. This use of classical ballet to narrate the most politically important development in the plot constituted a breakthrough for Soviet ballet.

Red Poppy changed not only what stories ballet could tell but how ballet told stories. When ballet was tasked with telling a story that could politically educate and enlighten mass audiences, ballet producers developed new embodied methods of storytelling. In this way, the pedagogical imperative for all Soviet arts stimulated creativity in the genre of ballet.

Red Poppy **Rage, or** ***Krasnyi mak*** **Mania**

Marina Frolova-Walker and Jonathan Walker report, "By March 1928, all performances [of *Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater] had already been sold out through to the 1930 season."[79] The one-hundredth performance of *Red Poppy* took place on December 23, 1928, barely 1.5 years after the premiere,[80] at a time when ballet performances were normally presented at the Bolshoi Theater approximately three times per week during the nine-month theatrical season.[81] With seventy performances in the 1929-1930 season, *Red Poppy* was given more than twice as

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[79] Frolova-Walker and Walker, 193.

[80] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 251. See also a program from the one-hundredth performance preserved in Leonid Mikhailovich Lavrovskii's personal papers (RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 381).

[81] See Edward Tyerman, "Authenticity and Sacrifice: China Onstage," in "The Search for an Internationalist Aesthetics: Soviet Images of China, 1920-1935," 295n746. See also collected programs and monthly schedules for 1936-1937 in RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 2438. The Bolshoi Theater offered performances six nights a week, plus one or two matinees, and the majority of the performances were of operas. Elizabeth Souritz estimates that there were up to eighty ballet performances at the Bolshoi Theater per season in the late 1920s (*Soviet Choreographers*, 252); this works out to 2-3 performances per week in a nine-month theatrical season.

many times at the Bolshoi Theater as the next most frequently performed production, the opera *Eugene Onegin* (thirty-four performances).[82] As Table 1 shows, *Red Poppy* was performed almost twice as many times in the 1929-1930 season as all of the "classical" ballets in the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire combined.

Table 1. Number of ballet performances at the Bolshoi Theater in the 1929-1930 theatrical season.

Ballet	Number of Performances at the Bolshoi Theater (1929-1930 season)
Red Poppy	70
The Soccer Player	25
The Little Humpbacked Horse	9
The Sleeping Beauty	8
Swan Lake	8
La Esmeralda	7
La Bayadère	4
Raymonda	3

Source: RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 745, ll. 57-57ob.

In fact, the only other ballet presented more than ten times in the 1929-1930 season was *The Soccer Player* (twenty-five performances), another new Soviet production that premiered on March 30, 1930.[83] Even in the 1930-1931 and 1931-1932 seasons, with just twenty-six and twenty-four performances of *Red Poppy*, respectively, *Red Poppy* was performed at the Bolshoi Theater far more

[82] Repertoire lists (titles of operas and ballets) for the Bolshoi Theater, with indication of the number of performances per title per season in 1929-1930, 1930-1931, and 1931-1932 and which productions premiered in those seasons: RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 745, ll. 57-57ob.

[83] *The Soccer Player* (Futbolist) had libretto by Vsevolod Valerianovich Kurdiumov, music by Viktor Aleksandrovich Oranskii, and choreography by Lev Lashchilin and Igor' Aleksandrovich Moiseev (Zarubin, 156-158).

often than any other ballet and also more often than all but one or two of the operas in current repertoire.[84]

Despite all of those chances to see *Red Poppy*, the ballet still brought in box office revenue that was above the average box office takings for ballet performances at the Bolshoi Theater. According to GABT's financial report for 1931, even four years after its premiere the ballet still brought in more than the average ballet receipts for both evening and matinee performances.[85] Audiences were not tired of *Red Poppy*. They kept coming.

Red Poppy was a sensation. Frolova-Walker and Walker observe that "it broke all records for popularity with the public."[86] Between June 1927 and May 1936, there were 317 performances of *Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater.[87] The ballet was soon produced in other theaters of opera and ballet in Soviet Russia,[88] it was staged abroad,[89] and it seeped into everyday Soviet life beyond the theaters. In

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[84] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 745, ll. 57-57ob.

[85] Sbory po GABTu SSSR za 1931 g.: RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 399, ll. 25-25ob.

[86] Frolova-Walker and Walker, *Music and Soviet Power*, 193.

[87] Zarubin, 149.

[88] *Krasnyi mak* was staged at the former Mariinsky Theater in Leningrad (1929) and at the theaters of opera and ballet in Saratov (1928) and Sverdlovsk (1928, 1930) (E. P. Belova, et al., *Russkii balet, Entsiklopediia, Bol'shaia Russkaia Entsiklopediia* [Solgasie, 1997], s.v. "Krasnyi mak," http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/k/krasn3y-mak.html [accessed October 4, 2020]). I also came across a program for *Krasnyi mak* from the Perm' State Theater of Opera and Ballet (1932-1933 season) in a search on images.google.com (April 23, 2019).

[89] O. S. Sapanzha and N. A. Baladina note that *Red Poppy* was staged in Riga in 1933 and Tallin in 1939 ("Balet 'Krasnyi mak' v prostranstve sovetskoi povsednevnoi kul'tury," *Vestnik Akademii*

the 1930s, there was at least one collective farm called "Red Poppy" located in the North Caucasus.[90] According to Elizabeth Souritz, "Red Poppy perfume and soap, candy and cookies appeared for sale; a café of the same name opened."[91]

Red Poppy featured catchy music, exciting events that seemed to leap off of newspaper pages, and characters with whom Soviet audiences could relate. The orchestral score was tuneful and threaded with familiar themes such as "The Internationale" and "The Little Apple" as well as popular social dances of the day (foxtrot, tango, Boston waltz, Charleston). The events of the plot melded bits of international news into a tragic story with Soviet heroes. The Soviet Captain and sailors stood up for the Chinese workers and embodied efficient, even joyful, labor. And the ballet showed contemporary foreign workers who were attracted to socialist ideals, including humane treatment of workers and gender equality. The Chinese characters wanted to be like the Soviet characters, who in turn represented the exemplary people the Soviet citizens wanted to be.

Russkogo baleta im. A. Ia. Vaganovoi 1, no. 48 [2017]: 34). N. V. Kiseleva describes a production of *Red Poppy* by the company Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo which premiered in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1943 ("'Krasnyi mak' R. M. Gliera Pervaia Postanovka v Amerike," *Vestnik Akademii Russkogo baleta im. A. Ia. Vaganovoi* 2, no. 37 [2015]: 98).

[90] Russian State Archive of Documentary Film and Photography (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kino-foto Dokumentov, hereafter RGAKFD) d. 01877-ch/b. The photograph was taken in 1935.

[91] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 250. Sapanzha and Balandina describe the *Red Poppy* perfume and its special bottle and packaging, which were produced shortly after the ballet premiered in 1927 (36-37); they also note that there was *Red Poppy* cosmetic powder in the 1930s (37). Elena Konstantinovna Kolikova kindly presented me with *Red Poppy* chocolates during my research at RGAKFD in 2017.

Perhaps more than all of these elements, *Red Poppy* was known as the first Soviet ballet. Its sheer novelty must also have been a draw for audiences. Mocked and ridiculed almost as often as it was praised,[92] *Red Poppy* became a staple of Soviet popular culture.

Gendered Possibilities in Soviet Popular Culture

There were plenty of other artistic productions that featured contemporary Soviet characters in the 1920s. Why did Soviet popular culture need *Red Poppy*? What did Soviet popular culture gain with this new hybrid story ballet? In order to understand the significance of *Red Poppy* in Soviet popular culture of the late 1920s, it is worth comparing and contrasting *Red Poppy* not only with its nineteenth-century ballet antecedents but also with a contemporary Soviet cultural production: the 1926 film adaptation of Maksim Gor'kii's novel *Mother* (Mat'). A comparison of the characters in *Mother* and *Red Poppy* reveals that, while the film and the ballet presented variations on a common revolutionary theme (conversion to the socialist cause), the ballet reversed the gender roles of the main characters. The ballet complemented the gendered possibilities in the film and other genres,[93]

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[92] Edward Tyerman provides an overview of contemporary press reception of *Red Poppy*—positive and negative—in "The Search for an Internationalist Aesthetics: Soviet Images of China, 1920-1935," 329-335.

[93] Edward Tyerman contrasts *Red Poppy* with the 1926 play *Roar, China!* (Rychi, Kitai!) in "The Search for an Internationalist Aesthetics: Soviet Images of China, 1920-1935." The play's gendered possibilities line up closely with those of *Mother*, providing further evidence that *Red Poppy* was unique and therefore a valuable addition to Soviet popular culture in the late 1920s.

thus doubling the possibilities for audiences to imagine themselves in ideologically positive roles.

By the time of *Red Poppy*'s germination, there had already been two Soviet film adaptations of Gor'kii's novel *Mother*.[94] The second film version, directed by Vsevolod Illarionovich Pudovkin, was released in 1926; this version of *Mother* was in the Zeitgeist as the creative team for *Red Poppy* strove to put together the story, music, and staging for the first evening-length narrative ballet on revolutionary subject matter.[95] In fact, Judith Mayne's description of the film could describe *Red Poppy* almost equally well: "Pudovkin's film traces the increasing politicization of a woman as she moves from an identity defined exclusively in patriarchal terms to an identity shaped by commitment to political struggle."[96]

The film centers on a family: father, mother, and son. It is 1905, and the father joins the Black Hundred to break a strike at the local factory; he is fatally

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[94] Film director Aleksandr Efimovich Razumnyi produced a film adaptation of *Mother* (Mat') in 1919. Denise J. Youngblood observes that Razumnyi's film hewed much closer to Gorkii's story than did Pudovkin's 1926 film (*Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era*, 1918-1935 [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991], 86).

[95] This was a Mezhrabpom-Rus film with scenario by Natan Abramovich Zarkhi (after Gor'kii's novel), assistant directors Mikhail Ivanovich Doller and V. Strauss, cinematographer Anatolii Dmitrievich Golovnia, and designer Sergei Vasil'evich Kozlovskii (Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* [1960; repr., New York: Collier Books, 1973], 431). Philip Ross Bullock calls *Mat'* "that most conspicuously transposed text of Soviet literature;" there were two later film adaptions of *Mat'* (1956, 1990) as well as a play (1933) and two operas (1937, 1957) ("Staging Stalinism: The Search for Soviet Opera in the 1930s," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 1 [2006]: 97).

[96] Judith Mayne, *Kino and the Woman Question: Feminism and Soviet Silent Film* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), 91.

shot by a revolutionary. The son is among the organizers of the strike, and his revolutionary activity alarms the mother. The mother turns her son in to the local police, who arrest, try, and convict him of undermining the tsarist regime. During the trial, it suddenly dawns on the mother that the tsarist regime is not above reproach. She begs her convicted son's forgiveness and helps his revolutionary comrades organize the prison break that will allow him to escape. After the prison break, the mother marches with the revolutionaries. When they are attacked by tsarist forces and the son is shot, the mother retrieves the banner from the mud and continues her forward march. At the end of the film, the mother is trampled to death by the horses as the tsarist troops decimate the revolutionaries.[97]

According to Peter Kenez, "The theme of *Mother* was that in the new world it is the old who must learn from the young."[98] This was a common theme in Soviet culture of the 1920s, and this theme was also present in *Red Poppy*, where upon witnessing his daughter's murder, Tao-Khoa's father converted to the revolutionary cause. For most of the ballet, Tao-Khoa's father was one of the Chinese villains, along with her fiancé Li Shan-fu, the two Chinese conspirators, and the ambivalent old magician. In the *dramatis personae* and in Act I of the published libretto for the 1927 production, Tao-Khoa's father was introduced as the chief overseer of the

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[97] *Mat'*, directed by Vsevolod Pudovkin, Mezhrabpom-Rus, 1926 (remastered 1968), YouTube, Biznes Posidelki, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybiLS8Orrag (accessed September 23, 2020).

[98] Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 214.

coolies. He worked for the European capitalists, beating his countrymen (the coolies) to make them work harder so that the Europeans could make even greater profits. Then, suddenly, at the end of the ballet, Tao-Khoa's father had his own moment of political enlightenment. He switched sides. Part of the section of the 1927 libretto about the apotheosis reads: "Tao-Khoa's death triggers a crisis within her father. He joins the revolutionaries."[99] Critic Viktor Iving admitted that Tao-Khoa's father's abrupt awakening was a confusing moment in the 1927 Bolshoi Theater production: "During the entire performance, the audience sees [Tao-Khoa's father] as a fervent counterrevolutionary. His moral rebirth at the end of the performance, when he suddenly grabs a red banner and joins the revolutionary coolies, is presented entirely without motivation."[100]

Red Poppy and *Mother* had in common a seemingly unmotivated and abrupt parental conversion to the revolutionary cause, but the genders of the converted parents are reversed. In the film, the mother suddenly asks, "Where is the justice?" when her son is sentenced by the tsarist court to hard labor in Siberia, and she subsequently participates in revolutionary activities by hiding leaflets under the floorboards of her home, carrying her son a message about the plot to enable his escape from prison, and marching with the revolutionaries against the

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[99] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 45.

[100] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 10. This observation is part of Iving's larger critique of the lack of logical motivation for events in the libretto of *The Red Poppy*.

tsarist military forces.[101] At the very end of the ballet, Tao-Khoa's father abandoned his role as chief enforcer of the European capitalists' oppression of Chinese workers to pick up the revolutionary banner. The primary difference between the two parental conversions was the gender of the parent: female in the film and male in the ballet. In the film, the mother learned from her son, while in the ballet, the father learned from his daughter.

Therefore, there was also a gender reversal between the film and the ballet regarding the revolutionary children. In *Mother*, as in most examples of Soviet literature and other artistic genres from this time, the revolutionary hero is male.[102] The son becomes, in Katerina Clark's analysis of the novel, the mentor to his mother-disciple.[103] *Red Poppy*, by contrast, featured a revolutionary heroine. Tao-Khoa may not have had a chance to serve as a mentor to her father because it was her death that prompted his supposed transformation into revolutionary actor, but Tao-Khoa's consciousness-raising is at the center of the ballet's plot. This focus on the process of consciousness-raising also sets the ballet apart from the film.

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[101] *Mother*, directed by Vsevolod Pudovkin, Mezhrabpom-Rus, 1926 (remastered 1968, English subtitles added 1982), YouTube, kinoved kinovedov, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sX1VDZNCJMI (accessed October 16, 2020).

[102] According to Victoria Bonnell's analysis of Soviet poster art, "women occup[ied] a position of secondary importance in visual propaganda produced between 1917 and 1929" (*Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* [1997; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999], 9). Katerina Clark also focuses on "the positive hero" in *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[103] According to Clark, "for mother and son are to each other as disciple and mentor" (*The Soviet Novel*, 65).

The son-hero in *Mother* is already cooperating with the revolutionaries at the start of the 1926 film, while Tao-Khoa did not seem to be aware of any revolutionary movements at the beginning of the 1927 ballet. The film sidesteps both processes of political enlightenment: the son's enlightenment comes before the beginning of the film and the mother's enlightenment happens without protracted on-screen deliberation.[104] The ballet, however, dwelt on Tao-Khoa's struggle between her identity in prerevolutionary Chinese society—especially because she was gendered female and therefore subservient to men and ethnically Chinese and therefore subservient to Europeans—and the potential for flattening these hierarchies promised by the ideals embodied by the Soviet Captain and sailors. Tao-Khoa's consciousness-raising was not instantaneous. Whereas the mother in *Mother* suddenly abandoned her devotion to the tsarist system, Tao-Khoa (at least symbolically) grappled with the prerevolutionary traditions that were stifling her burgeoning desires for freedom. In this way, Tao-Khoa's consciousness-raising presented a more realistic example of a woman who thought through her position and rationally chose to side with socialism. Perhaps Soviet audiences found this protracted embodiment of socialist consciousness-raising appealing.

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[104] Katerina Clark describes the son and mother's consciousness-raisings in the novel *Mother* as "a ritual conferral of 'consciousness'," rather than an internal struggle for consciousness out of "spontaneity" (the state of not yet being politically aware) (*The Soviet Novel*, 57).

Tao-Khoa's choice was more motivated than her father's and than the mother's conversion in *Mother*.

Katerina Clark terms the plot of Gor'kii's novel *Mother* the prototypical "'road to consciousness' plot,"[105] and Denise Youngblood characterizes Pudovkin's film version of *Mother* as "easily the single most successful [Soviet] film... in terms of satisfying the demand for a traditional narrative film with revolutionary content."[106] *Red Poppy* did not constitute a precise formula for future Soviet ballets, but it did establish that Soviet ballet could dance the "road to consciousness plot." *Red Poppy* was easily the most successful Soviet ballet of the 1920s and the first full-length narrative ballet with a revolutionary theme. The ballet *Red Poppy* presented many of the same ideological messages as the film *Mother*, especially the theme of the young teaching the old how to build a better future. But the gender roles were reversed in the ballet, making room for more diversity of representation among the positive characters. In the ballet, the daughter teaches her father.

The character of Tao-Khoa's father has, thus far, received little attention from historians. He is particularly interesting because he spends most of the ballet beating the Chinese coolies and plotting to assassinate the Soviet Captain before abruptly joining the rebels who are in the process of overthrowing the European

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[105] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 65.

[106] Youngblood, 88.

capitalists in the ballet's apotheosis. As Xenia Gasiorowska observes, "The transfer of a character from the conservative to the progressive camp... was rare, and was more likely to take the form of a victim's awakening than of a villain's conversion."[107] Far from a typical victim, Tao-Khoa's father was a perpetrator of physical violence and psychological oppression of his daughter and his countrymen. He offers a rare example of a villain's political awakening in Soviet culture, perhaps pointing to the redeemability or perfectibility of even the most hardened class enemies.

The ballet and the film show variations on a woman's commitment to revolutionary struggle, but the ballet also goes further than the film in showing the process of a woman's political enlightenment. Judith Mayne observes that, even though the mother is the title character in the film and "it is her change that gives the film its basic structure, the overarching perspective of the film is clearly identified with the son. It is *his* revolution, and *his* identity that ultimately benefits from the change in the mother."[108] Tao-Khoa really is the central character of the ballet named after the supposed translation of her name ("red poppy"); the ballet is

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[107] Xenia Gasiorowska, *Women in Soviet Fiction, 1917-1964* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 43. Note that Gasiorowska's analysis focused on female characters, both positive and negative.

[108] Mayne, 104. It is also interesting that *Red Poppy* privileges a female character who was not—and would never become—a mother. Tyerman suggests a symbolic reproduction of revolution via the red poppy that the Soviet Captain gives Tao-Khoa before he departs ("The Search for an Internationalist Aesthetics: Soviet Images of China, 1920-1935," 346-347).

structured around her changing perception of her environment and herself. The mother's abrupt transformation is unlike Tao-Khoa's danced reflection on Chinese patriarchal social norms and ancient religious traditions versus socialist ideals of gender equality, freedom from religion, and joyful collective labor. The ballet bodies forth Tao-Khoa's attraction to the possibilities inherent in socialist ideals and her deliberate choice to side with the Soviets. In these ways, *Red Poppy* presented gendered possibilities not available in other contemporary genres. The ballet made unique contributions not only to the history of Soviet ballet but to gendered representations in Soviet popular culture.

Chapter Conclusion: A Big Break for Soviet Ballet (and the Bolshoi Theater)

On May 13, 1928, Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin gave a brief speech to open the Eighth All-Union Congress of the Komsomol. His main point was that the Komsomol newspaper *Komsomol'skaia pravda* was not taking seriously its responsibility "to best educate youth in the Communist spirit."[109] Kalinin's example was *Komsomol'skaia pravda*'s coverage of a scandal at the Bolshoi Theater known as Golovanovshchina,[110] coverage which he viewed as excessive, one-sided, and without the potential to positively influence young people's Communist worldviews. Kalinin exhorted the Komsomol members in his audience to smite all

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[109] M. I. Kalinin, 228-237 (quote from 234). The speech was also published in *Izvestiia* on May 20, 1928.

[110] For more on Golovanovshchina, see Chapter 4.

of the negative aspects of the Bolshoi Theater's operations "in order to further ennoble the Bolshoi Theater so that it can become a powerful instrument for the upbringing of the new person."[111] He praised the Bolshoi Theater for "the enormous labor, superhuman labor, energy, expertise, [and] talent" that went into its productions. And he praised *Red Poppy*, in particular: "what you all will see in *Red Poppy*, it's monumentally difficult, how much patience was invested." That, he said, was what *Komsomol'skaia pravda* should be illuminating for its readers.[112] And Kalinin finished his speech by characterizing *Red Poppy* as a "magnificent—already Soviet—creation."[113]

The first "Soviet" ballet blended tropes from nineteenth-century classical ballets with new political ideas, contemporary characters, and innovative approaches to danced storytelling. According to Viktor Iving, *Red Poppy* was the first production at the Bolshoi Theater (ballet or opera) on a contemporary subject.[114] *Red Poppy* proved that ballet could be idea-filled and educative, more than mere entertainment. And ballet had the potential to participate in building socialism and rearing socialist citizens. To this end, I suggest that *Red Poppy* was more about celebrating and modeling Soviet socialist principles than about

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[111] Kalinin, 235.

[112] Kalinin, 236.

[113] Kalinin, 237.

[114] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 3.

educating Soviet audiences regarding Chinese culture. Further, *Red Poppy* offered Soviet popular culture a more positive, more rational female character and a redeemable male class enemy; models like these characters were few and far between in other artistic genres.

Elizabeth Souritz and Valerii Zarubin credit *Red Poppy* with ending the dispute over whether classical ballet should be preserved.[115] Indeed, *Red Poppy* justified ballet's existence in Soviet socialist culture. The history of *Red Poppy* is not the history of artists who protected their prerevolutionary traditions from socialist contamination. *Red Poppy* was the result of artists attempting to update ballet for its new socialist milieu and purposes, artists attempting to fulfill their roles in Soviet socialist society.

There were just five original ballets with music by Soviet composers staged in the government theaters in the Soviet Union in the 1920s.[116] Of those first five Soviet ballets, only *Red Poppy* was widely reproduced in other versions at multiple theaters around the country and revived in new productions by subsequent generations of artists. Of course, those other versions and later productions at the Bolshoi Theater and elsewhere were not the same as the Bolshoi Theater's original

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[115] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers*, 253, and Zarubin, 149.

[116] Spisok baletov sovetskikh avtorov, postavlennykh na stsenakh teatrov SSSR /v khronologicheskom poriadke, s ukazaniem let pervy[kh] postanovok/: RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 485, l. 17. The handwritten note at the top of the list indicates that the records are through 1956 (inclusive).

production of *Red Poppy*. However, eventually, more than a dozen other theaters took some variety of *Red Poppy*'s musical score, libretto, set of ideas, and characters and created their own versions. Therefore, the Bolshoi Theater's 1927 production of *Red Poppy*, more than any other production of this period, marked an important turning point in the Sovietization of ballet. *Red Poppy* was ballet's big break, because it secured a place for the genre of ballet in Soviet culture.

As both my analysis and that of other scholars (especially Souritz, Tyerman, Morrison, and Priest) shows, *Red Poppy* was not a clean break with the ballet's past. And as the next chapters demonstrate, socialist realism in ballet was not a rupture with all the ballet performed and produced in the Soviet state theaters in the 1920s, including *Red Poppy*.[117] In fact, the Bolshoi Theater's original production of *Red Poppy* was performed from June 14, 1927, all the way through May 12, 1936.[118] *Red Poppy* did not suddenly disappear from the repertoire when "socialist realism" was articulated and wide-ranging discussions ensued about how to make socialist realist ballet; while *Red Poppy* was withdrawn from the repertoire for more than a decade, GABT returned to reimagine *Red Poppy* for a new

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[117] Previous scholarship on other artistic genres has also made the point that socialist realism incorporated existing artistic tropes. Among the most influential are Clark, *The Soviet Novel*; Evgeny Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (1992; repr., London: Verso, 2011); and Régine Robin, *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

[118] Zarubin, 149.

generation of Soviet audiences in 1949. To borrow a framing question and its answer succinctly articulated by Katerina Clark: rather than "'continuity or change?'," Soviet ballet experienced "continuity and change."[119]

The title of this chapter conjures the concept of "*velikii perelom*." The period in Soviet history known as the "Great Break" is associated with Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin's article "The Year of the Great Break: Toward the Twelfth Anniversary of the October Revolution." Published in *Pravda* on November 7, 1929, the article outlined a three-point plan for an economic reversal and a "break" with capitalist aspects of the Soviet economy associated with the mid-1920s New Economic Policy.[120] While it is not my intent to propose a re-periodization of Soviet historiography, I think it is important to contend with genre-specific (and, more broadly, subject-specific) variations in the practical operations of Soviet everyday life, including everyday life in a state theater. While, as Chapter 4 shows, the "Cultural Revolution" (1928-1931) did not create a significant rupture in ballet production practices at GABT, *Red Poppy* had already served as a turning point in the history of ballet in the Soviet Union two years before the Great Break.

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[119] Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), ix.

[120] I. V. Stalin, "God velikogo pereloma: K XII godovshchine Oktiabria," Marxists Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/russkij/stalin/t12/t12_06.htm (accessed October 19, 2020). Chapter 1 briefly describes the environment for cultural production during the New Economic Policy (1921-1928).

After *Red Poppy*'s overwhelming popular success, GABT's existential crises subsided. In the first eight years after the October Revolution, there were numerous attempts to close the former Imperial Theaters.[121] By the tenth anniversary of the revolution, the theaters were irrevocable parts of the Soviet cultural project, and they no longer faced serious threats. Actually, the Soviet government invested in building, staffing, and operating dozens more theaters of opera and ballet around the country! New repertoire, popular with mass audiences, was key to the institutions' survival. *Red Poppy*'s fusion of classical dance and socialist ideas gave the theaters and ballet artists breathing room to continue experimenting with other ways of creating ballets that could politically educate and enlighten mass audiences.

[121] For a chronology of institutional threats to GABT, see Chapter 1.

Chapter Four

Mermaid Revolutionaries? Milkmaids on Pointe? Socialist Realism and Making Ballet "Soviet" in the 1930s

> GABT dancer Mikhail Markovich Gabovich: The thing is that the libretti that they are giving us to produce are phenomenally unsuitable. They are a rehashing of everything old without consideration for ballet's capabilities. I can give you an anecdotal example of the kind of libretti that we've received. Such libretti can only ruin ballet theater and not help it achieve its proper eminence. So, for example, they compose a libretto like this: a Soviet ship is docked in Odessa, and there a Soviet sailor dives down to the ocean floor—
> From the floor: Soviet
> Gabovich: —He dives down to the Soviet ocean floor, and he meets a mermaid—
> From the floor: Soviet
> Gabovich: —a Soviet mermaid. A rebellion ensues in the underwater kingdom against the king of the merpeople. Therefore, the sailor, of course, can't pass by this insurrection indifferently, and he helps dethrone the king of the merpeople, and so on. It's just an anecdotal example, but we have a lot of this type of libretto.
>
> —from the debate on the ways forward for Soviet ballet (April 19, 1932)

Chapter Introduction

The anecdotal example above points to the complications inherent in repurposing an art form that developed over centuries in the contexts of European courts to serve the pedagogical mission of Soviet culture in the 1930s. Nineteenth-century ballet depicted fantastic realms—underwater kingdoms, ghostly woods, opium dreams, and spectral visions. But starting in the 1930s, Soviet art was supposed to be "socialist realist." Some of the first attempts to devise ballets on contemporary Soviet subjects were clumsy, like this example of setting a revolution in an underwater kingdom of merpeople. On the one hand, the mermaid was a

character type that dancers and choreographers were used to presenting and audiences were used to seeing on the ballet stage, and the movement vocabulary of classical ballet lent itself to depicting characters such as mermaids. On the other hand, mermaids were not inherently socialist or realist.

By 1930, more than a decade after the October Revolution, there had been only one really successful Soviet ballet: *Red Poppy*, which premiered at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow in 1927 and by 1930 had been staged in Leningrad, Saratov, and Sverdlovsk.[1] And yet, dancers and choreographers did not feel that *Red Poppy* could be a template for future Soviet ballets. GABT dancer Mikhail Gabovich remarked that, despite its revolutionary subject matter, *Red Poppy* "was some sort of eclectic, completely unresolved thing, a complete hodgepodge of any and everything. Maybe it's a stage in the development of our [Soviet] ballet, but one should never consider *Red Poppy* a ballet on which a new dance system can be based. The ballet includes a whole array of dances that aren't justified by the subject matter."[2] *Red Poppy* was a significant step in the integration of socialist

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The epigraph is a quoted exchange from the stenographic record of the debate: Disput o putiakh sovetskogo baleta (v sviazi s konkursom k 15 godovshchine Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii): Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, hereafter RGALI) f. 962, op. 3, d. 5, l. 23. "GABT" is the Russian acronym for the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (Gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii Bol'shoi teatr SSSR).

[1] The production process and production of *Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater in 1927 are the subject of Chapter 3. Mikhail Ivanovich Kurilko contributed the libretto and designs for *Krasnyi mak*, Reingol'd Moritsevich Glier composed the music, and Lev Aleksandrovich Lashchilin and Vasilii Dmitrievich Tikhomirov choreographed the original production.

[2] Stenogramma disputa o putiakh sovetskogo baleta (V sviazi s konkursom k XV godovshchine Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii) as published in *Mnemozina: Dokumenty i Fakty iz istorii Otechestvennogo*

ideas with the choreographic structures and physical lexicon of classical ballet, but it was only a first step. Even as the Bolshoi Ballet continued to perform *Red Poppy* for sold-out audiences in the 1930s,[3] dancers, choreographers, and other interested producers debated how to make ballet Soviet.

As Gabovich observed above, the art of ballet had "capabilities" that early Soviet ballets did not fully utilize.[4] Participants in the discussions about ballet in the 1930s assumed that ballet was capable of moving mass audiences. During the debate on the ways forward for Soviet ballet in April 1932, actor and reciter Emmanuil Isaakovich Kaminka declared, "We are dealing with the type of art that can orchestrate mass audiences' enthusiasm—their depths of feeling—to the maximum degree."[5] Ballet's perceived capacity to reach and to influence mass audiences was key to the art form's survival in the Soviet Union. The Soviet government and Communist Party invested in ballet as a means of politically educating and enlightening mass audiences. By the 1930s, this capacity of ballet

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teatra XX veka 6 (2014), 602-603. I thank Elizabeth Hannah Stern for sharing this volume of *Mnemozina* with me.

[3] The original production of *Red Poppy* ran at the Bolshoi Theater from June 14, 1927, until May 12, 1936 (V. I. Zarubin, *Pervye postanovki baletov na russkoi stsene 1825-1997* [Moscow: Ellis Luck, 1998], 144, 149).

[4] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 5, l. 23.

[5] "Stenogramma disputa," 594. In the archival copy of the *stenogramma* that I handled (RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 5), Kaminka's name is missing from the page where his speech begins. For references to Kaminka's remarks, I cite the version of the *stenogramma* (from a copy in a different *fond* at RGALI) published in *Mnemozina*, where Kaminka's speech is clearly attributed to him.

(and other art forms) was integrated in the quest for *kul'turnost'* (culturedness, or the quality of being cultured).

Vadim Volkov explains that early understandings of *kul'turnost'* incorporated habits of dress, personal hygiene, diet, table manners, speech, and the organization and equipment of living and work spaces. These were all habits that peasants new to the city and the factory (and workers recently promoted from the shop floor to management positions) needed to learn in order to be effective members of Soviet society. In the mid-1930s, *kul'turnost'* came to include the consumption of officially approved literature, music, and other works of artistic production. As Volkov observes, "To become a cultured person one must [have] read classical literature, contemporary Soviet fiction, poetry, newspapers, works by Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin, as well as [have] attend[ed] the cinema and exhibitions with the purpose of self-education."[6] In addition to current events, political texts, literatures, cinema, and visual arts, ballet and opera were forms of culture that Soviet officials sponsored and disseminated for inclusion in what Volkov terms Soviet people's "common cultural horizon."[7] Soviet citizens were supposed to be able to understand and appreciate a wide range of cultural artifacts, including but

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[6] Vadim Volkov, "The Concept of *kul'turnost'*: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process" in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2000), 225.

[7] Volkov, 224. See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 79-83; and Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), esp. 116-131.

not limited to artistic works. Soviet leaders assumed that citizens with an unimpeded grasp of the common cultural horizon would be willing and able to successfully build the world's first socialist society.[8]

Soviet ballet, like other art forms in the Soviet Union but unlike prerevolutionary Russian ballet (or twentieth-century ballet in Western Europe and North America), was supposed to contribute to the political education and enlightenment of mass audiences. In order for ballet to serve this instructive purpose, it had to be accessible to mass audiences. People had to be able to afford the time, money, and energy to experience performances. They needed to understand how to comport themselves during performances.[9] And the performances they experienced had to be comprehensible to them. In other words, people could not learn from ballet if they could not understand what they were experiencing. To this end, artists and officials sought to make Soviet ballets accessible for mass audiences by selecting edifying subject matter, devising dramatically sound plots, and finding ways to convey stories with ballet's corporeal languages.

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[8] Pauline Fairclough, among others, notes that there was very little research on whether artistic experiences did or did not cultivate better workers and citizens (*Classics for the Masses: Shaping Soviet Musical Identity under Lenin and Stalin* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016], 53). Soviet leaders firmly held on to the assumption that *kul'tura* was a positive influence on people, but they rarely commissioned studies of the effects on Soviet people of the government's unprecedented investments in furnishing mass audiences with *kul'tura*.

[9] For more on GABT's audience development and outreach strategies during the 1910s through the 1950s including efforts to reduce economic barriers and educate new audiences, see Chapter 2.

This chapter argues that socialist realism in ballet was not dictated from above or micromanaged by the newly created All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs (VKpDI). The priorities and forms of Soviet ballet developed along paths that were worked out in practice and through discussions that engaged artists themselves. Officials who were not practicing artists participated in many of these discussions, but they acknowledged and sought artists' expertise in determining what kinds of stories ballet should tell, how those stories needed to be structured, and with what physical language Soviet ballet should incorporate those stories. Critically, the discussions reveal that the pedagogical imperative for Soviet arts (including ballet) was a shared goal of both officials and artists. Everyone who participated in the discussions offered his or her suggestions about how to make ballet performances more accessible and relevant to Soviet people.

My approach has much in common with Marina Frolova-Walker's approach to music in the Stalin period; I approach ballet neither exclusively from the top nor exclusively from the bottom but from the middle, incorporating the perspectives of artists and other experts who served as intermediaries between working-class audiences and the Soviet political elite. Frolova-Walker affirms, "The ideas that were taken up as state policy had sometimes been in circulation for years and originated with relatively lowly players, awaiting the day when a suitably powerful administrative apparatus was in a position to realise them. Only in retrospect did

they become 'Stalin's policies'."[10] It is in discussions among the "relatively lowly players" (relative to Stalin and the Politbiuro), such as the discussions I cite, that much practical and creative artistic work was accomplished.

Adapting a prerevolutionary art form for the Soviet pedagogical imperative was a fundamentally artistic process that engaged the professional expertise of dancers, choreographers, stage directors, and other artists. These discussions challenge assumptions that situate the Soviet state in opposition to artists and show how artists exercised agency in the 1930s. Taken together, the discussions illuminate how characteristics of "Soviet" ballet were developed in conversation with professionals, not mandated to resistant artists. The debates show how the pedagogical imperative for Soviet arts facilitated artistic innovation in ballet.

The sources for this chapter mainly consist of stenographic records of meetings and debates held in Moscow. In chronological order, these include: the debate on the ways forward for Soviet ballet (April 19, 1932), a dance conference (June 14-16, 1933), the all-union dance conference (November 21-23, 1936), and a meeting with VKpDI Chairman Platon Mikhailovich Kerzhentsev about ballet issues held at the Bolshoi Theater (October 7, 1937). However, because I do not see much change over time within this five-year span, I have chosen to organize

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[10] Marina Frolova-Walker, "The Soviet Opera Project: Ivan Dzerzhinsky vs. Ivan Susanin," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 2 (July 2006): 186.

the chapter thematically. Three of the primary topics debated were subject matter, plot structure, and methods for embodied storytelling.

These meetings and debates brought together poets, librettists, bureaucrats, pedagogues, composers, and others interested in the future of Soviet ballet. I have tried to ascertain the first name and patronymic for each speaker cited. However, the stenographic records often list only the last name, and for some relatively common last names and/or speakers whose names I was unable to cross-reference in other documents, I could not determine more specifically who the speakers were. At these meetings GABT was represented by members of its artistic staff and by administrators, including both male and female members of the ballet company.[11] I also cite internal meeting minutes from GABT, especially with respect to discussions of prospective ballet libretti.

This chapter begins with historical context about the 1930s and GABT's changing institutional environment. Next, I describe how general parameters of socialist realism were defined in the early 1930s and how the Great Appropriation influenced discussions about Soviet ballet. After that, I demonstrate how the

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[11] These sources contain wide-ranging discussions about topics that are not central to this project. I will reserve for other projects the questions of the needs for one or more institutions of higher education (*vysshee uchebnoe zavedenie*) for the training of choreographers, pedagogues, and other artistic personnel; other sorts of centralized institutions for the management of ballet training and production; the ballet schools; the place and future of "character dance" in Soviet ballet; ballet publications and ballet critics; methodological and ethnographic research related to dance; and the strengthening of the relationships between professional theaters and theater professionals with amateur dance circles and amateur dance practice in the Soviet Union.

discussions about what was appropriate for Soviet ballet in the 1930s boiled down to three main principles: appropriate subject matter, danceable dramaturgy, and embodied storytelling. Finally, I delve into participants' opinions on recent Soviet ballets, including *Red Poppy* and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, to reveal how artists attempted to construct a canon of suitable models for future ballet productions.

Historical Context and Institutional Changes

The 1930s were a period of tremendous upheaval in the Soviet Union. The almost simultaneous campaigns of the First Five-Year Plan (1928-1932) and collectivization wreaked havoc in both urban and rural parts of the country. The First Five-Year Plan constituted a massive expansion of industrial capacity, during which speed and quantity were prioritized over quality, safety, and environmental repercussions. Technical and academic experts were pushed aside in what has come to be known as the Cultural Revolution (1928-1931). Meanwhile, grain requisitioning; dispossessing peasants of their land, livestock, and other property; and involuntary formation of large "collective farms" (*kollektivnye khoziaistva*, or *kolkhozy*) to replace individual family farms led to famines that killed millions of people in the early 1930s. The Great Purges (1936-1938) hit Communist Party members and Red Army officers and their families particularly hard but sowed terror throughout much of Soviet society. By the end of the decade, upwards of ten million Soviet people had died unnaturally, millions more were exiled or

imprisoned, and World War II had begun, which would soon threaten Soviet lives and territory. The 1930s were a period of unprecedented industrial progress and unimaginable brutality.

On the cultural front, there had been an upsurge in "proletarian" artistic theorization and production in the late 1920s. Organizations such as the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers and the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians tried to "secure the hegemony of the proletariat" in their respective genres.[12] They sought to make art for (and when possible by) proletarians, just as "proletarian hegemony" was the watchword in campaigns against technical specialists in industry and established farming practices in the countryside. However, the Cultural Revolution in practice played out differently in different sectors of Soviet society. Overall, attacks on experts (such as professors at the state music conservatories) were not as much a feature of the Cultural Revolution in music as they were in literature or in industry;[13] in ballet, the Cultural Revolution

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[12] Amy Nelson, "The Struggle for Proletarian Music: RAPM and the Cultural Revolution," *Slavic Review* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 105. For more on the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, see Edward J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 1928-1932* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953). For more on the Association of Proletarian Musicians, see Neil Edmunds, "Music and Politics: The Case of the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians, " *The Slavonic and East European Review* 78, no. 1 (January 2000): 66-89, and *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000); and Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

[13] Nelson, "The Struggle for Proletarian Music," 115. Nelson explains: "No amount of shockwork and storming could train a composer, violinist, or pianist in five years, much less four. And even preparing qualified teachers for amateur music groups would take more than the few months or weeks allowed by the 'campaigns' of the Cultural Revolution" (116). As in music, professional ballet training necessarily requires years of commitment, even more years than would be allotted for a Five-Year Plan.

had even less of an impact. The Cultural Revolution came to an abrupt end in April 1932, when the Politbiuro Resolution "On Restructuring Literary and Arts Organizations" suddenly disbanded the Association of Proletarian Writers and corresponding organizations in other artistic genres. The Resolution provided for the founding of the Union of Soviet Writers and similar unions for composers, visual artists, architects, and others, and paved the way for the first Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934.[14]

As an institution, GABT was buffeted by currents of the Cultural Revolution, even if the impacts on ballet specifically were negligible and GABT did not face any existential crises on the scale of threats to close the theater earlier in the 1920s.[15] Golovanovshchina was the most significant episode of the Cultural Revolution for GABT. The scandal was named for Nikolai Sergeevich Golovanov, a conductor who was mostly occupied with the opera company and had little to do with the day-to-day operations of the ballet troupe. Golovanovshchina, as it was fervently publicized in newspapers, pitted a young bass-baritone soloist with the Bolshoi's opera troupe (who was of humble origins and had been a worker before embarking on professional musical education) against Golovanov, who had been

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[14] Katerina Clark et al., eds., *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 151-152. Only the writers' and architects' unions were organized within the year.

[15] See Chapter 1.

an established conductor for almost twenty years.[16] This attack on a "specialist" on behalf of someone with less experience (and proletarian credentials) was characteristic of the Cultural Revolution period. Golovanovshchina resulted in two successive commissions to reorganize GABT's operations.[17]

Apparently unsatisfied with the commissions' attempted reorganizations, in the middle of 1930, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party transferred GABT and all of its subsidiary institutions to the control of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union (TsIK SSSR), the highest governmental organization.[18] For the next four years, GABT reported directly to a commission comprised of high-ranking Soviet government officials, including Avel' Safronovich Enukidze, Aleksandr Petrovich Smirnov, Kliment Efremovich

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[16] For more on Golovanovshchina, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Emergence of Glaviskusstvo. Class War on the Cultural Front, Moscow, 1928-1929," *Soviet Studies* 23, no. 2 (October 1971), 244-246; Clark et al., 474-475n5; Andrei Artizov and Oleg Naumov, eds., *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia: Dokumenty TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b), VTsK-OGPU-NKVD o kul'turnoi politike. 1917-1953 gg.* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond "Demokratiia," 2002), 747n32; E. S. Vlasova, *1948 god v sovetskoi muzyke: Dokumentirovanoe issledovanie* (Moscow: "Klassika–XXI," 2010), 90-91; and Richard G. Thorpe, "The Management of Culture in Revolutionary Russia: The Imperial Theaters and the State, 1897-1928" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1990), 318-325. Golovanov was briefly removed from GABT's staff but returned as conductor and eventually Chief Conductor at GABT. In the latter role, he was tangentially involved in GABT's production of *The Red Poppy* in 1949 (see Chapter 5).

[17] Fitzpatrick, "The Emergence of Glaviskusstvo," 245. See also Theses for the Ballet Subcommittee of the Commission for the Reorganization of GABT (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History [Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii, hereafter RGASPI] f. 142, op. 1, d. 528, ll. 18-18ob.) and Theses for the Opera Subcommittee of the Commission for the Reorganization of GABT (RGASPI f. 142, op. 1, d. 528, ll. 19-19ob.), both from April 1929.

[18] Excerpt from meeting minutes #35 of TsIK SSSR (May 13, 1930): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 734, l. 153. The name of the theater was also officially changed from the State Theater of Opera and Ballet to the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the USSR.

Voroshilov, Vasilii Vladimirovich Shmidt, and Andrei Sergeevich Bubnov. This commission made its business GABT's repertoire, finances, human resources, and other matters.[19] The fact that such prominent officials as the People's Commissar for Defense Voroshilov took time to discuss GABT's operations, sometimes on a weekly basis, is indicative of the prominent role that the arts (including opera and ballet) were expected to play in Soviet society. GABT existed in this subordinate relationship to the commission from the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union until the organization of the All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs (VKpDI).[20]

VKpDI was established by a resolution of the Politbiuro on December 16, 1935. The Politbiuro charged VKpDI with oversight of theaters, musical institutions, and organizations devoted to the visual arts, as well as organizations related to cinematic production and distribution. VKpDI became the foremost governmental authority on artistic production,[21] though it did not dictate all

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[19] Later, MKhAT (Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Akademicheskii Teatr, or Moscow Artistic Academic Theater, which bills itself as "Moscow Art Theatre" in English) came under the purview of the same commission. See, for examples, meeting minutes collected in RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 734. See also meeting minutes, financial plans, correspondence, and other materials in RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, dd. 394-396, 398-399, 401.

[20] The meeting minutes that I have found, so far, become sparse in 1934. I have not found any meeting minutes for this commission for 1935, yet. It is possible that the commission ceased normal functions as its *de facto* leader Enukidze was reassigned.

[21] On the establishment of VKpDI, see Postanovlenie Politbiuro TsK VKP(b) "Ob organizatsii Vsesoiuznogo Komiteta po delam Iskusstv (t. Stalin)" published in Leonid Maksimenkov, ed., *Muzyka vmesto sumbura: Kompozitory i muzykanty v strane sovetov, 1917-1991* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond "Demokratiia," 2013), 133. On VKpDI as participant in artistic production

aesthetic matters to powerless artists. VKpDI and artists engaged in artistic production with the common goal of creating art that would politically educate and enlighten mass audiences.

Socialist Realism

Socialist realism emerged as an approach to artistic production in the early 1930s. The concept gained momentum in 1934 with the first Soviet Writers' Congress, though earlier discussions about ballet cited below evidence that the ideas that shaped initial definitions of socialist realism were circulating among artists before any official pronouncements in the name of socialist realism.[22] In his address to the Writers' Congress, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov proclaimed that Soviet literature should "depict reality in its revolutionary development" in order to effect "the ideological remoulding and education of the toiling people in the spirit of socialism."[23] Socialist realism was, in effect, to be a repurposing of the nineteenth-

processes, see Marina Frolova-Walker, "The Soviet Opera Project: Ivan Dzerzhinsky vs. Ivan Susanin," 194.

[22] "Socialist realism" incorporated some aspects of existing artistic genres and adapted those genres in new ways. In other words, "socialist realism," much like the original version of *Red Poppy* (1927), can be understood as a blend of continuity and change.

[23] A. A. Zhdanov, "Soviet Literature—The Richest in Ideas. The Most Advanced Literature," in H. G. Scott, ed., *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism in the Soviet Union*, 1935 (Reprint, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), 21. It was quite typical in this period for official pronouncements to address literature as a genre; artistic workers in other genres, such as ballet, took their cues primarily from decisions based on literature (Clark et al., 139).

century realisms that the Soviet Union inherited from Western Europe and Imperial Russia.[24]

Realism was a late nineteenth century movement in visual arts to dissolve the distinctions between artistic practice, as defined by artistic conventions, and everyday life.[25] By the end of the nineteenth century, social realism developed from realism in visual arts and literature. Art works of social realism highlighted not only what *was* in society but what *was wrong* in society.[26] Social realism (or critical realism) dramatically portrayed negative aspects of real life in order to spur the viewer or reader to take action to improve society. Socialist realism had an even more ambitious purpose—to demonstrate the best aspects of reality and the even better aspects of what would soon be real. Instead of shocking audiences with negative truths, socialist realism was to inspire audiences with all that was good in the present and all of the possibilities of the near future. Socialist realism took the nineteenth-century assumption that art could move audiences and replaced negative stimuli with positive indicators of the path forward.

Socialist realism was never methodically prescribed by non-artist officials. One way that socialist realism was typically defined was in terms of general

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[24] For more on the nineteenth-century Russian roots of socialist realism, see Régine Robin, *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 77-162.

[25] Stephen Little, *…isms: Understanding Art* (New York: Universe Publishing, 2004), 80.

[26] Little, 126.

principles.[27] Three of the characteristics of socialist realist art were *narodnost'*, *ideinost'*, and *partiinost'*. *Narodnost'* was the quality of being of the people or for the people. Art characterized by *narodnost'* was supposed to be comprehensible to mass audiences and may have been based on folk sources. *Ideinost'* meant that art was imbued with ideological content. Art characterized by *ideinost'* was not simply entertainment; neither was art characterized by *ideinost'* the result of an individual artist's experiments with formal principles of artistic composition (i.e., "art for art's sake" or "formalism"). Art suffused by *ideinost'* would be able to contribute to audiences' political education. *Partiinost'* described art that was saturated with the spirit of the Communist Party or the Party's current ideological priorities. Because these principles were quite vague, artists exercised considerable agency and creativity in working out how the general principles could be incorporated into compositional practice.

The second way that socialist realism was defined was in terms of exemplary works.[28] Official pronouncements usually took the form of vague gestures toward literary production (e.g., literature should be saturated with *narodnost'*, *ideinost'*, and *partiinost'*) from which artistic workers in literature and other genres elaborated specific approaches in practice.[29] Then, once workers had

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[27] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 3.

[28] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 3.

tried to apply the general principles to their compositions, official declarations, commendations, and denunciations followed to indicate whether the experiments were fulfilling official expectations.[30]

In one of the most famous examples of such denunciations, just one month after its founding, VKpDI launched what has come to be known as the first anti-formalism campaign. "Formalism" was a disparaging label, the precise definition of which varied widely across time, space, and genre in Soviet culture.[31] Basically, "formalism" was supposed to connote an artist's attention to formal properties of composition at the expense of the ideological content of an artistic creation. The first anti-formalism campaign is an example of a series of official condemnations that responded to artistic efforts in opera, ballet, dramatic theater, and other genres.[32] The campaign began with the publication in *Pravda* on January 28, 1936, of an unsigned review of the production of the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*

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[29] Clark et al., 139.

[30] Katerina Clark analyzes the "official 'model' novels" that helped define socialist realism in *The Soviet Novel* (3). And as Michael David-Fox observes about another Soviet context, "even rejection can imply an important influence, since it helps define what is adopted instead" (*Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning Among the Bolsheviks, 1918-1929* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997], 209).

[31] A second major campaign against formalism tore through Soviet music in 1948 (again, with an opera as the initial target and, again, implicating composer Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich). Ekaterina Vlasova terms the Cultural Revolution and the first anti-formalism campaign as the "first rehearsal" and "second rehearsal," respectively (80, 142), for what I term the second anti-formalism campaign in 1948.

[32] There were additional articles in the 1936 anti-formalism campaign that dealt with architecture, painting, and other fields. Some such articles and speeches were collected and published as P. I. Lebedev, ed., *Protiv formalizma i naturalizma v iskusstve: sbornik statei* (Moscow: OGIZ–IZOGIZ, 1937).

District that had premiered at the GABT Filial in late December 1935.[33] The anti-formalism campaign continued with a second unsigned article in *Pravda* on February 6, 1936, this time criticizing the Bolshoi Theater's production of the ballet *The Bright Stream*.[34] The third article in the anti-formalism campaign was published in *Pravda* on November 15, 1936, and targeted the fusion play-with-music *The Bogatyrs* (or *The Paladins*).[35] The article on *The Bogatyrs* was printed above the byline of VKpDI Chairman Platon Mikhailovich Kerzhentsev.

The three articles, taken together, suggested to Soviet artists what was not needed in the development of socialist realism.[36] Public criticism of these three

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[33] Reprinted in Maksimenkov, *Muzyka vmesto sumbura*, 136-137, and in Lebedev, 5-7. *Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda* had been produced at other theaters in Moscow and Leningrad (as well as abroad) in the two years prior to its denunciation in *Pravda*. The opera had music by Shostakovich and libretto by Shostakovich and Aleksandr Germanovich Preis.

[34] Reprinted in Lebedev, 8-11. The ballet had music by Shostakovich, libretto by Fedor Vasil'evich Lopukhov and Adrian Ivanovich Piotrovskii, and choreography by Lopukhov in both Leningrad and Moscow. The GABT production had designs by Vladimir Vladimirovich Dmitriev and stage direction from Boris Arkad'evich Mordvinov (E. P. Belova et al., eds., *Russkii balet, Entsiklopediia, Bol'shaia Russkaia Entsiklopediia* [Solgasie, 1997], s.v. "Svetlyi ruchei," http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/s/svetl3y-ru4ey.html [accessed May 31, 2021]). Like *Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda*, *Svetlyi ruchei* had been running for months in multiple theaters before the GABT production became the target of a denunciation in *Pravda*.

[35] Reprinted in Artizov and Naumov, 333, and published in translation in Clark et al., 250-251. The genre is a bit difficult to determine. It is variously referred to as a "comic opera," an "operetta," and a "play." *Bogatyri* was produced at the Chamber Theater (*Kamernyi teatr*) in Moscow, and it used music by nineteenth-century Russian composer Aleksandr Porfir'evich Borodin. The playwright was Dem'ian Bednyi (Efim Alekseevich Pridvorov) and the stage director was Aleksandr Iakovlevich Tairov (Clark et al., 249-250).

[36] Historians of Soviet music observe broader inter-institutional dynamics in the 1936 anti-formalism campaign. Leonid Maksimenkov views the campaign as VKpDI's imposition of its authority over the Central Committee of the Communist Party's Bureau of Party Propaganda and Agitation in *Sumbur vmesto muzyki: Stalinskaia kul'turnaia revoliutsiia 1936-1938* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Iuridicheskaia kniga," 1997). Simo Mikkonen interprets the campaign as VKpDI's imposition of its authority over

productions in the country's most prominent newspaper served to warn theaters, producers, and critics around the country not to make (or condone) similar aesthetic-ideological experiments; producers needed to seek alternate paths. The article on *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* emphasized the distinction between "realism," which was required of Soviet artists in all genres, and "naturalism," which meant depicting even the unpleasantries of reality. The article on *The Bright Stream* warned against the opposite extreme: depicting "a doll-like, false relationship to life." In other words, *The Bright Stream* depicted a sanitized, not-real-enough version of collective farm life. The ballet, which was set on a collective farm in the Kuban' region, also failed to incorporate Kuban'-specific details, thus disrespecting the particularities of the people on whose daily life it was based and ignoring the wealth of folk dances, games, and songs that might have served as source material.[37] The Politbiuro resolution on which the article about

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the Union of Soviet Composers in "'Muddle Instead of Music' in 1936: Cataclysm of Musical Administration," in *Shostakovich Studies 2*, ed. Pauline Fairclough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Whether or not the impetus for these articles was aesthetic, in practice, the articles did refocus the attention of artists and other producers on what sorts of productions government and Communist Party oversight organizations deemed appropriate for Soviet audiences. In other words, the articles influenced artistic production, whether or not the substance of their aesthetic critiques was "really" the intent of the articles.

[37] Marina Frolova-Walker also notes that this article about *The Bright Stream* "was the first official call for a folk-based idiom" in music ("The Glib, the Bland, and the Corny: An Aesthetic of Socialist Realism," 9). Frolova-Walker's chapter is available online, with different pagination from the book form: https://www.academia.edu/6624165/The_Glib_the_Bland_and_the_Corny_An_Aesthetic_of_Socialist_Realism (accessed January 21, 2020); I cite the online version. The chapter was originally published in *Music and Dictatorship in Europe and Latin America*, ed. Roberto Illiano and Massimiliano Sala (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 403-423. In ballet, the question of how to integrate folk dance into professional productions was open even earlier in the 1930s; it did not begin in 1936.

The Bogatyrs was based criticized the production for being ahistorical, or at least for contradicting the version of Russian history that the Central Committee of the Communist Party was trying to promote.[38] The three articles helped artists conceptualize the boundaries of "socialist realism" in various genres, and they were widely discussed among workers in the arts.[39] One of the major questions in debates about artistic production in the 1930s was what to do with prerevolutionary artistic practices and objects: should the prerevolutionary culture be abandoned completely or could it be adapted for use in Soviet culture?

In his address to the 1934 Writers' Congress, Andrei Zhdanov observed that Soviet authors were in a position to undertake "the critical assimilation of the literary heritage of all epochs."[40] He continued, "Comrades, the proletariat, just as in other provinces of material and spiritual culture, is the sole heir of all that is best in the treasury of world literature. The bourgeoisie has squandered its literary heritage; it is our duty to gather it up carefully, to study it, and having critically

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[38] Clark et al., 250-251.

[39] See, for examples, *Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh del* (NKVD SSSR, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, which included the secret police and other law enforcement operations) records of artists' and writers' reactions to the article on *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* excerpted in translation in Clark et al., 231-235; Central Committee of the Communist Party's Department of Agitation and Propaganda's report on musicians' reactions to the articles "Muddle Instead of Music" and "Balletic Falsity" excerpted in translation in Clark et al., 236-238; stenographic record of meeting with GABT leadership about future work on repertoire from February 9, 1936: RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 64; and NKVD SSSR records of writers' and artists' reactions to the condemnation and ban of *The Bogatyrs* excerpted in translation in Clark et al., 251-258.

[40] Zhdanov, 22.

assimilated it, to advance further."[41] These remarks emphasize Soviet leaders' understanding of history as a dialectical process of essentially forward-moving progress. According to Marxist historical materialist theories of human history, feudalism had been superseded by capitalism and socialism (led by the proletariat) and communism were bound to develop in the wake of capitalism. Soviet leaders also assumed that the processes of remaking socioeconomic organization would be reflected in cultural production. Therefore, Soviet artists were tasked with determining what prerevolutionary artistic traditions and texts would be useful for the development of Soviet art and the education of Soviet citizens and "critically assimilat[ing]" those traditions and texts into Soviet culture. Realism and romanticism were both appropriated and repurposed in the Soviet context.[42]

"The Great Appropriation" and Ballet

Appropriation of extant cultural practices had both domestic and international significance in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Domestically, socialist realism was a selective appropriation of preexisting ideas in literature and the arts combined with efforts to rethink and "advance further" along the inherited paths by creating new works of art and by revising existing works in accordance with the principles of socialist realism. Soviet leaders and artists conceived of socialist

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[41] Zhdanov, 22.

[42] As Zhdanov put it, "Our literature, which stands with both feet firmly planted on a materialist basis, cannot be hostile to romanticism, but it must be a romanticism of a new type, revolutionary romanticism" (21).

realism as an artistic approach that would serve the pedagogical, *kul'turnost'*-enhancing mission of Soviet arts. As Zhdanov said, Soviet artists were responsible for creating "works from which the people of our times can learn."[43] But in addition to fostering a population willing and able to build socialism in the Soviet Union, Katerina Clark argues that Soviet assimilation of prerevolutionary cultural products had international significance.

Katerina Clark argues that the Soviet Union tried to establish itself as the center of world culture in the 1930s by incorporating into Soviet culture ideas and texts from both the Russian and Western European pasts in a process she calls the "Great Appropriation."[44] In their drive to develop Soviet culture and gain recognition on the world stage, Soviet leaders posited the Soviet Union as heir to the greatest ideas and traditions of Western European culture: "In building up its own image, Moscow appropriated both laterally (absorbing contemporary trends in other countries, primarily western European, but also American) and diachronically (appropriating Great Russian and European culture of the past)."[45] Artistic genres,

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[43] Zhdanov, 23.

[44] Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 8. *Moscow, the Fourth Rome* focuses on literature, literary theory, journalism, architecture, visual arts (painting, graphic arts, statuary), and film. Kiril Tomoff also explores the Great Appropriation in practice for the genre of classical instrumental music in *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition During the Early Cold War, 1945-1958* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

[45] Clark, *Fourth Rome*, 8.

such as the novel and ballet, and specific texts, such as *Hamlet* and *Swan Lake*, were appropriated. Clark continues, "But such Western culture was not just appropriated. In the process it was reworked, reinflected for the specifica of Marxism-Leninism and the Stalinist epoch."[46] In addition to its recognition of the international significance of Soviet cultural assimilation, Clark's Great Appropriation is useful for understanding the cultivation of Soviet ballet because the concept productively frames the debates—especially vigorous in the 1930s—about how ballet could be repurposed and therefore changed in the process of becoming Soviet.

In accordance with the Great Appropriation, Soviet artists were expected to improve upon their inheritance. The Soviet Union was not supposed to be a museum for relics of bygone cultures; the Soviet Union was to provide the conditions for select and celebrated artistic and intellectual traditions to further develop. To this end, artists exercised agency grounded in their professional expertise. At the conference on dance in November 1936, stage director and theater critic Pavel Aleksandrovich Markov spoke in terms of a Great Appropriation:

> The great distinction of the ballet actor is that we, who are taking over Soviet ballet, have the right and even should know how, thanks to the fact that the Revolution laid bare before us the enormous cultural richness and magnificent inheritance, to perform this and to represent people of all times and all eras. Only an unencumbered artist of the Soviet Union can take this

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[46] Clark, *Fourth Rome*, 8.

> on. We, who possess in literature our Homer, Pushkin, and Goethe, we are obligated to represent on stage living characters—without aestheticization, without stylization—we are obligated to find the most quintessential distinguishing characteristics of a people, using the classics to represent the power of the Great French Revolution, and heroes of antiquity, and living people of our country.[47]

His remarks evidenced a sense—among not only Soviet leaders but among Soviet artists—that Soviet artists were the rightful inheritors of past artistic achievements, including the works of Homer, Pushkin, and Goethe, who represent cultural achievements diverse in time and geography.[48] According to Markov, Soviet artists had the responsibility to create new masterpieces from that cultural inheritance.

The debates about Soviet ballet in the 1930s were, in part, a process of working out what of Soviet ballet's inheritance would be useful for Soviet ballet and what should be abandoned in the process of "reworking" and improving on Soviet ballet's inheritances. Head of the Theatrical Section of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment's Arts Sector Pavel Ivanovich Novitskii also spoke

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[47] Stenogramma Khoreograficheskogo Soveshchaniia (November 21, 1936): RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 39.

[48] Similar sentiments were expressed in a letter dated January 1, 1936, from stage director Konstantin Sergeevich Stanislavskii to Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin:

> [T]he USSR is at the present time the genuine heir to the best traditions of both the European theater and everything good there was in the old traditions of the Russian theater. We have to succeed at conveying what is most valuable to the young up-and-coming generation and together with them not only hold on to it but also strengthen it for further development. We, the representatives of contemporary theater, must be most concerned about preserving these seeds of age-old achievements in the theater and the development from them of a splendid new art.

The letter is reproduced in translation in Clark et al., 221. The excerpt is also published in Russian in Artizov and Naumov, 282-284.

in terms of selective appropriation and separating the useful inheritances from the harmful ones. With reference to Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, Novitskii declared:

> It doesn't mean that we should take everything [from bourgeois, prerevolutionary culture], but it does mean that we are obligated to learn from the culture of the past, which was created by the bourgeoisie and feudal aristocracy. It means that we should appropriate this experience, to decide which elements of the old culture we use, which we assimilate into our arsenal of cultural action, and which elements of the old culture we should fight against, which elements we should overcome.[49]

One of the main questions for the debates about Soviet ballet in the 1930s was what the former court art of ballet could offer socialist society and how they could extricate what was valuable in ballet from ballet's pernicious traditions.

Some participants recognized in ballet forms of discipline and organization that made the art form valuable to Soviet society. For his part, stage director Boris Arkad'evich Mordvinov was attracted to ballet by its physical discipline and the technical mastery that dancers perfected during their ballet training as well as the collective and creative discipline within ballet companies who worked together to create their artistic productions.[50] Novitskii also proposed that "we should master [ballet's] technique and discipline."[51] Other participants saw promise in ballet's

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[49] Stenogramma zasedaniia khoreograficheskoi konferentsii (June 14-16, 1933): A. A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatrical Museum (Gosudarstvennyi Tsentral'nyi Teatral'nyi Muzei imeni A. A. Bakhrushina, hereafter GTsTM) f. 152, d. 508, ll. 145-146. I thank Elizabeth Hannah Stern for generously sharing portions of this document with me.

[50] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 11.

[51] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, l. 15.

choreography for crowds. Ballet critic and journalist Gennadii Isaevich Geronskii observed, "Though it might sound paradoxical, we can adopt a lot from classical ballet with respect to organizing movement of large groups, the organization of masses, which very often makes an impression on contemporary audiences."[52]

But it was the impression on audiences that most concerned the participants. Mordvinov praised ballet's "emotional intensity, its festive nature, musicality, genuinely thrilling infectiousness."[53] Specialist in Persian studies, military intelligence officer, and journal editor Rudol'f Petrovich Abikh observed that "we are discussing dance and should discuss it as one of the means of psycho-ideological stimulation, which should be used by those who have set themselves the challenge for the near future of liquidating the remnants of capitalism not only in the economy but also in the consciousness of people."[54] In other words, ballet was to be used as a means for politically educating mass audiences.

Thus, while the Great Appropriation may have been initiated from the top for the purpose of asserting Soviet power on the international stage, the practicalities of what to appropriate and how were worked out by people in the middle: artists and bureaucrats. And domestic Soviet audiences were the primary recipients of this appropriated and reworked cultural production. Novitskii

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[52] "Stenogramma disputa," 613.

[53] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 11.

[54] "Stenogramma disputa," 613.

claimed that its expressive, agitational purpose separated ballet in the socialist context from ballet in royal courts or capitalist countries.[55] Instead of allegory, fantasy, and other abstract themes, ballet in a socialist society would take on concrete subject matter.[56] The pedagogical imperative for Soviet arts precluded some avenues of ballet production but simultaneously created opportunities for ballet to tell new kinds of stories.

What Subjects are Appropriate for Soviet Ballets?

One of the most pressing questions at the meetings about "Soviet" ballet in the 1930s was the question of subject matter (*tematiki*). Dancers, stage directors, journalists, and others contributed suggestions about appropriate themes for Soviet ballets. Choice of subject matter was important because of the pedagogical function that all Soviet arts, including ballet, were expected to serve in exchange for government and Communist Party investment in artistic institutions and productions. In April 1932, even before the first formal speeches and publications about socialist realism, GABT dancer Irina Aleksandrovna Charnotskaia advocated for staging ballets "about Soviet woman as she should be," not as she was and certainly not as female characters had been in classical ballets or early Soviet ballets such as *Red Poppy* and *The Soccer Player*.[57] Charnotskaia's remarks

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[55] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, l. 12.

[56] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, l. 12.

connected the choice of subject matter directly to ballet's pedagogical imperative in the Soviet Union. She said, "We should agitate from the stage. We have ideas about how people should be, and we should campaign for these ideas from the stage."[58] The question was, what subjects were appropriate for Soviet ballets? Many of the proposed themes for Soviet ballets can be sorted into four categories: contemporary Soviet reality, legends and folklore, historical events, and literary sources.

Many of the participants in the meetings and debates in the 1930s agreed that Soviet ballets should depict contemporary Soviet characters in realistic situations. Stage director Boris Mordvinov offered a lengthy list of potential subjects for ballets: "The heroic battle and revolutionary romanticism of the Civil War. The ardor of construction. The birth of the new person. Forging [new people, new society, new way of life]. Celebrations of victory and meeting heroes. Our youth and its explosive flowering. The heroic struggle of the proletariat. The mission and friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union." He observed that these subjects were both "emotional" and "danceable," and thus a ballet on any of these subjects would engage both Soviet audiences and the creativity of choreographers

[57] "Stenogramma disputa," 605. *Futbolist* premiered at the Bolshoi Theater in March 1930 with libretto by Vsevolod Valerianovich Kurdiumov, music by Viktor Aleksandrovich Oranskii, designs by Leonid Aleksandrovich Fedorov, and choreography by Lev Lashchilin and Igor' Aleksandrovich Moiseev (Zarubin, 156-157).

[58] "Stenogramma disputa," 606.

and dancers.[59] Actor and reciter Emmanuil Kaminka also suggested the following themes from contemporary Soviet life: "the creative initiative of millions [of Soviet people]," "classless society," "the relationship to labor," "the Pioneers," and "the moving [efforts] of the Komsomol."[60] Irina Charnotskaia proposed a ballet about the unveiling of Muslim women (*sniatiia parandzhi*).[61] In October 1937, VKpDI Chairman Platon Kerzhentsev summarized his recommendations for ballets on Soviet themes, such as Soviet reality, the Soviet present, Soviet people (from the Caucasus, Uzbekistan, and so on), folk dance, fizkul'tura,[62] youth, defense, and vigilance (against foreign or domestic forces that might try to undermine socialist construction).[63]

In addition to themes from contemporary Soviet life, some participants suggested themes from folklore and legends as appropriate sources for ballets. Comrade Galitskii from Kyiv thought that ballet did not necessarily need to take its

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[59] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 19.

[60] "Stenogramma disputa," 595. The Pioneers constituted the children's wing of the Russian/Soviet Communist Party. They were akin to a socialist scouting organization. The Komsomol was the All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth, the youth wing of the Russian/Soviet Communist Party (1918-1991). On the history of the Komsomol and the Pioneers, see Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 167-194.

[61] "Stenogramma disputa," 605.

[62] "Fizkul'tura" is a contraction of the Russian phrase for "physical culture" (*fizicheskaia kul'tura*). It refers to calisthenic and gymnastic exercises commonly practiced by Soviet workers and students in pursuit of self-discipline and physical health. The exercise regimens were often done in groups.

[63] Stenogramma po voprosam baleta pod predsedatel'stvom tov. P. M. Kerzhentseva (October 7, 1937): RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 22.

settings from everyday life in the Soviet Union in the 1930s so long as ballet put human experience—as he put it, "the truth of life"—at its center, and for this folk tales might provide useful source material.[64] Kerzhentsev suggested fairy tales for children's ballets.[65] While some speakers considered fairy tales to be most suitable for productions intended for young audiences,[66] and while the lists of contemporary themes were more voluminous than specific suggestions in all of the other categories combined, there was considerable interest in developing "Soviet" ballets that were not set in contemporary Soviet society.

Historical events were another primary alternative to settings in contemporary Soviet society. GABT dancer Mikhail Gabovich suggested that it would be a good idea to "reflect the past from the perspective of today."[67] In fact, Gabovich himself submitted a libretto on Ivan Isaevich Bolotnikov and the peasant armies who had attempted to overthrow the Muscovite tsar in the early seventeenth century.[68] The Bolotnikov Rebellion was a revolutionary theme—people from low

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[64] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 77.

[65] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 24. At the debate in 1932, poet and screenwriter Nikolai Nikolaevich Aseev had similarly suggested that the themes for ballets should be familiar to audiences. Aseev was commenting on ballets in general, not children's productions specifically ("Stenogramma disputa," 608).

[66] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 12.

[67] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 5, l. 23.

[68] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 3ob-4. Kerzhentsev also mused that the Bolotnikov Rebellion would make a good subject for an opera.

social classes fighting against Russian autocracy—but not a contemporary one. GABT administrator Ia. L. Leont'ev thought that ballets about vigilance and parachutists—that is, ballets about contemporary Soviet life—were okay but that there should also be ballets on historical themes.[69] Participants in the debates of the 1930s seemed sympathetic to producing ballets on a variety of themes and a variety of different types of subjects.

The third significant alternative to contemporary events was literary sources. This alternative arose in practice in the early 1930s with ballets such as *The Flames of Paris* (1932) and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (1934). Both of these ballets were originally staged in Leningrad with music by composer Boris Vladimirovich Asaf'ev and libretti by Nikolai Dmitrievich Volkov.[70] In both cases, the libretti were based on literary works: stories by Félix Gras and a poem by Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, respectively.[71] During a discussion with the VKpDI Chairman in October 1937, Mikhail Gabovich pressed for the inclusion of classical literature as source material for ballets, particularly plays by William Shakespeare, Lope de Vega,

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[69] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 19.

[70] *Plamia Parizha* premiered at the former Mariinsky Theater in November 1932. It was choreographed by Vasilii Ivanovich Vainonen and directed by Sergei Ernestovich Radlov (E. P. Belova et al., s.v. "Plamia Parizha" http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/p/plam8-parija.html [accessed May 31, 2021]). *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan* premiered at the former Mariinsky Theater in September 1934. It had choreography by Rostislav Vladimirovich Zakharov (E. P. Belova et al., s.v. "'Bakhchisaraiskii fontan'" http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/b/bah4isarayskiy-fontan.html [accessed May 31, 2021]).

[71] The literary source for *The Flames of Paris* seems to be in dispute. I thank Olivia Sabee for her help and perspective on this question.

Molière, and Nikolai Vasil'evich Gogol'.[72] For his part, Kerzhentsev suggested that stories by Jules Verne would make good sources for children's ballets[73] and perhaps works by Gogol', Rustaveli, and Shakespeare for adults, though Kerzhentsev stressed the importance of contemporary themes above literary and other sources.[74]

There were some topics that GABT staff or VKpDI administrators judged to be inappropriate for ballet. First of all, the ballets had to contribute to the pedagogical imperative for Soviet theater. In 1932, GABT prepared a letter to the author of a ballet libretto, declining the libretto because the main character was a hypocrite whose behavior would not be of interest to Soviet audiences. GABT staff believed that Soviet audiences would shun a ballet starring a "lascivious yet sanctimonious lady."[75] This rejection letter emphasizes that characters in ballets needed to be characters with whom Soviet audiences could identify and from whom they could learn. Unwholesome and unhelpful characters could not contribute to the enlightenment of Soviet audiences, and therefore ballet libretti featuring such characters were deemed unsuitable for Soviet theatrical productions.

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[72] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 9.

[73] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 24.

[74] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 22ob. Rustaveli was a Georgian poet who lived in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

[75] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 745, l. 128.

If the lascivious but sanctimonious lady represented too frivolous a topic for a Soviet ballet, VKpDI administrators also warned against trying to give balletic treatment to topics that were too serious. At the conference in November 1936, VKpDI Deputy Chairman Iakov Osipovich Boiarskii told the assembled participants that monumental philosophical, economic, and political questions were not appropriate subjects for ballet.[76] In October 1937, VKpDI Chairman Kerzhentsev expressed deep skepticism about a libretto submitted by GABT dancer Kuznetsov which involved the unmasking of a spy. While Kerzhentsev grudgingly admitted that the libretto showed promise in its representation of Soviet youth, he did not think that espionage was a very balletic theme.[77] There was a lingering sense that ballet was a lighter genre than opera or dramatic theater or literature. This resulted in a gray area wherein ballet producers needed to find enlightening and/or contemporary subjects about which to dance, but they had to avoid some of the most serious questions of the day.

A meeting between GABT staff and VKpDI Chairman Kerzhentsev in October 1937 yielded what was probably the first officially promulgated list of suggested themes for Soviet ballets.[78] After the meeting, Kerzhentsev followed up

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[76] Stenogramma vsesoiuznogo khoreograficheskogo soveshchaniia (November 23, 1936): RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 93.

[77] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 3.

[78] There had been lists of suggested titles even before the formation of VKpDI. See "Repertoire Index, 1929" in Mary Grace Swift, *The Art of Dance in the U.S.S.R.* (Notre Dame: University of

with a memorandum to GABT reiterating the four categories of themes for Soviet ballet. The first priority was contemporary Soviet subject matter. Historical themes were a distant second priority, followed by folk tales and fantasy, then works of classical literature. VKpDI insisted that the most urgent task for GABT and other theaters was to produce ballets on contemporary themes.[79] Almost two years after the formation of VKpDI, VKpDI issued a list to GABT of subject matter priorities for Soviet ballets. The list included many of the themes put forward by artists themselves at the meetings over the previous five years (and listed above), suggesting that priorities for Soviet ballet in the 1930s were not mandated to resistant professionals but developed in conversation with professional ballet and theater workers.

An Appropriate Subject Is Not Enough: From Subject Matter to Plot

Having an appropriate subject was not sufficient to guarantee that a libretto would yield a ballet at any one of the Soviet state theaters, much less at the largest and most prestigious musical theater in the country. The staff at GABT had clear ideas about what was and was not producible in the genre of ballet. As the following examples show, libretti on perfectly acceptable subjects were routinely

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Notre Dame Press, 1968), 301-303. Originally published by Glavrepertkom in Moscow in 1929, this list contains extant ballets graded A ("The best works ideologically; universally recommended for presentation") through E ("Forbidden"). See also Table 1 in Vlasova, 54-78, which contains the titles from the 1929 list of ballets as well as titles of operas and ballets officially recommended in 1931 and 1934.

[79] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 29, l. 20. The memorandum is dated October 20, 1937.

rejected if their content or structure seemed not to be conducive to expression in the physical and nonverbal genre of ballet. Libretti that were rejected often centered on ideas that could not be represented without words, lacked opportunities for dancing, took the form of episodes or divertissements, consisted of only one or too few concrete ideas or scenes, allegedly distorted historical events, and/or failed to balance positive heroes with sympathetic portrayals of the masses. Therefore, these sources establish that libretti for Soviet ballet were expected to be comprised of danceable themes, to include dramatically-justified opportunities for dancing, to be organized by a strong dramaturgical concept, to consist of multiple coherently sequenced scenes, to be deemed historically accurate (if dealing with a historical subject), and to incorporate both positive heroes and favorable characterizations of the masses (historical or contemporary).

Minutes from meetings of GABT's Ballet Repertoire Commission, a subset of the GABT Artistic-Political Council,[80] and similar gatherings to discuss libretti submitted for possible production at GABT contain comments from the participants regarding what they found promising and unpromising in the submitted libretti,

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[80] The Artistic-Political Council (Khudozhestvennyi-Politicheskii Sovet) was a short-lived intra-institutional organization that emerged around 1929 from earlier consultatory bodies called Artistic Councils (Khudozhestvennye Sovety). For more on the establishment of Artistic-Political Councils in Soviet theaters and other institutions, see RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 29. GABT administration discussed the organization of the GABT Artistic-Political Council in Informational Letter #1 (November 26, 1929), which was sent to government and Communist Party oversight organizations, newspapers, other Moscow theaters, and the union for workers in the arts, among others (RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 698, ll. 1-17).

discussions of possible revisions that could make the libretti suitable for production at GABT, and negotiations toward consensus on how GABT should reply to the librettists regarding the future of his (less often her) submission.[81] In addition to meeting minutes, the theater's archive contains a few draft rejection letters that GABT employees prepared in response to ballet libretti submitted for possible production at the Bolshoi or Experimental Theater (GABT Filial). These sources offer insight into contemporary understandings of what attributes of plot structure GABT, VKpDI, and other ballet producers sought in ballet libretti.

GABT dancer Irina Charnotskaia summed up the limitations of the libretti submitted for GABT's consideration in the late 1920s and early 1930s: "And what is also lousy in the libretti that have been submitted—they include ideology which can't be communicated with any sort of gestures."[82] GABT dancer-choreographer Igor' Aleksandrovich Moiseev, in another context, expressed a similar sentiment: "Ballet dramaturgy must account for the specifics of this art form and should construct action such that it is revealed through visual demonstration."[83] He went on to explain that ballet is very different from dramatic theater. In dramatic theater,

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[81] For example, see RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 30, ll. 10-10ob. The librettist was present along with four of the eight members of the Ballet Repertoire Commission and fifteen dancers from the GABT ballet troupe. Some of the dancers participated in the discussion, and the dancers' collective opinion was polled alongside the official vote by the members of the commission.

[82] "Stenogramma disputa," 606.

[83] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, ll. 35-36.

an actor makes himself understood through the combination of words, gestures, and facial expressions; gestures complement words. But, as Moiseev observed, "In ballet, the gesture paints everything."[84] Therefore, if a subject could not be expressed with the dancers' bodies, the subject—no matter how "Soviet" or how "contemporary"—could not be the basis for a ballet.

The following two examples demonstrate that revolutionary subject matter was not sufficient to ensure that a ballet libretto would be produced at GABT. GABT's February 1932 rejection letter for a libretto about the French Revolution entitled *Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity* noted that the libretto was unsuitable because it called for written inscriptions during the performance, which would defeat the purpose of ballet as a genre of performance where the content should be communicated without words.[85] Similarly, in December 1932, GABT rejected a libretto about the eighteenth-century peasant rebellion led by Emel'ian Ivanovich Pugachev on the grounds that the proposed scenes did not lend themselves to being clearly expressed in dance.[86] These are examples of subject matter that was otherwise acceptable. GABT observed in its rejection letter for the latter that the Pugachev affair had been frequently staged in other genres such as dramatic theater and opera; *The Flames of Paris* subsequently became a successful ballet about the

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[84] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, l. 40.

[85] RGALI f. 648, op. 2. d. 745, l. 130.

[86] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 745, l. 39.

French Revolution (based on a different libretto). But these ballet libretti (*Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity* and the one about the Pugachev rebellion) were rejected primarily because of the perceived undanceability of their ideological content as set forth in the proposed libretti. Even a libretto on a revolutionary theme did not guarantee production; a ballet libretto needed an appropriate subject and the subject needed to be presented in a danceable form.[87]

GABT rejected other libretti for a related reason: the plots did not offer occasions for dancing. The GABT Artistic-Political Council Repertoire Commission met in January 1930 to discuss a proposed ballet libretto called *The Mountains Were Moved*. The ballet would ostensibly have been about the construction of socialism in Central Asia, a contemporary Soviet theme. However, among its many weaknesses, the commission determined that the libretto *The Mountains Were*

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[87] I speculate that a 1926 draft of the libretto for *Red Poppy* by poet Mikhail Petrovich Gal'perin was probably rejected for having an ideological message that was not suitable for nonverbal communication (RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 470, ll. 26-33). For example, Gal'perin's draft libretto contains a scene which calls for one Guomindang representative to explain to another Guomindang representative that the senior British diplomat in the port city must have hatched a profitable new plot for the impoverishment and oppression of Chinese workers (l. 27). This is an important ideological statement for the libretto which sets up a clear antagonism between the Guomindang representatives on one side and the Western European diplomats and their Western European and Asian capitalist allies on the other. However, in the context of a conversation at the European Diplomatic Club reception, it would be hard to communicate the concepts of impoverishment, oppression, and Chinese workers. The Chinese workers should not logically be present on stage, so the choreographer would have needed to invent a gesture or series of gestures to convey the concepts of "Chinese" and "workers," plus "impoverishment" and "oppression," all in the abstract, and then to convey the relationship among the concepts, that the Chinese workers are the objects of the impoverishment and oppression. A later scene in Gal'perin's draft libretto calls for the Guomindang representatives to explain the British plan to the Chinese and Korean workers (l. 31). That also seems to be something ideologically important but difficult to accomplish without recourse to words.

Moved lacked opportunities for dancing.[88] Nineteenth-century ballets usually contained a wedding, an engagement party, a ball, a harvest celebration, or other pretexts for dancing. While these ballets were sometimes criticized in the 1930s for having plots that were too thin or for lacking an appropriate ideological message, most contributors to the 1930s debates about the future of Soviet ballet assumed that Soviet ballets should incorporate dance.[89] GABT did not want to produce a ballet unless dance scenes could be logically integrated into the plot, and librettists who were not used to working in the genre of ballet tended not to understand dance scenes as a fundamental requirement for a ballet production.

Another fundamental requirement identified by GABT dancers was that Soviet ballets should be based on a definite plot developed through the course of the performance.[90] In addition to its apparent requirement for written inscriptions, *Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity* was rejected, in part, because of the libretto's

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[88] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 36, ll. 8-8ob. *Gory tronulis'* seems to be based on a novel of the same name published in 1929 by Orest Mikhailovich Mal'tsev (pseudonym: Rovinskii). Further discussion of a ballet on this subject reemerged in early 1931 (RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 745, ll. 152-155).

[89] This is one characteristic that sets ballets staged at the state academic theaters of opera and ballet apart from productions of the Dramaticheskii balet (Drambalet) studio/company that was based in Moscow from 1918 until the early 1940s. Drambalet productions subordinated dance to pantomime and acting techniques, primarily those developed at the Moscow Art Theatre (E. P. Belova et al., s.v. "'Drambalet,'" http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/d/drambalet.html [accessed May 31, 2021]). Somehow, later critics and historians have managed to dismiss all Soviet ballets from the 1930s and 1940s with the disparaging label "drambalety," even though the productions at GABT and the former Mariinsky Theater were based on different aesthetic principles than those of the Drambalet organization.

[90] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 3.

episodic form.[91] And in October 1932, GABT rejected a libretto called *Life–Struggle* for being better suited to the form of divertissement—that is, a series of dances without any logical connection between them or underlying dramatic justification for their order of presentation—than to a well-developed plot. The rejection letter notes that the main characters did not really interact in the course of the action. The so-called plot did not have a unified dramaturgical through-line (*net ni edinogo siuzhetnogo sterzhnia*).[92] Even if the individual scenes were danceable, the plot lacked dramatic justifications for its characters. While ballet divertissements had been part of Russian theatrical practice since the eighteenth century, VKpDI Deputy Chairman Boiarskii observed that the requirements for ballet had changed over the years. People used to go to the ballet "to admire the movements" of the dancers, he said. However, in the 1930s, Boiarskii asserted that Soviet people were interested in ballet as an art that could excite people and communicate ideas, not merely as a series of baubles to admire.[93] Boiarskii concluded that it was very clear that in Soviet ballet, divertissements should be replaced by strong dramaturgical conception.[94]

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[91] RGALI f. 648, op. 2. d. 745, l. 130.

[92] RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 745, l. 66.

[93] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, ll. 92-93.

[94] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 93. Actually, VKpDI Chairman Platon Kerzhentsev continued to suggest the use of divertissements in the 1930s to fill out ballet programs, for example, to be performed after one- or two-act story ballets so that the performances would be as long as a single

Some proposed ballet libretti were not episodic in form but seemed to contain just one episode; this was also deemed insufficient material for a ballet. VKpDI Chairman Kerzhentsev gave a negative evaluation of a libretto submitted by GABT dancer Viktor Ivanovich Tsaplin about May Day celebrations before and since the October Revolution. Kerzhentsev opined that it was inappropriate to show the prerevolutionary May Day celebrations, and without those, the libretto consisted only of the postrevolutionary May Day celebrations. One idea/scene was not sufficient, Kerzhentsev blustered, because it did not allow for dramaturgical development during the course of the performance.[95] Similarly, VKpDI Deputy Chairman Boiarskii reported that someone had suggested to him a ballet about the international folk dance festival in London in 1935. Boiarskii said that this happened a lot: people suggested an episode rather than a full narrative, and one scene was not enough to make a ballet libretto.[96] As producers sought to strengthen the dramatic coherence of ballets, they struggled to identify not only thematically appropriate material but material from which a definitive plot structure with a beginning, middle, and end could be developed.

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three- or four-act ballet (e.g., RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 11). Kerzhentsev was virtually the only participant in the discussions in the 1930s who championed divertissements for any purpose; even his deputy Boiarskii categorically refused to consider divertissements appropriate for Soviet audiences.

[95] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 3.

[96] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, ll. 95-96.

Aside from the structure of the plot and needing to have enough substance to qualify as a plot, librettists working on historical themes also needed to depict historical events in accordance with the Communist Party's most up-to-date version of world history. With respect to *Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity*, the ballet *aktiv* felt that the personal relationship between the main characters was drawn in such as a way as to require distortion of the historical facts regarding the French Revolution. The commission also observed that the libretto left out significant events from the French Revolution while highlighting insignificant occurrences. The dancers and choreographers did not think that the story of the main characters' romantic relationship was an adequate substitute for accurate historical portrayal of the important historical-revolutionary subject matter. Historical accuracy was perhaps the least-debated aspect of plot development in the 1930s, when the focus of VKpDI and other ballet producers was on contemporary Soviet themes.[97] However, as Soviet ballet developed in the 1940s and 1950s and the emphasis on contemporary subject matter ceded ground to universal themes and historical allegories, concern with historical accuracy came to be more resonant.[98]

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[97] Note that the title of Kerzhentsev's article criticizing *Bogatyri* was "Falsification of the People's Past" ("Fal'sifikatsiia narodnogo proshlogo [O 'Bogayriakh' Dem'iana Bednogo]," *Pravda*, November 15, 1936). Historical accuracy was a concern in wider theatrical-artistic discussions, if not in discussions about ballet specifically.

[98] See, for example, debates about revising *Red Poppy* at GABT for the 1949 and 1957 productions (Chapters 5 and 8, especially the latter).

Ballet libretti in this period needed to have positive heroes (i.e., characters whom audience members could aspire to emulate) and also to portray the masses in a positive light while downplaying positive attributes of courts and other non-socialist ways of organizing society. Mikhail Gabovich's libretto on the Bolotnikov Rebellion did show the masses positively, in Kerzhentsev's evaluation, but at the same time the masses were undifferentiated and lacked individuals with whom Bolotnikov's character could relate. Gabovich's hero, Bolotnikov, was consequently isolated from the masses and seemed dwarfed by them. Kerzhentsev's evaluation spoke to the challenges of balancing positive heroes and representations of the masses.[99] At the same meeting, Kerzhentsev went on to dismiss a proposed libretto based on Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*. Though the libretto was dramaturgically well-made, Kerzhentsev cautioned that it would be impossible to convince the audience to sympathize with the pauper in the face of the opulence of a magnificent king's court.[100] Libretti that might be interpreted as promoting monarchy, religion,[101] or any other institution that the

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[99] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 3ob-4.

[100] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 4-4ob. Kerzhentsev also doubted that Twain was an appropriate source for a children's ballet. He did not elaborate further.

[101] One member of the GABT Artistic-Political Council Repertoire Commission suggested that *The Mountains Were Moved* actually promoted religion, which was not the only reason why GABT rejected the libretto but likely did not help (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 36, l. 8ob.).

Communist Party was working to banish to history were not welcome, even if they had an appealing moral and well-developed plot structure.

In conclusion, while discussions of appropriate subject matter for Soviet ballets were lively, it was also clear that having a contemporary theme or a revolutionary subject could not guarantee a successful ballet. Ballet libretti based on solidly contemporary or revolutionary subject matter could be rejected along with libretti on less acceptable subjects. Ballet libretti with "good" subject matter also needed to be centered on ideas that could be expressed in dance, to offer dramatically-justified occasions for dancing, to have a firm dramaturgical concept that could be developed throughout the duration of the performance, to be historically accurate (if the subject was historical), and to serve as instruments for the political education and enlightenment of mass audiences by presenting positive heroes and sympathetic portrayals of the masses (while avoiding beguiling representations of royalty, religious figures, etc.).

Balancing all of these concerns about appropriate subjects and crafting stories that were danceable and gave characters reasons to dance while also featuring positive heroes and productive masses and well-justified plot structures was no simple task. Perhaps unsurprisingly, between their verbal participation in meetings and the proposed libretti that they wrote, dancers and choreographers contributed the clearest articulations of what could and could not be produced in ballet. By October 1937, VKpDI Chairman Platon Kerzhentsev decided that there

was not much point in trying to engage outsiders in the early stages of libretto development for ballet. Efforts to cultivate ballet librettists from the general public (though open competitions) and among professional writers (especially poets and playwrights) had not yielded many viable libretti. Kerzhentsev noted that the libretti that GABT dancers had submitted were already more promising than the libretti coming from other sources. He recommended that dancers and choreographers themselves compose libretti and suggested engaging professional dramaturgs or other literary specialists only later in the production process.[102] This recommendation highlights ballet's unique requirements as a genre. Kerzhentsev recognized that the ballet professionals themselves were in the best position to imagine what stories ballet could tell. Once they had settled on an appropriate subject and sufficiently dramatic plot, the professionals also had to figure out how to tell the stories.

How Should Soviet Ballet Tell Its Stories?

Actor and reciter Emmanuil Kaminka was of the opinion that reforming ballet should not start with dance technique but with subject matter,[103] and his opinion was widely shared among the participants in these discussions from the 1930s. However, the relationship between subject matter and the corporeal

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[102] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 12.

[103] "Stenogramma disputa," 595.

language of its expression was also contested: Would a new language of dance emerge from efforts to express new subject matter? Or could the language of classical ballet be used to tell stories about the building of socialism? How much of the inherited techniques of dance and pantomime should Soviet ballet adopt and how much should be abandoned?

The corporeal lexicon of nineteenth-century ballets consisted of classical ballet dancing, character dancing, and a limited assortment of ballet-specific mime gestures.[104] The debates over the future of Soviet ballet dissected each of these three categories of movement. However, the discussions with respect to character dance engaged broader debates about the relationship between professional ballet performance and authentic folk dance practice that lie outside the scope of this project.[105] Therefore, this analysis will focus on 1930s debates concerning the

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[104] These and other inheritances from nineteenth-century ballet are defined and discussed in Chapter 1.

[105] The discussions about staging and revising *The Red Poppy* analyzed in Chapters 5 and 7 do not reference character dance as taught in the imperial Russian and then Soviet state ballet schools; that movement vocabulary was not central to the choreography of any of the three versions of *The Red Poppy* at GABT, with the possible exception of the mélange of balletified Slavic folk movements incorporated in the Soviet sailors' dance "Iablochko." *The Red Poppy* did have dances that functioned like nineteenth-century character dances to indicate characters' national identities, such as the dance of the Malaysian women in Act I of the 1927 production of *Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater. However, Malaysian dance was not one of the types of character dance in which ballet students trained. According to the 1941 syllabus for folk and character dance classes in the archive of the Bolshoi Ballet School, students in their first through fifth years of ballet training studied Russian, Belorussian, Kazan' Tatar, Bashkir, Spanish, Hungarian, Polish, Ukrainian, Georgian, Tatar, Azerbaijani, Uzbek, Turkmen, Tadjik, Armenian, Romany, Kalmyk, Scottish, and other dances of the Caucasus and Soviet East (RGALI f. 683, op. 2, d. 189, ll. 32-41). None of these nationalities was specifically represented in *The Red Poppy*. Therefore, I reserve analysis of the fate of character dance in Soviet ballet for a separate project.

place of classical ballet technique and ballet mime in Soviet ballet.[106] Could classical ballet technique and mime be used to make ballets that were socialist and realist? Once an appropriate subject was selected and a plot on that subject developed, how should Soviet ballet stories be told?

There were a number of participants in the debates of the 1930s who argued that classical ballet technique should be entirely abandoned as Soviet culture appropriated ballet from its imperial past. Comrade Tikhonov objected to the verticality of classical ballet technique, the depersonalized unison of corps de ballet choreography, the emotional facial expressions dancers used to convey their characters' feelings, and technical aspects such as the positions "croisé," which he deemed more suitable to Christian religious propaganda than socialist agitation.[107] Professor Isaak Samoilovich Turkel'taub also sharply criticized the use of a "fish dive" (during which the women pasted "ballet smiles" on their faces, completely at odds with the situation at hand) to represent peasant women being abducted by soldiers in the ballet *The Hypocrites*.[108] Another dissenting voice came from

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[106] VKpDI Chairman Platon Kerzhentsev seems to have been the most vehement supporter of making ballets based on folk dance (Stenogramma soveshchaniia s rukovoditeliami Bol'shogo teatra o dal'neishei rabote nad repertuarom [February 9, 1936]: RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 64, l. 33). He repeated this position at multiple meetings, but Comrade Andreev, a theater scholar, commented that composing ballets exclusively with character dance "smelled of cheap opera" (RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 83).

[107] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, ll. 98-99. "Croisé" comes from the French verb "croiser," meaning "to cross." Most ballet terminology is and was of French origin.

[108] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 50. A fish dive is a position in which a male dancer holds a female dancer's body horizontally, almost parallel to the floor. Her back is arched and chin lifted;

Comrade Shapovalova, who argued that classical ballet technique did not train the entire body and was therefore unsuitable as the basis for socialist dance. She asserted that classical ballet training bore within itself class content that was alien to Soviet Russia in 1930s—embodied relics of ballet's court past—and that there was therefore no way to repurpose the dance lexicon and training methodology for socialist art because the form of the dance technique would always be at odds with the ballets' socialist subject matter.[109] Similarly, choreographer Kas'ian Iaroslavich Goleizovskii opined that a class-specific art form such as ballet could not exist in a classless society.[110] With reference to the ballet *The Bright Stream*, Goleizovskii lamented the "bourgeois-pirouette style of classical ballet that dishonors and defiles Soviet subject matter."[111] All of these participants argued that ballet's physical language was an anachronism, that the way that bodies were trained and presented in classical ballet could not be repurposed to tell Soviet stories.

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one leg is held turned out and straight, while the other is turned in and bent more than ninety degrees at the knee. The male dancer supports her with one arm wrapped under her lower abdomen and the other arm under the thigh of her straight leg. Her arms are free to gesture triumphantly, as was often called for in the final seconds of *pas de deux* in nineteenth-century classical ballets. *Komedianty* is ostensibly based on something by Lope de Vega, but I am not sure which play or other work it is related to. I don't know if it should be translated as *The Comedians* or as *The Hypocrites* or some other way. RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 485 and Zarubin (158) list the source for *Komedianty* as *Fuente Ovejuna*, a play that is not about "comedians."

[109] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, ll. 115-116.

[110] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 117.

[111] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 118.

Turkel'taub also cited impediment of connotations that audiences might bring from prerevolutionary ballet to Soviet productions. He suggested that choreographer Rostislav Zakharov should redo the scene of the argument between Mariia and Girei in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* because the adagio that the characters perform can only be read by audiences as a "love duet" and never as "anger" or "antagonism."[112] According to Turkel'taub, classical ballet technique was unsalvageable because of its past application to tell non-Soviet stories. He did not think that Soviet audiences would be able to see ballet as communicating anything other than the limited repertoire of stories and themes cultivated in nineteenth-century romantic and classical ballets.

However, there were many participants who did think that classical ballet technique could be repurposed to serve Soviet objectives. Stage director Boris Mordvinov proclaimed that "under no circumstances should the language of classical ballet *not* be used—it will never be possible to create Soviet ballet that isn't based in ballet of the past."[113] Dancer-choreographer Igor' Moiseev similarly argued that "we should use this technique not for its own sake but as a means [of expression]."[114] Contrary to Turkel'taub's pessimism about repurposing ballet,

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[112] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 50. "Adagio," in this context, refers to an extended partnering sequence danced by a man and a woman to music of an unhurried tempo.

[113] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 23. Italics mine.

[114] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, l. 46.

dancer Irina Charnotskaia expressed optimism that ballet could be reinflected with new meanings in the Soviet context. She made an analogy with visual arts:

> In painting, which advances very quickly, we see the same seven colors. In ballet, we have the same sort of movements. Maybe we should select from these same movements and compose different combinations. From the same jumps, these elevated jumps, we need to give powerful jumps, to create the image of a strong woman who does not need rescuing by some romantic 'him' from some sort of 'it' [evil force].[115]

Charnotskaia suggested that if painting could take just a few colors and create all sorts of different styles and textures, surely classical ballet technique, which had embodied scenarios with kings and queens, could now be used to body forth Soviet ideals. Charnotskaia insisted that people in the audience should want to be like the characters on stage.[116] She maintained that ballet should offer audiences characters whom Soviet audiences should want to emulate, including strong heroines. To represent strong Soviet women, Charnotskaia reasoned that a ballerina should be able to utilize fouetté turns, among other inherited elements of classical ballet technique in Soviet ballets: "Let her spin fouetté turns… this will demonstrate her strength."[117] Where Tikhonov, Turkel'taub, Shapovalova, and

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[115] "Stenogramma disputa," 606-607.

[116] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, l. 87.

[117] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, ll. 87-88. Fouetté turns were popularized at the end of the nineteenth century by Italian virtuosi ballerinas, several of whom spent time as dancers of the Russian Imperial Theaters. The turns are often done consecutively on one foot with the other leg "whipping" out to the side between each revolution and bending in toward the standing leg during the turns. The woman's "coda" in many *pas de deux* from late nineteenth-century ballets is often staged to include a series of thirty-two fouettés (e.g., the *pas de deux* for Odile, the Black Swan, and Prince Siegfried in *Swan Lake*).

Goleizovskii saw in the embodiment of classical ballet technique only the relics of aristocratic and bourgeois cultures, Charnotskaia saw the potential to imbue ballet technique with a new range of meanings that could incorporate socialist ideas.

But then there was the issue of realism. Could ballet be realistic? Turkel'taub contended that classical ballet vocabulary could not be used to stage a realistic production on any subject, whether the theme was Soviet or not.[118] Comrade Andreev, a theater scholar, opined that he would not be convinced by a milkmaid standing on pointe, that such a movement would not be natural for her. He strongly objected to the scene in *The Bright Stream* where the ballerina from the city arrives at the collective farm and begins to dance in a field strewn with stubble after a harvest. Andreev wondered whether classical dance could, in fact, be used to represent contemporary subject matter.[119]

Here, the debate turned on different standards of realism. No, ballet could not be used to present a precise rendering of agricultural labor—ballet was not documentary film or photography or even realist painting. But ballet could be used to express the emotions of agricultural laborers and Komsomol members who found their work fulfilling. The debate came back around to dramaturgical conception and coherence: some participants reasoned that if the plot justified the

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[118] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 49.

[119] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 83.

emotions, then ballet could be the means of emotional expression. VKpDI Deputy Chairman Iakov Boiarskii maintained that the question was not whether a milkmaid should or should not stand on pointe. He argued that if a dramatic situation arose when a milkmaid's mental state justified her dancing on pointe, then she could dance on pointe. The important thing was that there be a dramatic justification for dancing on pointe.[120] Or doing fouettés.[121] Theater critic and stage director Pavel Markov believed similarly that it would be perfectly acceptable for a Komsomol girl to rise "onto her toes in delight and express her feelings with the means of classical steps."[122] He made an analogy between singing in opera and dancing in ballet: both are means of scenic expression to be accepted and justified in their application to communicate edifying stories for Soviet audiences.[123]

If classical ballet technique could be justified by some participants, what about nineteenth-century ballet mime or mime in general? Almost everyone who mentioned mime was prepared to dispense with nineteenth-century ballet mine. Pavel Markov suggested replacing the old ballet mime with fresh, new gestures:

> The concept of choreographic development of a character that responds to the growth of that character inevitably requires not only the elimination of conventional gestures, entrenched for centuries: not only all of these kisses blown in the air, caressive movements of the fingers around the face, not

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[120] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 99.

[121] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 100.

[122] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 40.

[123] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 40.

> only the hands, clasped to the heart as a sign of ardent love. The promotion of a new arsenal of extraordinarily eloquent movements is required.[124]

In the lexicon of nineteenth-century ballet mime, a ballet character drew an oval with his or her fingers in the air around his or her own face to indicate that another character was "handsome" or "beautiful." "Love" was conveyed by placing one palm flat against the chest and the other palm flat over the first hand (usually on an inhalation). Everyone agreed that these sorts of "conventional gestures" had no place in Soviet ballet. But were new gestures required, as Markov suggested, or should Soviet ballet completely do away with gestures?

Other participants in the discussions floated the possibility of dispensing with gestures altogether. Stage director Boris Mordvinov was of the opinion that it was possible to reveal a character through dance alone but that choreographers had not developed this capacity in practice. He suggested that using pantomime scenes interspersed among dances (not entirely unlike the structure of nineteenth-century ballets) might be a temporary measure to allow choreographers and stage directors to work out how to represent characters on the ballet stage. This temporary measure could promote the development of more expressive dances, Mordvinov argued, so that audiences would be able to tell which ballet they were watching by the choreography rather than by the costumes.[125] Similarly, ballet

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[124] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, ll. 36-37.

critic Vladimir Il'ich Golubov was not in favor of abandoning all mime. He thought that replacing dance with mime was a bad idea but that "social conflicts" could be conveyed more effectively through gesture than through dance.[126] Golubov was likely referring to experiments in the 1920s (at the Drambalet studio and elsewhere) that sought to substitute classical ballet dancing's courtly bearing with more realistic pantomime transplanted from dramatic theater; these productions actively deemphasized dance and emphasized pantomime in service of increasingly explicit storytelling. Golubov posited that dance which could communicate social conflicts might be developed in the future, but until then he favored incorporating gesture alongside dance.[127]

While there were suggestions that dance alone could tell stories (or should do so in the future), there were also speakers who advocated renewing ballet's mime vocabulary and continuing to use some gestures to identify characters and illustrate concrete concepts and relationships. And many speakers favored the maintenance of classical ballet technique. Igor' Moiseev bluntly dismissed the idea that classical dance technique could be cast aside and replaced: "To discard classical technique and try to create some sort of new technique—that means repeating exactly the same stage of development which classical dance has already

[125] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 17. Mordvinov did not elaborate on what kind of gestures he thought would be appropriate for the pantomime scenes.

[126] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 76.

[127] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 105, l. 76.

experienced, and at the end of the day arriving at pretty much the same result."[128] Moiseev suggested that, since the human body had not been fundamentally altered ("two arms and two legs") and the human body was the instrument for classical ballet, starting over with the same material would not necessarily yield a radically new form of dance. In other words, even if they tried to reinvent dance technique, they might well end up right back where they started.

In conclusion, the question of with what means Soviet ballet should tell its stories was one of the most fervently debated issues in the discussions in the 1930s. There were arguments that classical ballet technique was intrinsically antagonistic to Soviet ideals because of the physical carriage of their bodies that dancers cultivated through years of childhood training and the prior associations audiences brought to their reception of ballet dancing. Speakers who wanted to desert ballet technique often contended that new ways of moving and dancing would develop if choreographers were challenged to tell Soviet stories without resorting to classical ballet steps, jumps, and positions. Shapovalova advocated for reforming dance training first (i.e., abolishing ballet technique), in order to generate new dance vocabulary that would be suited for demonstrating contemporary political ideas. In Shapovalova's words, "ballet dramaturgy will not save the situation."[129]

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[128] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, l. 45.

[129] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, l.116.

Other speakers expressed the belief that dramaturgy was, in fact, the answer. They countered that as long as Soviet ballets had appropriate stories, ballet technique could be used to express joy, agony, and a whole range of human emotions that would be part of Soviet story ballets. Consequently, they argued, there was no need to abandon ballet technique; ballet technique needed to be put to use to tell Soviet stories. Librettist Nikolai Volkov cited the example of choreographer Vasilii Ivanovich Vainonen's use of a ballerina character in *The Flames of Paris*. Volkov asserted that the ballerina's solo dance on pointe conveyed "true agony" and that over the course of the whole ballet, her character embodied the transition of the intelligentsia from one revolutionary camp to the other.[130] He defended Vainonen's use of ballet technique on the grounds of ballet technique's capacity to reveal a character's emotions without words.

While some speakers hoped to dispense with mime in ballet altogether, most focused on the practical requirements of storytelling and admitted that some gestures could be used to serve the purpose of communicating stories and character. The biggest issue with respect to mime was vanquishing the inherited "caressive movements of the fingers around the face" and replacing the inherited nineteenth-century ballet mime gestures with less old-fashioned signals. Again, some speakers saw dramaturgy as the answer. Irina Charnotskaia declared that the

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[130] Stenogramma khoreograficheskogo soveshchaniia (November 22, 1936): RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 104, ll. 53-54.

discussion of "conventional gestures" would be obviated if they constructed the action of ballets correctly.[131] In other words, if the dramatic situations on stage no longer required explanations with conventional ballet mime, the old-fashioned ballet mime gestures would no longer be an obstacle for producers or audiences. According to Charnotskaia, the issue was not with the gestures themselves but with the dramatic structure of ballets and the types of scenes that the libretti required. Dancers, choreographers, and other participants in the discussions scrutinized existing or memorably recent ballets for possible solutions to the integration of subject matter, plot structure. Few, if any, ballets were deemed ideal, though lively discussions examined what had worked as well as what had not.

Cultivating a Canon

Katerina Clark argues that "[t]he Socialist Realist novel forms a tradition that rests on canonical exemplars."[132] Marina Frolova-Walker observes about Soviet music that "[w]orks were held up as positive or negative examples, or as a mixture of the two, and in this way musical precedents played the most important role in

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[131] GTsTM f. 152, d. 508, l. 87. The discussion of "conventional gestures" (especially as defined by Pavel Markov above) is not the same as the sense in which "conventionality" (*uslovnost'*) was being used in Vsevolod Emil'evich Meierkhol'd in the 1910s. According to Katerina Clark, in dramatic theater, Meierkhol'd sought to perfect *uslovnost'* (*Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995], 85-87). On the contrary, in Soviet ballet of the 1930s, nearly all discussants aggressively searched for ways to overcome *uslovnost'*, especially conventional gestures (*uslovnye zhesty*).

[132] *The Soviet Novel*, xii.

shaping future policy."[133] Something similar can be said of Soviet ballet. There were even fewer official directives that defined how Soviet ballet should tell its stories than there were official pronouncements on literary production or music. The means of storytelling in Soviet ballet were worked out in practice and analyzed by artists themselves in relation to ballets that had already been produced. In addition to prerevolutionary classics such as *Giselle*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, and *La Fille Mal Gardée*, the discussions in the 1930s focused on recent Soviet ballets, especially *Red Poppy* and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*.

Despite the ballet's flaws, Irina Charnotskaia found promise in one scene from *Red Poppy*:

> In *Red Poppy* there is one section: the unloading of the ship. What is good in that? [The scene] accurately expresses action. Maybe in olden times it would have been okay to signal that far away somewhere they are unloading a ship, but here we see the action unfolding accurately, how the scuffle with the coolies arose from the circumstances of the unloading. The action needs to be constructed like that, so that the activities flow one from another and so that there is no place for conventional gestures.[134]

According to Charnotskaia, this scene was good because the dancers did not try to gesture abstractly about unloading a ship or about the coolies' oppression. The coolies were actually on stage, unloading the ship, when one fell under his heavy load and his fellow workers defended the fallen coolie from the overseers' blows.[135]

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[133] Frolova-Walker, "The Glib, the Bland, and the Corny," 2.

[134] "Stenogramma disputa," 605.

Charnotskaia located in this scene an effective use of dancers' bodies to convey the plot of the ballet (which was also about a contemporary theme in the 1920s: the maltreatment of workers by their capitalist employers in revolutionary China) without the use of nineteenth-century ballet mime gestures. She suggested that this scene could be a model for other choreographers and librettists to reference as they worked out how to structure ballet libretti and how to tell stories on the ballet stage.

Pavel Markov and Mikhail Gabovich praised *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* as an exemplar of balletic storytelling.[136] Markov held up *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* as an example of a ballet that exhibited appropriate plot development and integration of scenes.[137] Gabovich agreed with Markov's assessment of the dramaturgical strength of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* and added that this production had the further distinction of actually using classical dance as a means of expression.[138] Gabovich thought that *Three Fat Men* had also succeeded in

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[135] See GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 24. See Appendix A for my translation of the 1927 libretto for *Red Poppy*.

[136] *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* premiered at Vladimir Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko Theater in Moscow in April 1936 and at the Bolshoi Theater in June 1936; along with *Red Poppy*, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* went on to be one of the most widely produced and reproduced ballets set to music by a Soviet composer (E. P. Belova et al., s.v. "'Bakhchisaraiskii fontan'" http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/b/bah4isarayskiy-fontan.html [accessed May 31, 2021]).

[137] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 39.

[138] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 68. Kas'ian Goleizovskii, however, was less enamored with the achievements of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. "Never be comforted by *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*," Goleizovskii wrote. "Moreover, that ballet constitutes not a reform but a shrewd retreat for the time being under the protection of the great name of Pushkin" (RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d.

using classical dance to represent characters, even if the subject matter of the ballet was a bit less serious than in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*.[139]

Much as in literature and music, socialist realism was defined with reference to exemplary works. Ballets such as *Red Poppy* and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* served to ground the theoretical discussion of ballet's capabilities. Professional opinions varied on the success of these productions in the integration of socialist subject matter, dramaturgical logic, and ballet's movement vocabulary, but the examples gave participants a common language from which to begin to imagine how Soviet ballet might be made "socialist" and "realist."

Chapter Conclusion

These examples show how ballet dancers, choreographers, and other producers negotiated the challenge of locating viable paths forward for Soviet ballet. They considered which subjects would make good ballets and how plots could be structured to convey important ideas through ballet's embodied means. They analyzed the structure and movement vocabulary of current repertoire and older ballets that were recent enough to be remembered. They asked what worked and why in the extant ballets and debated the value of trying to transfer a particular

105, l. 118). Goleizovskii had to be in Tashkent, preparing for the ten-day festival of Uzbek art in Moscow (the *dekada* was scheduled for May 1937), so he sent written remarks for the conference on dance in Moscow in November 1936.

[139] RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 103, l. 69. *Tri Tolstiaka* premiered at the Bolshoi Theater in March 1935 with music by Viktor Aleksandrovich Oranskii, libretto and choreography by Igor' Moiseev, and designs by Boris Aleksandrovich Matrunin (Zarubin, 161-163).

technique or structure into future productions. And they tried to separate what of ballet's corporeal languages worked against Soviet subject matter and what aspects of ballet's movement vocabularies could be critically assimilated and repurposed to body forth Soviet ideals. These discussions demonstrate how involved professionals themselves were in working out how to make "Soviet" ballets. Dancers, choreographers, and other theatrical professionals contributed much of the creative labor in developing the genre of ballet for Soviet state theaters.

Jan Plamper observes, "The binary pairing of censorship and cultural production has generated further binaries of writers vs. censors and is ultimately embedded in a dichotomy of state vs. society."[140] He continues, "This dichotomy obfuscates the actual processes of cultural production, which remain buried under the weight of a paradigm of repressive violence directed from top to bottom, from censors as the party-state incarnate to the cultural producers."[141] This paradigm of top vs. bottom and state vs. artists has been remarkably durable in scholarly imaginations. But the discussions in this chapter show that Soviet artists, bureaucrats, and political leaders shared the goal of creating ballets that could be accessible to, enlightening for, and enjoyed by mass audiences. There was one goal, and opinions abounded about how to achieve the goal. It is clear that these

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[140] Jan Plamper, "Abolishing Ambiguity: Soviet Censorship Practices in the 1930s," *The Russian Review* 60 (October 2001): 526.

[141] Plamper, 527.

were not discussions pitting the state against artists. To conceive of Soviet ballet production only in these binary terms obscures the real practices inherent in Soviet cultural production.

The idea that Soviet artists possessed and exercised agency is not a new one.[142] Marina Frolova-Walker writes of Soviet music, "There was a constant interaction between broad directives from above, theorizing of musicians and critics, and the examples provided by new and recent compositions, and it is this interaction, I would argue, that created the musical style of Socialist Realism."[143] Sheila Fitzpatrick, too, argues that professional aesthetic preferences were at least as influential in the formation of Soviet cultural products in the Stalin era as were the tastes of audiences, members of the Communist Party, and Soviet government officials.[144] However, Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko observe that "[c]ensorship is generally seen as a defining feature of Soviet cultural life."[145] Therefore, this chapter serves as another contribution clarifying that, in the early

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[142] Kiril Tomoff and Leah Goldman, among others who write about later periods, argue for the agency of composers in the composition of Soviet music: Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939-1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 1-3; and Leah D. Goldman, "Art of Intransigence: Soviet Composers and Art Music Censorship, 1945-1957" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2015).

[143] Frolova-Walker, "The Glib, the Bland, and the Corny," 2.

[144] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Lady Macbeth Affair: Shostakovich and the Soviet Puritans," in *The Cultural Front*: *Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 214.

[145] Clark et al., 261.

years of socialist realism as official aesthetic policy, the processes of cultural production in the Soviet Union were not manifestations of a state vs. artists binary.

Perhaps because of the prevailing assumption that censorship prevented Soviet artists from creating what they pleased, academic study of socialist realism has often been accompanied (or worse: provoked) by aesthetic derision.[146] For example, Evgeny Dobrenko terms socialist realism "the disaster of middlebrow taste."[147] Yet creating art that is accessible to mass audiences does not necessitate creating bad art. As Frolova-Walker and Pauline Fairclough have shown for Soviet music, composers themselves took an interest in creating music for mass audiences. Socialist realism was not manufactured "to prevent composers from having the modernist fun they all supposedly wanted."[148] Fairclough asserts, "we might also consider the notion that a composer of Shostakovich's stature sincerely wished for [Soviet mass audiences of the 1930s] to enjoy his music, and that he crafted a style that was both congenial to him and intended to be widely enjoyed

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[146] There is, of course, another layer to this judgment. Anglophone scholars and late-Soviet and post-Soviet Russophone scholars often denigrate socialist realist artistic production as what Elizabeth Hannah Stern terms "the compromised by-product of an oppressive regime" ("Politics in Pointe Shoes: The Genesis and Afterlives of Stalinist *Drambalet*" [PhD diss., Princeton University, 2019], 184). In other words, genesis in the era of Stalin and Stalinism tarnished socialist realist art for generations of scholars and critics. Cold War revulsion likely played no small part in the dismissal of Soviet ballets, novels, and other art works of this period by outside critics and later scholars.

[147] Evgeny Dobrenko, "The Disaster of Middlebrow Taste, or, Who 'Invented' Socialist Realism?" in Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, eds., *Socialist Realism without Shores* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 135.

[148] Frolova-Walker, "The Glib, the Bland, and the Corny," 20.

and understood by his compatriots."[149] She goes on to write that "what Soviet composers did in the 1930s and 1940s was deliberately write music for a wide audience… in full acceptance that this was their duty as Soviet citizens."[150] I posit that Soviet dancers, choreographers, and other ballet producers were also devoting their creative energies to the task of reinventing ballet for mass audiences—not because Soviet officials forced the artists to create particular ballets (or worse: bad ballets) but because artists and officials shared the aspiration that ballet could simultaneously achieve high levels of aesthetic and socialist-ideological quality. Therefore, this chapter makes a contribution to understandings of socialist realism as artistically generative.[151]

Elsewhere, Evgeny Dobrenko dismisses artistic production from this period as "fulfill[ing] the *social functions of art*" without actually being art.[152] I contend that Soviet ballets produced in the 1930s met most of Dobrenko's criteria for being art and, in fact, that the requirements of socialist realism contributed to the development of ballet as an artistic genre.

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[149] Pauline Fairclough, "Was Soviet Music Middlebrow? Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, Socialist Realism, and the Mass Listener in the 1930s," *The Journal of Musicology* 35, no. 3: 348.

[150] Fairclough, "Was Soviet Music Middlebrow," 350.

[151] I thank Susan Morrissey and the participants of the 2020 Desert Russian History Workshop for help in clarifying this point.

[152] Evegeny Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xi-xii. Italics in the original. Dobrenko argues that socialist realism was "*an institution for the production of socialism*" (xii). Italics in the original. See also xx, 6-7.

Art, according to Dobrenko, is characterized by "freedom, creativity, depth, and mastery."[153] The discussions cited herein exhibit sophisticated attempts (requiring professional expertise, or "mastery") to work out how to transform ballet into a genre that was relevant to Soviet audiences. In other words, making ballet socialist realist was a "creative" endeavor. And while Soviet artists created in institutional contexts that did not allow for complete "artistic freedom," their discussions from the 1930s shed light on the extent to which artists and other producers did possess and exercise agency in determining how to embody socialist realism in ballet. Socialist realism fostered artistic innovations that have outlasted Stalin and even the Soviet period. The "depth" of socialist realism's influence on storytelling in ballet and therefore on the repertoire of Soviet state theaters for the rest of the twentieth century would be hard to overestimate. Well into the twenty-first century, story ballets continue to form the core of the repertoire at theaters of opera and ballet in the former Soviet republics.

Everyone who participated in the discussions cited in this chapter assumed that Soviet ballet should be a narrative-based art form. Soviet leaders tasked Soviet artists with performing and creating works of art that would engage mass audiences and help teach workers, peasants, soldiers, engineers, managers, students, and bureaucrats how to be good citizens. Their didactic duty led producers to focus on

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[153] Dobrenko, *Political Economy*, xi.

cultivating large-scale evening-length ballets structured by stories. The stories gave Soviet ballet producers the chance to incorporate pressing themes of modern political importance. The stories also offered producers opportunities to use ballet to represent contemporary Soviet characters; ballet could depict model Soviet people and archetypal enemies. Both of these capacities—to embody significant ideas and to viscerally manifest characters—empowered the art of ballet to contribute to the Soviet government and Communist Party's cultural project of promoting *kul'turnost'* among Soviet citizens.

It is important to note Soviet ballet's undisputed emphasis on story ballets in this period because contemporary ballet choreographers in Western Europe and the United States, especially those whose careers began with Sergei Pavlovich Diagilev's Ballets Russes company or its successors, were neither endowed with a pedagogical imperative to nurture builders of socialism nor were they prioritizing the development of ballet as a storytelling genre. George Balanchine (Georgii Melitonovich Balanchivadze), the most famous and prolific ballet choreographer of the twentieth century, prized "technical and musical precision" and "formal composition as opposed to stories and dramatic acting" in most of his productions for the New York City Ballet.[154] While there were choreographers in the West making story ballets in the 1930s and 1940s, including the brothers Lew and

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[154] Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet* (New York: Random House, 2010), 509.

Willam Christensen,[155] producers in North America and Western Europe tended to explore at most individual scenes rather than complex dramatic spectacles. It was Soviet ballet, cut off from artistic exchanges with Western Europe and North America for nearly twenty years, that accentuated ballet's storytelling potential, seeking new stories for ballet to tell and new methods for ballet to tell stories.

[155] For more on the Christensen brothers, see Debra Hickenlooper Sowell, *The Christensen Brothers: An American Dance Epic* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998) and Cobbett Steinberg, *San Francisco Ballet: The First Fifty Years* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1983).

Chapter Five

Revitalizing *Red Poppy*: Collaborative Creativity at the Bolshoi Theater (1949)

> "The new production of *The Red Poppy* is the epitome of the creative and artistic experience of two generations of Bolshoi Theater ballet artists. The production constitutes a significant step in the development of Soviet ballet, to the creation of which the strength of the GABT ballet company (along with composers and librettists) is now dedicated."
>
> —on the 1949 production of The Red Poppy at the Bolshoi Theater, from an article in the program for the performance commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the original production (June 13, 1952)

Chapter Introduction

It is an understatement to say that a lot happened between the discussions of how to make ballet "Soviet" in the early- to mid-1930s and the Bolshoi Theater's second production of *Red Poppy*. The Great Purges reverberated through the Communist Party and out into Soviet society, the Soviet Union sacrificed incalculable numbers of lives and quantities of other resources for the sake of Allied victory during World War II, the Cold War commenced, and a series of ideological campaigns beginning in 1946 jarred many realms of Soviet cultural life. Because this project's scope is defined by the initial bloom and subsequent variations on *Red Poppy*, many momentous events in Soviet and world history that fall between the case studies are therefore excluded from detailed discussion. In the wake of all of these cataclysms and despite the upheaval in Soviet musical life and institutions that followed the anti-formalism campaign of 1948 and the anti-cosmopolitanism campaign that began in 1949, it is remarkable that the State

Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (GABT) premiered six opera and four ballet productions in 1949.[1] Among those ten productions completed in 1949 was new version of *Red Poppy*.

This chapter begins to unpack the process through which ideas about what constituted "Soviet" ballet were further refined and put into practice in the making of the Bolshoi Theater's second production of *Red Poppy*. From the theoretical discussions in the previous chapter, we now step behind the scenes and into the production process for a specific ballet. One key source for this chapter is the stenographic record of a meeting held at GABT on October 7, 1949, just after *Red Poppy* was added to the theater's repertoire plan for the final quarter of the year. During the meeting, GABT dancers and choreographers and their colleagues from within the theater debated the relationships among story, music, and choreography as they planned for the restaging of *Red Poppy*. Even though Rostislav Vladimirovich Zakharov had been the most prominent and prolific ballet

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The epigraph is from Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva (hereafter RGALI) f. 648, op. 5, d. 606, l. 76ob. "GABT" is the Russian acronym for the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (Gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii Bol'shoi teatr SSSR).

[1] For more on the anti-formalism and anti-cosmopolitanism campaigns, see Marina Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1981*, enlarged ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939-1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); E. S. Vlasova, *1948 god v sovetskoi muzyke: Dokumentirovanoe issledovanie* (Moscow: "Klassika–XXI," 2010); and Patrick Zuk, "Nikolay Myaskovsky and the Events of 1948," *Music and Letters* 93, no. 1 (February 2012). For GABT's 1949 opera and ballet premieres, see Repertuar Gosudarstvennogo akademicheskogo Bol'shogo teatra Soiuza SSR Prem'ery (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 482, l. 8).

choreographer in the 1930s, participants at the meeting broke down Zakharov's premises for the new production from multiple angles: political-ideological significance; the relationships among music, dance, and story in the ballet; the logistics of staging particular scenes and how to communicate the plot to the audience without words; character development; plot development; the relationship between the original production and a new version; and more. From large-scale concerns to small details, from abstract ideas to the physicality of dance and gesture, with their attention to so many dimensions of the production, the participants at the meeting were engaging in the development of Soviet ballet. Their participation demonstrates that collective production processes could bring to life a new ballet that was successful by the aesthetic and ideological standards of their day.

The meeting on October 7 evidences professional and artistic disagreement about how to realize a shared goal: reviving *Red Poppy*. The stenographic record illustrates that Soviet people (including artists employed at a state-sponsored theater) were not completely conditioned to share a single perspective furnished by government-sponsored propaganda and political education. Even though many of the participants shared similar political ideas, they had different opinions about how to realize an ideologically sound version of *Red Poppy*. The participants in the meeting disagreed about the details of the planned production, and they articulated their disagreements on the record, in the presence of their colleagues

and a stenographer. While the stenographic record may not be a perfect record of what went on during the meeting, this type of source offers historians significant insight.

In terms of understanding the history of Soviet ballet and ballet more broadly, the stenographic record of the meeting on October 7 attests to two important facts. First, while previous research reveals resistance to Soviet goals and ideas among certain Soviet dancers and choreographers,[2] dancers and choreographers at this meeting demonstrated their willingness to participate in the production process. They only resisted what they understood as poor artistic choices or (seemingly inadvertent) ideological missteps. Second, while there is a persistent stereotype about ballet dancers in general (not only Soviet dancers) being vacuous vessels for genius choreographers, the dancers at this meeting showed themselves to be critical thinkers. The stenographic record evidences dancers' significance in the creative process.

These findings accord with those of Ethan Pollock and Kiril Tomoff who demonstrate that even in the context of post-World War II Stalinism, practitioners possessed and exercised agency.[3] In what is widely considered a stifling period for

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[2] See especially Janice Ross, *Like a Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Joel Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko: Beauty and Resistance in Soviet Ballet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Ania Nikulina, "Maya Plisetskaya's *The Carmen-Suite*: Recovering a Hidden Repertoire," *Theatre Journal* 71, no. 2 (June 2019). See, too, Christina Ezrahi's *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

Soviet culture, scientists, composers, and ballet professionals worked to develop their academic and artistic fields. As Tomoff describes, composers "willingly responded" to the Soviet government and Communist Party's calls to contribute to the cultural upbringing of Soviet audiences.[4] And because the government and the Party rarely embodied the necessary expertise to specify how appropriate music was to be composed or ballet was to be choreographed, composers and ballet artists needed to "fill in the contours" of broad ideological directives with genre-specific methods and practices hashed out during discussions such as the one on October 7.[5] Thus, archival sources reveal that artists and scientists maintained professional agency, even during the height of Stalinism.

This chapter, then, expands on the previous chapter's evidence of Soviet artists' agency in the development of "Soviet" ballet and highlights the collaborative production processes for ballet in Soviet state theaters. According to Alfonso Montuori and Ronald E. Purser, widespread belief in "the romantic myth of the lone genius still prevails."[6] Even twenty-five years later, this is certainly true in ballet, where biographies and memoirs have traditionally told the stories of genius male

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[3] Ethan Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) and Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union*.

[4] Tomoff, *Creative Union*, 93.

[5] Tomoff, *Creative Union*, 98.

[6] Alfonso Montuori and Ronald E. Purser, "Deconstructing the Lone Genius Myth: Toward a Contextual View of Creativity," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 35, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 77.

choreographers; new scholarship is just starting to analyze the work of female choreographers and choreographers who invite dancers to participate in the generation of choreographic material as opposed to those who dictate their individual artistic vision.[7]

While public and professional perceptions favor the singular artistic genius, researchers who study creativity from the perspectives of psychology, social psychology, and sociology observe "that creativity can be sparked by interactions."[8] They call for case studies of collaborative creation in opera, theater, film, jazz, and other artistic genres.[9] Archival records from Soviet theaters offer historical examples of collective creativity. The sources for this chapter—including both the stenographic record from the meeting on October 7 and the brigadier's report on the creative brigade's work to realize *The Red Poppy* at GABT—exemplify the collaborative production processes that were common in Soviet state theaters. The archival records illuminate "the social construction of activity in face-to-face dialogue."[10] As Montuori and Purser observe, "With the present individualistic

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[7] For examples, see contributions to *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Ballet*, edited by Kathrina Farrugia-Kriel and Jill Nunes Jensen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). The collection includes fifty-three essays by dancers, former dancers, dance scholars, dance critics, choreographers, and others.

[8] Montuori and Purser, 105.

[9] Riane Eisler and Alfonso Montuori, "Creativity, Society, and the Hidden Subtext of Gender: Toward a New Contextualized Approach," *World Futures* 63, no. 7: 491, and Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*, Updated and Expanded ed. (1982; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[10] Montuori and Purser, 91.

focus on creativity, all too often interactions are viewed only as negative factors in the creative process."[11] My sources challenge prevailing understandings about the conditions of possibility for creativity, expanding possibilities for creativity beyond intra-psychic invention by a single male genius. I emphasize the collaborative nature of the production process at GABT in order to provide a complement to the standard approach in dance historiography which focuses on individual choreographers.[12]

The archival sources on which this chapter is based also challenge prevailing scholarly assumptions about gender in ballet. Since dance scholars began to apply feminist theoretical lenses to ballet in the late 1980s, many have condemned ballet as a celebration of patriarchy in which women cannot exercise

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[11] Montuori and Purser, 105.

[12] For examples from Soviet ballet historiography, see Janice Ross, *Like a Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Elizabeth Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*, trans. Lynn Visson, ed. Sally Banes (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990); and E. Surits and E. Belova, eds. *Baletmeister A. A. Gorskii. Materialy. Vospominaniia. Stat'i.* (Saint Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999). For other ballet examples (not an exhaustive list), see Sasha Anwalt, *The Joffrey Ballet: Robert Joffrey and the Making of an American Dance Company* (New York: Scribner, 1996); Judith Chazin-Bennahum, *The Ballets of Antony Tudor: Studies in Psyche and Satire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Elizabeth Kendall, *Balanchine and the Lost Muse: Revolution and the Making of a Choreographer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Nadine Meisner, *Marius Petipa: The Emperor's Ballet Master* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Tim Scholl, *From Petipa to Balanchine: Classical Revival and the Modernization of Ballet* (London: Routledge, 1994); Debra Hickenlooper Sowell, *The Christensen Brothers: An American Dance Epic* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998); E. Ia. Surits, *Artist i baletmeister Leonid Miasin* (Perm': Knizhnyi mir, 2012); Mary Grace Swift, *A Loftier Flight: The Life and Accomplishments of Charles-Louis Didelot, Balletmaster* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1974); Roland John Wiley, *The Life and Ballets of Lev Ivanov: Choreographer of* The Nutcracker *and* Swan Lake (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). The prominence of choreographer-centered studies is even greater in scholarship on twentieth-century modern dance.

any agency over how they are represented on stage or off.[13] I take up Alexandra Carter's call to research "the actual conditions of the production,"[14] that is, to look not only at the product (choreography) but also at "the whole network of social interactions that brings the product to life."[15] And in attending to the production process, I find that women were among the dancers who actively participated in the making of *The Red Poppy* at GABT in 1949. Judith Lynne Hanna's assertion that "male producers and choreographers continue to make decisions in the background"[16] does not necessarily hold true in the Soviet context. While women were not the only ones working in the background to produce *The Red Poppy*, they were active participants and were recognized as such by their colleagues. Therefore, these sources help to correct the scholarly discourse that has largely failed to locate any agency for women in ballet practice.[17]

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[13] Alexandra Carter reviews some of the most famous examples in "Dying Swans or Sitting Ducks? A Critical Reflection on Feminist Gazes at Ballet," *Performance Research* 4, no. 3 (1999).

[14] Carter, 97.

[15] Eisler and Montuori, 490.

[16] Judith Lynne Hanna, *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance, and Desire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xiv.

[17] For examples of other approaches to analyzing women's agency in ballet past and present, see Jennifer Fisher's books and articles, including *Nutcracker Nation: How an Old World Ballet Became a Christmas Tradition in the New World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); "Tulle as Tool: Embracing the Conflict of the Ballerina as Powerhouse," *Dance Research Journal* 39, no. 1 (Summer 2007); "The Swan Brand: Reframing the Legacy of Anna Pavlova," *Dance Research Journal* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2012); and *Ballet Matters: A Cultural Memoir of Dance Dreams and Empowering Realities* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2019). New essays by Emily Coates ("Weaving Apollo: Women's Authorship and Neoclassical Ballet," 791-808), Carrie Gaiser Casey ("Reclaiming the Studio: Observing the Choreographic Processes of Cathy Marston and Annabelle Lopez Ochoa,"

This chapter begins by situating the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* in the context of GABT's production plan for the year. It shows how contingent the repertoire planning could be and how suddenly plans could change, even in the Soviet Union's largest theatrical institution. Then, I examine the meeting on October 7, 1949, to understand the value that the participants associated with the original production of *Red Poppy* as well as the potential value that a new version of *Red Poppy* would have in 1949. Next, I analyze the discussion and eventual rejection of choreographer Rostislav Zakharov's plans for the new production to show how GABT's collaborative production process could provide conditions of possibility to strengthen an artistic product in accordance with contemporary priorities for "Soviet" ballet. After that, I examine the next stage of the collaborative production process through the brigadier's report on the creative brigade's contributions to staging the new ballet in record time; the creative brigade offers further evidence that collaboration contributed to creativity. Finally, I analyze archival traces of one artist's frustration with respect to the collective efforts. This example illustrates the tension between institutionalized structures for collaborative production and Soviet mechanisms for individual remuneration. I concede that not everyone was thrilled with the collaborative production process but also suggest

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889-906), Tanya Wideman-Davis ("Dance Theatre of Harlem: Radical Black Female Bodies in Ballet," 249-262), among others, in Farrugia-Kriel and Nunes Jensen, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Ballet* are locating agency for women in contemporary ballet practice. See also Anna Aalten, "'The Moment When it All Comes Together': Embodied Experiences in Ballet," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 11, no. 3 (2004).

that making space for discourse about collective creation and designing institutional contexts for collaboration could engage and foreground more diverse perspectives and ideas.

Red Poppy Returns

After more than a decade's absence from the repertoire, *Red Poppy* suddenly returned to the Bolshoi Theater in late 1949. The most proximal cause was the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949.[18] After decades of bloody civil war, the Chinese Communist Party had finally prevailed.[19] It appears that the Chairman of the All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs (VKpDI) Polikarp Ivanovich Lebedev suggested shortly thereafter that the Bolshoi Theater stage *Red Poppy* again.[20] A new production of *Red Poppy* at the Soviet Union's most prestigious theater of opera and ballet must have seemed to Lebedev the appropriate celebration of the country's major new socialist ally.

Judging by the archival records of repertoire planning and approval processes, *Red Poppy*'s return to the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire came as

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[18] The Declaration of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was published on the front page of *Pravda* on October 2, 1949; the Declaration is dated October 1. The General Program of the People's Political Consultative Council of China took up the entirety of Page 3 on October 2, 1949. A statement on the front page of *Pravda* on October 3, 1949, confirmed diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the PRC.

[19] The original 1927 production of *Red Poppy* was set in revolutionary China in the late 1920s and depicted the (fictionalized) first stirrings of the Chinese Communist Revolution. See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of the original production of *Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater.

[20] Stenogramma zasedaniia Direktsii po voprosu o postanovke baleta "Krasnyi mak" (October 7, 1949): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 2.

something of a surprise to GABT.[21] VKpDI issued a directive on March 11, 1949, approving the repertoire plan for the Bolshoi Theater and its Filial for the remainder of 1949. There were ten productions planned for the two stages. For the Bolshoi Theater, the operas *Sadko* and *Aida* were expected along with the ballets *The Bronze Horseman* and *Life*. For the Filial, the operas *Faust*, *Mazepa*, *Chio-Chio-San*, and *Fra Diavolo ou L'Hôtellerie de Terracine* were planned, plus the ballets *Coppélia* and *The Dragonfly*.[22] There was no sign of *Red Poppy* in the 1949 repertoire plan six months before the ballet went into rehearsal.[23]

On July 21, 1949, VKpDI issued a directive with the approved repertoire for celebrations of the thirty-second anniversary of the October Revolution at the most prominent theaters of opera and ballet, operetta, and musical comedy in Moscow and Leningrad. *Red Poppy* was planned for the Kirov Theater in Leningrad, and the Bolshoi Theater was scheduled to present the ballet *Ruby Stars* (formerly titled

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[21] Note that, as of early 1949, the idea of staging *Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater did make a brief appearance in a draft decision of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union entitled "On the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the USSR," but there *Red Poppy* was not projected for realization until 1951 (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii, hereafter RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 84, ll. 26-30). There are several earlier drafts of this decision in d. 84 along with memoranda suggesting revisions. The draft had been bouncing among VKpDI, GABT administration, and the Central Committee of the Communist Party's Department of Propaganda and Agitation since mid-1948. Only one draft mentions *Red Poppy* (l. 28).

[22] VKpDI Prikaz #170 (March 11, 1949): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 131, l. 17. Prikaz #170 also lists current repertoire for the Bolshoi Theater and Filial for 1949 (ll. 17-17ob.). *Chio-Chio-San* was a Soviet version of the Italian opera *Madame Butterfly*.

[23] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 357 contains Bolshoi Theater and Filial rehearsal schedules for the 1949-1950 theatrical season. From this, it appears that stage rehearsals for *The Red Poppy* began on November 9, 1949 (l. 16). Rehearsals would have been held for several weeks in separate rehearsal halls prior to the first on-stage rehearsal.

Life); the GABT Filial was slated to premiere the Polish opera *Halka* (*Gal'ka*). The timeframe for completion of the productions was set for October 15-31, 1949, with premieres to be November 3-8, 1949.[24] Again, there was no plan for a production of *Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater in 1949.

Suddenly, on October 7, 1949, VKpDI revised its directive from March 11, 1949. *The Dragonfly* was removed from the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire plan and work on *Ruby Stars* (*Life*) was suspended. In their places, the ballet *Red Poppy* and the opera *Lakmé* were added to the repertoire plan, both set to premiere in December 1949. VKpDI gave GABT three days to put together budgets and production teams for the newly-added titles.[25]

Why *Red Poppy*? (October 7, 1949)

That same afternoon, October 7, 1949, GABT held a meeting on the question of staging *The Red Poppy*. The meeting typified the collaborative nature of ballet and opera production at the Soviet Union's largest musical theater; it was a dialogue among theatrical professionals concerned with the new ballet

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[24] VKpDI Prikaz #594 (July 21, 1949): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 131, l. 43. *Life* had at least three working titles in various years: *Zhizn'* (Life), *Rubinovye zvezdy* (Ruby Stars), and *Stranitsy zhizni* (Pages of Life). The music for *Life* was composed by Andrei Melitonovich Balanchivadze, choreographer George Balanchine's younger brother. *Pages of Life* eventually premiered at the Bolshoi Theater (as a one-act ballet) on November 19, 1961, with libretto and choreography by Leonid Mikhailovich Lavrovskii. For brief production history and scenario see V. I. Zarubin's *Pervye postanovki baletov na russkoi stsene 1825-1997* (Moscow: Ellis Luck, 1998), 211-213.

[25] VKpDI Prikaz #849 (October 7, 1949): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1278, l. 1 and RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 131, l. 60.

production and its resonance in Soviet society.[26] The discussion clearly articulates participants' understandings of the importance of the 1927 production of *Red Poppy*, the potential value of *Red Poppy* in 1949, the need for an updated production, and errors to avoid.

The speakers at the meeting obviously felt that the original version of *Red Poppy* had been an important production in the history of Soviet culture. V. Ia. Balaban remarked, "[T]hanks to the splendid music and choreographic images, the old production was very popular and played not an insignificant role in the formulation of Soviet ballet performance."[27] The original production, while not perfect in the estimations of critics in the 1920s or the assembled gathering in 1949, had been an important step in the development of Soviet ballet. According to Aleksandr Ivanovich Radunskii, the original production of *Red Poppy* was significant because it was absolutely a ballet and it also featured Soviet characters.[28] In the 1920s, when ballet's utility in the Soviet Union was disputed,

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[26] Those attending the meeting included Leonid Lavrovskii, Vasilii Ivanovich Vainonen, and Rostislav Zakharov (choreographers); Aleksei Ermolaev, Mikhail Markovich Gabovich, Sof'ia Nikolaevna Golovkina, Boris Sergeevich Kholfin, Iurii Grigor'evich Kondratov, Ol'ga Vasil'evna Lepeshinskaia, Asaf Mikhailovich Messerer, Sulamif' Mikhailovna Messerer, Vladimir Alekseevich Preobrazhenskii, Aleksandr Ivanovich Radunskii, Irina Viktorovna Tikhomirnova, Aleksandr Romanovich Tomskii, Viktor Ivanovich Tsaplin, Galina Sergeevna Ulanova, and Aleksei Alekseevich Varlamov (dancers); Nikolai Semenovich Golovanov and Arnol'd Savel'evich Roitman (conductors); Vasilii Alekseevich Zadorskii, I. P. Il'in, and Sergei Vladimirovich Shashkin (GABT administrators); and V. Ia. Balaban (head of the artistic-production sector at GABT) (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 2). I have not been able to track down first names and patronymics for Il'in and Balaban.

[27] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 17.

Red Poppy emerged as a decisively balletic production. It was neither circus art nor dramatic theater nor modern dance. It did not rely on the placards of silent films or agitprop[29] skits. *Red Poppy*, as discussed in Chapter 3, had the recognizable multi-act form of a classical ballet. It had mime scenes to communicate some parts of the story just as the pre-revolutionary ballets had. It had a ballerina on pointe. And on top of all of the familiar balletic tropes, as both Radunskii and Leonid Mikhailovich Lavrovskii pointed out, *Red Poppy* introduced contemporary, Soviet characters.[30] The contemporary characters brought ballet out of the realm of fairy tales and down to present-day earth, while the classical ballet form and techniques for both dancing and storytelling anchored *Red Poppy* in the dominion of ballet. In the process, according to Lavrovskii, "The genre was preserved."[31] Saving a genre is, indeed, no insignificant role for a production to play.

In addition to the several speakers who commented on the importance of the original production of *Red Poppy,* there was also consensus that *Red Poppy* still had value in its Soviet context. Leonid Lavrovskii opined that the subject matter of the Chinese Communist Revolution was very serious, and the Bolshoi

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[28] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 14.

[29] "Agitprop" is a contraction of "agitation" and "propaganda."

[30] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 14 for Radunskii's remarks. Lavrovskii's comment appears on l. 20.

[31] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 20.

Theater needed to have a ballet production on this subject in its repertoire.[32] The subject itself was important for contemporary Soviet artists and audiences. Aleksei Alekseevich Varlamov spoke of the revolutionary quality of *Red Poppy* that he felt resonated with contemporary Soviet ideas.[33] This demonstrates the multiplicity of *Red Poppy*'s appeal. The ballet could simultaneously be about a fictional Chinese city and fictional characters and events but true to the spirit of the Soviet times—as often had been the case in theater, where exoticized places served as settings for presentation of local ideals. The ballet's subject matter and revolutionary spirit were both deemed relevant to Soviet audiences in 1949.

However, several speakers at the meeting suggested that it was necessary to update the ballet for contemporary audiences. Rostislav Zakharov opined that *Red Poppy* had been popular because it was the first Soviet ballet and that Soviet audiences and artists had grown more sophisticated since the 1920s. "Now, to us, the old production seems naive," he said.[34] Lavrovskii concurred, arguing that the ballet from the 1920s was a fully-realized artistic production for its time. However, Lavrovskii continued, "Now we have matured, and already [the old production] cannot satisfy us."[35] Zakharov and Lavrovskii's remarks evidence belief in the need

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[32] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 20.

[33] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 16.

[34] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 19.

[35] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 20.

for Soviet ballet not merely to move forward but to continually reinvent itself for new generations by adapting to changing ideas and perspectives in the surrounding society.

Aleksandr Radunskii admitted that the original version of *Red Poppy* was dramaturgically weak; however, compared to even older ballets in the repertoire in 1927, he acknowledged that the original production of *Red Poppy* had been satisfying. In 1927, Soviet ballet theaters had not yet produced ballets with strong dramatic conceptions, so the original version of *Red Poppy* constituted an acceptably effective dramatic production for its original audiences. In the 1930s and 1940s, however, ballets such as *The Flames of Paris*, *Lost Illusions*, *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai,* and *Romeo and Juliet* raised the standard for dramatic coherence in ballet. Most of the aforementioned ballets were based on classic literary works, and their readymade plots and well-developed characters were translated into ballets. *Red Poppy*, by contrast, had not taken its plot structure or characters from a famous novel, play, or poem. As discussed in Chapter 3, the original libretto for *Red Poppy* was cobbled together from contemporary geopolitical events and conventional ballet tropes.[36] Looking back from 1949 through the experience of the ballets from the 1930s and 1940s,

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[36] See also Simon Morrison's discussion of the 1927 production of *Red Poppy* in *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (New York: Norton, 2016), especially 243-253.

Radunskii observed that it was difficult to appreciate the dramaturgy in the original version of *Red Poppy*.[37] The genre had moved forward. The original version paled in comparison to subsequent Soviet advancements in ballet.

Leonid Lavrovskii and Mikhail Markovich Gabovich identified weaknesses in the original production's embodied portrayals of Chinese characters that any new version would need to improve upon. Lavrovskii praised the original choreography for *Red Poppy* but simultaneously raised doubts about whether the choreographic style had aged as well as the spirit of the production. Lavrovskii described the original choreographic style as derived from porcelain: "a pseudo-Chinese style born in France."[38] He asked, perhaps rhetorically, whether such a style could be performed in the Soviet Union in 1949. Mikhail Gabovich observed that Soviet people in 1949 had a better understanding of Chinese culture than the original production team had brought to bear on *Red Poppy*. Like Lavrovskii, Gabovich declared that it was necessary to avoid what he described as the worst errors of the previous production: depicting Chinese men with braids[39] and

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[37] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 14.

[38] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 21.

[39] Most adult Han Chinese men in China were required to maintain their hair in a "queue" or braid, especially during the Qing dynasty (1636-1912). See Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000). The setting of the original version of *Red Poppy* was revolutionary China in the late 1920s. By the late 1920s, Chinese men were no longer expected or even allowed to wear the queue. To incorporate queues or queue-cutting in a ballet set in China in the late 1920s was a historical inaccuracy that revealed early Soviet artists' woeful obliviousness to how life in China had already changed in the first two decades after the Qing dynasty fell.

consigning to Chinese characters dances borrowed from the ballet *The Nutcracker*.[40] Gabovich and Lavrovskii's comments emphasized the importance of the dancers' embodied portrayal of Chinese characters. In ballet, it was not merely the music or the story that mattered but also the dancers' corporeality. Therefore, Gabovich and Lavrovskii claimed, it was important for the new production to avoid the old production's portrayals of Chinese people via obsequious postures.

In sum, the comments of meeting participants articulated the significance of the 1927 production of *Red Poppy*, the importance of the ballet's subject matter and revolutionary spirit in 1949, and the reasons why the ballet's dramaturgy and corporeality would need to be updated for contemporary Soviet audiences. Choreographer Rostislav Zakharov, who was then in the process of staging *The Red Poppy* at the Kirov Theater in Leningrad for the thirty-second anniversary of the October Revolution, expected to handle the new production for the Bolshoi Theater, too.[41] One of the main purposes of the meeting on October 7, 1949, was for Zakharov to present his plans for the new Bolshoi Theater production so that those assembled could contribute feedback.

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[40] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 24.

[41] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 2.

How *Not* to Revive *Red Poppy* (October 7, 1949, cont'd.)

Rostislav Zakharov informed the meeting that he was working from the basis of Mikhail Ivanovich Kurilko's libretto and incorporating some aspects of Aleksei Nikolaevich Ermolaev's version of the scenario.[42] The dancers and others roundly criticized Zakharov's plans for disturbing the elements of the ballet that seemed most valuable from the original production, for insufficiently strengthening the ballet's dramatic through-line, and for introducing illogical and unballetic ideas that stood to make his version even less coherent than the original. Participants in the meeting also expressed skepticism about Zakharov's capacity to put a new story over the old music, though there was general agreement that GABT needed to stage *Red Poppy* again from the perspective of 1949, not reconstruct the original production. Finally, speakers at the meeting struggled with the tension between historical accuracy and representation on the ballet stage. Taken together, the comments at the meeting show artists, especially dancers (men and women), engaging in the development of Soviet ballet.

The dancers Mikhail Gabovich, Aleksandr Radunskii, Aleksandr Romanovich Tomskii, and Aleksei Varlamov voiced frustration with both the lack

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[42] More on Ermolaev's libretto below. Zakharov does not specify whether he is working from Kurilko's 1927 libretto for the Bolshoi Theater (Gosudarstvennyi Tsentral'nyi Teatral'nyi Muzei imeni A. A. Bakhrushina, hereafter GTsTM, f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, ll. 19-45; see also translation in Appendix B herein), Kurilko's 1947 draft (RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 1868, ll. 73-84, not produced at the Bolshoi Theater), or a version of the libretto used for the production(s) in Leningrad in 1929 and/or 1949.

of genuine motivation for the characters occasioned by the plot of the libretto in Zakharov's revision and Zakharov's version of the conspiracy to assassinate the Soviet Captain, which seemed ill-suited to representation on the ballet stage. Radunskii complained that it was incomprehensible for Li Shan-fu to try to assassinate the Soviet Captain since the Soviet Captain did not do anything to warrant such fierce hatred.[43] Similarly, Radunskii observed that there was no good reason for Li Shan-fu's accomplices to participate in the assassination plot; there was no obvious motivation for the conspiracy.[44] Radunskii worried that the audience would not even understand what was happening on stage because the situations were so preposterous and illogical and because the situations did not lend themselves to being communicated through movement; he thought that Zakharov's plan was actually less dramatically coherent than the 1927 production.[45] Varlamov, it seems, acknowledged Zakharov's attempt to heighten the suspense in the plot by exaggerating the conspiracy. At the same time, Varlamov criticized Zakharov's solution because he thought that Zakharov's conspiracy would ruin the relatively sedate second act.[46] Zakharov had tried to insert drama into the old libretto, but in doing so Zakharov's insertions distracted

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[43] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 15.

[44] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 16.

[45] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 15.

[46] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 17.

from what Varlamov felt were the more important, more balletic aspects of the Act II dream scenes.

The dancers were distressed about the diminution of the characters of the main roles in Zakharov's vision for the ballet, too, especially the character of the Soviet Captain. Mikhail Gabovich, Aleksandr Radunskii, and Aleksei Varlamov ridiculed Zakharov's version of the Soviet Captain for what they considered his dwindling masculinity; Varlamov and Gabovich referred to Zakharov's Captain as a sissy.[47] "For an actor, it's already not a role," Radunskii complained. Choreographer Leonid Lavrovskii observed that the role of the Soviet Captain had deteriorated in Zakharov's conception, losing the courage and nobility that characterized the role in the 1920s.[48] The dancers objected to Zakharov's contention (following Aleksei Ermolaev's VKpDI-approved libretto) that the Soviet Captain should not be observed entering—or even walking on the street outside—a smoking parlor. If the Soviet Captain could not be physically present on stage at the sites of the action in the plot, the dancers argued, the Soviet Captain ceased to be an important player in the story. No one defended Zakharov and Ermolaev's

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[47] Varlamov noted, "*Rol' kapitana v etom spektakle prinizhena i on stanovitsia znachitel'no golubee chem byl ran'she*" (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 17). Gabovich commented, "*Iz za togo, chto Kapitan ne dolzhen khodit' v kabak/kstati tuda ego ne nado bylo puskat'/, prevrashchaetsia v khodul'nuiu figuru, s golubymi kraskami*" (l. 23). In Gabovich's remarks, everything before "*prevrashchaetsia*" is crossed out in the original. I translate "*golubee*" and "*s golubymi kraskami*" from these remarks as "sissy."

[48] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 20.

attempt to raise the standards of the Soviet Captain's behavior; everyone who spoke found the new restrictions on the Soviet Captain's movement and behavior detrimental to his prominence as a character and as a representation of Soviet personhood on stage.

The dancers also protested what they heard as the one-dimensionality of Zakharov's other main characters: Li Shan-fu, Tao-Khoa, and the new character of the young coolie.[49] Aleksandr Radunskii reproached Zakharov's description of Li Shan-fu as evil incarnate rather than a person engaged in logically- and emotionally-motivated human relationships with other characters.[50] Mikhail Gabovich described the role of Tao-Khoa as less lyrical and three-dimensional than she had been in the 1927 production.[51] Radunskii agreed that Tao-Khoa's role was more dramatically coherent and important to the plot in the 1927 production. He groused that Tao-Khoa's character was reduced to getting a hunch that something was wrong when Li Shan-fu was plotting to assassinate the Soviet Captain, which did not amount to much of a character and was also extremely difficult to express in dance.[52] Gabovich observed that the young coolie was an inchoate character in

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[49] The young coolie was not yet named at the time of this meeting. They were discussing the character who came to be known as "Ma Li-chen" in the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater.

[50] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 15.

[51] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 23.

[52] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 15.

Zakharov's description: the young coolie did not appear to have any preparation to lead the revolution, but he happened to be there, so he led the uprising.[53] Radunskii scoffed that the young coolie merely robbed Tao-Khoa of some of the scenes in which her character starred in the previous production without actually being himself developed as a character.[54] In all, no one at the meeting expressed the slightest support for Zakharov's proposed directorial exposition, especially his lengthy explanation of the ballet's plot and characters.

On a broader level, there were recurring doubts among the participants at the meeting about the practicality of using Reingol'd Moritsevich Glier's music from the 1920s as the score for a ballet with a revised storyline. Sof'ia Nikolaevna Golovkina was the first to point out that Glier's classical ballet music might not be in harmony with Zakharov's proposed dramaturgical interventions.[55] Radunskii and Tomskii echoed Golovkina's concern.[56] Gabovich wondered how Zakharov could possibly use the old music if he intended to create new dramaturgical material.[57] Nikolai Semenovich Golovanov was the most blunt: "It's absolutely incomprehensible to me how two different versions [of a libretto] can be set on the

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[53] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 24.

[54] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 16.

[55] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 11.

[56] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, ll. 15, 19.

[57] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 23.

same music."[58] Under this issue simmered a philosophical conundrum about the relationship between music and storytelling in ballet.

Zakharov asserted that it was important to use Glier's music, even though the music had been written for Mikhail Kurilko's 1927 libretto. Zakharov characterized Reingol'd Glier's music for *Red Poppy* as "consistent with the principles of the Russian school of classical music."[59] No one directly contradicted Zakharov's commitment to using Glier's score, and Mikhail Gabovich, too, complimented the quality of Glier's music.[60] Zakharov explained that Glier's score was the foundation for his (Zakharov's) directorial vision for the new production.[61] Zakharov intended to use all of the original music in Glier's score except the Boston waltz; he had asked Glier to write two new pieces (for Act II, when Tao-Khoa sees the Soviet Captain and the red ship in her dream) and to rework the Charleston in Act I.[62] By the end of the meeting on October 7, faced with mounting criticism from his colleagues about the potentially incongruous result of combining old music and a new story, Zakharov allowed that perhaps Glier might

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[58] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 22. Putting a new story over an old score was not unheard of in Soviet ballet. For example, Léo Delibes's nineteenth-century score for the ballet *Sylvia* reappeared in the Soviet Union with a Soviet story and title: *Fadetta*.

[59] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 3.

[60] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 24.

[61] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 3.

[62] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, ll. 10-11.

need to write four new pieces rather than two.[63] Zakharov's concession did not inspire confidence in his audience. Nikolai Golovanov fumed, "Out of sixty-six musical numbers, only four will be new and the rest old!"[64]

Although most of the speakers suggested what the new production should *not* do, there was not consensus at the meeting on precisely what GABT *should* do with *Red Poppy*. V. Ia. Balaban warned, "Today, we do not have the right to return to the previous version, regardless of its many successes."[65] Just because the original production was extremely successful did not mean, according to Balaban, that the Bolshoi Theater could replicate the original's success by trying to reconstruct the original production. Ol'ga Vasil'evna Lepeshinskaia, when presented with Rostislav Zakharov's plan, seemed to think that reviving the 1927 production was a less bad option than Zakharov's version. Unlike Mikhail Gabovich and Leonid Lavrovskii, Lepeshinskaia was undeterred by the prospect of reusing the previous choreography. Lepeshinskaia proclaimed, "I think that one ought not alter that which was done effectively. There is classical repertoire which will exist until the end of time. If this ballet [*Red Poppy*] was well-staged, if it contained outstanding dances as performed by our eminent ballerinas (I am

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[63] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 24.

[64] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 25.

[65] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 17.

speaking about the character of Tao-Khoa), why remake something that is treasury of our dance art?"[66]

Rostislav Zakharov replied, "When I staged *Don Quixote*, I preserved that which was valuable in that ballet and added to it certain numbers and scenes. I have the same perspective with regard to the ballet *Red Poppy*, namely that I, as a Soviet choreographer, can make a new composition."[67] Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia's comment was an outlier in the conversation, but it highlights a key question about the value in and process of remaking classics from contemporary perspectives. Staging something from today's perspective was the most common Soviet rationale for reproducing ballets and moving the genre forward. This is how classical ballets (including *Don Quixote* and *Giselle*) were handled from decade to decade and how Zakharov discussed his approach to *Red Poppy*. While suggested by Lepeshinskaia (apparently out of exasperation with Zakharov's presentation), a return to the original version of *Red Poppy* was not seriously considered. "Reconstruction" of earlier choreography was not a customary approach to staging ballets at GABT in this period.

During the discussion, concern arose regarding the intersection of ballet and historical accuracy. There was tension between staging actual events in a way that

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[66] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 12.

[67] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 12.

would properly celebrate what the Soviet Union considered to be the heroic battle waged by the Chinese people and staging *Red Poppy*, a Soviet ballet which in its previous versions included no ethnographic or authentic Chinese folk material and presented entirely fictional characters and events. Lavrovskii observed that the task was all the more momentous because productions at the Bolshoi Theater had to be staged according to the highest principles.[68] Aleksandr Radunskii opined that Zakharov's plan made it seem like the Chinese Communist Revolution began from a minor incident with a Soviet naval officer who briefly visited a Chinese port city, a skewed perspective which demeaned the great fight waged by the Chinese people over a period of twenty years.[69] V. Ia. Balaban also worried that the serious Marxist-sociological ideas at work in China were glossed over in Zakharov's emphasis on the plot to assassinate the Soviet Captain.[70] In Zakharov's telling, according to those at the meeting, *Red Poppy* seemed to make light of Chinese people's principles and sacrifices, presumably the very elements VKpDI Chairman Lebedev intended to celebrate with the new ballet production.[71] Mikhail Gabovich exclaimed that the events in China made it one hundred times more obligatory for

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[68] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 20.

[69] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 16.

[70] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 14.

[71] Lavrovskii went so far as to wonder aloud whether Lebedev had heard Zakharov's plan, unsubtly observing that anyone who could assent to Zakharov's plan knew not the first thing about creating an ideologically sound ballet (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 20).

the theater to carefully consider how to represent the rebellion on stage.[72] Aleksei Varlamov observed that the Bolshoi Theater would need to make a completely new artistic product to adequately honor the success of the Chinese Communist Revolution; *Red Poppy* could not do justice to actual historical events in China.[73] From these comments emerges the complexity of the assignment to restage *Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater in 1949. The participants at the meeting felt a tension between staging historically important events from the Chinese Communist Revolution and staging a beloved Soviet ballet. The "first Soviet ballet" was not and could not be rigorously accurate with respect to historical events in China, but participants insisted *Red Poppy* had been and could again be relevant for Soviet audiences.

GABT Deputy Director Vasilii Zadorskii concluded the meeting by promising to provide VKpDI Chairman Polikarp Lebedev and GABT Director Aleksandr Vasil'evich Solodovnikov with the stenographic record of the discussion. Zadorskii observed that, while the issue of producing *Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater was urgent, the production process would require significant preparatory work to bring the librettist, choreographer, composer, and designer's ideas together before they began to stage the ballet. He expressed some doubt as to whether

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[72] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 24.

[73] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 16.

minor changes in the old production would resonate with contemporary Soviet audiences and the present world-historical moment.[74]

The meeting on October 7, 1949, was a civil but not dispassionate exchange of ideas among theatrical professionals. The participants in the meeting offered remarks designed to safeguard the artistic and ideological qualities of the new version of *Red Poppy*. They discussed the sensitive task of staging a fictional ballet loosely based on real historical events of great geopolitical significance to the Soviet Union. The dancers, choreographers, conductors, and others present possessed and consciously exercised agency to shape the artistic production at hand. The participants at the meeting observed—without regret—that Soviet audiences and artists had outgrown the old version of *Red Poppy* and that, somehow, a new version needed to be developed. The concerns in and around the Bolshoi Theater in 1949 were different from the concerns surrounding the Bolshoi Theater's production of *Red Poppy* in 1927, and so the resulting ballet needed to be different. In most of the comments at the meeting on October 7, presenting *Red Poppy* again necessitated revisions, though the participants in the meeting could not settle on precisely how to update the ballet.

Three days later, right on schedule, interim GABT Director Vasilii Zadorskii informed VKpDI Chairman Polikarp Lebedev that GABT administration was

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[74] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 26.

nominating Leonid Lavrovskii (choreographer), Iurii Fedorovich Faier (conductor), and Mikhail Kurilko (designer) as the production brigade for *The Red Poppy* and requested VKpDI's approval for these assignments. Zadorskii reported that Rostislav Zakharov's directorial exposition (from the meeting on October 7) demonstrated Zakharov's complete unpreparedness to satisfy the creative challenges inherent in the production and his casual attitude toward the great ideological-political significance of the ballet's subject matter. Zadorskii indicated that GABT administration put greater faith in Leonid Lavrovskii's professional merits, seriousness, and responsibility. Zadorskii also noted that Lavrovskii's single choreographic assignment for the year, *Ruby Stars*, had been dropped from the repertoire plan and replaced by *Red Poppy*, while Zakharov had already staged one opera and one ballet at GABT in 1949. This "question of etiquette"[75] regarding the distribution of workload among the choreographers perhaps made GABT's nomination more convincing in Lebedev's estimation. Zakharov was out, Lavrovskii was in, and soon the creative brigade got to work.

The Creative Brigade

At the meeting on October 7, 1949, Mikhail Gabovich suggested forming a group to help the several authors (librettist, composer, designer, choreographer)

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[75] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 148, l. 51. Rostislav Zakharov was one of the few staff choreographers at the Bolshoi Theater who served as both a choreographer for the ballet company and a stage director (*rezhisser/regisseur*) for the opera company. In 1949, he staged the opera *Ruslan i Liudmila* and the ballet *Mednyi vsadnik*. He divided his time between the two genres for his entire tenure at GABT, though his ballet productions may have been often more celebrated than his stagings of operas.

arrive at a unified conception for the new production of *Red Poppy*.[76] As it happened, around the time of the second production of *Red Poppy*, GABT was trying out a new intra-institutional production mechanism: the creative brigade (*tvorcheskaia brigada*). This intra-institutional body is another example of how ballet production at GABT could be a collaborative effort.

Scholars have written disdainfully about collective production in the Soviet context for a variety of reasons. One reason might be summarized as "too many cooks spoiled the broth," especially if there was a genius among them. Simon Morrison laments the ways in which conductors, choreographers, bureaucrats, and other stakeholders whittled away the brilliance of Sergei Sergeevich Prokof'ev's musical compositions through incessant requests for revisions.[77] It is true that in such cases where one artist does possess a strong vision, collaborators may inadvertently obstruct that vision's realization. Another reason has to do with a perceived lack of genius at the heart of the group. Maria Frolova-Walker discusses the possible perils of the "'brigade' method" with respect to the Bolshoi Theater's production of the opera *Wholeheartedly* in 1951.[78] In this case, Frolova-Walker posits that "'brigade' was a euphemism with spurious socialistic associations to

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[76] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 24.

[77] Simon Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[78] Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize*, 244-248. She translates *Ot vsego serdtsa* as *Heart and Soul*.

cover up the fact that neither composer was good enough," referring to both German Leont'evich Zhukovskii, the composer of *Wholeheartedly*, and another opera composer, Ivan Ivanovich Dzerzhinskii. Not every artistic creation can be improved or saved by group effort, and results of collaborations do depend on the capabilities of the people involved. But just because some collaborations were frustrating or unfruitful does not mean that all collaborations are doomed. The case of the creative brigade for *The Red Poppy*, which took on significant responsibility in realizing the production, serves as evidence that collective creativity did sometimes go reasonably well.

According to the Provisions for the Creation of Creative Brigades to Help Authors Who are Working on New Compositions for GABT, the creative brigade was envisioned as a team to function as an intermediary between composers and librettists and GABT.[79] The new production of *Red Poppy* in late 1949 was one of the productions for which a creative brigade was appointed. In practice, *Red Poppy*'s creative brigade did not conform exactly to the Provisions; instead, participants adapted the concept of the creative brigade to the specific needs of the production at hand. The original creative brigade for *The Red Poppy* included the dancers Mikhail Gabovich, Aleksei Ermolaev, Asaf Mikhailovich Messerer, Lev

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[79] *Polozhenie o sozdanii tvorcheskikh brigad v pomoshch' avtoram, rabotaiushchim nad novymi proizvedeniiami dlia teatra* was approved by GABT Director Solodovnikov on March 2, 1949 (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 132).

Aleksandrovich Lashchilin (choreographer of much of the original production of *Red Poppy*), Aleksandr Radunskii, and Kaplun. Dancer Viktor Ivanovich Tsaplin served as the brigadier.[80] It seems that the creative brigade set to work very shortly after the emergency meeting on October 7, 1949, and the brigadier's report was dated January 10, 1950. Given the extremely short timeline for realizing *The Red Poppy*, it seems safe to say that the creative brigade succeeded in bringing the new ballet to the stage on schedule. The October 7 directive from VKpDI projected the premiere for December 1949, and *The Red Poppy* premiered on December 30.

According to Tsaplin's report, the composition of the creative brigade shifted in the course of the production process. Rostislav Zakharov participated in the creative brigade's first meeting, but then he was replaced by Leonid Lavrovskii.[81] Tsaplin reported that dancers Mikhail Gabovich, Aleksandr Tomskii, Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia, and Asaf Messerer were particularly active contributors to the work of the creative brigade.[82] They were supported by the vigorous work of administrators Vasilii Zadorskii, V. Ia. Balaban, Serafim Mikhailovich Oreshnikov, and I. P. Il'in. Tsaplin described the production team—Lavrovskii, Iurii Faier, Reingol'd Glier, and Mikhail Kurilko—as working incredibly quickly, carefully

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[80] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168 contains Tsaplin's report to GABT Director Aleksandr Solodovnikov on the activities of the creative brigade for *The Red Poppy*. The report is dated January 10, 1950. I am not sure who "Kaplun" was. Perhaps it was Semen Solomonovich Kaplan.

[81] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 2.

[82] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 4.

listening to the proposals from the creative brigade and contributing to the healthy creative atmosphere of the production.[83]

In the wake of the very critical discussion on October 7, the creative brigade's first task was to compose a new libretto with a solid dramatic through-line. Rather than consult with Mikhail Kurilko (the librettist for the 1927 production at GABT), Aleksei Ermolaev (who had composed one or two versions of a libretto for *Red Poppy*, at least one of which was approved by VKpDI), or any of the contributors to the Leningrad productions, the GABT creative brigade developed its own version of the libretto. According to Viktor Tsaplin, the creative brigade's version of the libretto was based on Mikhail Kurilko's original libretto, the piano score of Reingol'd Glier's music for the 1927 production, and written suggestions submitted (mostly by members of the creative brigade) in late 1949.[84] At their first meeting, members of the creative brigade agreed on fundamental characterizations for the Chinese coolies and Ma Li-chen as their leader, Tao-Khoa, the Soviet Captain, and the group of imperialists and their Chinese allies.[85]

The members of the creative brigade worked to strengthen the characterization of the Chinese people, especially the coolies, throughout the ballet. They agreed that the coolies should be presented as organized and

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[83] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 5.

[84] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 3.

[85] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, ll. 1-2.

victorious—inclined toward revolution—rather than weak-willed, resigned, and powerless. First, the creative brigade decided to make clearer the strength and revolutionary energy of the coolies through the staging of the coolies' protest at the overseers' and policemen's beating of the fallen coolie in Act I. Second, they proposed having the dancers portraying Ma Li-chen and Li Shan-fu lead the workers and the conspirators, respectively, into a battle between good and evil in the dream scene.[86] The leaders of the forces for good (the Chinese workers) and the forces for ill (the Chinese bourgeoisie) in the realistic first and third acts of the ballet would also take part in Act II, bodying forth the symbolic battle between positive and negative forces. The creative brigade sought to strengthen the dramatic through-line of the ballet by weaving these characters and their positive and negative associations throughout all three acts. They envisioned Ma Li-chen and the people winning in Tao-Khoa's dream, foreshadowing the people's victory at the end of the ballet. Third, the creative brigade planned to enhance the revolutionary qualities of the apotheosis to reflect the victory in contemporary China, thus connecting the fictional plot set in the 1920s or 1930s with the present-day events in People's Republic of China. In these ways, the creative brigade enhanced the dramatic logic of the plot while also rendering more positive the ballets' characterizations of the Chinese people.

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[86] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 1.

The members of the creative brigade emphasized the need to develop Ma Li-chen's leadership characteristics throughout the entire ballet so that it would make dramatic sense for him to lead the revolution.[87] As with the appearances of Ma Li-chen and Li Shan-fu in the Act II dream scene that foreshadowed the outcome of the revolution, the creative brigade sought to develop a scaffolding of dramatic logic within ballet to make the plot seem more plausible and easier for audiences to follow. This change also ensured that the agency of Chinese revolutionary characters was clearer than it had been in the original production (or in Zakharov's aborted conception). The creative brigade attended to the dramatic weaknesses of the original production and worked out strategies for bolstering the dramaturgy and historical accuracy of the new production.

The creative brigade envisioned the character of Tao-Khoa as "a folk actress-dancer who was in tune with the revolutionary movement of the Chinese people and saw in the behavior of the Soviet Captain and his sailors new attitudes of people who had brought with them radiant ideas about the liberation of humanity."[88] The members of the creative brigade wanted to get rid of the characterization of Tao-Khoa as a "geisha" who had fallen in love with the Soviet Captain.[89] Instead, they argued that Tao-Khoa should become a heroine with her

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[87] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 1.

[88] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, ll. 1-2.

[89] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 1.

heroic act of self-sacrifice for the good of the people: the moment when she shields Ma Li-chen from Li Shan-fu's bullet with her body.[90]

The creative brigade agreed, in principle, that the Soviet Captain should follow the code of conduct appropriate for Soviet representatives abroad. He should not, therefore, interfere in events in China or be understood to consciously import Soviet ideas to China.[91] Presumably, the Soviet Captain's embodiment of Soviet ideas (regarding humane treatment of the Chinese coolies and other people oppressed by capitalism/imperialism) was supposed to be enough to inspire Tao-Khoa and Ma Li-chen. Much as Rostislav Zakharov had envisioned in the meeting on October 7, when Zakharov described the Soviet Captain as "morally condemning" the overseers' beating of the fallen coolie,[92] the Soviet Captain was to emanate Soviet ideals without proselytizing. The creative brigade decided to create scenes in which the foreign imperialist-colonizers would be shown exploiting the Chinese people via the foreigners' relationships with members of the local Chinese bourgeoisie who were entirely dependent on and submissive to the foreigners.[93] By contrast with the European and American capitalist-imperialists, the Soviet Captain would not actively disturb the course of the Chinese people's

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[90] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 2.

[91] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 2.

[92] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 4.

[93] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 2.

lives. The Soviet Captain would simply show up as an example of an alternative life for the oppressed Chinese workers.

Besides revising the libretto, Tsaplin reported that the members of the creative brigade advised Mikhail Kurilko on the development of more realistic designs.[94] By the time of the new version's premiere, the mildly constructivist hull of the Soviet ship from the 1927 production was replaced by a sleeker, more modern, and more realistic vessel in Act I.[95] The costumes were similar to those from the 1927 production, though the make-up was less extreme.[96]

In addition to working with the designer on more realistic designs, the creative brigade helped organize the production process within the theater. The creative brigade consulted with the choreographer, conductor, and cast on the realization of scenes, dances, and performers' characterizations. Members of the creative brigade met with the ballet company in order to collect the dancers' ideas on the production and to communicate those ideas to the production team. When

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[94] Spravka o zatratakh na novuiu postanovku "Krasnyi mak" v Bol'shom teatre Soiuza SSR (March 17, [1950]): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1278, l. 27. This file does not contain a copy of the contract, but it does indicate that 24,000 rubles were spent on "the designer" (*khudozhnik*) in the category of *neobeshchestvlennye zatraty*. Kurilko served as GABT Chief Designer from 1924 to 1927, a salaried position at the theater, but by 1949 he was no longer employed by GABT. He worked on a contract for the new production of *The Red Poppy*.

[95] Compare photographs of the stage in Act I in 1927 (Zarubin, 144) and in 1949 (Zarubin, 146-147).

[96] See photographs in folder "Krasnyi mak (1927)" at the Museum of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater versus the photographs taken in 1950 in Georgii Petrusov, *The Bolshoi Ballet* (Moscow: Museum Moscow House of Photography, 2004), 42-55, especially those featuring Tao-Khoa.

a pair of dancers volunteered some choreography for the famous Soviet sailors' dance "The Little Apple," the creative brigade arranged for a showing of the choreography, which Leonid Lavrovskii subsequently incorporated into the ballet.[97] Throughout the much-abbreviated production process, the creative brigade served as an intermediary among the GABT sectors and employees involved, facilitating contributions from around the theater helping to keep everyone on the same page.

Finally, aside from working with the theater's own production team, the creative brigade liaised with VKpDI and Glavrepertkom in order to ensure mutual understanding about the goals of the new production and the means for their expression.[98] The creative brigade made itself a conduit for communication between GABT and external oversight organizations. In sum, the creative brigade for *The Red Poppy* further exemplifies collaborative production processes at GABT.

Viktor Tsaplin's brigadier's report may well have exaggerated the good work of the creative brigade. However, the fact remains that the creative brigade for *The Red Poppy*, the ballet company, the workshops, and everyone else involved came together to put on a new production in 2.5 months, which is much less time than it normally took to stage a new ballet from the time that the libretto and music were submitted. In this case, the 2.5 months also included substantial revisions to the

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[97] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, ll. 3-4.

[98] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 3.

libretto before the staging of dances and scenes could begin in earnest. From the perspective of efficiency, the creative brigade's achievement was remarkable. Tsaplin reported, too, that the atmosphere was both friendly and creative. He suggested that the structure of the creative brigade should be further developed and used for other productions.[99] Not everyone, though, was satisfied with the creative brigade's working process.

Aleksei Ermolaev and the Ascription of Authorship

Aleksei Ermolaev was a virtuoso classical dancer first at the State Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet in Leningrad[100] (1926-1930) and later at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow (1930-1958). Ballet critic Vadim Moiseevich Gaevskii credits Ermolaev with setting new standards for male ballet technique on stage with his impressive jumps, especially triple tours en l'air and double rivoltades.[101] After a

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[99] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 4. I found evidence of another *tvorcheskaia brigada* working on a new ballet, *Pod znamenem mira*, in November 1950. There is a document (Akt [priema libretto]) certifying that GABT received the libretto from Rostislav Zakharov. Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia, as brigadier, is among the signatories (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 769, l. 9). The *tvorcheskikh grupp* ("creative groups") assigned for ballets in March-June 1952 were also led by "brigadiers," even though the groups were not labeled *tvorcheskikh brigad*; in this later example, the brigadier was also the choreographer in each case (Plan raboty Khudozhestvennogo soveta Bol'shogo teatra na mart-iiun' 1952 goda: RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 227, ll. 59-60). This demonstrates that the creative brigade was not a one-time experiment. There were also drafts of a *Polozhenie o tvorcheskom kabinete* (Provisions for the Creative Office) at GABT circulating in March 1950 (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 156). The Creative Office was envisioned as an extension of the fruitful work of the creative brigades. Not only was the creative brigade not a one-time experiment, but it was deemed worthy of expansion into a more permanent form.

[100] One of the names of the former Mariinsky Theater.

[101] E. P. Belova et al., *Russkii balet, Entsiklopediia, Bol'shaia Russkaia Entsiklopediia* (Solgasie, 1997), s.v. "Ermolaev, Aleksei Nikolaevich," http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/e/ermolaev.html (accessed June

serious leg injury in 1937, Ermolaev shifted from highly technical dancing roles toward dramatic roles requiring less dancing and reinvented himself as an extraordinarily expressive mime artist. In later years, Ermolaev served intermittently as a choreographer, staging ballets for the theater of opera and ballet in Minsk, choreographing for festivals of art from around the Soviet Union (*dekady*), and preparing his own solo program of dances at the GABT Filial. He directed the Bolshoi Ballet School (1968-1972) and taught class for GABT's leading dancers (1960-1975).[102]

Aleksei Ermolaev's career as a dancer intersected with multiple productions of *Red Poppy*. He performed the roles of the Chinese magician and an idol in Tao-Khoa's dream in the 1929 Leningrad production. With his performance as the villain Li Shan-fu, Ermolaev would go on to be part of the Stalin Prize-winning cast of the Bolshoi Theater's 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*.

In addition to his onstage contributions, Ermolaev was a shadowy figure in the production process for *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater in 1949. His colleagues described his participation in the creative brigade as fractious and surly, and he was subsequently involved in a dispute over authorship and royalties for the libretto of *The Red Poppy*. The archival records of Ermolaev's role in the

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27, 2019). For more on specific ballet jumps, see Gail Grant's *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet* 3rd rev. ed. (New York: Dover, 1982).

[102] E. P. Belova et al., s.v. "Ermolaev, Aleksei Nikolaevich," http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/e/ermolaev.html (accessed June 27, 2019).

production process indicate that the complex collaborative proceedings were not without conflict. Ermolaev's apparent dissatisfaction provides a necessary complement to the otherwise overwhelmingly rosy picture painted by brigadier Viktor Tsaplin's report on the work of the creative brigade. Even more importantly, Ermolaev's case highlights the inherent contradictions between the collaborative production processes within the state theater and the government's mechanisms for compensating artistic labor.

From the archival records of VKpDI and GABT, it appears that Aleksei Ermolaev was one of the first artists in Moscow to commence work toward a new version of *Red Poppy*. He produced at least one (perhaps two) revised version(s) of the libretto almost a year before the premiere of the Bolshoi Theater's new production. During the first meeting at GABT about staging *The Red Poppy* on October 7, 1949, Ermolaev recounted that in 1948, VKpDI had suggested that he compose a new version of *Red Poppy*. Ermolaev explained that the first version of the story that he came up with would have required a significant quantity of new pieces of music and revisions to the original score. Ermolaev reported that Reingol'd Glier, the composer, was not willing to revise 35% of the score; instead, Glier and VKpDI asked Ermolaev to try again.[103] We may assume that Glier, who was in 1948 working on the music for the new ballet *The Bronze Horseman*, would

[103] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 21.

have preferred the revivals of *Red Poppy* to go ahead without substantial labor from the composer.[104]

At the meeting on October 7, Aleksei Ermolaev went on to state that he prepared a "compromise" version of the libretto on the condition that, if VKpDI and other authorities approved the compromise version, Glier would be obligated to provide the necessary music for Ermolaev's first version of the libretto. According to Ermolaev, the compromise version was approved and dispatched to theaters outside of the capital cities of Moscow and Leningrad.[105] After hearing Rostislav Zakharov's directorial exposition for the new ballet during the October 7 meeting, Ermolaev claimed that Zakharov had somehow gotten ahold of the aforementioned compromise version of the libretto, which Ermolaev himself described as "primitive" and unsuitable for staging at the Bolshoi Theater.[106] Ermolaev claimed that he had categorically refused the assignment to choreograph on the compromise version for the Bolshoi Theater.

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[104] Ermolaev's story also fits with Zakharov's reticence about asking Glier to compose more than two new pieces. Perhaps some of Zakharov's obsession with the original music was the result of consultation with Glier and discovery that the composer was unwilling or too busy to substantively revise the score in time for the 1949 production in Leningrad. It is possible that Zakharov's sometimes seemingly illogical addiction to the idea of using the original music was hiding an obstacle in the form of an intransigent composer.

[105] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 21. Copies of an approved libretto for the ballet *Red Poppy* with Aleksei Ermolaev as sole author are preserved in the administrative records of both GABT (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 886) and VKpDI (RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 598). The date of approval is March 25, 1949, and the draft submitted for review by Glavrepertkom is dated February 26, 1949 (RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 598, l. 1).

[106] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 21.

Why a "primitive" libretto was taken to be appropriate for theaters outside of Moscow and Leningrad remained an open question. Mikhail Gabovich pointed out that VKpDI's distribution to the periphery of a libretto which was not deemed appropriate for staging in Moscow was "politically incorrect."[107] Gabovich also reported that he had read Ermolaev's libretto in Odessa, lending credence to Ermolaev's account of his compromise version being distributed to theaters outside of the capital cities.[108] Aside from recounting his experience with VKpDI and Glier, Ermolaev did not speak much in the meeting on October 7. He did not participate in the critique of Zakharov's exposition. The stenographic record reflects only Ermolaev's effort to defend his own work on the libretto and to excuse the inadequacies in the compromise version. Ermolaev maintained that he had written a good libretto, but VKpDI and Glier forced him to pen the lesser version later adopted by Zakharov. Then, Ermolaev fell silent.

A statement from the creative brigade for *The Red Poppy* dated October 16, 1949, testified that Mikhail Kurilko, Vasilii Dmitrievich Tikhomirov, Aleksandr Tomskii, Leonid Lavrovskii, Mikhail Gabovich, Aleksei Ermolaev, Viktor Tsaplin, Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia, Asaf Messerer, and Aleksandr Radunskii participated in the

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[107] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 23.

[108] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 23. VKpDI records also confirm that, among ballets commissioned by VKpDI, there was a new version of the libretto for Glier's *Red Poppy* by Aleksei Ermolaev which was completed, approved, and distributed to theaters (RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 483, l. 370).

composition of the libretto for the 1949 production. The statement explains that Kurilko and Tikhomirov were the principal creators of the original version of *The Red Poppy* whose work formed the foundation of the 1949 production and that therefore creative brigade transferred its authorship rights to these two central figures from the 1927 production process at the Bolshoi Theater.[109] The statement is appended to a draft of the libretto, the title page of which lists Kurilko and Tikhomirov as authors of the libretto "in the Bolshoi Theater's new version."[110] Ermolaev's name appears in the text of the statement and at the bottom of the page in the list of signatories, but his signature is conspicuously missing. He was the only one who did not sign the statement. The missing signature suggests that Ermolaev may not have consented to (or may have revoked his consent for) the transfer of authorship and therefore copyright and royalties. It seems that all was not tranquil among the members of the creative brigade.

Viktor Tsaplin's report, as the brigadier of the creative brigade for *The Red Poppy*, portrayed the meeting on October 7, 1949, as a reckoning on the insufficiencies in Aleksei Ermolaev's version of the libretto for *The Red Poppy*.[111] (From the stenographic record of the meeting on October 7, the criticism seems to have been both for Ermolaev's libretto and for Zakharov's mishmash of Ermolaev's

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[109] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 887, l. 34.

[110] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 887, l. 24.

[111] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 1.

libretto, an earlier version of Mikhail Kurilko's libretto, and Zakharov's own dramaturgical fancies.) Tsaplin's report perhaps overemphasizes the blame on Ermolaev, though it is clear from Ermolaev's approved libretto that Zakharov's directorial exposition incorporated some of Ermolaev's principal innovations. Tsaplin emphasized that the creative brigade's approach to the libretto was fundamentally different from Ermolaev's,[112] perhaps as a way to bolster the claim that Ermolaev was not an individual author of the 1949 libretto for *The Red Poppy* in the Bolshoi Theater's new version.

At the meeting on October 7, Ermolaev had said that his first version of the libretto, the one requiring significant additions and revisions to the score, was waiting for Glier to prepare the necessary music.[113] According to Tsaplin's report, at the second meeting of the creative brigade, Ermolaev again announced that he had another version of his libretto (a different version than that which Rostislav Zakharov had plundered). This time, Ermolaev claimed that he had misplaced his copy of the better version of the libretto and that VKpDI also could not find its copy. Ermolaev reportedly told the creative brigade that he would provide the libretto to the creative brigade in about two days. According to Tsaplin, despite repeated requests from members of the creative brigade, Ermolaev never did bring

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[112] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 1.

[113] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 21.

another libretto.[114] Then, according to Tsaplin, Ermolaev's behavior escalated from irritating to obstreperous.

During production meetings involving the whole cast, crew, and administrators, Tsaplin reported that Ermolaev heckled the creative brigade's libretto. When Ermolaev was invited to present his own suggestions, he declined to speak. Ermolaev's behavior, according to Tsaplin, undermined the amicable and inventive atmosphere, causing indignation and resentment at the production meeting.[115] Likewise, Tsaplin reported that Ermolaev refused to engage in discussions during meetings of the creative brigade, even when other members of the creative brigade solicited his input.[116] Tsaplin recommended that the GABT Director should examine Ermolaev's behavior as a member of the GABT collective especially with regard to Ermolaev's attitude toward GABT but also with respect to Ermolaev's claim of authorship for *The Red Poppy* libretto.[117]

The dispute over authorship of the libretto for *The Red Poppy* intensified in the months following the ballet's premiere. In January 1950, Reingol'd Glier provided a statement testifying that, from Glier's perspective, Vasilii Tikhomirov was the principal choreographer during the staging of the original production of

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[114] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 2.

[115] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 4.

[116] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, l. 4.

[117] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 168, ll. 4-5.

Red Poppy in 1926-1927.[118] While not filed with other correspondence regarding the dispute over authorship of the 1949 libretto for *The Red Poppy*, this statement may have been requested from Glier to bolster the case for the creative brigade's transfer of its share of the royalties to Tikhomirov. The existence of a statement from early 1950 attesting to Tikhomirov's essential role in the original production in 1927 would seem unnecessary were it not for additional documentation of a dispute over credit for authorship relating to the 1949 production(s) of *The Red Poppy*.

On March 18, 1950, the Director of the All-Union Copyright Administration (VUOAP) notified GABT Director Aleksandr Solodovnikov and Nikolai Nikitovich Goriainov, the head of the Main Administration for Musical Theaters, that, at the request of a group of (unnamed) GABT employees, VUOAP had applied its expertise in order to determine the appropriate percentages of royalties due the librettists for their contributions to the libretto for the ballet *The Red Poppy*. VUOAP concluded that Mikhail Kurilko was the principal author, because he was responsible for the 1927 version of the libretto and co-author for the 1949 version. Based on the materials at its disposal, including a letter of support for Ermolaev's

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[118] RGALI f. 2729, op. 1, d. 116. As discussed in Chapter 3, Tikhomirov was not actually the choreographer for most of the scenes in *Red Poppy* in 1927, but it is likely that Tikhomirov worked more closely with Glier during the composition process than did co-choreographer Lev Lashchilin. Therefore, from Glier's perspective, Tikhomirov played an indispensable role in the original production.

copyright claim from Goriainov,[119] VUOAP decided that Aleksei Ermolaev was a co-author of the 1949 version of the libretto, because his approved libretto introduced "much that was new, substantive, and important."[120] A statement from Kurilko was accepted as evidence that Vasilii Tikhomirov also participated in the creation of the libretto.[121] Therefore, according to VUOAP, the posters advertising *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater should list Kurilko, Tikhomirov, and Ermolaev, and the shares of the royalties for the three authors should be based on the proportion of each librettist's contributions.[122]

A week later, Aleksandr Solodovnikov sent a carefully-worded reply to VUOAP, copying Goriainov at the Main Administration for Musical Theaters. Solodovnikov did not dispute VUOAP's findings with respect to the apportionment of royalties for the librettists for *The Red Poppy*. However, Solodovnikov sought to clarify the situation with the posters. He informed VUOAP that the creative brigade for *The Red Poppy*, of which Ermolaev was a member, had undertaken the work of intensively revising the libretto. Solodovnikov reported that the creative

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[119] Further research is needed to determine exactly to what other materials VUOAP had access in order to make its determination in this case. I did not come across a copy of Goriainov's letter, but VUOAP Director G. V. Khesin mentions Goriainov's letter in Khesin's memorandum to Solodovnikov.

[120] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 171, l. 2.

[121] I did not locate such a statement from Kurilko, though I did find one from Glier (see above).

[122] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 171, l. 2. Goriainov followed up on March 23, 1950, with a memo directing GABT to list the three authors "on all posters, programs, and press coverage" (l. 1).

brigade voted unanimously to assign their authorship rights to Vasilii Tikhomirov because he had been one of the creators of the original libretto.[123] Therefore, GABT objected to VUOAP's instruction that Ermolaev should be individually credited on the posters for *The Red Poppy*. According to Solodovnikov, advertising Ermolaev's individual contribution on the posters did not reflect the real working process and discredited the collective effort of the creative brigade.[124] The GABT Director was clearly swayed by the statement from the creative brigade and the brigadier's report, both of which emphasized the collective labor of the creative brigade in the composition of the new libretto over the contributions of individual authors. Moreover, the GABT Director seemed to be compelled by the creative brigade's collective will that credit for the libretto should go to Kurilko and Tikhomirov. It appears that VUOAP was satisfied by Solodovnikov's compromise: remove Ermolaev's name from the published materials about *The Red Poppy*, but allow him to receive a share of the royalties which would not be public knowledge. While Ermolaev may have been listed as an author of the libretto for productions at other theaters, the programs and posters for *The Red Poppy* at the

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[123] See statement dated October 16, 1949, cited above (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 887, l. 34). Given that Ermolaev did not sign the creative brigade's statement, the unanimity of the creative brigade's decision is in question.

[124] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 171, l. 5.

Bolshoi Theater reflected the co-authorship of Mikhail Kurilko and Vasilii Tikhomirov.[125]

Even though (officially) GABT was not using Aleksei Ermolaev's libretto, by comparing Ermolaev's approved libretto with the published libretto for the 1949 production,[126] it is possible to deduce that some of Ermolaev's ideas were incorporated into the Bolshoi Theater's second version of *The Red Poppy*. Most notably, Ermolaev declared that the Soviet Captain should not frequent "dubious places" in the course of the plot.[127] According to Ermolaev, the character of the Soviet Captain needed to strictly abide by the protocols for Soviet representatives traveling abroad on official business. In Ermolaev's definition, "dubious places" in previous productions of *Red Poppy* included a casino, a tea house, and a banquet presented by the local bourgeoisie and their sympathizers.[128] In fact, in the 1949

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[125] On the programs for the dress rehearsals in December 1949 (before VUOAP got involved in the dispute over authorship of the libretto), both Mikhail Kurilko and Vasilii Tikhomirov were credited as librettists; Aleksei Ermolaev was listed only as a dancer (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 605.). For the first month of performances, the programs and posters advertised that the libretto for *The Red Poppy* was "by Mikhail Kurilko in the version of the Bolshoi Theater" ("*Libretto M. I. Kurilko v redaktsii Bol'shogo teatra*"). See examples of programs from December 30, 1949, onward and posters beginning January 26, 1950, in the log book (*kontrol'naia kniga*) for *Krasnyi mak* (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 605). Tikhomirov's name returned to the posters beginning on February 28, 1950 (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 605). The posters stop advertising the production as "*spektakl' idet v redaktsii Bol'shogo teatra*" as of October 26, 1952 (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 606). It is not clear why this change occurred at this point during the 1952-1953 theatrical season (or at all). The credits for co-librettists Kurilko and Tikhomirov do not change between February 28, 1950, and the final performance of *The Red Flower* on April 14, 1960.

[126] The published libretto for GABT's 1949 production will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 6.

[127] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 886, l. 3.

Bolshoi Theater production, the opium den (perhaps what Ermolaev euphemistically called a "*chainyi dom*," or "tea house") was completely absent and the performance by local Chinese artists (culminating in the ceremony with poisoned tea) was moved to the town square rather than any particularly bourgeois venue.[129] Ermolaev also called for the performers of the roles of conspirators to appear in Tao-Khoa's dream as denizens of a dark kingdom and more broadly for Tao-Khoa's dream to emerge organically from the action.[130] This is part of what the creative brigade's libretto accomplished: incorporating the "good" and "evil" characters from the port city in the dream scene to enhance the coherence of the ballet's plot. I want to be careful not to unequivocally assert that Ermolaev contributed these ideas to the 1949 Bolshoi Theater production or that Ermolaev was the only one in or around the Bolshoi Theater who had these ideas. Nonetheless, while more of Ermolaev's revisions were left out, it appears that some of his suggestions may have shaped the Bolshoi Theater production.

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[128] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 886, ll. 3-5. Note that these "dubious places" may have cropped up in libretti for productions at other theaters and were not necessarily part of the original production at the Bolshoi Theater.

[129] The opium den is still part of Ermolaev's libretto (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 886, l. 8). In Ermolaev's version, on orders from the conspirators, Tao-Khoa invites the Soviet Captain into the opium parlor, but he turns down her invitation (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 886, l. 9). The more restricted the Soviet Captain's behavior was, the more peripheral his character would become, as Aleksandr Radunskii explained at the meeting on October 7, 1949 (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 16). It appears that the creative brigade wanted to make sure that the Soviet Captain would not be excluded from scenes in the ballet, so they removed all of the potentially "dubious" locations.

[130] RGALI 648, op. 5, d. 886, l. 10.

In the dispute over authorship, the collective work of GABT's creative brigade prevailed in the publicity for the ballet. However, GABT conceded Ermolaev's claim for royalties as a librettist. The dispute over authorship of the libretto for *The Red Poppy* highlights a conflict between the collaborative production process at the GABT and the individual incentives offered for some forms of compositional labor. Among all of the collaborators on a ballet production, individual incentives—including commissions and royalties—were particularly relevant to composers and librettists.[131]

Ballet composers and librettists were typically eligible for a commission from VKpDI or a particular theater (especially an all-union institution, such as GABT). As of January 1947, the maximum commissions for multi-act ballets were 40,000 rubles for the music and 8,000 rubles for the libretto.[132] The commissions were paid in parts relating to three stages of the work in progress. The author received an advance at the signing of a contract for a new production. He or she received the next payment after the full work was submitted by the author and

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[131] There were other types of individual incentives in the Soviet Union. These included titles (People's Artist of the USSR was the most prestigious), medals, and other honors. Titled artists accrued financial and other privileges. Because the present dispute centers on copyright of a libretto, I will confine the discussion to the incentives common for ballet librettists.

[132] VKpDI Prikaz #40 (January 23, 1947): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 102, ll. 5-6, esp. l. 5ob. Note that the limits for operas were higher: up to 60,000 rubles for music and 25,000 rubles for libretto. The compensation ranges fluctuated over the decades covered by this dissertation. As far as I know, the 1947 amounts cited here were the ones still in effect during the burst of new productions of *The Red Poppy* in the late 1940s.

cleared by the oversight bodies for production. The author received a final payment after the premiere.[133]

From the premiere onward, librettists and composers were eligible for royalty payments.[134] Royalty payments were calculated as a small percentage of the box office receipts for each performance. As of 1931, usually the composer received 2% per act and the librettist 1.5% per act.[135] For productions with multiple librettists or in which the music of multiple composers was used, the royalties were divided according to the proportion of the production for which each author was responsible. It was in authors' financial interests for their works to be performed frequently but not so frequently that audiences tired of attending that particular production since number of performances and per-performance attendance both contributed to authors' income from royalties. The contracts

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[133] By 1956, the three payments were specified as 25%, 50%, and 25% of the amount of the commission, respectively (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 203, l. 37ob.). However, I believe that in the 1930s and 1940s, the payments may have been made more fluidly, scheduled and apportioned on a case-by-case basis.

[134] It is interesting that only librettists and composers were eligible for royalties. No other form of labor related to the realization of a ballet (design, choreography, performance, etc.) was compensated with royalties. Choreographers and designers, in this period at GABT, either received contracts for their work on individual productions or were full-time employees whose annual contract stipulated how many ballet and/or opera productions the choreographer or designer should work on that season. Choreographers and designers were not eligible for royalties for their choreography or designs. Dancers were salaried, and their contracts specified the number of performances (and categories of roles) that they needed to give each month in order to earn their full salary.

[135] Dokladnaia zapiska (proekt): RGALI f. 648, op. 2, d. 1930, ll. 69-70, esp. l. 70. Translators of libretti also received 1.5%. This typically applied to opera libretti translated into Russian or other Soviet languages.

usually included a minimum number of performances for which royalties would be paid, whether or not the performances actually happened in the period of time stipulated in the contract. In Moscow, the minimum number of performances of a new production for which royalty income was guaranteed was twenty.[136]

Royalties could be an ongoing source of income for composers and librettists. While multiple productions of a new work were generally forbidden in the same city, authors could earn royalties for productions of the same work in different cities. A production that ran for many years or a ballet that was staged in multiple theaters could be lucrative for its authors. Large theaters such as the Bolshoi Theater, which had two or three times as many seats to sell per performance as some of the other theaters of opera and ballet, were particularly advantageous from the perspective of generating of royalty income. Theaters in larger cities, such as Moscow, where average ticket prices were higher than in smaller cities were also potentially more remunerative. Composer Glier and the credited librettists for *The Red Poppy* would have benefitted financially from the staging of their ballet at the Bolshoi Theater.

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[136] Clarified in Narkompros instruction "O poriadke zakliucheniia dogovorov na postanovku neizdannykh dramaticheskikh i muzykal'nykh proizvedenii" (June 27, 1932). One of the original copyright statutes, "Ob avtorskoe pravo" states that Narkompros RSFSR will set the minimum number of performances for which an author can expect to receive royalties (Article 39). Text of "Ob avtorskoe pravo," a joint decision of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars (October 8, 1928) is available on http://pravo.levonevsky.org/baza/soviet/sssr6644.htm (accessed February 17, 2019). The minimum number of performances for which authors were guaranteed to be paid fell to five by 1956 (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 203, l. 38).

To review: GABT Director Aleksandr Solodovnikov did not seek to strip Aleksei Ermolaev of a share of the royalties for *The Red Poppy*.[137] Solodovnikov took issue with VUOAP's decision that Ermolaev should share billing on the posters and programs with Mikhail Kurilko and Vasilii Tikhomirov, to whom the creative brigade had dedicated its collective labor. The issue was not a question of money but of publicly recognizing the creative brigade's collective effort and collective will. Because the royalties would have been shared among co-authors, conceding to Ermolaev a share of royalties meant that Kurilko and Tikhomirov's individual earnings from royalties would be reduced but that Ermolaev would get more than nothing in recognition of the innovations introduced in his version—at least in the "compromise" version—of the libretto, a few of which made it into the Bolshoi Theater's new production. It seems that Solodovnikov managed to keep the peace by allowing Ermolaev financial remuneration, which likely pacified Ermolaev, while ensuring that the creative brigade's decision to credit Kurilko and Tikhomirov was publicly acknowledged on the posters. This outcome points to respect for collective will and authority of the creative brigade within the theatrical collective. There seems to have been genuine interest in fostering and honoring collaborative creativity.

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[137] Further research is needed to determine what VUOAP set as the proportion of royalties each for Kurilko, Tikhomirov, and Ermolaev. It is also unclear whether Ermolaev, Tikhomirov, and Kurilko all earned royalties from every production of *The Red Poppy* in the Soviet Union.

Revitalizing *Red Poppy*: A Premiere over Protest (December 30, 1949)

Given the extremely short timetable between the summoning of the creative brigade in October and the premiere scheduled for December, VKpDI's Main Administration for Musical Theaters granted GABT an exemption from the prohibition on the construction of sets, costumes, and props before the designs and budgets for the entire production were approved.[138] GABT was allowed to approve budgets for individual scenes of *The Red Poppy* in order to start the construction, provided that the budgets for individual scenes/acts did not total more than the already-approved budget for the entire production.[139] GABT received notice of this dispensation on November 28, 1949, about three weeks before the three-act ballet was scheduled to premiere. The exception was another indication of how important this production was to VKpDI Chairman Polikarp Lebedev. Even though the new designs were not yet finished, almost all stops were being pulled out inside

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[138] There is a memo dated November 10, 1949, from GUMT that forbade GABT from starting construction on sets for *The Red Poppy*. Another memo dated November 28, 1949, reversed the one from November 10. See RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1278, ll. 2, 3.

[139] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1278, l. 3. There was a further flare-up regarding the budget for *The Red Poppy*. The VKpDI-approved maximum expenditure for the new production, as of October 18, 1949, was 580,000 rubles. Two months later, after nearly all of the new sets and costumes had been constructed, GABT was informed that GUMT had notified the State Bank of the USSR that the budget for *The Red Poppy* could not exceed 520,000 rubles (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1278, l. 19). GABT Director Aleksandr Solodovnikov protested the change (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1278, ll. 25-26). Having spent 580,000 rubles in preparation for the first weeks of performances (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1278, l. 27), GABT spent another almost 77,000 rubles in January through April to complete costumes, sets, and props that were not ready in time for the premiere (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1278, l. 28). Further research will be needed to determine where the additional funds came from. Perhaps not all of the stops were pulled out, but most of the stops were loosened.

and outside the theater in order to get the production to the stage. GABT even had brief hopes of premiering *The Red Poppy* in time for the commemoration of General Secretary of the Communist Party and Soviet Premier Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin's seventieth birthday on December 21, 1949.[140]

The first dress rehearsal of *The Red Poppy* was scheduled for December 18, 1949.[141] One day earlier, the Director of the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies D. I. Tarkovskii sent a letter to Dmitrii Mikhailovich Popov, the Deputy Superintendent of the Central Committee of the Communist Party's Bureau of Propaganda and Agitation (OPA TsK VKP[b]), with a copy to VKpDI Chairman Lebedev. Tarkovskii reported that GABT administration had invited members of the Chinese language faculty from the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies to consult on the new production of *The Red Poppy*. An assistant professor of Chinese literature met with the GABT collective on December 1, 1949, and informed GABT that there were problems with the libretto. The faculty from Moscow Institute for Oriental Studies assumed that their entire department would be brought in to help rework the libretto. Instead, the Institute heard nothing further from GABT and learned from reading the newspaper *Evening Moscow* that the premiere of *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater was scheduled for December

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[140] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1278, l. 25.

[141] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1278, l. 25.

21, 1949. From the newspaper coverage, the department could tell that their initial advice had not been heeded.[142]

Among other perceived inadequacies, the faculty from the Moscow Institute for Oriental Studies were very concerned about the unsuitability of the title of the ballet. They observed that the title of the ballet should symbolize the Chinese people's fight for independence. Instead, the professors protested, the present title included the word "poppy," which in Chinese was a term of abuse strongly associated with opium. The opium wars of the nineteenth century had enabled foreign empires to colonize parts of China.[143] Therefore, aside from its literal meaning, opium symbolized China's enslavement by foreign powers. The professors insisted that the title of the ballet implied a hostile "red imperialism," that is, a new wave of foreign domination of China, this time by the Soviet Union. The title, they maintained, was an affront to the Chinese people.[144]

On December 22, 1949, P. A. Tarasov and Boris Mikhailovich Iarustovskii of OPA TsK VKP(b) fired off a hasty memo to Vladimir Semenovich Kruzhkov, another Deputy Superintendent of their Bureau. Their memo seemed to be an attempt to calm any fears aroused by Tarkovskii's letter. Tarasov and Iarustovskii

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[142] RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 238, l. 128.

[143] For background on the Opium Wars, see Julia Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams, and the Making of Modern China* (London: Picador, 2011) and Stephen R. Platt, *Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and the End of China's Last Golden Age* (New York: Vintage, 2019).

[144] RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 238, l. 128.

assured Kruzhkov that GABT was reworking the libretto for *The Red Poppy*. They reported that the premiere had been postponed to a to-be-determined date in January 1950 and that GABT Director Solodovnikov had indicated that specialists would be consulted in due time. They also assured Kruzhkov that GABT would also present the Central Committee of the Communist Party with the final version of the libretto. Presumably, Tarasov and Iarustovskii were trying to allay concerns about GABT's preparations for the new production of *The Red Poppy* by promising that GABT was in the process of rectifying the weaknesses in the libretto, Tarkovskii's professors would have their chance to give feedback on the new edition of the libretto, and the Central Committee would also be apprised of the final version of the scenario. "Nothing to see here... no problem... everything is under control," they seemed to be assuring their superior.

From the documents I have found so far, it is not clear what happened next. Five days after Tarasov and Iarustovskii's memo, the Bolshoi Theater had its first of two dress rehearsals for *The Red Poppy*. Title intact, the second dress rehearsal took place on December 28, 1949.[145] The Bolshoi Theater's new production of *The Red Poppy* premiered on December 30, 1949.[146] It is doubtful that the specialists from the Moscow Institute for Oriental Studies were consulted in the

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[145] For cast lists for the two dress rehearsals see RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 532, ll. 22-23.

[146] The premiere was danced by Galina Ulanova (Tao-Khoa), Iurii Kondratov (Ma Li-chen), and Sergei Gavrilovich Koren' (Li Shan-fu).

intervening days. While there are some minor differences between the draft libretto dated December 15-30, 1949, and the published libretto for the 1949 production, the major reworkings of the libretto clearly happened before (not after) December 15.[147]

Chapter Conclusion

Two and a half years later, *The Red Poppy* was still in the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire. On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Red Poppy*'s premiere, GABT published a commemorative program booklet. The booklet included an article which read, in part: "The new production of *The Red Poppy* is the epitome of the creative and artistic experience of two generations of Bolshoi Theater ballet artists. The production constitutes a significant step in the development of Soviet ballet, to the creation of which the strength of the GABT ballet company (along with composers and librettists) is now dedicated."[148] This excerpt gestures towards inter-generational collaboration, which certainly shaped GABT's 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*. Mikhail Kurilko and Reingol'd Glier

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[147] Compare RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 602 (draft libretto dated December 15-30, 1949) with RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388 (published version of the libretto from 1954). The draft dated December 15-30, 1949, is very similar to the published libretto, though some of the political specificities are softened in the published version. Fuller discussion of the published libretto for the 1949 production follows in Chapter 6. See also earlier draft libretti from 1947 by Mikhail Kurilko (RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 1868, ll. 73-84), February 1949 by Aleksei Ermolaev (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 886), and October 1949 (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 887, ll. 24-33). Further research will be required to determine whether GABT submitted the libretto for review by the Central Committee before the ballet premiered on December 30, 1949.

[148] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 606, l. 76ob.

reprised their 1927 roles as designer and composer, respectively. The creative brigade crafted the new libretto with reference to Kurilko and Glier's earlier work.[149] There were even some dancers who performed in the 1927 and who were cast again (often in different roles) in the 1949 production.[150] The ballet company in 1949, especially the members of the creative brigade, took what they considered to be the most valuable aspects of the original *Red Poppy* and updated other aspects of the ballet to make a new production. They did not seek to "reconstruct" the original production. Rather, they sought to improve upon their predecessors' creation and make a new production in keeping with priorities for Soviet ballet in the late 1940s. The artists who participated in meetings about the production, in the creative brigade, and in the performances of *The Red Poppy* were contributing to "the development of Soviet ballet."[151] "Soviet" ballet was not decreed from on high in all its details. The artists themselves exercised agency as they negotiated the practical and artistic challenges of staging a new version of *Red Poppy* fit for Soviet audiences in 1949.

The conversations and disputes cited here mostly took place outside of the spotlights and even beyond the reaches of journalistic coverage. While archival

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[149] Kurilko had been both designer and librettist for the 1927 production of *Red Poppy*.

[150] Several cast members who had performed in the 1927 production were recognized in the program for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the original production (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 606, l. 77). There may have been others who performed in the 1949 production but not on that night.

[151] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 606, l. 76ob.

records cannot be assumed to offer a complete picture from all angles of the production process—and accessing the entire archival record for any particular production is a near logistical impossibility, given the structure of the GABT archives and the records' dispersion among multiple repositories—archival records bring to historical understanding additional perspectives that may be elided in memoirs or the press. The lively discussion on October 7, 1949, and the brigadier's report on the work of the creative brigade evidence a creative environment and a collaborative process involving many dancers, other theatrical employees, and representatives of government oversight organizations. The dancers and others thought critically about what would make an ideologically and artistically sound ballet in 1949. In the meeting on October 7 (and in countless other meetings at GABT and in other Soviet state theaters of opera and ballet) and in the creative brigade, the dancers do not appear to have been resisting the task of staging a new version of *Red Poppy*. They appear to have been working together to make the best possible ballet they could collectively conceive. However, just because the production process was supposed to be (and was) collaborative did not ensure that everyone involved would always be satisfied with the collaboration. The dispute over authorship of the libretto points to a tension between the individual incentives for certain types of artistic labor that sometimes clashed with the overarching objective of collective effort.

Notably, the stenographic record of the meeting on October 7, 1949, does not evidence a realm of dancers as silent vessels for a genius choreographer. The first important takeaway from this meeting is that dancers were active participants; the choreographer Rostislav Zakharov was not left to intra-psychically invent his choreographic plan and then apply his plan to brainless bodies. In the recorded discussion, dancers plainly accused the choreographer of insufficient ingenuity before he had secured his first hour of studio rehearsal. The second important takeaway is that there were women involved in the conversation. To be fair, men outnumbered women in attendance at the meeting on October 7 and in the ranks of the creative brigade for *The Red Poppy*. There were twenty-four people in attendance at the meeting on October 7, and only five were women (all dancers). While my analysis does not engage with all of the women's comments (only two are cited above, though others' remarks were recorded in the stenographic record), the simple observation that women were participating behind the scenes in ballet production is an important intervention in scholarly discourse about ballet. Elizabeth Dempster writes, "The traditional ballet company structure, although foregrounding the female performer, continues to delimit her participation in the definition and extension of that form and perhaps... a situation of fuller participation is a logical impossibility."[152] I argue that women's participation is not

[152] Elizabeth Dempster, "Women Writing the Body: Let's Watch a Little How She Dances," in *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, ed. Susan Sheridan (London: Verso, 1988), 42.

"a logical impossibility," but the more histories of ballet are written with this assumption in mind, the fewer possibilities there will be for women to participate because people will think, "It has never been done before." Perhaps Riane Eisler and Alfonson Montuori's observation that "the myth of women's lack of creativity is in large part due to the fact that women's creative contributions have not been recorded"[153] is broadly true in discourses about ballet, too. It is not that women are incapable of participating. It is that women's contributions have not been written about. The extant discourses limit institution-builders' imaginations: judging by existing discourses, people do not imagine women to be capable of contributing to ballet in any role other than that of dancer-muse.[154]

I would like to reiterate how unusual is a story of ballet creation by discussion in which multiple choreographers and dancers, among others, actively participated. On the posters, choreography for *The Red Poppy* (1949) was credited to Leonid Lavrovskii. However, the stenographic records from meetings in the course of the production process reveal that Lavrovskii was not creating in isolation. Further, the records suggest that the feedback in the meetings and

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[153] Eisler and Montuori, 482.

[154] For other examples of women in even more prominent leadership positions in ballet companies, see the careers of Anna Pavlova and Viktorina Vladimirovna Kriger. On Pavlova's career, see Carrie Gaiser Casey, "Ballet's Feminisms: Genealogy and Gender in Twentieth-Century American Ballet History" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2009) and Jennifer Fisher, "The Swan Brand: Reframing the Legacy of Anna Pavlova."

through the creative brigade's interventions strengthened the resulting artistic production, when considering the product in light of the aesthetic priorities for Soviet ballet in the late 1940s. How many choreographers working in the twenty-first century create alone because they have been socialized and professionalized to believe that creativity is the realm of individual male geniuses? What effect have the discourses of dance history and dance studies wrought through emphasis on biographical and choreographic analyses focused on the creativity of individual men? How many more choreographers—of any gender—could ballet foster if the potential choreographers imagined choreography to be a collective effort instead of a solo endeavor? This is not to say that all choreographers would work more effectively if creating as part of a committee. It is simply to suggest that institutional structures to promote collaborative creation could empower a more diverse range of creators, if institutions and artists recognize that the lone male genius is not the only condition of possibility for creativity in ballet. The production process for *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater in 1949 stands as an example of successful (for its day) collaborative creativity.

Chapter Six

The Red Poppy (1949): Rejuvenating the First Soviet Ballet for the Bolshoi Stage

> "In the name of Tao-Khoa, who died for the happiness of the people, Ma Li-chen vows to lead the fight for the people's emancipation to a victorious conclusion. The revolutionaries surround him in steely resolve."
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> —from the libretto for the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater (Act III, scene 4)

Chapter Introduction

One of the central assumptions of this project is that new versions of ballets (and, by extension, other forms of cultural production) can help historians understand the contexts of their remaking. *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater in 1949 differed from the original production at the same theater in 1927, and at minimum the differences reflected changes in Soviet society and culture between 1927 and 1949.[1] This premise challenges the approach of scholars who assume that if you have seen one *Red Poppy* (or *Swan Lake*, or *Giselle*), you have seen them all. For example, Simon Morrison mentions that *Red Poppy* was remade but makes little distinction among the versions: "[*Red Poppy*] faded from the Bolshoi stage in the 1930s, but reappeared in the 1940s, in celebration of the Chinese

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The epigraph is from a copy of the libretto held by the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, hereafter RGALI) f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 37ob.

[1] Using the verb "reflected," I do not mean to preclude the possibility that ballet helped produce changes in Soviet society. In other words, ballet's relationship to Soviet culture should be assumed to be two-way. However, the sources for this chapter more clearly evidence influence from Soviet society and culture to ballet rather than the other way around.

communist revolution. In the 1950s, the ballet was revived again at the Bolshoi, as *The Red Flower*."[2] From this description, a reader might conclude that the three versions were the same, except for the title change.

Reproductions of ballets and art works in other genres share with their originals similarities that may illuminate connections between cultures and societies across time and space. By definition, a reproduction has something in common with previous versions of the same ballet. The Bolshoi Theater's second production of *The Red Poppy* was still about capitalist oppression of Chinese workers and the eventual overthrow of foreign imperial powers in a Chinese port city. The subject matter was the same, but the narration and embodiment of the subject were new. The differences between the 1927 production and the 1949 production help us understand changes in Soviet ballet and Soviet society in the intervening tumultuous decades. Changes in the libretto reflected and re-inscribed postwar Stalinist society's gender norms and preoccupation with the geopolitics of the emerging Cold War while the ballet's storytelling through dance evidences Soviet ballet's development toward the through-danced ballets of the Thaw era.

The changes are apparent when comparing the published libretti that accompanied the 1927 and 1949 productions. The libretto for *The Red Poppy* in

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[2] Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), 252.

1949 was revised to make the events seem more plausible, to make the plot easier to follow, and to make the story more historically accurate. Analysis of change over time between the libretti is supplemented by analysis of still photographs from the 1927 and 1949 productions.[3] Taken together, the changes show how the requirements of socialist realism were applied in ballet and that socialist realism could generate artistic innovations. Socialist realism did not obliterate ballet, and ballet artists did not hide from socialist realism. The requirements of socialist realism impelled ballet artists to change what stories they told and how they told those stories.

Some changes in *The Red Poppy*, especially those having to do with the heroine's role, accorded with significant real-world changes in Soviet laws between 1918 and 1944. In the first decade or so of Bolshevik rule, opportunities opened for women to work at a wider range of jobs than they had under the tsars, divorce became easier for women to initiate, birth control was promoted, abortion became legal, and Soviet officials attempted to aggregate household labor (child care, cooking, dishwashing, laundry) so that more women could go to work outside of their homes. This is not to say that all of these efforts reached all Soviet women—they did not. The Soviet government's goals far exceeded their resources to implement such sweeping social changes in practice.[4] However, for a time in the

[3] Almost no film of the 1949 production has surfaced. Since there is also no film of the 1927 production at GABT, moving images do not constitute a significant source base for this chapter.

1920s, it seemed that Soviet women would soon be able to do almost anything that Soviet men could do.

In the 1930s, many of these reforms were reversed. The "law of happy motherhood" in 1936 included a ban on abortion, monetary inducements for women to bear children, and disincentives for divorce.[5] Then, the Soviet population was devastated by World War II. The Family Code of 1944 brought additional financial benefits for mothers with at least three children and tax penalties for adults with fewer (or no) children as part of government efforts to repopulate the country.[6] Laws in the 1930s and 1940s incentivized women to be mothers and to deprioritize other social roles. As expectations for women's roles in Soviet society narrowed, the role of Tao-Khoa in *The Red Poppy* also shrank because the heroine had to share the stage with a new hero: Ma Li-chen. In fact, while the ballet's heroine has much in common with portrayals of women in Soviet literature of the time, its hero stands out for his wholeness and idealism, qualities

[4] For more on unfulfilled plans to communalize household labor, see Tricia Starks, *The Body Soviet: Propaganda, Hygiene, and the Revolutionary State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).

[5] For more on the changing priorities and possibilities for women in Soviet Russia see Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Lynne Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity, 1922-1953* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999).

[6] Claire E. McCallum, *The Fate of the New Man: Representing & Reconstructing Masculinity in Soviet Visual Culture, 1945-1965* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2018), 137-138.

that were receding in other cultural representations of masculinity in the late Stalin period.

The discussions in Chapter 4 highlighted principles that came to define Soviet ballet, especially ballet at the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (GABT), namely edifying subject matter, a well-crafted narrative, and embodied storytelling. The meetings in Chapter 5 revealed how artists and administrators negotiated these principles with respect to the production process for GABT's second version of *The Red Poppy*. And this chapter analyzes the results of the creative brigade's work: the 1949 GABT production itself. First, I show how the libretto was revised to reflect international dynamics of the early Cold War. Next, I examine the two leading roles in the 1949 production, the heroine Tao-Khoa and the hero Ma Li-chen. After that, I explore the function of dance sequences in the plot of the ballet, suggesting that the diffusion of opportunities for dancing throughout the scenes was a step towards the through-danced ballets of the Thaw era and beyond. And I unpack the transformation of the red poppy as a symbol between the 1927 and 1949 productions. Finally, I discuss official reception of the ballet. Because the Bolshoi Theater production was awarded a Stalin Prize, I contend that the ballet was successful by the ideological and artistic standards of its day. The collaborative effort that brought the new production to the Bolshoi stage in 1949 succeeded in updating the first Soviet ballet for a new generation of Soviet audiences.

Cold War Politics in *The Red Poppy* (1949)

Changes in the libretto for the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* resulted in stronger characterizations for both "bad" and "good" characters in accordance with contemporary Cold War politics. Victoria Bonnell observes that after the World War II, the United States became enemy number one in Soviet propaganda posters.[7] In the ballet, too, the postwar Boss was American, and a new scene in Act I heightened the contrast between Soviet socialist ideals and American capitalist deception in the narrative. Meanwhile, the Chinese people were represented by the characters of the coolies and rickshaw drivers; these characters bodied forth preparedness for revolution so as to leave no doubt in the audience that the revolution was by and for the Chinese people. In these ways, the revised libretto clarified characters' motivations, improved the historical accuracy of the ballet's portrayal of revolutionary China, and updated the conflict between capitalism and socialism to reflect the United States's status as a post-World War II superpower.

Like the original production of *Red Poppy*, the 1949 production at the Bolshoi Theater featured the arrival of a Soviet ship at a Chinese port. Tao-Khoa, a local performer, and Ma Li-chen, a leader of the coolies, are inspired by the Soviet Captain's humane consideration for the Chinese workers and the Soviet sailors'

[7] Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (1997; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 263.

organized, disciplined, and enthusiastic labor. At the same time, the Boss, Li Shan-fu (the city's small-time impresario), and other Chinese, European, and American members of the bourgeoisie feel threatened by the ideals that the Soviet characters embody. Tao-Khoa dreams that Ma Li-chen and Li Shan-fu square off in a battle and that Ma Li-chen's warriors defeat Li Shan-fu's forces. After Tao-Khoa wakes up, Ma Li-chen calls the Chinese workers to rise up and overthrow their capitalist bosses and overseers. Li Shan-fu and the Boss try and fail to poison the Soviet Captain. They then try to decapitate the revolution by shooting Ma Li-chen. Tao-Khoa tips the Soviet Captain off regarding the poison and then throws herself in the path of the bullet bound for Ma Li-chen. She is fatally wounded. In the apotheosis, the revolutionaries prevail.[8]

Unlike the 1927 production, which opened with the unloading of the Soviet ship, GABT's second production opened with the transfer of cargo from the dock to a warehouse. According to the libretto, the crates in the opening scene had been delivered by an American ship and bore American labels.[9] The Boss in the port city was also American,[10] while the Boss in the original production had been British. As they worked, the coolies threw bitter glances toward the Boss and Li

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[8] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, ll. 33-37ob. My full translation of the published libretto for the 1949 production constitutes Appendix B of this dissertation.

[9] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33.

[10] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33.

Shan-fu. Ma Li-chen was the boldest—when he looked at the Boss and Li Shan-fu, Ma Li-chen expressed both hatred and fearless readiness to fight.[11] After one coolie collapsed from exhaustion, Ma Li-chen lifted the crate labeled "cigarettes" from his fallen comrade and flung it to the ground.[12] The crate splintered and out tumbled not American cigarettes but American rifles.[13] This first scene with the revelation of the content of the American crates of "cigarettes" was entirely new for the 1949 production, and the details of the scene helped to set up the dramatic and ideological conflict at the heart of the ballet.

The 1949 production set in opposition American capitalist deception and Soviet socialist trustworthiness. The disparity between American word and deed played out with the coolies' discovery that the "cigarettes" were guns. It was not merely that the foreign capitalists were exploiting the Chinese workers so that the foreigners could live decadently—this the foreigners did in the 1927 production. In the 1949 production, the Americans were secretly importing weapons, presumably to arm Chinese nationalist fighters in order to defeat the Chinese Communist forces and maintain the foreigners' economic interests in China.

By contrast, the ballet presented the Soviet Union as a generous country full of upstanding people. The Soviet ship was delivering gifts from Soviet trade union

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[11] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33.

[12] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33ob.

[13] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33ob.

members: sacks of grain for hungry Chinese workers and peasants. Because the coolies were on strike, the Soviet sailors willingly unloaded the ship. Later, when the Boss and Li Shan-fu tried to provoke an incident with the Soviet Captain, he did not stoop to their bait; he merely went about his business of delivering the grain.[14] The Soviet characters were not only helpful—they remained above the fray and smoothly evaded the local bourgeoisie's attempts to entrap them. The ballet definitively displayed the untrustworthiness of the Americans and their capitalist allies while showing how the Soviet sailors and their Captain stood on the side of the Chinese people. This contrast between Soviet socialism and American capitalism grounded the ballet in contemporary political ideas and events.

The contrast between the Americans and the Soviets also established the conflict between evil and good that structured the rest of the ballet. *The Red Poppy* exemplifies a phenomenon located by Xenia Gasiorowska in contemporary Soviet literature, namely "the uncompromising segregation of its inhabitants into positive and negative characters, both of which serve to educate the reader ideologically."[15] Like literature, ballet served a pedagogical function for Soviet audiences. And creators in both genres approached this task by attempting to strip away "ambiguity," trying to overdetermine audience interpretation.[16] The resulting

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[14] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 34.

[15] Xenia Gasiorowska, *Women in Soviet Fiction, 1917-1964* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 237.

productions in literature as well as ballet foreground the contrast between what audiences were supposed to understand to be right and wrong. Audiences should have been able to cheer for and hope to emulate the positive characters. They should have rooted for the negative characters to fail.

In 1949, Li Shan-fu and the American Boss led the forces of evil. Ma Li-chen, aided by Tao-Khoa, led the impoverished Chinese people as the forces of good. In the course of the narrative, the forces of good triumphed over the forces of evil. As was typical of socialist realist productions in the 1940s, GABT's second version of *The Red Poppy* featured characters who clearly represented the bad and the good throughout the ballet.

Ma Li-chen was the leader of the forces for good in the 1949 production, and the way that he uncovered the American deception in the first scene helped the audience understand his character. Ma Li-chen was frustrated with the coolies' lot in the port city, and he was ready to do something to better their situation. He stepped in to help his fallen comrade and vented his anger by throwing the crate. His anger caused him to reveal the American deception, and recognition of the American deception spurred Ma Li-chen to call the Chinese dockworkers to strike. The coolies heeded his call. Ma Li-chen was characterized from this first scene as a leader among the coolies who was inspired and willing to fight for better working

[16] Jan Plamper analyzes this process as it took shape in the 1930s, mostly with reference to visual culture, in "Abolishing Ambiguity: Soviet Censorship Practices in the 1930s," *The Russian Review* 60, no. 4 (October 2001).

and living conditions. There could have been no doubt among his comrades or the audience about who was fit to lead the revolution. This scene depicted Ma Li-chen as the person prepared to lead the forces for good and bolstered the dramatic logic of the plot. The fact that the revolution succeeded by the end of the ballet no longer seemed like a fluke or *deus ex machina*.

In the 1927 production, the revolutionary forces (the Red Spears) had snuck into the city amid the chaos that followed the failed attempt at assassinating the Soviet Captain. There was not a firm logical connection between the revolution and the events involving Tao-Khoa, the Soviet Captain, and Li Shan-fu in the 1927 production. One might have even mistaken the events surrounding the attempted assassination of the Soviet Captain for the spark that set off the revolution because there was no evidence that anyone in the ballet (up until the last moments) was inclined toward uprising.

In the 1949 production, even though Ma Li-chen seemed the readiest for revolution, he was surrounded by coolies, rickshaw drivers, and other Chinese workers and peasants who were almost as ready as he was. The coolies' spiteful glances at their bosses in Act I were mirrored by the coolies and rickshaw drivers who glared at the Boss in Act III. In the final act, Ma Li-chen called the coolies and rickshaw drivers to rise up against their oppression—according to the libretto, they listened to him hungrily, their faces full of determination. The Boss peered down from the balcony of a nearby mansion. The coolies and rickshaw drivers' eyes

blazed with hatred. They met the Boss's gaze.[17] With a couple of impassioned dances and speeches, Ma Li-chen roused the people to revolution. The coolies went on strike. Then the rickshaw drivers refused to work for their American and European clients. A few revolutionary fliers later, the exploited workers of the city overthrew the American Boss and his allies. To a much greater degree than in the 1927 production, the Chinese people—at least, those who were not benefitting from the foreign capitalists' ventures—seemed already on the verge of revolution before the Soviet ship arrived. It was not only the heroine and hero who were ready to defend and to lead the revolution, respectively. The masses were also ready to revolt. The 1949 production portrayed the Chinese people as primed for revolution in a way that the 1927 production did not. Details such as the dirty looks that the coolies threw at their bosses and the two work stoppages had the effect of clarifying that the Soviet Captain and Soviet sailors inspired but did not cause the revolution.

In terms of the physicality of the positive Chinese characters, available photographs indicate that the 1949 production toned down the stereotypical sycophancy and reticence that had characterized Tao-Khoa and the other Chinese characters in the 1927 production.[18] Li Shan-fu still slumped obsequiously in his

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[17] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 36.

[18] See photographs in Georgii Petrusov, *The Bolshoi Ballet* (Moscow: Museum Moscow House of Photography, 2004), 42-55, and in V. I. Zarubin, *Pervye postanovki baletov na russkoi stsene 1825-1997* (Moscow: Ellis Luck, 1998), 146-151.

role as chief flatterer of the American Boss, but Tao-Khoa, Ma Li-chen, and the Chinese characters with whom Soviet audiences were supposed to sympathize seemed more physically assertive than did Tao-Khoa in the 1927 production. They stood and moved with open chests, chins raised. Their arms were often opened wide, too. They took up much more vertical and horizontal space than did Ekaterina Gel'tser's Tao-Khoa in 1927. The 1949 production probably did not succeed in shedding all of the theatrical stereotypes of *chinoiserie* for which the 1927 production was justly criticized. However, it seems clear that the stereotypes were updated for the 1949 production. The pseudo-Chinese style that irritated Leonid Lavrovskii about the original production[19] looked less pseudo-Chinese and more Soviet in the 1949 production. Both the sets and the choreography were revised in accordance with contemporary preferences—what was deemed appropriate for Soviet ballet in 1949.

Taken together, these changes staged contemporary politics, updating *The Red Poppy* for Soviet audiences 1949. The Soviet Union's major new socialist ally, the People's Republic of China, was shown to be more self-sufficiently revolutionary than in the original ballet. In the midst of the Cold War, the United States replaced Great Britain as the symbol of capitalism and imperialist corruption in *The Red Poppy*. And the scale of American treachery in revolutionary China

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[19] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142, l. 21.

painted a thoroughly negative portrayal of the Soviet Union's primary ideological and economic enemy after World War II. At the same time, the changes clarified the Chinese characters' motivations and made their actions seem more logical; these revisions improved the dramaturgical through-line of the ballet as well as its historical accuracy in accordance with contemporary understandings of what constituted a good Soviet ballet.

The Role of Tao-Khoa

Tao-Khoa's role was simplified and sidelined in efforts to heighten the contrast between positive and negative characters, make the plot more plausible, and increase the ballet's historical accuracy. Tao-Khoa's political enlightenment had been the heart of the ballet in 1927, but by 1949 that conversion had obviously taken place before the ballet began. The ballet again embodied a trend that Xenia Gasiorowska identifies in Soviet literature: "In the 1940's, the fictional heroine no longer fights for nor awakens to her rights; she exercises them, while performing her duties."[20] Tao-Khoa no longer needed to dance her political awakening in the course of the ballet. In 1949, the heroine entered in Act I as a committed revolutionary.

But, in a sense, Tao-Khoa was also demoted. Her duties were limited. Gasiorowska observes that in post-World War II fiction, women do not do

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[20] Gasiorowska, 58.

important work such as killing negative characters or saving the lives of positive characters; the fictional women leave the important jobs to male characters.[21] Anna Krylova similarly argues that Soviet authors "developed male protagonists at the expense of female heroines, whom they used as abstract symbols of Russian feminine virtue" in postwar literature.[22] In *The Red Poppy*, Tao-Khoa shared the stage with the new character Ma Li-chen. It was Ma Li-chen who directed the workers and led the revolution. Tao-Khoa was merely his assistant. Similar to postwar fiction and propaganda posters, the ballet heroine ceded ground to a powerful man.[23]

Tao-Khoa's character undergoes less development in the 1949 production than it did in the 1927 version. In the 1927 production, Tao-Khoa had a moment of political enlightenment ("consciousness-raising," in socialist parlance) when she witnessed the Soviet Captain's humane response to the Chinese overseers' inhumane treatment of the coolies. Tao-Khoa's character went from flirting coquettishly with the Chinese and European bourgeoisie to partisan of and martyr for Soviet ideals. In the course of this transformation over several scenes, Tao-Khoa

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[21] Gasiorowska, 166. Of course, Tao-Khoa does save Ma Li-chen's life in *The Red Poppy*. However, she is killed in the process.

[22] Anna Krylova, "'Healers of Wounded Souls': The Crisis of Private Life in Soviet Literature, 1944-1946, *Journal of Modern History* 73 (June 2001): 327.

[23] Gasiorowska, 243; Bonnell, 261.

performed for the audience her transformation. In so doing, the character of Tao-Khoa exhibited a range of emotions and attachments.

The role in 1927 would have been challenging, offering the leading dancer opportunities to explore and showcase her acting abilities. The ballerina who played Tao-Khoa had to mime and dance her awakening to socialist ideas and her choice between the familiar, old Chinese traditions and the new ideas embodied by the Soviet visitors. A range of expression like this was very appealing to some dancers who longed to grapple with how to embody characters and perform more than technical tricks. Being able to convey a range of feelings and ideas to an audience was an artistic aspiration for many ballet dancers.

In the 1949 production, the role became a little less dramatic because Tao-Khoa did not need to perform her internal struggle; she was already a partisan for the revolutionary movement at the beginning of Act I. Before the action of the ballet began, Tao-Khoa was already helping Ma Li-chen with his revolutionary activities and, from their lingering look in Act I, seemed to have had a friendly relationship with him. More broadly, she fondly greeted the dockworkers instead of the bourgeois characters at her first entrance to the town square.[24] Later in Act II, she was not surprised when Ma Li-chen arrived at her home and passed her a packet of revolutionary leaflets for safekeeping.[25] With a glance, she directed Ma

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[24] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33ob.

Li-chen to the back room, where he proceeded to hold a secret meeting with his comrades.[26] By all appearances, this was not the first time Tao-Khoa had hosted such a gathering. Throughout the first half of the 1949 production, Tao-Khoa showed herself to be politically aligned with the revolutionaries. While she still had some dramatic scenes and some emotional moments to perform, Tao-Khoa no longer needed to transform in front of the audience's eyes from bourgeois plaything to committed communist.

The simplification of Tao-Khoa's role can be interpreted in several ways, none of which are mutually exclusive. It seems likely that the streamlining of Tao-Khoa into an unambiguously "good" character was part of the creative brigade's efforts to make the ballet easier to follow. The "good" characters were good from the start, and members of the audience would not have had any doubt about where their sympathies should lie.

It is also possible that the simplification of Tao-Khoa's character was part of the creative brigade's efforts to make the plot more plausible. By having Chinese characters who were already working toward a revolution before the ballet begins (Tao-Khoa, Ma Li-chen, and his comrades), the revolution looked more believable. This had two benefits. First, the revolution did not seem to spring entirely from the visit by the Soviet ship; having a revolutionary movement in place before the start

[25] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 34ob.

[26] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 34ob.

of the ballet made the revolution in Act III seem a more probable event. Second, a local revolutionary group that was active prior to the start of the ballet was more historically accurate. This set up the plot to give more credit for the revolutionary victory to the Chinese people than to the transient Soviet crew. The seeds of the revolution had sprouted much earlier, even if the bloom unfurled only with the apotheosis of the ballet (following the departure of the Soviet ship). Recognizing and honoring the Chinese people's sacrifices and successes was one of the creative brigade's goals for the 1949 production, and one way to make sure that the Chinese characters were responsible for the revolution was to show Chinese revolutionaries who were active even before the Soviet ship's arrival. Part of the latter included making Tao-Khoa a consistent partisan rather than a character who chooses to side with the revolutionaries halfway through the ballet.

More ominously, the reduction in Tao-Khoa's expressive range in the 1949 production reflected a calcification of gender roles and a sidelining of women in Soviet society. Gender roles in Soviet society increasingly emphasized women's roles in the domestic sphere. Tao-Khoa was not a model for Soviet women in that she was never a mother. However, in 1927, the whole ballet had centered on her consciousness-raising. She was the one whose political enlightenment and potential activism represented the Soviet self in the process of formation. In 1949, the replacement of Tao-Khoa, the heroine, with Ma Li-chen, the hero, was both an acknowledgment of the centrality of male leaders to the real-life Chinese

Communist Revolution (another nod toward historical accuracy) and a more oblique statement that revolution was actually men's work after all. The heroine could not lead the revolution in 1949. She could only assist the hero. The role of Tao-Khoa became less three-dimensional and less central as the variety of women's roles in Soviet society shrank.

There was one other significant change for the character of Tao-Khoa. In the 1927 production, Tao-Khoa intentionally disrupted two attempted assassinations of the Soviet Captain. First, in Act II, scene 1, she threw herself between the Soviet Captain and Li Shan-fu's co-conspirators as they attempted to stab him. Then, in Act III, Tao-Khoa handed the Soviet Captain the cup of poisoned tea and immediately knocked it out of his grasp before he could imbibe. Li Shan-fu beat Tao-Khoa after her first interference in his conspiracy. He aimed his gun at Tao-Khoa and fatally shot her after her second intervention. In sum, in the 1927 production, Tao-Khoa saved the Soviet Captain's life twice and sacrificed her own life for his. This series of events may have contributed to confusion about the revolutionary spark.

In the 1949 production, however, Tao-Khoa sacrificed her life not for the Soviet Captain but for the Chinese hero. Tao-Khoa again saved the Soviet Captain's life by communicating with an acutely meaningful look that the tea was poisoned. The Soviet Captain himself threw aside the cup of poisoned tea.[27]

However, this time Tao-Khoa was not singled out for blame. More crucially, at the end of the ballet, Tao-Khoa sacrificed her life to save Ma Li-chen. In the 1949 production, Li Shan-fu aimed not for Tao-Khoa but for Ma Li-chen. Tao-Khoa saw Li Shan-fu, understood his intent, and threw herself in the path of the gunshot. Li Shan-fu was not trying to kill her at the end of the ballet. Yet, as in the 1927 production, Tao-Khoa died at the end and her red-draped body was held up as an inspiration for the revolutionaries. In the 1949 production, Tao-Khoa saved the Soviet Captain's life once and subsequently died to preserve the life of the local revolutionary leader.

The changes to Tao-Khoa's character reflect the changes in what constituted Soviet ballet between 1927 and 1949. Having a heroine who was already politically conscious at the start of the ballet supported the goals of decisively differentiating between positive and negative characters, making the plot easier to follow, and making the success of the revolution at the end of the ballet seem more plausible. It also contributed to placing responsibility for the revolution in the hands of the Chinese characters rather than the Soviet visitors. The fact that Tao-Khoa sacrificed her life to save the life of the Chinese hero instead of the Soviet Captain added to the overall picture of a Chinese revolution in China. The 1949 production was more historically accurate for this reason and because the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party had been male. However, in order for the ballet

[27] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 37.

to embody these changes, the role of Tao-Khoa had to be simplified. The emotional and intellectual complexities of the 1927 role were reduced by 1949, reflecting a narrowing of opportunities for women in Soviet society. Tao-Khoa ceded the stage to the revolutionary leader Ma Li-chen.

The Role of Ma Li-chen

Ma Li-chen was a new character in the 1949 production. There had been no Chinese hero in the 1927 production of *Red Poppy*. There had been a Chinese heroine (Tao-Khoa), and there were Chinese villains (Li Shan-fu and the conspirators). There was a Soviet hero (Soviet Captain) but no Chinese hero. Aside from being a more historically accurate Chinese revolutionary leader because of his gender, Ma Li-chen constituted the addition of a second principal dancing role in the new production, and his dancing was central to the new ballet's storytelling.

Elizabeth Souritz traces the invention of the character of Ma Li-chen to the 1929 production of *Red Poppy* in Leningrad, with choreography by Feodor Vasil'evich Lopukhov. She writes that "a solo dance part appeared [in the dance of the coolies in Act I], and in time this performer became a separate character; in the postwar versions of *The Red Poppy*, he became one of the protagonists—the leader of the coolies, Ma Li-Chen."[28] In drafts of the libretto from 1947 and early 1949,

[28] Elizabeth Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*, trans. Lynn Visson, ed. Sally Banes (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 248. This suggestion bears further research. It would be useful to compare libretti from the Leningrad productions in 1929 and 1949 with the Moscow libretti to see if there was evidence in one of the libretti for the emergence of a role for a principal dancer among the coolies or whether the solo role was the development of the choreographer Lopukhov and his dancers in 1929.

there was not yet mention of a Chinese hero.[29] There was mention of a "young coolie" in the meeting on October 7, 1949,[30] and then he appeared with the name Ma Li-chen in a draft of the libretto from later in October.[31]

In addition to Souritz's theory, it is also possible that Ma Li-chen emerged as a replacement for the character of Tao-Khoa's father in the Bolshoi Theater production. Tao-Khoa's father was probably not a particularly effective character in the 1927 production—it would have been hard to guess that he was related to Tao-Khoa without reading the libretto, which had to be purchased separately from a ticket to the ballet, and his last-minute conversion to the revolutionary cause happened so close to the end of the ballet that it probably did not make much of an impact on audiences, had they believed his metamorphosis (or even understood what was happening). There is no mention of Tao-Khoa's father in the 1949 libretto, but it is possible that the revision of the libretto swapped a father for a friend: the Chinese male character who was a late convert to the communist cause for a Chinese male character who was a committed communist for the duration of

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[29] See, for examples, drafts by Mikhail Ivanovich Kurilko from 1947 (RGALI f. 962, op. 3, d. 1868) and Aleksei Nikolaevich Ermolaev from 1949 (RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 598).

[30] Stenogramma zasedaniia Direktsii po voprosu o postanovke baleta "Krasnyi mak" (October 7, 1949): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142.

[31] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 887, ll. 24-34. This statement from the creative brigade that designated Mikhail Kurilko and Vasilii Tikhomirov as authors of the libretto was discussed in Chapter 5. In the same delo, there is also a draft libretto dated December 15-30, 1949, where Ma Li-chen is brazenly named "Mao Li-chen" (ll. 2-23). "Mao" reverted to "Ma" by the time of the ballet's premiere.

the ballet. This might have functioned to shift the balance of principal Chinese characters who were ready for the Soviet worldview—not Tao-Khoa alone but Ma Li-chen and his comrades, too—and therefore make the revolution more plausible. Part of what the revisions to the libretto did, after all, was to make the story more believable.

Also, while Tao-Khoa's father's moment of political enlightenment upon his daughter's death might have gotten lost in the confusion of the uprising and grief in the 1927 production, Ma Li-chen was committed to the revolution from the beginning of Act I. He goes on to lead the forces of good in Act II, calls the Chinese people to action in Act III, and commands the revolution in the apotheosis. Ma Li-chen, as a heroic worker, was shown in increasingly revolutionary form throughout the course of the ballet. His rapid ascent as revolutionary leader gave the story a central heroic Chinese figure and made the plot easier for audiences to follow.

In addition to his significance to the plot's dramatic through-line, Ma Li-chen's existence as a principal dancing role influenced how the story was told. While Tao-Khoa was the only serious principal role with dances in each act of the 1927 production, Ma Li-chen danced with the coolies in Act I, in the battle between good and evil and to celebrate the victory of the forces of good in Act II, and to rouse the people to revolution after the Chinese folk theater performance in Act III. There are numerous smaller featured dancing roles in GABT's 1949

production: female dancers from Malaysia, a male dancer with a ribbon, a male dancer with knives, female dancers with small drums, a male Chinese acrobat, female Chinese dancers at the tea ceremony, and Tao-Khoa's female students, most of which were also part of the 1927 production. There were also still some important mime roles, including the Boss and his aide-de-camp, the harbormaster, and the Soviet Captain. However, unlike in the original ballet, in the 1949 production, Tao-Khoa was no longer the lone principal dancing role. Where the 1927 production had been a vehicle primarily for the ballerina Ekaterina Vasil'evna Gel'tser, the 1949 production became a slightly more balanced display for a ballerina, a principal male dancer, several principal mime artists, an array of male and female soloists, and the corps de ballet. More of the company got to participate in the dancing, especially the dancers portraying the new character Ma Li-chen.

Ma Li-chen's dance in Act III at the conclusion of the Chinese folk theater performance is perhaps the most interesting dance addition to the 1949 libretto. The libretto describes the progression of embodied images in Ma Li-chen's dance: "An image of an enslaved coolie, crumpled by perpetual servitude, materializes before the audience. He is replaced with a sharply satirical image of a capitalist, a foreign 'master' of China. . . . Ma Li-chen concludes his inspired performance with a fervent call to revolution, to the overthrow of the domination by foreign and

domestic bourgeoisie."[32] Admittedly, it is impossible to tell from the libretto how much of Ma Li-chen's "dance interlude"[33] was danced with ballet steps and jumps and how much of the movement vocabulary was specific to this character's situation. It is possible that Ma Li-chen's dance interlude was composed of movements outside the usual lexicon, much as the transfer of cargo in Act I would have been dominated by movements not usually found on the ballet stage. Nonetheless, Ma Li-chen's dance interlude was important to the plot of the ballet because it roused the Chinese people to join the revolutionary movement. This was more than a dance for entertainment (though it followed several entertaining variations)—this was a dance that moved its audience.

Perhaps the most interesting way to read Ma Li-chen's dance interlude is as an extension of the storytelling device of nineteenth-century ballet mime. Coolies and capitalists were not part of the nineteenth-century ballet mime vocabulary, but in 1949 Ma Li-chen conjured these figures. Rather than a gesture with part of his body (a hand, an arm, or two), he likely used his entire body to communicate the contrast between the wealthy, foreign boss and the local worker whose labor makes the foreign boss wealthy. The character of Ma Li-chen did not merely gesture toward these polarizing figures; he became the downtrodden coolie and the

[32] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 36ob.

[33] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 36ob. The choreographer's rehearsal plan for Act III, scene 2 (*kitaiskii teatr*) also includes two female soloists "with Ma Li-chen" (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1033, l. 9). It is unclear from the libretto how the two female soloists were involved with Ma Li-chen's dance interlude or whether they were "with Ma Li-chen" during another part of the scene.

brash boss. He embodied these character types to tell the story of the coolies' present plight and to move his audience to action. This type of "dance interlude" during which one character embodied representations of other character types seems to be a link between the mime sequences that conveyed the narratives in nineteenth-century ballets and the through-danced productions choreographed by Iurii Nikolaevich Grigorovich, such as *The Stone Flower* (1957), *Legend of Love* (1961), and *Spartacus* (1968).

The dance interlude also had a role in the narrative of *The Red Poppy*. It was both a danced scene and a turning point in the plot. Recalling the coolies' passionate dance in Act I about their longing for freedom, Ma Li-chen's solo dance in Act III functioned to rouse the audience on stage (the audience for the Chinese folk theater performance) to revolt against the Boss and his allies. It moved the narrative forward by inspiring the Chinese people to join the uprising and by letting the nascent revolutionaries know that it was time to act. Also, the Boss and his retinue took offense at Ma Li-chen's performance and walked out.[34] Ma Li-chen's dance fueled the Boss and his allies' desire to do away with first the Soviet Captain and then Ma Li-chen. Further, the dance interlude functioned to remind the audience in the Bolshoi Theater about the stakes of contemporary Cold War politics. It is as if, in the middle of play in a dramatic theater, Ma Li-chen had

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[34] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 36ob.

given a speech about the dangers of unchecked capitalism for working people around the world. Ma Li-chen's dance interlude was a condensed danced story, an example of Soviet ballet telling stories through dance instead of mime. Together with the danced battle between good and evil in Act II, Ma Li-chen's Act III dance interlude evidences Soviet experimentation with telling stories through dance.

Ma Li-chen was neither a soldier nor a father, two key types of characters in post-World War II Soviet culture.[35] He was a manual laborer, much like the worker-heroes of political posters in the 1920s and 1930s.[36] *The Red Poppy* did not synchronize with contemporary representations of the hero as closely as it did the heroine. But the new Chinese hero Ma Li-chen did serve important narrative purposes by embodying the emerging revolution and by dancing significant events of the plot. Ma Li-chen's presence made the successful revolution more plausible, increased the story's historical accuracy, and helped tell the story through dance.

The Role of Dancing in *The Red Poppy*

Historians and critics have disparaged the ballets in the repertoire of the Soviet state theaters in the 1930s and 1940s for relegating dancing to a subsidiary

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[35] See especially McCallum on visual culture as well as Greta Bucher, "Stalinist Families: Motherhood, Fatherhood, and Building the New Soviet Person," in *The Making of Russian History: Society, Culture, and the Politics of Modern Russia, Essays in Honor of Allan K. Wildman*, eds. John W. Steinberg and Rex A. Wade (Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, 2009); John Haynes, *New Soviet Man: Gender and Masculinity in Stalinist Soviet Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); and Helena Goscilo and Yana Hashamova, eds., *Cinepaternity: Fathers and Sons in Soviet and Post-Soviet Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

[36] Bonnell, 20-46.

role. Victor Vanslov writes: "All too many of these ballets were plays, with much pantomime and little dance. In such productions dance was used mostly as background or was introduced for a ball or festival scene. The choreographers had no use for abstract ensemble structures that, in the ballets of the nineteenth century like *Giselle* and *Swan Lake*, depict the atmosphere and the emotions of the heroes."[37] In fact, dancing was very important in the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*. I concede that the ensemble structures were likely not "abstract," especially in Acts I and III. However, dancing was used to communicate characters' *raisons d'être*, as in the coolies' dance of gratitude in Act I. And dancing was used to convey the battle between good and evil in Act II. Then, Ma Li-chen's dance interlude catalyzed the revolution. Dancing was diffused throughout the narrative and central to storytelling in *The Red Poppy*.

The smaller featured dancing roles in the 1949 production functioned to punctuate the progression of events in the narrative. This was a subtle change from the profusion of small solo and small group dances in nineteenth-century Russian classical ballets. In nineteenth-century classical ballets, many of the famous variations occur in succession: the fairies in the Prologue to *The Sleeping Beauty*, the fairy tale characters in Act III of *The Sleeping Beauty*, the divertissements in Act

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[37] Victor Vanslov, "Russia: Theatrical Dance since 1917," trans. and ed. Elizabeth Souritz, *International Encyclopedia of Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), ed. Selma Jean Cohen, accessed via *Oxford Reference Online* (January 30, 2020).

II of *The Nutcracker*, the national dances in Act III of *Swan Lake*, the variations in *Raymonda* and *Paquita*. In *The Red Poppy*, the scene of the performance by the Chinese folk theater troupe (a play-within-a-play trope) provided a plausible reason for there to be a series of diverting variations by various performers, including a dance with a ribbon, Tao-Khoa's variation with a parasol, a dance with knives, a dance with small drums, and an acrobat's dance. Otherwise, the solo and small group dances were spread out throughout the three acts. This appears to be a structural change en route to the through-danced story ballets of Iurii Grigorovich in the late 1950s and beyond. Rather than having the action of the ballet stop for a series of dances, as it did in the nineteenth-century romantic and classical ballets, there are occasions for dancing throughout the first and second acts of *The Red Poppy* in 1949. Only the third act returned to a more traditional and limited structure for dances in the context of the scene at the Chinese folk theater.

As in any good ballet libretto, there were numerous occasions for dancing. In Act I, the Malaysian dancers performed at the restaurant for the European and American guests, and their dance was followed by one of Tao-Khoa's variations. Then, all of the restaurant's patrons danced.[38] Outside the restaurant, Tao-Khoa danced a variation with long, golden fingernails in Act I to communicate her gratitude for the Soviet people's gift of grain and the Soviet sailors' selfless labor.

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[38] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33ob.

After the unloading was done, the coolies danced to express their will for freedom and the Soviet sailors responded in solidarity with the dance known as "The Little Apple" ("*Iablochko*"). Then, all assembled at the harbor danced.[39] The coolies danced to declare their strength and commitment to fight against subjugation, which showed the audience that the coolies were prepared to participate in the coming revolution. This change in who danced and why was probably part of the creative brigade's strategy to bolster the character of the coolies (as a group, a mass of workers) and make the plot more plausible. The dances of the Soviet sailors and the coolies expressed their political motivations, adding a layer of characterization usually missing from dances in nineteenth-century ballets and strengthening *The Red Poppy*'s imbrication in contemporary twentieth-century political ideas.

At home in Act II, Tao-Khoa gave a dancing lesson to her students, much as she rehearsed with younger dancers in the restaurant in the 1927 production. Later in Act II, during Tao-Khoa's dream, the "dark forces" danced, and the "forces of light" danced to celebrate their victory. Then, Tao-Khoa and her friends danced for the victorious warriors of light.[40]

As in the original production, the 1949 production used dance to particular effect in Tao-Khoa's dream. (Here, the ensembles may have qualified as "abstract.")

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[39] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 34ob.

[40] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 35ob.

In the 1927 production, a profusion of dancers dressed as dandelions, poppies, butterflies, and phoenixes in Tao-Khoa's dream were supposed to represent Tao-Khoa's internal struggle between ancient Chinese traditions and new Soviet ideas. The original libretto included an elaborate explanation to guide the audience's understanding of this symbolism.[41] Regarding Tao-Khoa's dream in the 1949 production, choreographer Leonid Mikhailovich Lavrovskii staged a danced battle between representatives of "Feudal China" (embodied by the Chinese capitalist allies from Act I) and representatives of the new day dawning in China (embodied by Ma Li-chen and the coolies from Act I).[42] The warriors on both sides of the battle in 1949 were Chinese, underscoring the agency of Chinese revolutionaries, another part of the creative brigade's solution to the problem of how to respectfully represent the Chinese people's fight and their sacrifices. The 1949 production made the choice between the status quo (or the old) and the new not Tao-Khoa's personal struggle but a more pervasive battle for the future of China, and this battle was danced.

While dancing had been important in the 1927 production, the dancing was diffused throughout the story in the 1949 production communicating and

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[41] See Chapter 3 for discussion of this scene and Appendix A for my translation of the libretto for the 1927 production.

[42] While the libretto is not explicit about the battle being danced, it appears from photographs of Act II that Li Shan-fu leapt as part of the battle. See photograph of Aleksei Ermolaev in Act II of *The Red Poppy*, "*Predvoditel' zlykh sil—Aleksei Ermolaev, 1950*," part of an exhibit of photographs by Georgii Petrusov at the Moscow House of Photography (Petrusov, 50).

accentuating important aspects of the plot. The coolies' dance of gratitude in Act I, the danced battle in Act II, and Ma Li-chen's dance interlude in Act III were supposed to help audiences understand the inspiration the coolies took from the Soviet visitors, the conflict between good and evil, and the stakes of the conflict in terms of workers' experiences in China. In these ways, the role of dance in telling the story of the *The Red Poppy* increased in the 1949 production, paving the way for through-danced ballets in the next decades.

The Red Poppy

Edward Tyerman argues that the 1927 production of *Red Poppy* "resignified" the poppy—transferring it from a symbol of "colonial debasement" to one of "internationalist solidarity" among socialists.[43] He refers primarily to sources for the 1927 production at the Bolshoi Theater, which he frames with evidence of Chinese spectators' reception of the 1949 production. Because the changes between the productions have thus far eluded Tyerman and other scholars, I describe changes in how the red poppy figured in the ballet at the Bolshoi Theater between the 1927 and 1949 productions. My comparison is based on the libretti for these two versions of the ballet. The changes in how the red poppy was used enhanced the coherence of the plot for Soviet artists and audiences.

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[43] Edward Tyerman, "Resignifying *The Red Poppy*: Internationalism and Symbolic Power in the Sino-Soviet Encounter," *Slavic and East European Journal* 61, no. 3 (2017): 447.

Red poppies are not mentioned in the final version of the 1927 libretto until Act II, scene 5.[44] It is plausible that a red poppy (theatrical prop) did appear in Act I when Tao-Khoa showered the Soviet Captain with flowers, but the libretto does not mention of any particular type of flower in that scene.[45] In the last scene of Act II, the poppies encouraged Tao-Khoa's conversion to socialism; Elizabeth Souritz notes that roles of poppies in Act II, scene 5, were danced by members of the corps de ballet.[46] The poppies stretched their arms toward the red-sailed ship that appeared in Tao-Khoa's dream, confirming her choice of Soviet ideals over Chinese traditions.[47] According to the libretto, "the red poppies should stand for a new revolutionary beginning."[48] The prop poppy finally appeared in Act III. The Soviet Captain "pluck[ed] a red poppy from a bouquet of flowers and raise[d] it like a banner."[49] And after Tao-Khoa was shot, she handed that same poppy to a group of

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[44] A. A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatrical Museum (Gosudarstvennyi tsentral'nyi teatral'nyi muzei imeni A. A. Bakhrushina, hereafter GTsTM) f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 34. The only mention in the context of Act I is that of the translation of the heroine's name. According to the libretto, her name means "red poppy." Tyerman confirms that the translation/transliteration is inaccurate ("Resignifying *The Red Poppy*," 454-458).

[45] Tyerman cites an unpublished and undated draft of the libretto in which Tao-Khoa hands the Soviet Captain a red poppy (GTsTM f. 467, d. 59, l. 3). This draft is not the final version sold at Bolshoi Theater performances.

[46] Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*, 242. The dancers in photographs from the 1927 production look very small, perhaps even students from the ballet school. See collected photographs from the 1927 production at the Museum of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater (hereafter Muzei GABT).

[47] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, ll. 36-37.

[48] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 37.

children. The libretto states that "[t]his flower now acquires the significance of a revolutionary emblem and the children to whom Tao-Khoa gives the flower hold it in their hands, just like a red flag."[50] Aside from the heroine's name, the poppy only really appeared toward the end of the ballet at three moments: Tao-Khoa's dream (embodied by dancers), the Captain's explanation that his patriotic duty comes before romantic love (prop), and Tao-Khoa's death scene (prop). In Tyerman's argument, "As Tao Hua travels her road to consciousness, so the eponymous poppy's meaning transforms, from a symbol of sensual corruption associated with the old world to a symbol of hope invested in the new."[51] The road of the poppy's transformation was fairly short in 1927, since the poppy as prop or dancing flower did not figure in most of the ballet.

In 1949, the red poppy was placed more systematically throughout *The Red Poppy* than it had been in 1927. In Act I, the Soviet Captain bought a red poppy from a Chinese flower seller and presented it to Tao-Khoa after she danced for the workers at the port.[52] Alone in her room at the beginning of Act II, Tao-Khoa took the red poppy from its vase and remembered the nobility of the Soviet Captain and sailors.[53] After her students departed, Tao-Khoa again took up the red poppy and

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[49] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 40.

[50] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, ll. 44-45.

[51] Tyerman, "Resignifying *The Red Poppy*," 460.

[52] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 34ob.

stared at it, deep in thought.[54] At this point, Li Shan-fu snuck in and flew into a rage because he saw Tao-Khoa holding the red poppy. He ripped the blossom from her hands and threw it on the floor. When the Boss arrived, Li Shan-fu snatched up the red poppy and thrust it at the Boss. In this scene, the poppy symbolized the capitalists' archenemies: the communists foreign and domestic. The Boss immediately understood the threat that the flower represented. Li Shan-fu and his accomplices stabbed the poppy with their knives to illustrate their position relative to the Soviet Captain and the ideals for which he stood. The Boss approved of their gesture.[55] Later, in Tao-Khoa's dream, she found herself in an enchanted garden with a fantastic red poppy blossom that shone over people with the light of joy and freedom.[56] The garden was also populated by dancing red poppies.[57] In Act III, scene 4, Tao-Khoa followed the Soviet Captain and sailors to their ship after the botched poisoning at the tea ceremony. She carried the red poppy and showed it to the Soviet Captain, promising to cherish it as a dear memento of the Soviet people, as a symbol of the faith in a bright future for the Chinese people.[58] After the Soviet ship departed and Tao-Khoa was fatally

[53] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 34ob.

[54] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 35.

[55] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 35.

[56] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 35ob.

[57] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1033, l. 6.

wounded, she pressed the flower to her chest.[59] She did not, as in the 1927 production, pass the red poppy on to attending children as a banner for the revolution.

Because of its appearance in so many important moments of the plot, the red poppy contributed to the cohesion of the narrative in 1949. By this time, the libretto no longer associated Tao-Khoa's name with "red poppy," but the theatrical prop was introduced in Act I and between the prop and the dancers dressed as red poppies, the flower was featured in all three acts. The scattered appearances of red poppies in the 1927 production were replaced in the 1949 production with a consistent and recurring symbol for the Soviet worldview. These changes in the 1949 libretto made the plot easier for Soviet audiences to follow.

Edward Tyerman observes that red poppies generally had positive connotations in Russian culture and that "[t]he corn poppy or field poppy (*papaver rhoeas*) that grows in the fields of Russia is a different species from the opium poppy (*papaver somniferum*)."[60] While Soviet Sinologists and Chinese spectators registered negative reactions to the ballet's title and the central symbol in the 1949 production, Soviet audiences likely did not bring associations with opium to the Bolshoi Theater. The recurring figure of the red poppy helped tie together the

[58] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 37ob.

[59] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 37ob.

[60] Tyerman, "Resignifying *The Red Poppy*," 462-463.

ballet that was primarily created for the political education, enlightenment, and enjoyment of Soviet audiences.

Stalin Prize, (First?) Second Class

On March 8, 1950, *Pravda* published the list of Stalin Prize winners for literature and art, recognizing works that premiered in 1949. The production of *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater was awarded a Stalin Prize, Second Class. Receipt of a Stalin Prize evidences official reception of the new ballet as a production of high ideological and artistic quality. *The Red Poppy* was a success by the standards of its day.

Stalin Prizes were awarded almost annually from the early 1940s until the early 1950s. In the Soviet system of cultural production, where the standards for political acceptability morphed and sometimes inverted abruptly, Stalin Prizes served as indications for artists regarding what kind of art the country's leaders wanted at that particular moment. Stalin Prize-winning works designated exemplary "model[s]" of Soviet cultural production.[61] As Maria Belodobrovskaya describes, the Stalin Prize winners set "precedents" for acceptable art works.[62] Stalin Prize-winning productions took the place of clear policy pronouncements or checklists that could ensure an ideologically sound work of art. The list of Stalin

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[61] Oliver Johnson, "The Stalin Prize and the Soviet Artist: Status Symbol or Stigma?" *Slavic Review* 70, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 820.

[62] Maria Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to Plan: Filmmaking under Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 204.

Prize winners constituted a channel of communication between Soviet leaders and workers in many artistic genres.

The Stalin Prize recognized significant achievements in many artistic categories, including literature (prose, poetry, playwriting), criticism and academic monographs, feature films, documentary films, music (works for opera/ballet/oratorio/cantata, large instrumental works, small-scale works, concert performance), visual arts (painting, sculpture), architecture, productions of plays at dramatic theaters, opera performance and productions, and ballet.[63] There was occasional overlap among the categories, and not every category appeared in every award year.[64] Stalin Prize, First Class, came with a monetary prize of 100,000 rubles, while the monetary award attached to Stalin Prize, Second Class, was 50,000 rubles.[65]

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[63] In addition to the artistic categories, there were Stalin Prizes awarded in science and engineering fields.

[64] Awards for the ballet category were announced in *Pravda*: March 16, 1941; April 12, 1942; January 27, 1946; June 27, 1946; June 7, 1947; April 21, 1948; April 10, 1949; March 8, 1950; March 17, 1951; and March 15, 1952. The ballet category disappeared for the award year 1943 (recognizing works from 1942), though Ekaterina Gel'tser won her Stalin Prize, First Class, that year in the temporary category of "perennial outstanding achievements in the field of art and literature" (*za mnogoletnie vydaiushchiesia dostizheniia v oblasti iskusstva i literatury*) (*Pravda*, March 20, 1943).

[65] A category of Stalin Prize, Third Class, was added beginning with prizes announced in 1947 (for works that premiered in 1946). Stalin Prize, Third Class, came with a monetary prize of 25,000 rubles. No Third-Class Stalin prizes were awarded in the ballet category ("*baletnoe iskusstvo*"). In award years 1950, 1951, and 1952, no Stalin Prize, First Class was awarded in the ballet category—only Second-Class prizes were distributed.

Stalin Prizes could be awarded individually or collectively.[66] Awards for ballet productions sometimes went to individual choreographers for a particular program that premiered the previous year but more often were awarded to the production team and originators of principal roles in large-scale narrative ballet productions at the state theaters of opera and ballet. When a Stalin Prize was awarded to a group of people, each individual received a medal and the title of "Stalin Prize laureate," but the money was divided among the winners.[67] For Stalin Prizes awarded for productions of particular ballets, the monetary prize was divided among the onstage and backstage participants deemed to have made significant contributions to the overall success of the production.

The Stalin Prize, Second Class, for *The Red Poppy* was shared among Leonid Lavrovskii (choreographer), Iurii Fedorovich Faier (conductor), Mikhail Ivanovich Kurilko (designer), Galina Sergeevna Ulanova and Ol'ga Vasil'evna Lepeshinskaia (performers of the role of Tao-Khoa), Sergei Gavrilovich Koren' and

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[66] For more on the Stalin Prize awards process, see Marina Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016). Frolova-Walker's book focuses on prizes for composers and other conservatory-educated musicians and conductors, regardless of category of award. Most Stalin Prizes for composers of ballet music were awarded in the category of music that included compositions classified as opera, ballet, oratorio, and cantata; the category which included ballet music was separate from the category which included productions of ballets whether original productions or new versions of extant ballets.

[67] Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize*, 13. As with the titles such as People's Artist, medals, and other honors, Stalin Prize laureates reaped privileges beyond the sudden financial boost. For more on the relative value of the prizes and the benefits (and costs) of being a Stalin Prize laureate beyond the monetary award, see Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize*, 12-15. For more on titles, medals, and prizes, see Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939-1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 235-267.

Aleksei Nikolaevich Ermolaev (performers of the role of Li Shan-fu), Mikhail Markovich Gabovich and Iurii Grigor'evich Kondratov (performers of the role of Ma Li-chen), and Viktor Vasil'evich Smol'tsov (performer of the role of the Boss).[68]

According to archival records from the Central Committee of the Communist Party's Bureau of Propaganda and Agitation (OPA TsK VKP[b]), the Stalin Prize Committee (*Komitet po Stalinskim premiiam v oblasti iskusstva i literatury*) actually voted to award the Bolshoi Theater's 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* a Stalin Prize, First Class.[69] The Stalin Prize Committee's decision was supported by the All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs (VKpDI) and OPA TsK VKP(b). According to Vladimir Kruzhkov's comments on the Stalin Prize Committee's decision, the Bolshoi Theater's production was more than an ordinary revival of a famous ballet. *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater constituted a new ballet production on a real-world political theme: the victory of progressive forces in the liberation of China.[70] Kruzhkov praised the emotional intimacy between the revised plot of the ballet and the historical events in China.[71] He also noted that the revised libretto would serve as the basis for new productions of *The Red Poppy* in other Soviet

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[68] "*O prisuzhdenii Stalinskikh premii za vydaiushchiesia raboty v oblasti literatury i iskusstva za 1949 god*," *Pravda*, March 8, 1950.

[69] Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii, hereafter RGASPI) f. 17, op. 132, d. 271, l. 117.

[70] Kruzhkov wrote on behalf of OPA TsK VKP(b). RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 271, l. 117.

[71] RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 271, l. 117.

theaters and that the ballet was a great success with audiences.[72] From Kruzhkov's comments, it seems clear that he felt the Bolshoi Theater production was the type of ballet that should be held up as a positive example to ballet producers around the country.

OPA TsK VKP(b) did oppose part of the Stalin Prize Committee's decision with regard to *The Red Poppy*. According to Kruzhkov, commending six laureates (Ulanova, Lavrovskii, Lepeshinskaia, Ermolaev, Faier, and Koren') was more than enough. OPA TsK VKP(b) did not consider the contributions of the originators of the role of Ma Li-chen (Gabovich and Kondratov) and the Boss (Smol'tsov) and the designer (Kurilko) to be sufficient to warrant their inclusion among the laureates. Kruzhkov gave no further explanation as to why the artists who created the roles of Tao-Khoa and Li Shan-fu made more valuable contributions than those who originated the role of Ma Li-chen, the new hero. In the end, OPA TsK VKP(b)'s objection was ignored, and all ten laureates were honored.

Despite the unanimous opinion of the Stalin Prize Committee, VKpDI, and OPA TsK VKP(b) as of January 1950, the actual award announced in March 1950 was not a Stalin Prize, First Class, but a Stalin Prize, Second Class.[73] Further

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[72] Success with audiences was not always listed among a production's strengths. It is safe to say that success with audiences was not the primary consideration of the Stalin Prize Committee.

[73] For ballet productions/performances premiering in 1949 and individual achievements in dance, no Stalin Prize, First Class, was awarded. There were four Second Class prizes (three productions, one individual dancer) for 1949. The other three Second Class prizes were voted as such by the Stalin Prize Committee and supported by VKpDI. OPA TsK VKP(b) supported the two Second Class

research will be needed to determine when the class of the prize was downgraded, by whom, and why. It seems likely that, somewhere along the way, someone decided that *The Red Poppy* did not constitute a monumental achievement in the field of ballet and Soviet artistic production. Stalin Prizes were meant to honor productions and compositions that were not merely good but also somehow groundbreaking. Among the Stalin Prize winners in the category of opera productions for the same year, Stalin Prize, First Class, went to the Bolshoi Theater's production of *Sadko*. Kruzhkov's remarks confirm that this production revealed for the first time the national spirit of this classic Russian opera through the staging of lively and dynamic mass scenes.[74] In other words, the production offered audiences a new perspective on a classical opera. The new production centered on an important Soviet theme (*narodnost'*), revealing a theretofore latent aspect of a familiar prerevolutionary opera. This, at this time, constituted a more significant production in the history of Soviet opera and theatrical art than did *The Red Poppy*.

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prizes for ballet productions (*Kniaz'-ozero* at the Belorussian Theater of Opera and Ballet and *Iunost'* at the Leningrad State Academic Malyi Opera Theater) but argued that the individual dancer should receive a Third-Class prize. Kruzhkov wrote that "citing G. Izmailova's youth and her great potential for the future, it would be more appropriate to award her not a Second-Class prize but a Third-Class prize" (RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 271, l. 120). Kruzhkov's advice was ignored, in this case, and Izmailova received a Second-Class prize in 1950 as a performer of Uzbek folk dances. (The "ballet" category was used to recognize performers of national dances in addition to "ballet.")

[74] RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 271, l. 110.

It seems plausible that the nomination of the Bolshoi Theater's new production of *The Red Poppy* suffered from the ballet being neither a completely original production nor a re-envisioning of a prerevolutionary classic. It was in between. And there were those complaints from Soviet Sinologists about *The Red Poppy*'s representation of China and the Sino-Soviet relationship. The Bolshoi Theater's second production of *The Red Poppy* was not recognized as as much of a big leap forward for Soviet ballet as had been the original production in 1927, which preceded the establishment of the Stalin Prize. It is worth noting that—of the five productions of *The Red Poppy* that premiered in 1949—only the production at the Bolshoi Theater was a serious contender for a Stalin Prize. From that perspective, the Bolshoi Theater's new version was deemed more significant than the others. Official reception deemed the Bolshoi Theater's production of *The Red Poppy* a ballet of high ideological and artistic quality.

Chapter Conclusion

According to Valerii Zarubin, the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* was performed at the Bolshoi Theater eighty-eight times between December 30, 1949, and October 10, 1954.[75] Judging by the collected programs at the Museum of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater and the log books for *The Red Poppy*, the ballet was performed several times per month throughout the theatrical seasons in these

[75] Zarubin, 151.

years.[76] In addition to the Stalin Prize, this frequency of performance testifies to the ballet's success by the aesthetic and ideological standards of its day. The collaborative production process described in Chapter 5 yielded a fundamentally new version of the first Soviet ballet and a version that was frequently performed.

As part of the movement in Soviet ballet toward more dramatically sound stories with coherent plots, plausible scenarios, and logically motivated characters, the Bolshoi Theater unveiled a revised libretto for its 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*. The red poppy was integrated throughout the ballet as a symbol of Soviet ideals. The revised libretto foregrounded a battle between good and evil. The contrast between American and Soviet politico-economic systems gave the ballet an earnest dimension of contemporary political ideas and events. The new character of Ma Li-chen helped to organize and promote the revolution. He was assisted by Tao-Khoa; Tao-Khoa's role became less expressive than it had been in the 1927 production, but her involvement (assumed to have begun prior to the action of the ballet) provided legitimacy for the revolutionary apotheosis. The coolies, Ma Li-chen, and Tao-Khoa worked together to justify the revolution. These characters' preparedness for the uprising contributed to the production's historical accuracy and enabled the Soviet ballet to honor the Chinese people's sacrifices and victory. However, even as the creative brigade sought to update the representation

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[76] Kontrol'nye knigi "Krasnyi mak:" RGALI f. 648, op. 5, dd. 605 (1949-1951 gg.), 606 (1951-1953 gg.), 607 (1953-1954 gg.).

of Chinese people in *The Red Poppy*, the ballet's intended audience was not Chinese—it was Soviet.

Though I have not been able to find a full film version of the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*, it is possible to ascertain (based on the libretto and photographic evidence) that dance and embodied storytelling were important in this production. Reducing the divertissement structure did not mean reducing the prevalence of dancing. In fact, quite the opposite. The plot of *The Red Poppy* called for numerous occasions for small featured dances spread out throughout the first and second acts. This moved the genre closer to the through-danced ballets that gained prominence in the 1960s and beyond. Dance was used to convey the coolies' hunger for freedom in Act I, and Ma Li-chen danced his call to revolution in Act III. Dance was replacing mime—not completely supplanting mime but noticeably encroaching on mime's functionality—as a means for explaining what was going on and moving characters to action. In Tao-Khoa's dream, no longer her wrenching personal struggle, the battle between good and evil (new and old, socialist and feudal/religious/capitalist, Soviet and American) was danced by Ma Li-chen, Li Shan-fu, and their respective retinues. The crucial conflict in the ballet was danced but not in the same way as it had been danced in the 1927 production.

Even if *The Red Poppy*, with its emphasis on good versus evil and socialist ideals versus capitalist deception, would seem out of place on twenty-first century stages, I suggest that this ballet and other productions of the 1930s and 1940s form

a crucial link between the vaguely narrative ballets of the second half of the nineteenth century and the intensely psychological explorations of ballet choreographers in the second half of the twentieth century. Soviet ballets such as *The Red Poppy* were experiments in conveying serious subject matter through gesture and dance, and these productions opened the way for later ballets of greater psychological depth, including the works of choreographers Boris Iakovlevich Eifman, Iurii Grigorovich, and Kenneth MacMillan. If Soviet ballet had not married well-motivated characters and dramatically coherent plots with classical ballet, choreographers would not have been able to imagine making ballets that danced the internal stories and struggles of *Tchaikovsky* (Eifman), *Rodin* (Eifman), *Legend of Love* (Grigorovich), *Mayerling* (MacMillan), and others. So, even if many of the Soviet ballets of the 1930s and 1940s do not seem to have aged well, that fact should not eclipse the significant impact that these ballets had on their contemporary audiences and on the evolution of the genre. Before it could explore the human psyche, ballet needed to experiment with incorporating serious subject matter into embodied language and making the consequential thematics resonate with mass audiences. Therefore, ballets like *The Red Poppy* were a necessary stage in the process of what became ballet's twentieth-century development as a narrative art form.[77]

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[77] Of course, not all twentieth-century ballets were narrative ballets. In fact, the tradition of non-narrative ballets was quite strong outside the Soviet Union in this period.

I contend that, while Soviet ballets of this period tend to be disparaged and discounted for their lack of artistic merit, the more plausible plots and motivated characters were not inherently anti-artistic and in fact were fundamental to Soviet ballet's pedagogical imperative. In her study of Soviet propaganda posters, Victoria Bonnell argues that "[i]n the early 1930s, a new type of image appeared in visual propaganda, an image that served as a model, as an ideal type."[78] Bonnell goes on to observe that the "purpose [of an ideal type] was to conjure up a vision of the new Soviet man, to provide a visual script for the appearance, demeanor, and conduct of the model Stalinist citizen."[79] Visual culture and ballet were both supposed to present "ideal types" for Soviet audiences to emulate.

In order for ballet to be educational, the story needed a moral and people needed to be able to understand it. Therefore, ballet needed to present important ideas in the forms of dramatically coherent narratives. These changes were part of making ballet accessible to mass audiences. The ballets of the 1930s and 1940s, especially those ballets that were based on respected literary works or contemporary political themes, demonstrated that ballet was worth the Soviet government's considerable investments. These ballets confirmed that ballet could be more than entertainment. Ballet could be substantive, part of Soviet citizens'

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[78] Bonnell, 122-123.

[79] Bonnell, 38.

education. The principles of socialist realism required ballet artists to learn to tell new stories and to find new corporeal methods for telling those stories. In these ways, the high period of socialist realism was generative for ballet.

A new production of an extant ballet can reveal a lot about the time and place of its restaging. The Bolshoi Theater's second production of *The Red Poppy* reflects that by the late 1940s, expectations of gender equality in Soviet society had withered. But it also reflects a revolutionary spirit, an ongoing enthusiasm for building a better future through socialism. Studying new productions of extant ballets can provide a focused perspective on how the principles and priorities of ballet production have changed over time. In the decades between the original production of *Red Poppy* and the Bolshoi Theater's second production, what constituted ballet in the Soviet Union changed. The first production of *Red Poppy* proved that ballet could tell stories on contemporary political themes. After that, ballets from the 1930s and early 1940s that were based on classic literary works further developed the storytelling capacities of ballet to convey narratives on serious subjects of historical, revolutionary, and/or universal resonance. As part of the Great Appropriation, Soviet artists were moving the genre of ballet forward and upward in pursuit of the Soviet state's mission for the arts: to educate and politically enlighten mass audiences.

The 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater was preceded by premieres of *The Red Poppy* at three smaller Soviet theaters in the first

half of 1949: the State Theater of Opera and Ballet in Sverdlovsk, the Bashkir State Theater of Opera and Ballet in Ufa, and the Ukrainian Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet in Khar'kov.[80] Then, there was the November 1949 premiere of *The Red Poppy* at the Kirov Theater in Leningrad.[81] In all, there were productions of *The Red Poppy* running in eighteen Soviet theaters in 1949.[82] In 1950, there were new or revival productions of *The Red Poppy* in Insk, Gor'kii, Kuibyshev, Sverdlovsk, Kazan', Tallinn, and Alma-Ata.[83] According to statistics collected by VKpDI, *The Red Poppy* was performed 468 times in 1950 for a total of 377,994 spectators, more than double the next most-performed/best-attended ballet by a Soviet composer and even exceeding *Swan Lake*, for which there were at least twenty-five productions running.[84] The Main Administration for Musical Theaters also included *The Red Poppy* in its list of Soviet ballets recommended to Soviet theaters for the year 1950, which was intended to spur more theaters to produce certain ballets by Soviet composers.[85]

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[80] RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 483, ll. 12 (Sverdlovsk), 16 (Ufa), 24 (Khar'kov).

[81] RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 485, l. 5. This production was briefly mentioned in Chapter 5. Rostislav Vladimirovich Zakharov was the choreographer for the 1949 production at the Kirov Theater.

[82] RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 483, l. 83.

[83] RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 483, l. 59.

[84] RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 483, ll. 161 (*balety sovetskikh avtorov*), 163 (*balety russkoi klassiki*).

[85] The full list of recommended Soviet ballets includes *Iunost', Mnimyi zhenikh, Bereg schast'ia, Krasnyi mak, Mednyi vsadnik, Plamia Parizha, Lileia, Tsygany, Lola, Alen'kii tsvetochek,*

In July 1951, *The Red Poppy* was reported to be in the current repertoire of the theaters of opera and ballet in the cities of Alma-Ata, Ashkabad, Erevan, Frunze, Gor'kii, Kazan', Kuibyshev, Molotov, Novosibirsk, Saratov, Sverdlovsk, Kyiv, Khar'kov, Odessa, Stalin, Stalinabad, Minsk, Riga, Tallinn, Tbilisi, Ufa, and Vilnius,[86] in addition to the Bolshoi and Kirov Theaters in Moscow and Leningrad.[87] *The Red Poppy* was one of the most widely-produced ballets in the Soviet Union. Very few other titles were danced in so many theaters in so many parts of the country. For this reason, it is an important ballet for historians to understand, and it is worth unearthing the particularities of individual productions, investigating the versions that were performed in different times and places. Just as the 1927 production of *Red Poppy* would have been inappropriate for the Bolshoi Theater's audience in 1949, GABT's production of *The Red Poppy* in 1949 could not have been made in 1927. GABT's second version of *The Red Poppy* illuminates transformations of "Soviet" ballet and in Soviet society between the 1920s and the 1940s.

Prikliucheniia Aldarkese, Laurensiia, Strekoza, Tri tolstiaka, Vindzorskie prokaznitsy, Alye parusa, and *Shurale* (RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 483, l. 170).

[86] RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 483, ll. 65-72.

[87] As of March 1, 1951, there were thirty theaters of opera and ballet in the Soviet Union (RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 483, l. 87).

Epilogue

In the middle of the 1953-1954 theatrical season, GABT's principal ballet conductor Iurii Faier went on leave. According to an internal report by the superintendent of the ballet company Aleksandra Sergeevna Tsabel' to GABT Director Aleksandr Ivanovich Anisimov, as a result of Faier's departure GABT's ballet repertoire was substantially curtailed. The ballets *The Red Poppy*, *The Bronze Horseman*, *Don Quixote*, *Raymonda*, and *The Nutcracker* were not performed for the rest of the season.[88] While most of these ballets were performed again in the fall of 1954, it is worth keeping in mind that not all programming decisions were political. These ballets were not withdrawn for perceived ideological (or even artistic) inadequacies but because GABT did not maintain a strong staff of ballet conductors. Ballet was considered GABT's secondary genre until later in the 1950s, when the ballet company was rapturously received abroad, particularly on tours to Great Britain and North America.[89] Until the tours to West began, GABT generally prioritized opera over ballet and employed significantly more conductors who specialized in opera than ballet. When the principal ballet conductor, by this point no longer a young man, was ill or on leave, the theater

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[88] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 1060, l. 1.

[89] RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 533, ll. 6-10. Immediately after the Bolshoi Ballet's tour to London in the fall of 1956, the Minister of Culture wrote to the Ministry of Finance to request that the dancers' salaries be raised to parity with salaries for opera soloists at GABT. There were also plans to increase the size of the troupe from 230 to 250 dancers (l. 8).

struggled to cover ballet performances with substitute conductors more familiar with operatic scores and conventions.

Chapter Seven

De-Stalinization and Uncertainty for the Bolshoi Stage

Chapter Introduction

In 1957, the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (GABT) staged its third and final version of *The Red Poppy*. That production emerged in the context of widespread uncertainty in Soviet society after Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin's death. In the case of GABT, the Soviet Ministry of Culture's attempted de-Stalinization campaign, I argue, largely failed to put into practice its intended decentralization of repertoire planning and also failed to promote the production of original Soviet ballets. However, the confusion fostered by the Ministry of Culture's de-Stalinization efforts provided the conditions of possibility for GABT to revise *The Red Poppy* again.

Historians have previously documented the potential for incertitude to manifest as petrification in Soviet society. Elizabeth Wood describes "the climate of discontent and confusion" that arose among members of women's sections (*zhenotdel*) upon the unveiling of the New Economic Policy in 1921.[1] Both national and local institutional changes seemed to point to the disbanding of the women's sections. According to Wood, "When asked to report on liquidationism and its effects on them, many [local women's organizers] replied that the work had

[1] Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 129-130.

virtually stopped because of the climate of uncertainty."[2] Similarly, Karen Petrone examines the reactions of writers tasked with commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution in 1937. Where economic policies and institutional restructuring bred misgivings among the women's sections in the early 1920s, the Great Purges generated a climate of uncertainty in the following decade. Petrone observes that "[t]he constantly shifting rhetoric and tense political atmosphere of the mid-1930s caused Soviet authors to experience 'writer's block' and to cling to the familiar because they feared making mistakes."[3] Moving further forward in time, I contend that the Bolshoi Theater's 1957 production of *The Red Flower* grew out of GABT administrators' fear of making mistakes amid the uncertainty generated as a result of Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev's de-Stalinization efforts and the resultant decentralization campaign launched by the Soviet Ministry of Culture in the mid-1950s.

Christina Ezrahi argues that "[t]he persistently low number of ballets on contemporary Soviet themes and the comparatively short life of most of them indicate... that even though formally the theaters had no artistic autonomy from the Soviet regime because repertoire decisions were contingent on political approval, the state never managed to fully control the artistic spirit of the Kirov and Bolshoi

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[2] Wood, 141.

[3] Karen Petrone, *Life has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 170.

Ballet companies."[4] Ezrahi's evidence comes primarily from the Kirov Theater in Leningrad. In this chapter, I show that GABT did have some formal autonomy in the late 1950s but also that practically, the Ministry of Culture was operating at cross-purposes to its own goals. In other words, the absence of ballets at GABT on Soviet subjects was not a function of artists' resistance to making such ballets. Theatrical administrators at GABT were hard-pressed to balance ideological and artistic requirements with their practical circumstances. Logistical challenges rather than artistic resistance plagued the theater's efforts to meet its production goals.

The most important sources for this chapter are Soviet Ministry of Culture directives received by GABT. There is an axiom about how directives must not be confused with what actually happened in the Soviet context. Conceding that, there is a class of directives which called out actual behavior that the Ministry of Culture deemed unsatisfactory. Often, such directives listed the reasons why the situation was unsatisfactory and presented a plan for rectifying it. This is the type of directive through which the chaos of the Ministry of Culture's decentralization campaign may be recognized. The inter-institutional correspondence reveals the supposed terms of the decentralization, GABT's attempts to work within the new provisions, and the Ministry of Culture's undermining of its own campaign.

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[4] Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 73.

De-Stalinization's Unforeseen Ambiguities

Iosif Stalin died on March 5, 1953. He had led the Soviet Union for almost thirty years, and he had not named a successor. Through the period of "collective leadership" and power struggles among members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the mid-1950s, Nikita Khrushchev emerged as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (KPSS).[5]

Khrushchev was a member of the *vydvizhentsy*, the upwardly-mobile generation of Soviet officials who benefitted from the Party's efforts to open educational and job opportunities to workers in the 1920s and then who stepped in to fill vacancies left as results of the Great Purges in the 1930s.[6] After Stalin's death, details about the nationwide scale of the Great Purges began to emerge, as well as evidence that many of the victims had been arrested and convicted of completely contrived crimes based on confessions extracted through torture. The Communist Party was in a difficult position: hundreds of thousands of people were still in Soviet labor camps serving Stalin-era sentences, but more and more evidence was coming to light that the majority of those incarcerated were not

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[5] Nikolai Barsukov, "The Rise to Power," in *Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, and Abbott Gleason (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 59.

[6] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Stalin and the Making of a New Elite," in *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), esp. 150, 179. "Great Terror" and "Great Purges" are here used interchangeably to refer to the waves of repression that consumed many Communist Party members (and often their relatives and coworkers by association) in the 1930s. For more on the Great Terror, see J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*, updated and abridged ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

actually guilty of the "crimes" of which they had been convicted. Soviet leaders agreed that the innocent people deserved to be released from the gulags.[7] However, the release of prisoners would prompt questions as to why they were locked up in the first place. Khrushchev determined that, as part of leading the country forward toward communism, it was necessary to reveal to the members of the Communist Party that the Party had wronged its own people and endangered Soviet society and development. Admitting the Party's wrongs, Khrushchev and others hoped, would help the country permanently abolish repressive Stalin-era practices and would further the longer-term goal of establishing communism.

Khrushchev's de-Stalinization was, in part, an attempt to free Soviet people from anxiety about repression for dissent or debate. One of the consequences of the "cult of personality" described in Khrushchev's "secret speech" was that Soviet workers made less than all-out efforts in their professional work out of fear of arrest: "We should also not forget that, due to the numerous arrests of Party, Soviet and economic leaders, many workers began to work uncertainly, showed overcautiousness, feared all which was new, feared their own shadows, and began to show less initiative in their work."[8] Doing or saying the wrong thing had been

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[7] "Gulag" is a corruption of the acronym/abbreviation "GULag," which is derived from the Russian name of the government division that administered the labor camps: Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei. The terms "gulag" and "gulags" have come to refer to the camps themselves.

[8] At the end of the Twentieth Congress of the KPSS in February 1956, Nikita Khrushchev gave what came to be known as the "secret speech," or the report "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences." The text of the speech is available in English as "Speech to the 20th Congress of the

potentially deadly. As people watched relatives, friends, and coworkers get arrested, they learned that it was safer to do or say as little as possible. Khrushchev wanted to reverse this lesson so that the Soviet Union would be able to improve its standards of living and effectively compete with the capitalist countries.

In some cases, however, Khrushchev's approach to de-Stalinization backfired and made people even more wary of crossing the increasingly blurry line between acceptable and unacceptable expression. Khrushchev's strategy of asking Party members to confront repressive practices from the Stalin era led, in some cases, toward confusion and overcautiousness rather than away from these manifestations of uncertainty.

The Ministry of Culture's "Decentralization" Campaign

The Soviet Union's Ministry of Culture was established in 1953.[9] Within a couple of years, it set out to redefine itself and its subsidiaries as the arbiters of high-level ideological and financial control, with daily theatrical operations left to the theaters' administrators, artistic staff, and Artistic Councils. But because the Ministry of Culture was still responsible for both financial oversight and ideological

C.P.S.U." Marxists Internet Archive https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm (accessed June 27, 2019).

[9] The Soviet Ministry of Culture (Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR) replaced the All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs (Vsesoiuznyi Komitet po Delam Iskusstv or VKpDI, 1936-1953) as the highest all-union governmental organization responsible for oversight of arts and culture. As an all-union institution, GABT was overseen by VKpDI and, later, the Ministry of Culture; because of its prominence, GABT's artistic operations were rarely answerable to local or republic-level governmental organizations.

oversight, the GABT Director's new purview did not appreciably simplify GABT's repertoire-planning processes. As before, the Ministry of Culture harangued GABT about the (too-small) number of new productions, delays in the production processes, the lack of productions on contemporary themes, insufficient work with composers and librettists, declining artistic standards, excessive spending on new sets, and other operational and ideological matters.[10] The Ministry of Culture retained its authority to issue orders to GABT regarding the very issues that the GABT Director was ostensibly supposed to sort out in accordance with the delegation of repertoire decisions to the level of the theater. In effect, the Ministry of Culture said to GABT, "Repertoire is now your responsibility." But then, over and over, the Ministry of Culture issued directives to the effect of, "Not like that! You're doing it wrong!" The contrast between the apparent laissez-faire approach to theatrical management and the constant barrage of reprimands created in the theatrical world a variant of the confusion that pervaded much of the rest of Soviet society in the mid-1950s.

Part of what sowed confusion in the theatrical world was that the Ministry of Culture launched a multi-year campaign to give theatrical institutions more authority for their day-to-day operations. The Ministry of Culture was

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[10] See, as an example of the Ministry of Culture's wide-ranging criticism of GABT operations, Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #60 (January 22, 1959): Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, hereafter RGALI) f. 648, op. 7, d. 301, ll. 10-13. For specific example of excessive spending and poor planning related to set construction, see Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #778 (November 23, 1956): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 204, l. 41.

experimenting with decentralizing authority, especially authority for daily financial decisions, to theatrical institutions so that the Ministry itself could concentrate on ideological leadership and higher-level financial control.[11] For example, in May 1955, the Ministry of Culture dispatched a draft Statute for the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the USSR. The new provisions for the theater defined the GABT Director's new responsibilities to include the conclusion of contracts with composers and librettists and allocation of the theater's approved budget among the various productions in GABT's approved repertoire plan. The GABT Director also gained the rights to hire and fire most artists and other personnel and to move employees up and down the ranks (e.g., from corps de ballet to soloist, or the reverse) or between jobs within GABT, so long as the human resources reshuffling did not cause GABT's salary expenditures to exceed the funds approved annually

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[11] This project focuses on GABT, though the decentralization campaign affected other theatrical institutions, too. Subsequently, the Ministry of Culture issued a directive transferring responsibility for contracts with authors from Glavnoe Upravlenie Teatrov i Muzykal'nykh Uchrezhdenii (GUTiMU) to individual dramatic theaters (Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #178 [March 24, 1956]: RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 203, ll. 35-38). A broader range of responsibilities, similar to those outlined in the 1955 draft Statute for GABT, were extended first to dramatic theaters and children's theaters. In the Soviet context, "dramatic theaters" refers theaters that specialized in producing plays (and not ballets, operas, or operettas). The authority of the theaters' Artistic Council (Khudozhestvennyi Sovet), Director, and Chief (Stage) Director (*glavnyi rezhisser*) was expanded in the realm of daily operations (Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #566 [August 21, 1956]: RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 203, ll. 94-97). Stephen Bittner discusses productions at the Vakhtangov Theater in the wake of Prikaz #566 in *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 75-104. The Ministry of Culture followed with a separate directive conferring the same responsibilities on Directors and Artistic Councils of all Soviet musical theaters (Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #826 [December 13, 1956]: RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 204, ll. 56-57). Christina Ezrahi discusses the new provisions for artistic councils in *Swans of the Kremlin*, 67-101.

by the Ministry of Culture for the purpose of paying salaries.[12] While the rights outlined above were far from all of the GABT Director's responsibilities, these were responsibilities that had previously been micromanaged to a greater degree by the Ministry of Culture and before that the All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs (and their subsidiary "Main Administrations," such as the Main Administration for Musical Theaters [GUMT], the Main Administration for Theaters [GUT], the Main Administration for Musical Institutions [GUMU], the Main Administration for Theaters and Musical Institutions [GUTiMU], etc.).[13] The GABT Director had previously needed to seek approval from one of the government oversight bodies in order to make changes in employees' ranks and to increase spending on a particular production. The GABT Director's responsibilities for "repertoire, ideological-artistic quality of performances, fulfillment of the production-financial plan, labor organization and financial accounting, and reducing reliance on government subsidy and transitioning to financial self-sufficiency" were reconfirmed in the Statute on the Responsibilities of Directors of All-Union Theaters

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[12] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 334, ll. 156 (memo), 157 (spravka), 158-165 (proekt polozheniia), especially ll. 160-163 (itemized responsibilities of GABT Director). Additional research will be needed to determine whether this Polozhenie was officially adopted by the Ministry of Culture in 1955. The draft was sent to GABT Director Mikhail Ivanovich Chulaki on May 27, 1955, with a request for his comments and additions (l. 156). The draft in this file is covered in corrections and other notes (ll. 158-165). If this draft was not put into effect immediately in 1955, the responsibilities outlined would still have taken effect in accordance with Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #826, issued on December 13, 1956 (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 204, ll. 56-57).

[13] The "Main Administrations" were frequently reorganized and renamed; the precise organizations in operation varied from year to year. VKpDI and the Ministry of Culture had subsidiary "Main Administrations" with similar names.

in July 1959.[14] In theory, giving the GABT Director more control over the apportionment of the theater's human and financial resources should have made GABT's operations run more efficiently.[15]

However, this attempt at decentralizing authority for repertoire decisions did not significantly change operations at GABT in the late 1950s, except for perhaps reducing inter-institutional correspondence regarding budgetary allowances for individual productions. GABT no longer had to request increases for the budget for individual productions, so long as the theater could save money elsewhere and keep its overall production budget balanced for the year. At least until August 1959, GABT continued to submit its repertoire plans and repertoire lists to the Ministry of Culture for approval.[16] The Ministry of Culture continued to issue directives regarding subject matter and the number of new productions required

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[14] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 302, ll. 11 (Prikaz), 12-16 (Polozhenie). The quotation is from l. 12. Note that no Soviet theater of opera and ballet ever transitioned to financial self-sufficiency in this period. By contrast, some dramatic theaters could cover operating expenses with revenue from ticket sales. The July 1959 Polozhenie was for all all-union theaters, including both musical and dramatic theaters.

[15] In theory, the GABT Director's expanded responsibilities with respect to promoting/demoting/transferring to pension artists should have allowed the theater to better manage its own artistic staffing needs. GABT should have benefited from being able to promote promising young artists more quickly and being able to demote, fire, or transfer to pension artists who were no longer in condition to perform at their present rank. Then, new, well-qualified artists could have been brought in to fill the lowest ranks. It is unclear whether these theoretical benefits accrued in practice.

[16] See, for example, the repertoire list for September 1959 for the Bolshoi Theater and its Filial, submitted to the Ministry of Culture's Otdel Muzykal'nykh Uchrezhdenii (Department of Musical Institutions, a Ministry of Culture subsidiary analogous to the earlier Main Administration for Musical Institutions) on August 13, 1959: RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 312, ll. 12 (memo), 13 (repertoire list).

each year. And, through directives, the Ministry of Culture continued to upbraid GABT for the state of its repertoire, finances, and other operations.

As an example of the Ministry of Culture's micromanagement of GABT's repertoire, a Ministry of Culture directive from August 1958 specifically criticized GABT for its lack of operas on contemporary subject matter, for the long production delays in realizing Soviet operas, and for the "pomposity" of the designs for Soviet operas.[17] The directive instructed GABT to stage six new productions at the Filial each year, at least four of those by Soviet composers, and to present a repertoire plan for 1960-1963 for the Ministry of Culture's approval by January 5, 1959.[18] The directive about opera was followed by one about the tumbling artistic standards of the ballet company, the dearth of ballets by Soviet composers in the current repertoire (especially titles that had been produced at GABT relatively recently, for which GABT had ready sets and costumes and plenty of dancers familiar with the roles), and chaotic preparations for the ballet company's tours. This directive required GABT to stage at least four new ballet productions on its two stages, two productions of which needed to be on contemporary themes. It also asked GABT to plan to stage ballets from the non-Russian Soviet republics within the next three years. Further, GABT was instructed to make sure that touring

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[17] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #587 (August 23, 1958): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 269, ll. 17-19.

[18] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #587 (August 23, 1958): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 269, ll. 17-19. The number of Soviet productions was later set at eight per year for both stages: Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #216 (April 10, 1959): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 301, ll. 56-59.

repertoire included compositions with music by Soviet composers and that touring schedules did not interfere with the fulfillment of the repertoire plans for the Bolshoi Theater and its Filial.[19]

While in theory the GABT Director was responsible for formulating the repertoire plans, it appears that the flurry of directives left him very little room to maneuver in practice. The Ministry of Culture's directives were so specific and so frequent that, in reality, the GABT Director did not have much room to be creative about repertoire planning. This state of theatrical affairs at GABT contradicted Khrushchev's intention of fostering increased initiative and innovation in Soviet society. There were just too many requirements from the Ministry of Culture, some of which came into logistical conflicts with each other.

For example, the directive from January 1959 ordered GABT to bring back eight ballets that had recently been in its repertoire.[20] The total number of ballets in the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theater for the Fall of 1958 had been six.[21] To rehearse eight more ballets, with 2-4 casts of principal dancers plus other soloists

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[19] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #60 (January 22, 1959): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 301, ll. 10-13. Artists who were away for foreign or domestic tours could not simultaneously be cast to perform at GABT or be present at GABT for rehearsals of new productions.

[20] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 301, l. 11. The eight titles were: *Raymonda, The Sleeping Beauty, The Flames of Paris, The Bronze Horseman, Cinderella, Mirandolina, Fadetta,* and *The Little Stork*. They constitute three Western European classics (*Raymonda, The Sleeping Beauty, Fadetta*) and five Soviet ballets.

[21] Museum of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater (Muzei Gosudarstvennogo Akademicheskogo Bol'shogo Teatra, or Muzei GABT), collected programs from 1958.

and the corps de ballet, in addition to preparing multiple new ballet productions, rehearsing the current repertoire with new casts, and preparing for international tours was a logistical impossibility.

The ideological priority of having a broad repertoire conflicted with practical limitations on rehearsal time and space as well as with the artistic priority of ensuring that GABT's repertoire was well-rehearsed and met the Soviet Union's artistic standards. Keeping the productions in the repertoire for multiple seasons, in theory, was a way to increase the return on investment in building the sets and making the costumes in addition to the return on investment of the company's human resources in dancers, choreographers, coaches, accompanists, conductors, and the orchestra. When the ballet repertoire got too large, each ballet was performed less frequently. As a result, all of the casts did not get a chance to perform regularly, and they became rusty and were unprepared to dance. The combination of higher and higher requirements for the number of new productions plus the directive to keep everything in the repertoire year after year led to lackluster performances because the artists had less time and energy to concentrate on developing and perfecting their roles in each production. This is not to mention the logistical quandary of where to store the sets and costumes for eight additional ballets, when the opera company was simultaneously supposed to be increasing the number of productions in its current repertoire. The GABT administration and

artists constantly negotiated these ideological, artistic, and practical concerns in the context of the Ministry of Culture's contradictory directives.

To make matters worse, almost at the same time as it rolled out its decentralization scheme, the Ministry of Culture sent out a series of directives to all theaters about cutting expenditures on sets and costumes for new theatrical productions. The Ministry argued that designers' and directors' grandiose and cumbersome sets, furniture, costumes, and other materials were actually detracting from the artistic quality of the productions and increasing the logistical complexity (and therefore financial cost) of theatrical tours. In addition, the complex sets required longer intermissions and pauses between scenes, which discomfited audiences.[22] After a directive in November 1955 ordering theaters to be more careful and economical with their designs did not reduce spending, the Ministry of Culture issued a more direct directive requiring all-union theaters to slash their budgets for new productions in the year 1956 by not less than 20% while simultaneously increasing the quality of the set and costume designs.[23] This still did not yield results, so in November 1956, the Ministry of Culture again reminded theaters to economize on their sets and not to waste government resources.[24]

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[22] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #717 (November 14, 1955): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 313, ll. 115-118.

[23] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #185 (March 26, 1956): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 203, l. 48.

[24] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #762 (November 11, 1956): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 204, ll. 33-40.

GABT received targeted rebukes as part of this campaign, including one for wasteful spending on its new production of *Swan Lake* and another for poor planning processes and overspending on *Spartacus*.[25] The confusion resulting from the decentralization efforts was compounded by simultaneous orders to slash spending on new repertoire.

On paper, the theater had more control over its everyday operations and the countless decisions required to run such a large institution. While the Ministry of Culture was trying to "eliminate excessive centralization in the handling of creative, organizational, and financial matters," its frequent orders kept GABT attuned more to the directives from above rather than to those operational matters at hand. In practice, the Ministry of Culture's sometimes contradictory directives left GABT with limited options for fulfilling its responsibilities and even less scope for innovation. This congealed confusion at the level of the theater was an unintended consequence of Khrushchev's approach to de-Stalinization as it filtered through the Ministry of Culture. GABT's coping strategies sometimes further frustrated the Ministry of Culture, leading to criticism (and occasionally praise) from above.

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[25] On *Swan Lake*: Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #778 (November 23, 1956): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 204, l. 41. On *Spartacus*: Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #834 (December 19, 1958): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 269, ll. 69-71.

Uncertainty as Fertilizer for *The Red Poppy*

The very existence of a new production of *The Red Poppy* at GABT in 1957 is evidence of the uncertainty that accompanied de-Stalinization and the Ministry of Culture's mid-1950s attempts at decentralization. GABT was struggling to keep up with the Ministry of Culture's directives intended to expand its repertoire, particularly with respect to Soviet ballets on contemporary themes. On top of this, the Ministry of Culture was requiring all-union theaters to cut spending on new productions. GABT administrators tried to stick to producing ballets that had already been tried at other Soviet theaters, but the Ministry of Culture caught on and chastised the theater for this strategy. *The Red Poppy* appears to have offered GABT what seemed like a safe success in a time of uncertainty: the ballet had been popular with Soviet audiences, the theater already had the sets and most of the costumes for the production (which reduced production costs), and it was a Soviet

ballet that counted as a "new production"[26] in the GABT administration's efforts to fulfill their repertoire plan.[27]

Examining the ballets that GABT produced during the mid-to-late 1950s offers a sense of the impact of the uncertainty on the theater's repertoire. In the atmosphere of confusion from 1955 through 1958, GABT did not premiere any new full-length original Soviet ballets.[28] After Leonid Mikhailovich Lavrovskii's production of *The Story of the Stone Flower* premiered in February 1954, the full-

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[26] In the repertoire planning process, a "new production" (*novaia postanovka*) was distinguished from a "revival" (*kapital'noe vozobnovlenie*). A "revival" meant "significant creative reworking of [an existing] production, new musical and directorial interpretation, completely new costumes and sets, or at minimum significant reworking of whole scenes, tableaux [*kartin*], and acts" (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 89, l. 3). In practice, it was possible to have a "new production" of an existing ballet or opera, if the new version was based on a thoroughly new directorial, musical, or choreographic exposition of the whole production. Basically, a "new production" had to be a lot newer than a "revival" of an existing production when compared with GABT's earlier version(s). New set and costume designs were typically not enough to constitute a "new production." "New productions" were expected to cost more than "revivals," so the classification mattered for budgeting purposes. Also, "new productions" were considered greater achievements. The classification was not absolute, though, and contemporary archival sources sometimes disagree about whether a particular production was "new" or a "revival."

[27] *The Red Flower* at GABT in 1957 is listed as variously as a "new production" and a "revival." According to some sources, *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater in 1957 was to be a "new production." See, for example, Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #180 (March 24, 1956): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 203, ll. 39-40. See also RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 497, ll. 3-4, where *The Red Flower* is listed as "new production" in a 1958 summary of GABT's progress toward fulfilling its 1956-1960 repertoire plan (spravka o realizatsii perspektivnogo plana na 1956-60 gody, utverzhdennogo Khudozhestvennym Sovetom Bol'shogo teatra v 1956 godu). In other sources, GABT's production of *The Red Flower* was counted as a "revival." See, for example of the latter, Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #150 (February 24, 1958): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 267, l. 67.

[28] Full-length ballets usually had 2-4 acts and were presented as a full evening's performance. GABT did premiere a suite of dances, *Komsomoliia*, with music by Soviet composers A. Karmanov and Evgenii Pavlovich Krylatov and scenario by Vladimir Aleksandrovich Varkovitskii in November 1957 for the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution. The ballet was presented with the third act of *The Flames of Paris* (Plamia Parizha) and a scene from the opera *The Decembrists* (Dekabristy). *Komsomoliia* was performed only once (V. I. Zarubin, *Pervye postanovki baletov na russkoi stsene 1825-1997* [Moscow: Ellis Luck, 1998], 197-198).

length ballets that premiered were classics (new sets and costumes for Lavrovskii's 1944 production of *Giselle* in February 1955 and a new production of *Swan Lake* in time for the Bolshoi Ballet's 1956 tour to London) and new productions of *Laurencia* (February 1956), *Gayane* (May 1957), *Spartacus* (March 1958).[29] The latter three constituted premieres of full-length Soviet ballets, but versions of all three had been previously staged at other Soviet theaters. GABT was playing it a bit safe by making its own versions of Soviet ballets with already-tested music and subject matter, often even entrusting the GABT versions to the choreographers who had created the earlier productions, rather than staging new Soviet ballets from scratch.

This strategy of letting other theaters test out ballets (and operas) before GABT staged them had not proven particularly safe in the past, since *The Bright Stream* had been running successfully in Leningrad for almost a year before the

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[29] *Skaz o kamennom tsvetke* had music by Sergei Sergeevich Prokof'ev, libretto by Lavrovskii and Mira Mendel'son-Prokof'eva, and designs by Tamara Georgievna Starzhenetskaia (Zarubin, 188-189). Lavrovskii's production of *Giselle* had music by Adolphe Adam; libretto by Théophile Gautier, Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges, and Jean Coralli; designs by Boris Ivanovich Volkov; and utilized some choreography credited to Coralli, Jules Perrot, and Marius Petipa (Muzei GABT). The 1956 production of *Lebedinoe ozero* had choreography by Aleksandr Alekseevich Gorskii and Asaf Mikhailovich Messerer and was revived by Messerer and Aleksandr Ivanovich Radunskii. The music was by Petr Il'ich Chaikovskii and designs by Simon Bagratovich Virsaladze (Zarubin, 77). The libretto was credited to Vladimir Petrovich Begichev and Vasilii Fedorovich Gel'tser (Muzei GABT). *Laurensiia* had music by Aleksandr Abramovich Krein, libretto by Evgenii Moiseevich Mandel'berg, choreography by Vakhtang Mikhailovich Chabukiani, and designs by Vadim Fedorovich Ryndin (Zarubin, 337). *Gaiane* had music by Aram Il'ich Khachaturian, libretto by Boris Vladimirovich Pletnev, choreography by Vasilii Ivanovich Vainonen, designs by Vadim Fedorovich Ryndin, and stage direction by Emmanuil Iosifovich Kaplan (Zarubin, 337). This production of *Spartak* had music by Aram Khachaturian, libretto by Nikolai Dmitrievich Volkov, choreography by Igor' Aleksandrovich Moiseev, and designs by Aleksandr Iosifovich Konstantinovskii (Zarubin, 337).

GABT production was condemned in *Pravda*.[30] Not to mention that the opera *The Great Friendship* was simultaneously produced at thirteen theaters in 1948.[31] GABT's production of *The Great Friendship* was not the first to premiere, but GABT's production triggered official censure of this opera as well as a slew of leading Soviet composers.[32]

Besides the previous trouble GABT had gotten into with supposedly vetted operas and ballets, in the mid-1950s, the Ministry of Culture objected to GABT's playing-it-safe strategy. The Ministry of Culture perceived GABT's string of Soviet ballets that had been previously produced at other theaters as GABT's attempt to wriggle out of its responsibility for stimulating Soviet cultural production. It appeared to the Ministry of Culture that GABT was positioning itself as a showcase for the best Soviet ballet and opera productions rather than engaging in the messier

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[30] *Svetlyi ruchei* premiered at the Malyi Theater of Opera and Ballet in Leningrad in April 1935 and then at GABT in November 1935. The *Pravda* editorial criticizing GABT's version was published in February 1936. See production history in E. P. Belova, et al., *Russkii balet, Entsiklopediia, Bol'shaia Russkaia Entsiklopediia* (Solgasie, 1997), s.v. "Svetlyi ruchei," http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/s/svetl3y-ru4ey.html (accessed June 27, 2019).

[31] Simon Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 293.

[32] See Postanovlenie Politbiuro TsK VKP(b) "Ob opere 'Velikaia druzhba' V. Muradeli," February 10, 1948, http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/USSR/music.htm (accessed June 27, 2019). For more on the aftermath of *Velikaia druzhba* in Soviet music, see Marina Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1981*, enlarged ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939-1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); E. S. Vlasova, *1948 god v sovetskoi muzyke: Dokumentirovanoe issledovanie* (Moscow: "Klassika–XXI," 2010); and Patrick Zuk, "Nikolay Myaskovsky and the Events of 1948," *Music and Letters* 93, no. 1 (February 2012).

business of developing the newest best Soviet productions to ever-increasing artistic and ideological standards. According to a 1956 draft directive from the Ministry of Culture summing up the theatrical season, the work of GABT's ballet company in particular (more so than the opera troupe), was negatively distinguished by "preparation and scenic realization of compositions long shown by other Soviet theaters. The ballet company's leadership [was] not using the troupe's enormous creative potential and its high level of professionalism and initiative to stage performances that would receive their first scenic life at the Bolshoi Theater and its Filial."[33] The Ministry of Culture wanted GABT to both show the best of Soviet art from all over Russia and the other Soviet republics and to use its human and material resources to produce even better Soviet productions than other Soviet theaters could afford. The latter included the assumption that GABT's successes could then be disseminated to smaller Soviet theaters, once GABT had worked everything out. The bottom line was that there was supposed to be a two-way mechanism for building GABT's repertoire and making sure that GABT's achievements reached the rest of the country. GABT was not supposed to be only reaping other theaters' successes, which is what the Ministry of Culture perceived to be happening too regularly in the mid-1950s. The Ministry of Culture expected GABT to break its own ground.

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[33] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 204, l. 67.

Another strategy that emerged from GABT in the period of uncertainty around the secret speech was that—rather than develop completely new productions—the theater worked to update and improve its already-successful 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*, which had in fact been a revision of its wildly successful 1927 production. This had the benefit of skirting the Ministry of Culture's criticism of GABT for poaching other theaters' successful productions. The original production of *The Red Poppy* had been at GABT, not at another theater. And the new productions in 1949 and 1957 were not based on previously-staged versions at other theaters. GABT worked out its own libretti and stagings for the 1949 and 1957 versions. *The Red Poppy* had been a very reliable box office draw in its two previous incarnations. When in the mid-1950s the theater ran into various obstacles realizing its original Soviet ballets on contemporary themes, GABT turned again to revising one of its most successful Soviet ballets from the past.

It is possible that the Ministry of Culture's directives about reducing spending on new productions also influenced the decision to finalize the revisions to *The Red Poppy*. In some surviving documentation of GABT's repertoire planning and oversight, *The Red Poppy* was considered a "new production" in 1957.[34] In fact, GABT Director Mikhail Ivanovich Chulaki and four other GABT

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[34] See, for example, the summary of productions realized, so far, from the approved 1956-1960 repertoire plan: RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 497, l. 3.

administrators were awarded monetary bonuses for effectively managing the theater's finances in the fourth quarter of 1957 while simultaneously "overfulfilling" the repertoire plan.[35] *The Red Flower*, with its sets and costumes recycled from the 1949 production, helped Chulaki and his staff reduce expenses on "new productions." By bringing *The Red Poppy/The Red Flower* back into the repertoire in 1957, GABT saved money on the construction of new sets and costumes, a present preoccupation of the Ministry of Culture, and also cut short some of the periods of the production process, including the development of a libretto and music from scratch, approval of set and costume designs, and construction of sets and costumes. These savings improved GABT's financial and artistic performance for the quarter by the measures important to the Ministry of Culture, and GABT's administrators were rewarded accordingly, despite their failure to produce any new, original Soviet ballets. Here again the administrators were juggling ideological, artistic, and practical concerns. This time, their strategy paid handsomely.

Chapter Conclusion

One avenue for de-Stalinization in Soviet cultural life seems to have been a campaign by the Soviet Ministry of Culture for decentralization among its subsidiaries. In the mid-1950s, at least on paper, Soviet theatrical institutions were

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[35] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #150 (February 24, 1958): RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 267, l. 67.

granted expanded authority over their own repertoire-related decisions. I argue that in effect, however, GABT got caught between its new responsibility for repertoire decisions and the Ministry of Culture's ongoing micromanagement of GABT's repertoire planning processes. The tension between the newly decentralized repertoire authority on paper and the Ministry of Culture's ongoing critiques of GABT's repertoire planning in practice fostered confusion at the level of the theater. This uncertainty manifested in GABT's turn to the relatively safe choice of *The Red Poppy* in an attempt to plug the hole that the Ministry of Culture kept tearing in GABT's repertoire plan.

Despite Khrushchev's stated goal of fostering innovation, the atmosphere of uncertainty in the mid-1950s did not yield original new Soviet ballets at GABT. In fact, the existence of a new version of *The Red Poppy* may have been conditioned by reverberations from Khrushchev-era attempts at de-Stalinization. In the atmosphere of uncertainty (exaggerated in the theatrical world by the Ministry of Culture's efforts at decentralization), the officials in the Ministry of Culture and the artists and administrators at GABT did not know what would replace Stalin in the process of de-Stalinization or how much transparency about Soviet reality was warranted under the mercurial Thaw conditions. GABT administrators struggled to balance ideological, artistic, and logistical requirements with respect to their repertoire plans. Premiering a new production of *The Red Poppy* was safer,

quicker, and more cost-effective than investing considerable human and material resources in a new, original production.

The Red Poppy was a ballet by a Soviet composer set crucially in the more hopeful years before the Great Terror. Rather than rush a new Soviet ballet on contemporary subject matter to the stage, GABT brought back a beloved extant Soviet ballet intimately associated with the Bolshoi Theater. But as in 1949, GABT did not reconstruct its previous production; the ballet company developed a new production.

Chapter Eight

The Red Flower (1957): A Soviet Ballet for Soviet Audiences

> "… the question of the ballet *The Red Poppy* also remains open. [Reingol'd Moritsovich] Glier's music is Soviet music. Why don't we want this ballet to be performed on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater? If there are complaints from the Chinese side, then we can make the appropriate corrections, but it seems to me that this vibrant ballet ought to remain in our repertoire plan."
>
> —GABT ballerina Ol'ga Vasil'evna Lepeshinskaia challenging GABT Director Mikhail Ivanovich Chulaki at a meeting with the Soviet Minister of Culture Nikolai Aleksandrovich Mikhailov (June 18, 1955)

Chapter Introduction

In 1957, the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (GABT) produced its third version of *The Red Poppy* under the new title *The Red Flower*. Though GABT sought feedback from Chinese spectators during the revision process, artists and administrators were mindful of maintaining the ballet as a ballet for Soviet audiences. I argue that the Thaw was late in coming to GABT. The choreographer and many of the dancers for the 1949 production took part in *The Red Flower*; a generational shift had not yet occurred. Changes to the libretto further diminished the role of the heroine while improving the dramatic coherence of the plot. The libretto's militarism and anti-Americanism were also softened in accordance with the changing international dynamics of the Cold War. The story of *The Red Flower* was told through a combination of quotidian gesture and dance that I characterize as an intermediate stage between classical ballets of the late

nineteenth century and the through-danced ballets that began to enter the repertoires of the Soviet state theaters during the Thaw.

The period under Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev's leadership in the 1950s and 1960s came to be known as the Thaw for its gradual and often erratic fluctuations in openness to greater expression in speech, in print, and in action. The metaphor comes from a 1954 novel called *The Thaw* (Ottepel') by Il'ia Grigor'evich Erenburg. According to Eleonory Gilburd, "Depicting nature in a transitional stage, the metaphor suggested a world in the making, a cultural system open to chance and change."[1] Stephen Bittner observes that "[c]ontemporaries spoke not of one continuous thaw, but of numerous thaws and freezes, of cloudy weather, and of uncertain forecasts."[2] This period was not the relative permafrost of expression that characterized Soviet life under Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, but there were refreezes, crackdowns when Khrushchev and other leaders became alarmed about Soviet citizens asking too many inconvenient questions regarding accountability for the Great Terror or the efforts to concentrate blame for Stalin-era

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The epigraph comes from the stenographic record of the meeting "'O repertuarnom plane GABT na 1955-1957 g.g.' Beseda Direktora GABT t. M. I. Chulaki i Ministra Kul'tury SSSR t. N. A. Mikhailov s solistami opery i baleta i rukovodiashchimi rabotnikami teatra" held at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva, hereafter RGALI) f. 648, op. 5, d. 323, ll. 14-15.

[1] Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 7.

[2] Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 4.

abuses and mistakes on Stalin and Lavrentii Pavlovich Beriia.[3] Still, amid the threat of refreezes, there was some thawing of expression and debate.

There is a growing body of scholarship on Khrushchev-era cultural production in genres including literature, film, visual arts, architecture, music, and television.[4] It is becoming clear that the Thaw manifested in different areas of Soviet life and culture in different ways and at different times. Soviet literature experienced the Thaw in the 1950s. At the same time, other genres continued to operate much as they had in the 1940s. Nancy Condee asserts, "To understand the internal logic of these cultural processes, one must of course acknowledge that the end of the Thaw is a function of (1) the particulars of production within the individual culture industries, (2) the industries' positions within (or vis-à-vis) the

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[3] Kathleen E. Smith, *Moscow 1956: The Silenced Spring* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 69.

[4] Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw*; Christine Evans, *Between Truth and Time: A History of Soviet Central Television* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-1970* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Denis Kozlov, *The Readers of* Novyi Mir: *Coming to Terms with the Stalinist Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, eds., *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture During the 1950s and 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Claire E. McCallum, *The Fate of the New Man: Representing & Reconstructing Masculinity in Soviet Visual Culture, 1945-1965* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2018); Lida Oukaderova, *The Cinema of Soviet Thaw: Space, Materiality, Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017); Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Peter J. Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music During the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Kathleen E. Smith, *Moscow 1956: The Silenced Spring*; Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Josephine Woll, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000); Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

ideological hierarchies of official culture, and (3) the very different time frames within which a cultural text is produced."[5] The same is true of the Thaw's beginning. Ballet, being a collaborative art form and a synthetic genre, with many people and institutions involved in the production of each new work, was not suited for an instantaneous Thaw in 1953 (Stalin's death), 1954 (Erenburg's novel's contentious publication and reception), or even 1956 (Khrushchev's secret speech). As with the genre of film,[6] the process of creating a new ballet took an extended period of time, so ideas that emerged in the mid-1950s frequently reached the public stage years later.

Further, the production processes at GABT were complicated and often exaggeratedly long, given the institution's prominence in Soviet culture, the high artistic and ideological expectations for GABT productions, and outside institutions' encroachment on GABT's performance and rehearsal spaces.[7] While ballet was certainly not the genre at the very top of the hierarchy of official culture—literature was secure in the top spot—ballet's position was rendered all the colder at GABT

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[5] Nancy Condee, "Cultural Codes of the Thaw," in *Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, and Abbott Gleason (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 162.

[6] For details on Soviet film production processes, see Maria Belodubrovskaya's *Not According to Plan: Filmmaking under Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

[7] A draft directive from the USSR Ministry of Culture from 1956 observed that one reason GABT realized so few new productions was that one third of the rehearsal time each month was cancelled due to non-GABT use of the stages (RGALI f. 648, op 7, d. 204, l. 69). Use of GABT premises by other organizations had been a stumbling block in repertoire planning since at least 1919 (A. A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatrical Museum [Gosudarstvennyi tsentral'nyi teatral'nyi muzei imeni A. A. Bakhrushin, hereafter GTsTM] f. 154, d. 570).

by the history of denunciations of productions at the country's most prominent musical theater that were deemed ideologically weak.[8] In other words, the first and last warming and cooling signals of the Thaw were not directed at ballet, so it is not surprising that ballet was not the first genre to produce works that pushed the boundaries of Thaw-era socialist realism. However, GABT's position at the top of the institutional hierarchies for musical theater delayed the Thaw's effects on GABT's ballet repertoire even further. Ballet production processes at GABT in the late 1950s seemed frozen in their Stalin-era ways even as the Thaw began to make possible wider varieties of artistic production in other genres and institutions.

This chapter adds to current studies of the Thaw by delving into a ballet production process during the era of de-Stalinization, demonstrating that the Thaw manifested on a later timeline in ballet at GABT than in other genres or even in ballet at other theatrical institutions. To date, Christina Ezrahi's *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* is the most prominent non-biographical book to make use of archival sources from Soviet ballet production during the Thaw. Her focus is on the Kirov Theater in Leningrad, where a generational shift coincided with the early years of the Thaw.[9] By contrast, my research finds that

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[8] Most memorably, the operas *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* (1936), *The Great Friendship* (1948), and *Wholeheartedly* (1951), and the ballet *The Bright Stream* (1936), were publicly denounced (through *Pravda* editorials or other official channels) specifically in response to productions at GABT, even as theaters in Leningrad and elsewhere were presenting versions of these works.

the analogous generational shift did not occur at GABT until several years later, when the period usually recognized as the Thaw was almost over. This shows that neither genres nor institutions entered the Thaw in lockstep.

Discussions about whether and how to revise *The Red Poppy* in the 1950s provide further evidence of the collaborative nature of Soviet ballet production. Sources for this chapter include stenographic records of meetings held at GABT regarding *The Red Poppy* and repertoire-planning more broadly. Much as in the 1949 production process for GABT's second version of *The Red Poppy*, Soviet artists, theatrical administrators, and bureaucrats had lively, principled, professional exchanges as they sought to negotiate sometimes contradictory ideological, artistic, and practical priorities. Choreographers did not work in isolation. They were part of larger conversations, facilitated by GABT as an institution as well as by government and Communist Party oversight bodies, that shaped the direction of Soviet ballet productions. Despite the variety of changes discussed and effected, I argue that *The Red Flower* was still a Soviet ballet for Soviet audiences.

By 1957, the libretto for *The Red Flower* was less anti-American than had been the 1949 libretto, reflecting Nikita Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States and other capitalist countries. I argue that the role of the Chinese heroine Tao-Khoa was weakened again, becoming more

[9] Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), esp. 67-136.

emotionally dependent on the Chinese hero Van Li-chen. This further erosion of Tao-Khoa's role, while not as marked as the difference between Tao-Khoa's role in the 1927 and 1949 productions, served a larger dramatic purpose. I demonstrate how the 1957 libretto continued the trajectory initiated by the 1949 revisions toward greater dramatic coherence.

This chapter also addresses the question of change over time in Soviet approaches to telling ballet stories. Judging by extant film fragments, dancing (as distinct from gesture) was integral to the 1957 production. However, surviving film fragments also reveal that choreographer Leonid Mikhailovich Lavrovskii used extended passages of mime to tell the story. In *The Red Flower*, Lavrovskii replaced conventional nineteenth-century ballet mime gestures with quotidian twentieth-century gestures. I contend that, like GABT's 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*, *The Red Flower* represents an intermediate stage between the nineteenth-century classical ballets where mime scenes (consisting of formalized ballet-specific gestures) alternated with danced sequences and the later twentieth-century ballets which told stories through dance (without separate mime scenes and often with minimal recourse to gesture).

While Chapter 7 addressed the relationship between GABT and the Ministry of Culture in this period, this chapter delves further into GABT's internal operations. It focuses on GABT's protracted inquiry into whether and how to revise *The Red Poppy*. I examine constructive criticism from Chinese spectators and how

GABT artists and administrators incorporated this feedback into discussions about whether and how to revise *The Red Poppy*. I show how GABT planned to revise *The Red Poppy*, submitted its plans for feedback from the Main Administration for Theaters and Musical Institutions, abandoned its plans in favor of focusing on brand new ballets with music by Soviet composers, and then finally realized *The Red Flower* in November 1957. Then, I compare and contrast the published libretto for *The Red Flower* with that of *The Red Poppy* (1949) to show how the libretto changed for the new production. Finally, I analyze some of the surviving film fragments from rehearsals and performances of *The Red Flower*. The film fragments prove that the ballet's choreography combined dancing and vernacular gestures to tell the story.

A Chinese Comrade Offers Constructive Criticism

GABT artists and administrators knew that the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* was not perfect. Despite its Stalin Prize and Russian audiences' enthusiasm for the ballet, Soviet Sinologists voiced concerns even before its premiere and there were additional concerns registered by Chinese spectators. Edward Tyerman discusses complaints by the Chinese ambassador to the Soviet Union and his wife after one of the dress rehearsals in December 1949.[10] Tyerman also highlights Chinese poet Emi Xiao's 1951 criticisms of a production of *The Red Poppy* that

[10] Edward Tyerman, "Resignifying *The Red Poppy*: Internationalism and Symbolic Power in the Sino-Soviet Encounter," *Slavic and East European Journal* 61, no. 3 (2017), 453.

Xiao saw in Sofi, Bulgaria,[11] which raised concerns about the appropriateness of *The Red Poppy* anywhere that it was being staged or performed.[12] While the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* was still in the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire, GABT made an effort to explore what all the fuss was about and whether they could revise the 1949 production to satisfy the Chinese spectators' concerns without alienating Soviet artists and audiences.

The first significant step in GABT's investigation regarding Chinese concerns about *The Red Poppy* was a meeting with Zeng Xiufu, a Chinese PhD student at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Academy of Social Sciences in Moscow. This meeting proved vital because of the detailed and wide-ranging nature of Zeng's critiques and because Zeng's criticisms formed the core of GABT's later discussions about how to revise *The Red Poppy*. Zeng's comments reveal his interest in improving the dramatic logic of the ballet as well as its realism, and he suggested ways for GABT to represent Chinese culture more accurately. His comments reflect a Soviet-style adherence to the idea that artistic productions such as ballet should be, somehow, realistic. In the end, many of Zeng's suggestions shaped the 1957 production of *The Red Flower* at GABT.

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[11] Tyerman, "Resignifying *The Red Poppy*," 453.

[12] "Zapis' besedu i.o. zaveduiushchego Otdelom Vostochnykh narodnykh respublik VOKS tov. Egofeeva s kitaiskim poetom Emi Siao ot 6 marta 1951 goda," item in the historical-documentary exhibition "Sovetsko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v 1949-1955 gg." on loan from the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii, hereafter RGASPI), http://portal.rusarchives.ru/evants/exhibitions/prc60-f/89.shtml (accessed July 2, 2019).

That GABT could have such a meeting with a Chinese graduate student highlights the fact that understanding ballet was not only part of being a cultured Soviet person—it was part of the education of foreign exchange students. Zeng was not, as he pointed out, an art critic or a person with extensive education in the performing arts.[13] Yet, after seeing the ballet once and discussing it with his friends, he was able to provide an incredible range of feedback to the producers at GABT. That a Chinese graduate student, plucked from the Academy of Social Sciences, could articulate such a wide range of both faults and proposals for improving the ballet is startling. There is little chance that Zeng would have seen any ballet prior to his arrival in Moscow. But as something that the Soviet Russians prized, he obviously availed himself of the chance to attend the theater and think deeply about what he experienced. His criticisms were part of a socialist duty to help his Soviet comrades improve their artistic production.

Zeng Xiufu had seen *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater on September 30, 1953.[14] The meeting on October 21, 1953, for GABT artists and administrators to hear Zeng's impressions was attended by GABT Deputy Director Nikandr Sergeevich Khanaev; Leonid Lavrovskii, GABT Chief Choreographer and

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[13] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 7.

[14] Stenogramma vstrechi s aspirantum akademii obshchestvennykh nauk pri TsK KPSS tov. Tszen Siu-fu: RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 1. It is not clear from the stenographic record of the meeting on October 21 how this particular Chinese spectator was chosen to give feedback to GABT. Tyerman spells the student's name "Zeng Xiufu" in English ("Resignifying *The Red Poppy*," 453).

choreographer for *The Red Poppy* in 1949; and Serafim Mikhailovich Oreshnikov and M. A. Churova from GABT's literature section.[15] At the meeting, Zeng explained aspects of the ballet that were offensive to him and to his Chinese comrades. Zeng framed his critical remarks in terms of changes that would help ensure that the ballet would "show the friendship of the Chinese and Soviet people and not animosity."[16] He made suggestions regarding ways to improve the ballet, from his (Chinese) perspective. While Zeng protested that he was "not a representative of the Chinese people, and [he] spoke not as a representative of the Chinese people" but simply as an individual who happened to be Chinese,[17] Lavrovskii and the rest of the GABT staff took his critiques quite seriously. Zeng's criticisms can be divided into four categories, which are not mutually exclusive: linguistic adjustments, staging strategies, historical inaccuracies, and cultural misunderstandings.

Zeng's linguistic suggestions were concrete. They were about the heroine's name and the banner celebrating the Soviet trade unions' gift of grain for the Chinese workers and peasants. Zeng suggested that Tao-Khoa's name should be "Tao-Khua" because "Khua" is easier to pronounce and means "flower" in Chinese.[18]

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[15] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 1. It seems that the Superintendent of GABT's Music Library may also have been in attendance (l. 12).

[16] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 8.

[17] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 8.

Zeng also noted that the slogan explaining the Soviet people's gift to the Chinese workers was sloppily translated into Chinese such that it appeared to be a charitable handout rather than a gift. He informed GABT that the current translation of the slogan was actually offensive rather than friendly[19] and thus did little to promote the friendship between the Soviet and Chinese people. Zeng's linguistic adjustments would not have affected the choreography, staging, or music.

Zeng's suggestions for restaging certain scenes included ideas about costuming, mise-en-scène, choreography, and musical accompaniment. Zeng advised GABT to clothe the Chinese characters in more festive attire for the finale.[20] Further, Zeng described a moment in Act I when the Soviet sailors ran onto the stage and took off part of their uniforms. Chinese workers picked up the discarded clothing and removed it from the stage. Zeng objected to this staging strategy on the grounds that it was entirely unrealistic for the Chinese people to pick up after the Soviets and that it made it seem as though the Chinese workers were stealing the clothes.[21] He also suggested that, for the Chinese folk theater, there should be

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[18] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 7.

[19] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 6

[20] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 7.

[21] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 7. I assume that this was a practical (though very unfortunate-looking) solution for the choreographer who needed to clear the dancing area of stray, slippery clothing as soon as possible and had dozens of "Chinese workers" probably already on stage who were watching at that moment in Act I rather than themselves dancing. (Perhaps the dancers themselves solved the problem.) The Chinese workers happened to be free to take care of the problem, while the Soviet sailors were busy performing their dance. Lavrovskii mentions this moment in the meeting on January 8, 1955, and he specifies that it was really just one Soviet sailor,

Chinese folk dances or perhaps pantomime scenes to make the folk theater performance livelier and more realistic.[22] And Zeng hoped that GABT could utilize the Chinese national anthem rather than "The Internationale" for the apotheosis.[23] These suggestions would have been somewhat more complicated than Zeng's linguistic suggestions for GABT to incorporate, particularly the latter two, which would have involved interpellations into Reingol'd Glier's score and perhaps the incorporation of dance genres other than ballet. But, again, Zeng's suggestions are notable for their diversity and thoughtfulness. He sought to strengthen the production's realism by addressing the characters' attire, relationships among the characters, the movement vocabulary, and the choice of musical accompaniment.

With Zeng's observations about historical inaccuracies in the 1949 production, he got closer to the heart of some Soviet concerns about realism in the production and, perhaps, in ballet in general: how much artistic license was warranted in the making of a Soviet artistic production? How bound by historical

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the stoker, who discarded his jacket upon joining in the dance "Iablochko" (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, ll. 3-4). It may have been a much smaller moment than Zeng's description suggests, since Zeng's description uses the plural for the sailors and the Chinese characters: "*Moriaki vybegaiut sbrasyvaiut svoiu odezhdu i kitaitsy ee unosiiat, ubiraiut*" (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 7). The grammar and punctuation are as in the *stenogramma*.

[22] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 7.

[23] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 10. Since Glier wrote the music for the apotheosis in the 1920s, he would not have had the chance to incorporate the national anthem of the People's Republic of China, which was founded in 1949. "The Internationale" was the international communist anthem in the 1920s and represented Soviet ideals in the original production. However, Lavrovskii's staging of *The Red Poppy* in 1949 set the apotheosis in the present, showing the success of the Chinese Communist Revolution. See libretto for the 1949 production, translated as Appendix B.

fact did Soviet choreographers and composers need to be? Zeng's criticisms regarding the ballet's historical lapses ranged from the minutia of buttons to the setting itself and how it was evoked, even touching on a question of religious identity. Zeng was of the opinion that the crowd of Chinese workers should include factory workers and tradespeople as well as dockworkers and that such workers could be distinguished by the number of buttons on their jackets.[24] Overall, Zeng observed that the setting for such events really should be China in 1925-1927, not the 1930s, as the 1949 libretto claimed; historically, he argued, such Soviet aid would not have been arriving after 1929.[25] To that end, Zeng asked that the dance music be changed to music which people actually sang and danced to in China in 1925-1927.[26] Finally, Zeng argued that Ma Li-chen's surname "Ma" should be changed to a non-Muslim name because there were no Muslim leaders of Chinese revolutionary movements. He suggested the names "Van" or "Dzhan Li-chen" instead.[27] It is not likely that GABT employees would have been able to tell the difference among different types of workers' jackets by the number of buttons

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[24] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, ll. 5-6. Zeng informed the assembled meeting that workers in Shanghai wore jackets with an odd number of buttons and suggested that the costumes have either eleven or thirteen buttons on the jackets because an even number of buttons indicated suicidal tendencies (l. 5).

[25] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, ll. 4-5. Zeng likely meant that Soviet aid would not have been forthcoming during the years when the Guomindang was purging China of its Communists.

[26] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 6. At the end of the meeting, he sang and/or played some examples of what he considered appropriate music for the period and purpose (ll. 11-12).

[27] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, ll. 5-6.

had Zeng not explained how to interpret this distinguishing characteristic. The questions of the setting and who should be represented on stage—by professional and religious identity—were very reasonable ones. The questions of how GABT could represent professional, religious, and national identities in historically and cultural sensitive ways dominated GABT's later discussion about how to revise *The Red Poppy* and whether it was worth restaging the ballet at all.

Zheng's most ideologically significant, though least original, criticisms had to do with cultural misunderstandings evidenced in GABT's 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*. One of these concerns, the title of the ballet, echoes the complaints from the Soviet Sinologists that the theater received even before the premiere. Zeng reminded the assembled GABT employees that Chinese people associated the poppy with opium and therefore with American imperialism.[28] He observed that changing the title of the ballet to *The Red Rose* would not require any significant changes to the staging of the ballet but would completely change the associations that Chinese people attached to it.[29] As Lavrovskii later agreed, the

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[28] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 2. Zeng specified that the problem goes back to when the "*pervyi period bor'by kitaiskogo naroda s amerikanskim imperializmom nachalsia s opiuma*" (l. 2). It is interesting that Zeng specifies "American imperialism." Great Britain played a major role in the Opium Wars in the nineteenth century.

[29] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 3. Zeng observed, "We even have one prominent member of the Chinese Communist Party, Comrade Chai-dzan, whose name means 'rose.' [*The Red Rose*] would be a more suitable title for this ballet" (l. 3). GABT could have exchanged the near-realism of "Mao" Li-chen for a symbolic reference to a different, real-life Chinese Communist Party leader. Emi Xiao also suggested the alternative title "*The Red Rose*" ("Zapis'").

red color was the most important symbolic element of the title, not the type of flower described.[30]

The other indication Zeng found that the producers at GABT did not adequately understand Chinese culture was the starring role for the character of a female dancer. According to Zeng, female performers in China were not respectable and a dancer like Tao-Khoa could not credibly represent the Chinese intelligentsia, especially in the late 1920s and 1930s.[31] He also found it inappropriate that Li Shan-fu and his accomplices, virtual strangers to Tao-Khoa, visited her at home.[32] Given her sacrifice at the end of the ballet, Zeng deemed Tao-Khoa a woman of high moral character, so he found it inconsistent for her to consort with male strangers in her home.[33] Acknowledging that it would not be possible to remove the character of Tao-Khoa from the ballet, Zeng suggested that it would be more true-to-life to make Tao-Khoa Ma Li-chen's wife. That way, she could keep house for Ma Li-chen, helping him with revolutionary activities, and

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[30] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 8. "*[U] nas igraet glavnuiu rol' tsvet*," mused Lavrovskii (l. 8). Note also that the varieties of poppies that grow in Russia can be red in color but cannot be used to produce opium. Tyerman argues that the Soviet producers of *The Red Poppy* in 1927 understood that red poppies were strongly associated with opium and imperialism in China ("Resignifying *The Red Poppy*," 454). Even if some of the producers of the original production understood the connections with opium, I think it is safe to assume that Lavrovskii and the creative brigade inherited the title in 1949 without fully comprehending its significance for Chinese spectators.

[31] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 3.

[32] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 4.

[33] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 4.

give dancing lessons on the side.[34] By making Tao-Khoa a housewife by profession and not a dancer, Zeng reasoned that GABT could make her presence more logical and more palatable, from a Chinese perspective.[35]

It was very convenient for GABT to construct a ballet around a main character who had a good reason to dance well and frequently. This was the central conceit of nineteenth-century ballets such as *La Bayadère* and *La Esmeralda*. But by making the (professional) dancer Chinese and setting the ballet in revolutionary China, GABT had gotten its priorities tangled. The artistic and practical demands of the genre of ballet—that there be leading characters who danced throughout the performance—conflicted with the ideological need for the Soviet theater to be sensitive to gender roles and gendered expectations in the culture of the Soviet Union's largest socialist ally.

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[34] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 4. Zeng advised Lavrovskii that the spousal relationship between Tao-Khoa and Ma Li-chen could be explained in a Prologue, and he gave an analogy to the ballet *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (l. 4). This demonstrates that Zeng had seen at least one other ballet at GABT.

[35] Emi Xiao was more explicit: "in China, professional dancers were prostitutes" ("Zapis'"). N. T. Fedorenko recalls a related reaction from early 1950: when Chinese Communist Party leader Chen Boda was watching a performance of *Swan Lake* on television, he asked why all of the women were performing naked. Fedorenko chalked this up to the differences between costumes for Soviet ballet dancers and Chinese performers, who were typically more modestly dressed—the Chinese viewers found the Soviet ballet dancers' costumes improper, even for a ballet set in Europe ("Stalin i Mao Tsedun (okonchanie)," *Novaia i noveshaia istoriia* 6 [November-December 1992], 84). It seems likely that, even if unspoken with regard to *The Red Poppy* (which did, at least, have the heroine wearing trousers rather than a tutu), ballet's costuming conventions compounded the already-negative association Chinese spectators had between female performers and prostitutes.

The Soviet producers had assumed that Chinese revolutionaries were more similar to Russian revolutionaries than they actually were. Perhaps, in the spirit of socialist realism and representing life in the process of becoming better rather than life as it already was, GABT was representing Chinese gendered roles with imagined improvements. After all, professional dancers were already elite members of Soviet society by the time the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* premiered, and Soviet Russian audiences felt no qualms about cheering for a dancer-heroine. Nonetheless, Chinese spectators took offense at the representation of a female performer as a heroic political activist.

The producers at GABT took a great interest in Zeng's suggestions. Both Zeng and the GABT representatives had the "friendship between the Soviet and Chinese people" in mind during the discussion on October 21, 1953. The GABT employees clearly shared Zeng's concern about international relations and were interested in hearing his ideas about how to make the ballet more palatable to Chinese viewers. Both the Chinese graduate student and the employees of the Soviet state theater recognized in the art of ballet the potential to influence audiences' perceptions of international relations in positive and negative ways.[36]

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[36] China was not the only country about which GABT was receiving advice. In May 1955, about two weeks before Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was due to visit the Soviet Union, GABT sent a panicked budget request to the Main Administration for Theaters and Musical Institutions. Apparently, someone from the Indian embassy had offered suggestions about making the staging of *Lakmé* more realistic, and GABT wanted to try to revise the production urgently. They had heard that Nehru wanted to see *Lakmé* at the Filial during his visit (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 334, l. 151). *Lakmé* is a nineteenth-century French opera set in India.

They were searching for solutions to ameliorate the unintended negative impressions of this Soviet ballet production without marring what Zeng agreed was the overwhelmingly positive performance created by Glier, Lavrovskii, and the dancers and mime artists.[37]

After the meeting with Zeng Xiufu, *The Red Poppy* remained in the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theater for almost a year. The last performance of the 1949 version was in October 1954. The theater returned to the stenographic record of the meeting with Zeng in early 1955; Zeng's critiques formed the basis of GABT's next discussion about whether and how to restage *The Red Poppy*.

To Revive *The Red Poppy* or Not to Revive?

The Red Poppy had already been an extremely popular staple of the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire in both its previous incarnations. It featured music by a celebrated Soviet composer. It foregrounded conspicuously socialist themes. But just as *Red Poppy* had needed to be revised from the perspective of 1949, the ballet needed to be updated again in 1957 for contemporary artists and audiences. This time around, GABT did not organize a creative brigade to coordinate the work. However, the lengthy production process for *The Red Flower* was broadly similar to the production processes for other ballets and operas at GABT in the

[37] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 1.

1950s. GABT's Thaw-era production process was similar to its late-Stalin-era precedent.

As in 1949, there were meetings during which artists and officials came to terms with the requirements of Soviet arts' pedagogical imperative and balanced ideological and artistic concerns with the practical realities of theatrical institutions. Some of the Chinese spectators' criticisms pushed the boundaries of what constituted ballet and forced the representatives at this meeting to grapple with how much revision and what types of corrections could be implemented before the ballet *The Red Poppy* ceased to be a cohesive artistic production. Ultimately, the discussion turned on the necessity to balance the satisfaction of Chinese spectators' concerns about *The Red Poppy* with the priorities of Soviet artists and audiences. The producers determined that the interests of Soviet audiences and artists in the ballet were more important than some, though not all, of the Chinese spectators' qualms about the ballet formerly known as *The Red Poppy*.

On January 8, 1955, GABT convened a meeting to discuss the 1949 version of *The Red Poppy* and prospects for keeping the ballet in the repertoire.[38] The

[38] Obsuzhdenie: staroi redaktsii "Kr. Maka": RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, l. 1. Participants included GABT Director Aleksandr Ivanovich Anisimov; GABT conductors Iurii Fedorovich Faier and Aleksandr Shamil'evich Melik-Pashaev; GABT choreographers Rostislav Vladimirovich Zakharov and Leonid Lavrovskii; prominent GABT dancers Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia, Aleksandr Ivanovich Radunskii, and Galina Sergeevna Ulanova, all of whom performed leading roles in the 1949 production; GABT (operatic) stage director Boris Aleksandrovich Pokrovskii; Serafim Oreshnikov from the GABT literature section; and musicologist Boris Mikhailovich Iarustovskii from the Central Committee of the KPSS Department of Culture. Also in attendance were Meskheteli, Gladlev, Churovskaia, and Iakovlev. (Vladimir Evgen'evich?) Meskheteli was probably the representative from the Ministry of Culture's Main Administration for Theaters and Musical Institutions (GUTiMU),

meeting began with Leonid Lavrovskii's summary of Zeng Xiufu's qualms about *The Red Poppy*.[39] Lavrovskii opined that some of Zeng's suggestions would be easy to fix: the more festive costumes for the apotheosis and the addition of appropriately-attired factory workers. To Zeng's observations, Lavrovskii added his own concerns about his 1949 production. The way that the Chinese characters behaved towards the Russian characters, in Lavrovskii's opinion, was outdated. Even if similarly obsequious carriage of the body went over well in the 1920s, he allowed, it was inappropriate in the 1950s. Lavrovskii proposed that the mise-en-scène should be restaged to present the working-class Chinese characters in a more sympathetic manner.[40] Aleksandr Anisimov added that the coolies' dance in Act I

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but it is difficult to be sure without initials in the *stenogramma*. (V. D.?) Iakovlev likely represented the GABT Party organization. Churovskaia may have been M. A. Churova from the GABT literature section who was also present during the October 1953 meeting Zeng Xiufu. This *stenogramma* was archived in handwritten form and contains numerous abbreviations that proved barriers to total comprehension.

[39] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, ll. 1-6. Later, Oreshnikov read aloud to the meeting participants the part of the stenographic record from October 21, 1953, where Zeng praised *The Red Poppy* (l. 11).

[40] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, ll. 4-5. Lavrovskii also mentions Zeng's concern about how a Chinese character picks up the Soviet stoker's discarded jacket (ll. 3-4), but then he goes on to say, "*Zatem to, o chem oni ne pishut*" (l. 4). I interpret this sentence as a transition to Lavrovskii raising his own concerns. It is also possible that Lavrovskii is recalling complaints that were not written down as part of the stenographic record of the meeting with Zeng. These might have included additional discussion with Zeng or from separate meetings or correspondence. (For example, N. T. Fedorenko describes a meeting with Chinese Communist Party leader Chen Boda in the GABT Director's office after a performance of *The Red Poppy* in February 1950. Besides Reingol'd Glier, it is hard to tell who from the GABT production team was there, though. During the performance, Chen objected to even Li Shan-fu's character as too monstrous to actually be Chinese. Having Chinese spectators object to the premise of domestic bourgeoisie in a ballet set in China would have created even more complications for revising the libretto. It seems that Fedorenko managed to avoid translating this part of the substance of Chen's objections during the meeting with Glier ["Stalin i Mao Tsedun (okonchanie)," 83-85].) It is curious that, later in the discussion on January 8, 1955, Iarustovskii conflates Lavrovskii's additions with the concerns of Chinese spectators. Iarustovskii asserts that it is the embodiment of the Chinese characters that offends the Chinese

was too suffused with "exoticism" and should be toned down to reflect a more contemporary understanding of Chinese workers' deportment.[41] These costume changes, changes to the mise-en-scène, and the need for modifications to the coolies' dance were accepted during the meeting without objections as both feasible and necessary improvements in the ballet.

Then, the debate shifted to those of Zeng's suggestions that juxtaposed ideological benefits with practical challenges. Lavrovskii opposed changing the title of the ballet on the grounds that Soviet audiences were familiar with the title *The Red Poppy* and might not know to buy tickets and plan to attend if it were advertised under another title.[42] It is clear that GABT had been informed by multiple sources over the years, both Chinese and Soviet, that Chinese spectators found the original title offensive. From an ideological perspective, it would have been appropriate to change the title, but Lavrovskii worried about how a new title would go over with Soviet audiences and how the box office receipts and attendance numbers might suffer from this concession to the Chinese viewpoint.

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people (l. 15). Perhaps Iarustovskii did not catch the transition or arrived late for the meeting. Otherwise, from the sources consulted, it appears that the embodiment is a concern of Lavrovskii (generally) and Anisimov (the coolies' dance). Note that Lavrovskii is criticizing his own production, at this point.

[41] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, l. 6.

[42] In the meeting on January 8, 1955, Lavrovskii simply mentioned that the Chinese spectators had criticized the title but that "it would remain" (*ostalos': nazvanie*) (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, l. 2). He gave a somewhat more nuanced description of his reservations during the meeting with Zeng, observing that "*dlia nas mak ne imeet osobogo znacheniia, da i publika uzhe znaet balet, kak 'Krasnyi mak' i vosprinimaet ego, kak eto est'*" (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, l. 8).

For the moment, Lavrovskii refused on practical grounds to concede any change to the title of the ballet.

Besides the title, the Chinese spectators' suggestions regarding the addition of Chinese folk music and dance to *The Red Poppy* caused concern among the participants at the meeting. Aleksandr Radunskii expressed a misgiving about the inclusion of Chinese folk music, as obliquely suggested by Zeng.[43] Radunskii asserted that too much Chinese music might cause Soviet audiences to abandon the ballet, even if the Chinese spectators would be pleased.[44] Lavrovskii similarly fretted that "[the Chinese spectators] asked for one ethnographic dance in the scene of the Chinese folk theater, but I am afraid that that would instantly spoil the style of the production."[45] While the Chinese spectators[46] wanted to see Chinese art on the Soviet stage as a sign of friendship between the Soviet and Chinese peoples,[47]

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[43] This point is made in Lavrovskii's summary of Zheng's criticisms: "*Vvesti kitaiskie temy nevozmozhno, no vvesti kakuiu-to pesenku* [illegible adverb]—*posle proshchaniia Tao Khoa s kapitanom*" (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, ll. 2). It is possible that Lavrovskii's idea about inserting a Chinese musical motif in Act III was an attempt at compromise with Zeng's request for multiple additions and changes to the musical score.

[44] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, l. 11.

[45] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, l. 5.

[46] During the meeting on January 8, 1955, Lavrovskii and the others consistently referred to the Chinese spectators (that is, in the plural), although Lavrovskii's summary aligns very closely with the comments provided by Zeng Xiufu in the meeting at GABT on October 21, 1953. It is not clear how many other Chinese spectators GABT spoke to or if, for example, they received letters from Chinese spectators who had concerns analogous to Zeng's.

[47] Following his critical remarks about the Bulgarian production of *The Red Poppy*, Emi Xiao listed Russian plays that had been staged in China and suggested that a Chinese play might be staged in Moscow ("Zapis'").

the Soviet artists worried about dissolving the boundaries of the ballet genre and alienating the ballet-going Soviet public.

The question of including genuine Chinese dance and musical material is not completely separate from the questions of historical accuracy and realism. Of course, there had been Chinese people in China in the 1920s who danced Chinese folk dances. To include Chinese characters performing Chinese folk dances to Chinese music from the 1920s, then, would have been both historically accurate and realistic. But Lavrovskii was concerned that the production might take on a fragmented character rather than being unified by its ballet lexicon and European-style orchestral music. Here, ideological and artistic priorities conflicted: historical accuracy and realism versus aesthetic consistency. And Radunskii worried that Soviet audiences would not be interested in a ballet with authentic Chinese musical accompaniment. Depressed box office receipts and theatrical attendance would have constituted a practical problem for the theater, even as they sought to find compromises between their ideological and artistic priorities. The discussants were dancing around the issue of whether GABT should change the ballet to satisfy the Chinese spectators at any cost or whether the theater needed to also consider the reception of the ballet by the Soviet public.

Comments by Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia helped the others home in on this question. Lepeshinskaia allowed that the ballet might need to be withdrawn, after all, but she thought that everything possible should be done to rectify its faults and

keep it in the repertoire.[48] She urged the others to remember that the ballet company and the Soviet public wanted to have *The Red Poppy* in the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire.[49] She suggested that the ballet's value for the Soviet artists and Soviet audiences was at least as important as, if not more important than, the opinions of the Chinese spectators.

The weighing of Soviet priorities against the Chinese suggestions had been an undercurrent in the discussion, but Lepeshinskaia's remarks crystalized the dilemma. Who was GABT trying to satisfy—Soviet artists and audiences or Chinese visitors? Was it possible to satisfy both groups of stakeholders? If not, whose perspective was more important? These were important questions, given that *The Red Poppy* was primarily performed in Soviet theaters for Soviet audiences. The Bolshoi Theater did not take the whole ballet on international tours.[50] It is true that the Bolshoi Theater was more likely to be frequented by foreign visitors than other Soviet theaters.[51] Still, the majority of the audiences for

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[48] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, l. 10.

[49] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, l. 9.

[50] Sometimes individual dances from *The Red Poppy* were included in concert programs comprised of dances and scenes from various ballets. The acrobat's dance from Act III was commonly performed outside the context of the rest of *The Red Poppy*. Leonid Lavrovskii even proposed presenting the acrobat's dance as part of one of the concert programs for the Bolshoi Ballet's 1959 North American tour (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 723, l. 6).

[51] According to Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #646 (October 21, 1957): In order to provide better cultural enrichment to foreign delegations and tour groups visiting Moscow, theaters in Moscow were required henceforth to set aside a daily block of tickets for sale at a special satellite box office at hotel "Moskva." GABT was required to set aside 400 tickets for ballet performances

ballet performances would have been Soviet people. The representatives from GABT overwhelmingly spoke in favor of keeping the ballet in the repertoire and finding compromises with the Chinese critiques, where possible. While the assembled representatives did not take a formal vote, the discussion boiled down to a debate over whether or not *The Red Poppy* was salvageable. Could the ballet be corrected, or was it a lost cause? If it could be salvaged, whose priorities—Soviet or Chinese—should guide the revisions?

GABT Director Aleksandr Anisimov closed the meeting by concluding that the ballet should be saved. He assigned the revival to choreographer Leonid Lavrovskii, who had staged the 1949 version. Anisimov deputized Serafim Oreshnikov to draft an explanatory report within one week outlining the Chinese complaints and the suggestions from the present meeting. He observed that the revisions would require a lot of resources, so they needed to prepare a preliminary budget and make arrangements to revive the ballet in the fall.[52]

To Revive *The Red Poppy*: A Nine-Point Plan

About a month later, on February 7, 1955, GABT Director Aleksandr Anisimov signed off on a letter to the Ministry of Culture and the Bureau of Science

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and 200 tickets for operatic performances. Unsold tickets were to be returned to the theaters for public sale not later than noon on the day of the performance (RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 235, ll. 19-20). For context, GABT was required to reserve more than ten times the number of tickets required from any dramatic theater. The Bolshoi Theater also had a larger auditorium than the city's dramatic theaters. Dramatic theaters outnumbered the ballet and opera theaters in Moscow, but each dramatic theater seated fewer patrons per performance.

[52] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, l. 17.

and Culture, part of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The letter summarized GABT's detailed nine-point plan to amend the ballet *The Red Poppy* in response to the criticisms and compliments provided by Chinese spectators.[53] GABT's plan bears strong resemblance to Zeng Xiufu's comments from 1953 and the exchange of ideas on January 8, 1955. According to Anisimov's letter, GABT resolved to revise *The Red Poppy*, maintaining its Russo-European classical music and balletic movement vocabulary but endeavoring to strengthen the realism and historical accuracy of the production through revisions to the libretto, mis-en-scène, and choreography.

In the letter, Anisimov observed that some of the Chinese spectators' comments indicated that what the Chinese spectators really wanted was "to see a ballet production on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater about the genesis and historical development of the Communist Party in China"[54] and that such a production would lend itself to the incorporation of Chinese folk music and folk dance.[55] However, Anisimov contended that *The Red Poppy* could not be the basis for such a production—"a completely new production" would be needed to

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[53] This letter seems to be based on the "explanatory report" (*ob''iasnitel'nyi dokument*) that Anisimov requested from Oreshnikov on January 8, 1955 (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 318, l. 17). Oreshnikov often drafted this type of interinstitutional correspondence for the GABT Directors to sign.

[54] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 332, l. 1.

[55] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 332, l. 1.

adequately represent such a "consequential and important subject."[56] Anisimov's point harkened back to comments made about *The Red Poppy* at the production meeting on October 7, 1949. Then, too, the dancers, choreographers, and conductors debated what value *The Red Poppy* had, in spite of its not being historically accurate or based on ethnographic research into Chinese folk music and dance.[57] Then, too, they concluded that it was as a ballet—a European medium, not as a recreation of Chinese folk music or dance—that *The Red Poppy* held significance in Soviet culture.

Anisimov's articulation of the tension between Chinese criticisms and the extant Soviet ballet production clarifies a genre debate that haunted many GABT ballet productions in the Soviet period: how much ethnographic material should be included in a "ballet"? How true-to-life should a "ballet" be? Given the Russian ballet tradition of orchestral music—epitomized by the ballet scores of Petr Il'ich Chaikovskii and Aleksandr Konstantinovich Glazunov—how much real folk music and how many real folk instruments and instrumentalists should be incorporated into music for a "ballet"? How much should the movement vocabulary for a "ballet" be based on the classical ballet technique that professional ballet dancers trained daily since childhood to perform and how much should be based on folk

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[56] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 332, l. 1.

[57] See especially the comments by Rostislav Zakharov, Aleksei Alekseevich Varlamov, and Nikolai Semenovich Golovanov (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 142). The meeting on October 7, 1949, is discussed in Chapter 5.

dance forms as folk dances existed outside of the ballet schools and professional ballet theaters? In 1955, GABT seemed to draw the clearest line yet between a production based on folk music and dance and a ballet like *The Red Poppy*, which was part of the lineage of Russian classical music and classical ballet. *The Red Poppy* could not be revived as a folk music- and folk dance-based production meticulously true to the history of the Chinese Communist Party. *The Red Poppy* was a ballet, and it would need to remain a ballet.

And, Anisimov argued, *The Red Poppy* still had a place on the Soviet stage. With subject matter based on themes from Chinese history, music by a Soviet composer, and the embodied language of Soviet ballet, *The Red Poppy* had already and could again fulfill an essential ideological-artistic mandate and be popular with Soviet audiences.[58] In other words, GABT was prepared to revive *The Red Poppy* as a ballet, not as a new genre of fusion folk-ballet production[59] or an ethnographically detailed recreation of real events from Chinese history in the 1920s. For its revision, GABT was prepared to take into account many, but not all,

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[58] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 332, l. 1.

[59] Jennifer Fisher documents an Australian version of *The Nutcracker* that incorporates "corps de ballet members moving through tai chi patterns, dressed in dark blue work pants and jackets with mandarin collars," demonstrating that at least one choreographer has managed to combine a realistic Chinese movement practice with a Russian ballet frame (*Nutcracker Nation: How an Old World Ballet Became a Christmas Tradition in the New World* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 102-103). Elsewhere, Fisher notes that American productions of *The Nutcracker* are often tailored to the identities of the producers. She observes that "Hawaiians add hula," suggesting that it might be possible to stage a ballet that incorporates non-balletic movement vocabulary ("'Arabian Coffee' in the Land of the Sweets." *Dance Research Journal* 35, no. 2, and 36, no. 1 [Winter 2003 and Summer 2004]: 157).

of the criticisms offered by the Chinese spectators. The needs and desires of Soviet audiences (as GABT artists and administrators perceived them) with regard to genre conventions superseded some of the Chinese complaints.

From the perspective of cultural competencies, Anisimov allowed that the title of the ballet could be changed to *The Red Flower* (or similar) to distance the ballet from associations with opium and the legacy of feudal China. A romantic relationship could also be developed for Van Li-chen and Tao-Khoa. Anisimov reported that the choreographer Leonid Lavrovskii would revise all of these characters' *pas de deux* to clarify their romantic relationship and that the composer Reingol'd Glier would compose music for a new explicatory scene about the relationship between Tao-Khoa and Van Li-chen.[60] These changes addressed both of Zeng Xiufu's objections on the grounds of GABT's limited understanding of Chinese culture. However, the issue of Tao-Khoa's profession was not completely resolved.

In the area of historical accuracy, GABT agreed to change "Ma Li-chen" to "Van Li-chen," a less Muslim-sounding name, and Anisimov's letter refers to the character by the new name. GABT also agreed to include Chinese industrial workers in the mass scenes and planned to introduce the theme of a popular Chinese revolutionary song from the 1920s to the music of the Act III, Scene 4.

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[60] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 332, l. 2.

The theater agreed to definitively shift the setting of the ballet back to the 1920s and to include appropriately contemporary events from that period in the scenes of the workers' uprising.[61] With these changes, Anisimov signaled GABT's acceptance of Zeng's critiques on the grounds of historical accuracy.

With regard to staging of the new production, GABT incorporated one of Zeng's suggestions but focused mostly on recommendations generated during the meeting on January 8, 1955, from GABT's own staff. GABT accepted Zeng's proposal for more festive costumes for the Chinese characters in the finale. Additionally, GABT planned to work on Lavrovskii's suggestion to rethink the physicality of the relationship between the Chinese workers and the Soviet sailors and Captain in order to emphasize a sense of national dignity for the Chinese workers. Anisimov explained that the Chinese workers' bearing would then contrast sharply with the posture of the villain Li Shan-fu. Li Shan-fu's deportment, especially around the foreign capitalists, would continue to be obsequious and subservient, while these qualities would be removed from the posture of other Chinese characters. To this end, Anisimov's own suggestion "to remove the plaque of exotic savagery and ecstatic quality" from the coolies' dance in Act I was included in the plan. GABT hoped to enhance the national spirit of the coolies' dance.[62] GABT promised to carefully correct the set designs, costumes, and make-

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[61] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 332, l. 2.

up in consultation with Chinese consultants and Soviet Sinologists.[63] Thus, most of the ideas for revising the choreography and mis-en-scène came from within the theater and not from Zeng Xiufu, although one of Zeng's suggestions regarding costumes was adopted.

We can see from GABT's plan that, in terms of representing Chinese culture on stage and in the interest of historical accuracy, GABT's priorities largely coalesced with Zeng's Chinese perspective. Both parties were interested in increasing the ballet's accuracy with regard to Chinese culture and history. But when it came to the profession of the heroine, the Soviet producers of the ballet were less willing to compromise. Tao-Khoa would remain a dancer, and the new romantic relationship with Van Li-chen may have served to muddy audiences' understanding of the relationship between Tao-Khoa and Li Shan-fu. When it came to revising the staging itself—the mis-en-scène and choreography—GABT adopted the suggestions of its professional artists, as raised at the meeting on January 8. The Soviet artists' perspective took precedence over Zeng's recommendations about songs and scenes.

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[62] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 332, l. 2.

[63] In the meeting on January 8, 1955, both Boris Pokrovskii and Boris Iarustovskii suggested involving (Nikolai Trofimovich) Fedorenko, who was Head of the Far East Bureau of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1952-1955) and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (1955-1958). Around the time of the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*, Fedorenko was a translator for high-level Chinese Communist Party officials in Moscow (N. T. Fedorenko, "Stalin i Mao Tsedun (okonchanie)," *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* 6 [1992]).

Thus, GABT arrived at a plan to revive *The Red Poppy* that included almost all of Zeng's suggestions but stopped short of taking his advice to change the movement vocabulary or much of the music. Aleksandr Anisimov, Leonid Lavrovskii, Rostislav Zakharov, Boris Iarustovskii, Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia, and the others made a distinction between the genre of ballet—where they felt that *The Red Poppy* belonged—and folk performances with musical and movement traditions foreign to Soviet ballet. GABT artists and administrators wanted to ensure that their revival of *The Red Poppy* constituted a ballet because Soviet audiences and artists knew and loved *The Red Poppy* as a ballet. Soviet priorities for the ballet, therefore, emerged as the deciding factor regarding which Chinese suggestions would be acted upon and how far the revisions could go.

Anisimov's letter proposed that GABT revive *The Red Poppy* for the 1955-1956 theatrical season, citing the need for lengthy preparation and rehearsals to implement such extensive improvements.[64]

Thirtieth Anniversary, New Production

On February 24, 1955, the Bureau of Musical Theaters of the Ministry of Culture's Main Administration for Theaters and Musical Institutions (GUTiMU) registered its opinion with the Deputy Minister of Culture about GABT's nine-point

[64] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 332, l. 3.

plan for the next version of *The Red Poppy*. GUTiMU's Vladimir Evgen'evich Meskheteli weighed in in support of GABT's plan, with two major reservations.

First, GUTiMU cautioned that all of GABT's corrections were geared toward Acts I and III, and Act II would also need to be revised in order that new version of *The Red Poppy* be coherent. Meskheteli opined that the content and staging of Tao-Khoa's dream scenes would need to be adjusted relative to the new approaches to Acts I and III. And second, Meskheteli warned that the addition of new factory workers to the mass scenes was not going to be the simple fix of changing the costumes of some of the "Chinese workers" to factory-appropriate attire. The addition of new characters would require new musical material to contextualize the new historical actors.[65] The latter warning gets back to the debate from October 7, 1949, about the feasibility of telling a new story with old music (see Chapter 5). The former warning extends the logic of the discussion about the coherence of the production from January 8, 1955, even further: GABT needed to consider how the changes to the Acts I and III would affect the second act, perhaps especially the scene where the conspiracy to murder the Soviet Captain is concocted. The producers at GABT had still more thinking to do.

A week later, the Deputy Minister of Culture Vladimir Semenovich Kemenov replied to GABT, informing the theater that the Ministry of Culture would make a

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[65] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 888, l. 4.

decision regarding whether or not GABT's new production of *The Red Poppy* should proceed only after GABT had submitted the revised libretto for consideration. It seemed that the Ministry of Culture agreed with Meskheteli's reservations and wanted to see the libretto, at least, with a satisfactorily coherent plot. This turn of events resonates with the frequent observation in the historiography that bureaucrats in Soviet cultural oversight organizations concerned themselves primarily with the "verbal text" associated with non-verbal or synthetic genres of cultural production. Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko observe, "When, starting around late 1935 or early 1936, other branches of the arts [besides literature] such as film, opera, and ballet began to receive more attention from the leadership, most often it was the verbal text of a given work that was given most scrutiny."[66] Kemenov's response is perhaps an example of the Ministry of Culture prizing the libretto (a "verbal text") over the musical score, choreography, or any other aspect of the synthetic ballet production. Kemenov wanted to see the revised libretto, even though half of Meskheteli's criticism had to do with the music and much of GABT's plan had to do with how the characters were to be embodied by the dancers.

Kemenov suggested that GABT involve all of the people who had contributed to the libretto's previous incarnations: Reingol'd Glier, Mikhail

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[66] Katerina Clark et al., eds. *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 140.

Ivanovich Kurilko, Vasilii Dmitrievich Tikhomirov, and Aleksei Nikolaev Ermolaev. GABT Director Anisimov forwarded Kemenov's note to Serafim Oreshnikov with the urgent request to work with choreographer Leonid Lavrovskii to prepare the new libretto.[67]

Then, *The Red Poppy* fell out of the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire planning process. In all, more than four years passed between the meeting with Zeng Xiufu and the premiere of *The Red Flower* at the Bolshoi Theater. Mikhail Ivanovich Chulaki, who replaced Anisimov as GABT Director in May 1955, initially put greater emphasis on "new Soviet productions" and limited the number of revivals or new versions of existing Soviet ballets.[68] It was at this point that Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia lobbied Chulaki (in the presence of the Soviet Minister of Culture) for *The Red Poppy*'s return.[69]

When the Ministry of Culture approved GABT's repertoire plan for late 1955, 1956 and 1957, *The Red Poppy* was not listed for the fall of 1955 (as Anisimov's February 1955 letter proposed) or either of the following years.[70]

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[67] RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 888, l. 5. Anisimov's request is written on Kemenov's memorandum.

[68] On Chulaki's appointment at GABT Director, see Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #549-k (May 24, 1955): RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 313, l. 39. On Chulaki's privileging of "new Soviet productions," see RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 323, l. 15.

[69] See epigraph for this chapter, which is from f. 648, op. 5, d. 323, ll. 14-15.

[70] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #710 (November 10, 1955): RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 485, ll. 12-13. See also June 1955 discussion from which epigraph for this chapter was taken (RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 323).

However, by March 1956, *The Red Poppy* had returned to the plan. GABT submitted its repertoire plan for the rest of 1956 and all of 1957 for the Ministry of Culture's approval, including the ballet *The Red Poppy* with a projected premiere date of December 1957.[71]

Composer Reingol'd Glier died in June 1956, more than a year after GABT's nine-point plan was submitted and more than a year before the premiere of the new production.[72] Vasilii Tikhomirov also passed away in June 1956. The new production was mounted by choreographer Leonid Lavrovskii with the 1949 sets and costumes by Mikhail Kurilko. Gennadii Nikolaevich Rozhdestvenskii conducted the new production.[73] *The Red Flower* premiered slightly ahead of schedule on November 24, 1957, with Galina Ulanova as Tao-Khoa, Iurii Grigor'evich Kondratov as Van Li-chen, and Sergei Gavrilovich Koren' as Li Shan-fu.[74] Thirty years after the original 1927 production, the Bolshoi Theater's third production of *The Red Poppy* entered the repertoire. Forty years after the October

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[71] Ministerstvo Kul'tury SSSR Prikaz #180 (March 24, 1956): RGALI f. 962, op. 11, d. 485, ll. 52-52ob.

[72] Further research will be required to determine how much new music Glier contributed to the 1957 production. V. I. Zarubin notes that Glier completed the third version of the score shortly before he died (*Pervye postanovki baletov na russkoi stsene 1825-1997* [Moscow: Ellis Luck, 1998], 151).

[73] Gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii Bol'shoi teatr Rossii, "Gennadii Rozhdestvenskii," Liudi teatra, https://www.bolshoi.ru/persons/people/813/ (accessed July 5, 2019).

[74] Museum of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater (hereafter Muzei GABT), "Krasnyi mak," program from November 24, 1957.

Revolution, the new libretto reflected Soviet ballet's increasing commitment to historical accuracy and cultural sensitivity—within the present limits of the genre—and changing dynamics of international relations between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Peaceful Coexistence

Nikita Khrushchev's early approaches to international relations differed markedly from his predecessor's. In the 1950s, Khrushchev aimed to reduce international tensions between the Soviet Union and Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, Yugoslavia, Israel, and combatants in Korea and Vietnam. He also relinquished territorial claims and military establishments with respect to Turkey, China, and Finland.[75] And he announced a policy of "peaceful coexistence" with capitalist countries.

It was in this period of peaceful coexistence that Soviet dance companies embarked on tours to Western Europe and North America.[76] While a few Soviet ballet soloists had appeared on Western stages between 1917 and 1935, Soviet dance companies had not yet appeared in the West. The mid-1950s saw the first large-scale tours, complete with corps de ballet, soloists, conductors, sets, and

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[75] Oleg Troyanovsky, "The Making of Soviet Foreign Policy," in *Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, and Abbott Gleason (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 212.

[76] David Caute's chapter provides an overview of tours by various Soviet dance troupes: "The Ballet Dancer Defects" in *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 468-505.

costumes. The State Academic Folk Dance Ensemble of the Soviet Union, founded and led by Igor' Aleksandrovich Moiseev, undertook some of the most ambitious tours and usually preceded the major ballet companies.[77] The Bolshoi Ballet was the first full ballet company to tour to the West, performing in London in 1956 and in the United States and Canada in 1959.[78]

The heart of the policy of peaceful coexistence meant that the Soviet Union was officially not in the business of fomenting communist revolutions in capitalist countries. The Soviet Union would seek to share the planet with capitalist countries and compete with them in the realms of education, culture, and standards of living. As Khrushchev described it, "*Peaceful coexistence can and should develop into peaceful competition for the purpose of satisfying man's needs in the best possible way*."[79] Soviet leaders fully expected to win this competition, in which event they assumed that people in capitalist countries would decide of their

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[77] For more on tours by the Moiseev company, see "Ballet and Soviet-American Exchange" in Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 69-91; Anthony Shay, "The Moiseyev Company: Ancestor of a Genre" in *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation and Power* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 57-81, and *The Igor Moiseyev Dance Company: Dancing Diplomats* (Bristol: Intellect, 2019).

[78] For more on the Bolshoi Ballet's tour in 1956, see Ezrahi, 137-168. For more on the Bolshoi Ballet's 1959 North American tour, see Cadra Peterson McDaniel, *American-Soviet Cultural Diplomacy: The Bolshoi Ballet's American Premiere* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015) and Anne Searcy, *Ballet in the Cold War: A Soviet-American Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[79] Khrushchev, "Peaceful Coexistence," 4. Italics in the original.

own volition to transition to socialism and communism, and no war or violent revolution would be required.

Peaceful coexistence emerged at a time when both the United States and the Soviet Union had nuclear weapons, though the United States was leading in the nuclear arms race. The policy of avoiding violent conflict was conditioned by Khrushchev's desire, above all else, to avoid nuclear war. Khrushchev remarked, "But the main thing is ensured: the states which decided to adopt the path of peaceful coexistence repudiate the use of force in any form and agree on a peaceful settlement of possible disputes and conflicts, bearing in mind the mutual interests of the parties concerned. In our age of the H-bomb and atomic techniques this is the main thing of interest to every man."[80] However, not all countries shared Khrushchev's priority of nuclear conflict avoidance.[81] The United States was skeptical of other aspects of Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence policy, especially his call for the "renunciation of interference in the internal affairs of other countries with the object of altering their system of government or mode of life or for any other motives."[82] Given Soviet military and political interventions in

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[80] Khrushchev, "Peaceful Coexistence," 4.

[81] For example, in 1958, China tried to draw the United States and the Soviet Union into a nuclear conflict during the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in the interest of obliterating imperialism (Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008], 101). Chinese leaders did not share Khrushchev's priority of avoiding nuclear conflict, though the Chinese had different objections than the Americans.

[82] Khrushchev, "Peaceful Coexistence," 3.

Hungary, Poland, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, it seemed to the United States that the Soviet Union was not abiding by Khrushchev's own policy.[83]

Both Khrushchev's policy and the American objections had more dimensions than are relevant as context for the 1957 ballet *The Red Flower* at the Bolshoi Theater.[84] Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence—especially his efforts to charm the other Cold War nuclear superpower, the United States—is broadly relevant because the 1957 production of *The Red Flower* was markedly less anti-American than the 1949 production of *The Red Poppy* at the same theater. While it would be reductive to try to read government policy into every cranny of the Soviet state theaters and their productions, GABT was a particularly prominent Soviet government institution. Not only did other Soviet theaters look to GABT for inspiration regarding repertoire, but foreign delegations regularly attended performances at the Bolshoi Theater whenever they visited the Soviet capital.[85] If any theater's repertoire had to be in sync with government policy, including international relations, it would have been the Bolshoi Theater. And so perhaps the

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[83] George F. Kennan published a response to this effect to Khrushchev's *Foreign Affairs* article in the journal's following issue: "Peaceful Coexistence: A Western View," *Foreign Affairs* 38, no. 2 (January 1960): 171-190.

[84] For further details, see the Khrushchev and Kennan's articles in *Foreign Affairs*.

[85] Some of these visits were captured in contemporary newsreels. For example, a 1959 visit by President of Guinea Sékou Touré included a performance of *The Red Flower* at the Bolshoi Theater. The visit was covered by the Soviet press, including a film crew which followed him to the performance (Russian State Archive of Documentary Film and Photography [Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kino-foto Dokumentov, hereafter RGAKFD] k/f [kino-fil'm] d. 15728).

changes in the libretto for *The Red Flower* reflect an awareness on the part of GABT artists and administrators that explicitly framing the United States as the enemy of oppressed people, which had been an appropriate theme in 1949, was no longer in line with contemporary Soviet international relations. I have not found evidence that the Ministry of Culture or any of its subsidiaries directly ordered GABT to change the libretto in order to soften its antagonism toward the United States, but there certainly were changes in the 1957 version. Even in the absence of clarity as to who suggested which changes, the changes happened, and a new production resulted. The new production resonated with Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence and his hopeful overtures toward the United States in particular.

A Less Antagonistic Libretto

What changed between the 1949 and 1957 productions? There were several changes that accorded with Zeng Xiufu's suggestions from 1953. There were also subtle changes to the character of Tao-Khoa that enhanced the dramatic through-line of the ballet. And there were numerous small adjustments that toned down the 1949 production's anti-Americanism and softened the ballet's revolutionary theme. Taken together, these individually minor alterations to the libretto constituted a new production of the ballet from the perspective of 1957. Even though GABT incorporated many of the Chinese spectators' critiques, the resultant production was still a Soviet ballet primarily for Soviet audiences.

Like the Bolshoi Theater's 1949 production of *The Red Poppy*, *The Red Flower* opens with coolies' backbreaking labor at a Chinese port. The coolies unintentionally uncover a shipment of foreign weapons and decide they have had enough of their overseers and bosses, who are cooperating with foreign imperialist forces. The dockworkers go on strike just as a Soviet ship arrives to deliver food aid to the Chinese workers and peasants. In a show of solidarity with the striking workers, the Soviet Captain orders his crew to unload their own ship; the local people are inspired and grateful. Among those who welcome the food aid and the Soviet visitors are Van Li-chen, the leader of a Chinese revolutionary movement, and Tao-Khoa, his romantic partner and assistant in labor organizing. The Boss and his Chinese collaborator Li Shan-fu feel threatened by the Soviet characters' example to the decreasingly complacent workers. Tao-Khoa dreams that Van Li-chen and Li Shan-fu square off in a battle and that Van Li-chen's warriors defeat Li Shan-fu's forces. After Tao-Khoa wakes up, Van Li-chen calls the Chinese workers to revolt and overthrow their capitalist bosses and overseers. Li Shan-fu and the Boss try to poison the Soviet Captain, but Tao-Khoa tips him off. Li Shan-fu then tries to decapitate the revolution by shooting Van Li-chen. Tao-Khoa throws herself in the path of the bullet. She is fatally wounded. In the apotheosis, the revolutionaries have prevailed and they are depicted on the path to new victories.[86]

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[86] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309. My full translation of the published libretto for the 1957 production constitutes Appendix C.

The 1957 production places the action of the ballet back in revolutionary China in the 1920s, as it had been for the original production, rather than in the 1930s, as it had been for the 1949 production.[87] The title was finally changed from *The Red Poppy* to *The Red Flower*. This served to distance the ballet from Chinese associations of red poppies with opium and imperialism. And, as Zeng Xiufu requested, the name of the Chinese hero "Ma Li-chen" was changed to the Han Chinese surname "Van Li-chen," where "Van" is the Russian transliteration of "Wang."[88]

The relationship between Van Li-chen and Tao-Khoa is recast in the 1957 libretto as a romantic partnership. The specification of the romantic relationship appears to be a concession to the Chinese criticisms of the heroine's role and a gesture toward historical accuracy. In 1949, it was conceivable that the two characters were linked by political rather than personal interests. Admittedly, it was awkward for a woman to conceal a man in her home who was not her relative or husband, as Tao-Khoa apparently did in order to cover for Ma Li-chen's secret revolutionary meetings. But still, in 1949, Tao-Khoa seemed to have her own political consciousness and evidence in the libretto pointed to revolutionary goals binding the two leading characters together rather than romantic feelings. Their

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[87] See RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33 and my translation of the 1949 libretto in Appendix B.

[88] For Zeng's suggestion, see RGALI f. 648, op. 5, d. 273, ll. 5-6. Tyerman renders the male characters' names "Li Shang-fu," "Ma Li-cheng," and "Wang Li-cheng" ("Resignifying *The Red Poppy*," 454). He refers to the heroine as "Tao Hua."

first encounter in Act I was described obliquely: "evidently, they are bound by some common interests."[89] What sort of interests were not made explicit, though the context for their first meeting was Tao-Khoa alighting to greet the crowd of Chinese workers. In the rest of the ballet, the interests of the workers were clearly Tao-Khoa and Ma Li-chen's common concern.

For the 1957 production, the libretto observes of their first meeting in the town square that "an intense feeling connects them,"[90] which is still a bit vague. However, in Act II, "Van Li-chen gratefully embraces Tao-Khoa. They fervently speak of their love, of the wonderful future which is coming for them when they won't have to hide their feelings and won't have to rely on Li Shan-fu and [the Boss]."[91] In this later scene, there is clearly supposed to be a romantic relationship between Van Li-chen and Tao-Khoa. The romantic relationship between Tao-Khoa and Van Li-chen spawns another change in Tao-Khoa's character for the 1957 production.

Tao-Khoa is depicted as more emotionally dependent on Van Li-chen in the 1957 production. It is Van Li-chen, not Tao-Khoa, who picks up the red poppy in Act II, Scene 1.[92] He is the one who signals the "dawn of freedom and happiness

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[89] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33ob.

[90] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 4.

[91] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 6.

[92] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 6.

for the common people" by reminding Tao-Khoa of the flower and its symbolic association with Soviet ideals. This trade-off emphasizes Van Li-chen's political consciousness at the expense of Tao-Khoa's. She merely follows his lead, rather than considering for herself the political stakes for her country. Later, in Act III, Tao-Khoa looks to Van Li-chen when she is ordered to serve the poisoned tea to the Soviet Captain. According to the 1957 libretto, she feels "afraid and confused" in the face of the task at hand, but Van Li-chen's "warmhearted glance... instills in her strength and confidence."[93] She then moves to warn the Soviet Captain (with her eyes) and save his life. In these instances, Tao-Khoa's character relies on Van Li-chen for emotional support and direction. As Van Li-chen's character grows in emotional range and stature, Tao-Khoa's character recedes and becomes more dependent on him. These subtle changes continue the process of foreclosing independence for female characters (seen more dramatically in Chapter 6). The revolutionary possibilities for women depicted in the 1927 production of *The Red Poppy* were severely curtailed by the time of the 1949 production—in Soviet society as well as in the ballet—and the 1957 production refined the ballet's presentation of an increasingly limited scope of authority for the heroine. The differences in the characterization of Tao-Khoa between the 1949 and 1957 productions are slight, but their implications are significant for the overall dramatic

[93] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 8.

logic of the plot. The changes further strengthen the character of the hero Van Li-chen.

Based on a comparison of the published libretti, Tao-Khoa exhibits a few new moments of insight and ingenuity in the 1957 production. In Act I, Tao-Khoa does not want to go with Li Shan-fu to the restaurant, but she is described as knowing that she needs to be "submissive" or "obedient" to Li Shan-fu in order to help Van Li-chen and his comrades.[94] In other words, she is described as a person with reason, who can grasp the consequences of various available courses of action and decide which course is most suitable with respect to her larger goals, even if the immediate tasks are undesirable. In Acts II and III, she also manages to hide her feelings in pursuit of sensitive information about plots against the Soviet Captain. Rather than serving the Boss tea out of a duty to hospitality as she did in the 1949 production, she brings a cup of tea to the Boss as a pretext for eavesdropping on his conversation with Li Shan-fu, "in order to learn about what her enemies are conspiring."[95] And then later, when she sees the Boss and Li Shan-fu poisoning a cup of tea, she pretends not to have seen what she saw so that she can buy herself time to foil their plan.[96]

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[94] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 4.

[95] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 6ob.

[96] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 8.

In these three examples, the 1957 libretto depicts Tao-Khoa's character as capable of sublimating her immediate desires and feelings for the larger goal of outwitting the reactionary forces and helping the revolutionary movement. These changes also serve to enhance the dramaturgical coherence of the plot. The earlier moments of minor self-sacrifice in the 1957 libretto help to build her character logically to her greatest sacrifice at the end of Act II: when she throws herself in the path of the bullet to save the life of the revolutionary leader Van Li-chen. Despite the further deemphasis of Tao-Khoa's revolutionary consciousness in the 1957 libretto, these other minor changes also make the role of Tao-Khoa slightly more interesting than it had been for ballerinas and audience members in the 1949 production. More importantly, the changes help to complete the process of making the plot more plausible (see Chapter 6).

All of the above changes are related to GABT's acceptance of Chinese criticisms of the ballet's libretto. Even though "peaceful coexistence" did not come up in any of the discussions I found, other changes to the libretto seem more oriented toward appeasing American audiences. In the libretto for the 1949 production, the enemies were conspicuously associated with the United States. The Boss was a "brazen American Boss," the coolies were carrying goods delivered by an "American ship," and the crates bore labels of "American trading companies."[97] Even the rifles that were inadvertently exposed when Ma Li-chen

smashed a crate on the ground were "American carbine rifles."[98] "American and English officers"[99] sat around the portside restaurant, a menacing complement to the shipment of rifles reminding audiences that imperialism was not only economic subjugation but was also enforced by military presence. And the bourgeois characters danced the Charleston in Act III,[100] a social dance that gained widespread appeal in New York City in the mid-1920s.[101] In other words, the Charleston was a dance that represented Americanness in the Soviet context and was used in *The Red Poppy* to identify the bourgeois characters. With these details, the 1949 production was very much a product of the early years of the Cold War, when American military and economic strength made the United States the Soviet Union's primary antagonist on the world stage.

The libretto for *The Red Flower* featured more ambiguous enemies, not specifically Americans. For the 1957 libretto, mention of the "American and

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[97] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33.

[98] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33ob.

[99] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33.

[100] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 36.

[101] The Charleston may have derived from dances practiced by African-American slaves and then widely performed by free Black minstrel performers in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Katrina Hazzard-Gordon, *Jookin': The Rise of Social Dance Formations in African American Culture* [Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990], 19, 67). Black dancers brought their social dances north as they migrated to larger American cities, and Black entertainers brought the Charleston to Broadway (Lynne Fauley Emery, *Black Dance from 1619 to Today*, 2nd rev. ed. [Princeton: Princeton Book Company, 1988], 221, 225). From Broadway, the Charleston reached wider white audiences in the United States and then spread abroad (Emery, 230-231).

English officers" whiling away their time at the waterfront restaurant was eliminated,[102] leaving only the foreign businessmen and the Boss of indeterminate national identity.[103] The coolies were moving goods delivered by a "European ship" with labels from "foreign trading companies" rather than specifically American ones.[104] The guns still spilled out of the broken crate, but they were called "carbine rifles" in the 1957 libretto rather than "American carbine rifles."[105] There were dancing pairs in Act III, Scene 1, but what sort of dance they were performing was left to the audience to discern from the music and movement vocabulary, not the libretto.[106] Rather than specifying that the couples perform a dance that read as "American" to Soviet audiences, the 1957 libretto simply indicated that some sort of social dance was happening. These otherwise minor alterations—mostly dropping or exchanging adjectives—in the libretto had the effect of toning down the 1949 production's anti-Americanism.

The militancy of the 1957 production was also slightly reduced, compared to the 1949 production. Without the foreign military leaders in the opening scene,

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[102] "Officers," likely foreign, make a brief appearance, fleeing during the uprising in Act III, Scene 4, but their national identities are not specified (RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 8ob.).

[103] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 4.

[104] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 4.

[105] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 4ob.

[106] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 7ob. There is also no mention of the foxtrot in the 1957 libretto. Further research will be needed to determine which of the social dances included in the 1927 score were maintained in the later productions at the Bolshoi Theater or elsewhere.

Act I set a tone of capitalist/imperialist exploitation of workers versus socialist ideals but not a distinctly militant atmosphere involving the Cold War superpower the United States. Further, Li Shan-fu's "reactionary" politics[107] were not mentioned in the 1957 version of the libretto. Describing him as a reactionary and a wealthy capitalist in 1949 suggested that not only was he benefitting from the imperialists' enterprises in China, but he was also sensitive to China's political options and had decided to side with the current foreign "masters." He was still described as a "rich Chinese businessman" in the 1957 libretto, but not describing him as "reactionary" implies that the character may not be politically conscious. The more limited character description in the 1957 libretto makes Li Shan-fu seem ignorant and self-serving rather than intentionally destructive to his fellow Chinese people. This omission softens the rhetoric around the theme of revolution. Together, the diluting of anti-American references and the moderation of references to international military combatants and reactionary opponents to the Chinese Communist Revolution resulted in a libretto more in tune with Nikita Khrushchev's proposed policy of peaceful coexistence in the late 1950s.

The Red Flower deserves to be read as a new production because of the lengthy discussions that led to its staging and because the resultant ballet was different than its 1949 predecessor. The 1957 production incorporated some of the

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[107] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, l. 33.

Chinese spectators' criticisms and reflected new understandings of Soviet international relations that were not available to the producers in 1949. Further, GABT's third version of the ballet continued to refine the characterizations of Tao-Khoa and Van Li-chen in order to enhance the dramatic coherence of the plot. The changes between 1949 and 1957 are less drastic than the changes between 1927 and 1949. Still, the fact that *The Red Flower* did require numerous revisions demonstrates the producers' investment in rethinking the ballet from the perspective of Soviet artists and audiences in 1957.

Flower and Farewell, or The Limits of Libretti

A ballet performance and a ballet libretto are not equivalent. And, of course, film of a performance is not the same as experiencing a performance live in a theater. Still, for a historian, sometimes film is the best available embodied evidence of ballets from the past. Unlike the 1927 and 1949 productions of *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater, there are extant minutes of film footage from rehearsals and performances of *The Red Flower* between late 1957 and 1959.[108] There are archival recordings of Tao-Khoa's variations from Act I ("dance with the golden fingernails") and Act III ("dance with a parasol") as well as fragments of Tao-

[108] I have found approximately one minute of film from GABT's 1949 production: "Absoliutnyi slukh. Krasnyi mak. Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia (1951)," YouTube, Allga383, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oR6JwlBK1g (accessed May 12, 2021). The fragment is part of newsreel footage of an Indian diplomatic delegation's visit to Moscow in 1951 during which they attended a performance of *The Red Poppy*. The clip shows most of Tao-Khoa's variation with the golden fingernails from Act I.

Khoa's struggle against Li Shan-fu and the Soviet sailors' dance "Iablochko" in Act I, an adagio section of Tao-Khoa's dream in Act II, and Tao-Khoa's farewell to the Soviet Captain from late in Act III.[109] The fragments add up to less than fifteen minutes of an evening-length ballet which probably had closer to two hours of music and stage action (not counting intermissions), and all of the fragments are from scenes featuring Tao-Khoa (except for "Iablochko").

Comparison of the film fragments with the published libretto of the ballet is a humbling reminder of how much meaning can be made with the dancers' bodies, most of which is not captured in the libretto's brief description of the plot. Compared with the published libretto, one of the film fragments is almost unrecognizable as being a scene from *The Red Flower*. Still, the film fragment provides evidence of how choreographer Leonid Lavrovskii developed his own gestural vocabulary as he sought to replace the nineteenth-century ballet mime lexicon and empower Soviet dancers to tell stories about new character types and political scenarios.

Of the available film fragments from *The Red Flower*, the scene where Tao-Khoa bids farewell to the Soviet Captain is particularly interesting for the tension it

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[109] RGAKFD k/f d. 15354 (dance with the golden fingernails, fragment of "Iablochko"), d. 15728 (fragment of Act II), and d. 21346 (dance with a parasol; scene with Tao-Khoa, Li Shan-fu, the Soviet Captain, and Van Li-chen; adagio from Act II; departure of the Soviet ship).

evokes between the embodied performance of the scene and the textual distillation in the libretto. The 1957 libretto explains:

> [Tao-Khoa] wants to tell the person from the Soviet land everything that fills her heart. For the first time in her life, she had met a friend of downtrodden and oppressed people. She shows the Captain the red flower, which she treasures as a precious memento of the Soviet people, as a symbol of faith in the bright future for the Chinese people. The Soviet Captain tenderly bids farewell to Tao-Khoa and departs.[110]

This parting scene is part adagio, part mime, although the gestures are not drawn from the nineteenth-century ballet mime lexicon.[111] As in the previous productions, the Soviet Captain's role is a non-dancing role. Tao-Khoa does more dancing in this scene than the Captain, though there are moments where he lifts or supports her.

There is obviously a fair amount of staged miscommunication in the farewell scene, as Tao-Khoa struggles to express her feelings, but Lavrovskii applied few of the standard nineteenth-century mime gestures to the construction of this scene. She clasps and unclasps her hands, sometimes pressing them to the side of her face, trying to make herself understood. The Soviet Captain observes her efforts indulgently at first and then with growing curiosity. He lifts her up until she is kneeling briefly on his shoulder and then stands her gently back on the ground. He

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[110] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 8ob.

[111] For illustrations of conventional nineteenth-century ballet mime gestures and sequences, see Beryl Morina, *Mime in Ballet* (Winchester Hants: Woodstock Winchester Press, 2000).

clasps her shoulders in a comradely fashion. He kisses her forehead, and she backs away, reaching toward him. She rests her forehead on the backs of her hands, her palms placed flat against his chest. She rushes around the stage, reaching toward the ship and the Soviet sailors, who are standing at attention. She pulls the Captain around, frantically pushing past him with her arabesques. She gestures toward the crowd of Chinese onlookers. He reminds her of his duty, salutes the red flower that she holds aloft, and strides off to board the ship. After the Captain leaves, Tao-Khoa waves the ship off and then, remembering the flower, defiantly shakes her fist in the air.[112]

Soviet choreographers working in the state theaters in the 1930s and 1940s sought to replace the conventional mime gestures from nineteenth-century ballets with quotidian gestures. They believed that working-class audiences would not understand or would not be interested in ballets that relied on the old gestural lexicon. Anne Searcy writes that their "new style of silent acting was more realistic and relied less on the audience's presumed knowledge of pantomime vocabulary or musical quotation."[113] Some scenes from *The Red Flower* that have been preserved on film, including the farewell scene, evidence this "new style of silent acting."

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[112] RGAKFD k/f d. 21346. This description has been shortened to remove most technical ballet language and descriptions. The scene goes on for several minutes, significantly longer than I assumed it would from reading the libretto.

[113] Searcy, 26.

From my description of the filmed farewell scene, it is clear that Lavrovskii's choreography for the scene relied heavily on gestures. But the gestures are more pedestrian than those found in nineteenth-century Romantic or classical ballets. They seem to come from contemporary everyday life—the way people might have gestured on the street or in a movie in the 1950s. Lavrovskii used some dancing, notably *piqué arabesque* and *tour lent* for Tao-Khoa, to express her passion. But mostly, both Tao-Khoa and the Soviet Captain used quotidian gestures and traverse the stage in ways that do not seem uniquely balletic. Lavrovskii, then, did not make the transition to telling the story of this scene completely through dance. He did manage to excise most of the nineteenth-century ballet mime from his choreography and (arguably) still make the scene intelligible. To accomplish this, he swapped in contemporary non-balletic gestures and movements to explain the situation.

In fact, a lot more seems to be going on in the scene described above than in the comparable passage in the libretto. The libretto suggests that Tao-Khoa shows the Captain the flower, he says goodbye to her, and he leaves. If that was all, the scene could have been shorter. Why does the Captain lift Tao-Khoa on to his shoulder? Why does she gesture frantically toward the ship? Why does she seem to dismiss the Chinese onlookers? Why does the Captain pointedly point to the stripes on his uniform sleeve?

Strangely, the farewell scene from the 1957 production resembles the description in the 1927 libretto for a scene that occurred earlier in the plot, before the attempted poisoning:

> Tao-Khoa implores [the Soviet Captain] not to attend the party. She tells him of her love. Kneeling before him, she begs the Captain to carry her with him and away from China. The Captain pities her as he would a child. He explains that he cannot return her feelings. He is destined for another duty; his mission is to serve the revolution. Trying to make his point clear, he plucks a red poppy from a bouquet of flowers and raises it like a banner.[114]

Granted, the farewell scene from 1957 does not show Tao-Khoa kneeling before the Soviet Captain, and Tao-Khoa is the one who produces the flower, not the Captain. Still, the farewell scene appears to show Tao-Khoa pleading with the Soviet Captain to take her with him when he leaves. Even though the 1957 libretto does not mention a romantic attraction between Tao-Khoa and the Soviet Captain, she seems to physically melt when he lifts her and then kisses her forehead. In the film footage from 1957, Tao-Khoa flings her arms, seeming to dismiss the crowd of Chinese people gathered on the dock. Then, she straightens up, seeming to vow to accompany the Soviet Captain. The Soviet Captain gestures to the Soviet ship in the background with one arm and places his other hand over his heart. He resolutely points at the stripes on his uniform jacket sleeve and looks directly at Tao-Khoa. He looks at the stripes (with one hand still pointing toward them) and

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[114] GTsTM f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, l. 40. See also my full translation of the libretto for the 1927 production in Appendix A.

then back at Tao-Khoa, as if to say, "This is my duty." In the film, she shows him the red flower. He nods and raises the flower triumphantly. After a brief duet, he hands her back the flower and raises her arm. She stands like a monument to the revolution, facing the audience with the flower in her hand, her arm fully extended above her head and her chin proudly lifted. The Captain steps back, gazing approvingly, and he salutes Tao-Khoa and the flower.[115]

It is unclear exactly what is happening here. Perhaps the 1957 choreography is indebted to the 1927 libretto and the extant music, and the 1957 libretto is designed to guide spectators to see something else in the dancers' actions.[116] Perhaps the extended exchange between Tao-Khoa and the Soviet Captain in the 1957 film footage does not have anything to do with Tao-Khoa expressing her desire to go with the Soviet Captain. After all, according to the 1957 libretto, she is happily engaged to Van Li-chen and looking forward to life with him after the revolution. Then what does the farewell scene mean?

The lack of clarity between the published libretto and the film fragment points to one of the challenges in interpreting dances from the past. The libretto does not spell out all of the gestures and movements that the audiences would have

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[115] RGAKFD k/f d. 21346. In sequence, this action occurs between the last two sentences of description above: after the arabesques and before the Soviet Captain departs.

[116] In her research on the former Mariinsky Theater's ballet production processes, Elizabeth Hannah Stern describes the potential for libretti to channel audience reception in particular directions: "Politics in Pointe Shoes: The Genesis and Afterlives of Stalinist *Drambalet*" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2019), 129-130.

seen in 1957, a few of which have been captured on film for historians to ponder. The gap between the action on stage and the descriptions in the libretto also reminds historians that audiences made meaning from what they saw in the theater, what they read in the libretto, or a combination thereof. In some cases, the libretto may have planted an interpretation in readers' imaginations that then shaped their reception as spectators in the theater, but no analysis of the libretto can substitute entirely for analysis of a live performance. However, in the absence of opportunities to experience the full ballet in performance, analysis based on the libretto can begin to develop historians' understandings of Soviet ballet in decades past. Augmenting analysis of the libretti with analysis of photographs and film fragments where available helps to bring historians a little closer to imagining the experiences of Soviet audiences, who may have both read the libretto and made meaning from the dancers' moving bodies.

Classical Dancing in *The Red Flower*

In addition to revealing choreographer Leonid Lavrovskii's lexicon of vernacular gestures, the surviving film fragments from Act II challenge the scholarly consensus that Lavrovskii's ballets did not utilize classical dancing. Tao-Khoa's dream in Act II is almost a textbook example of what Soviet choreographers of the 1930s and 1940s supposedly rejected. Christina Ezrahi describes the part of Marius Petipa's choreographic formula for classical ballet that Soviet choreographers allegedly abandoned: "long, complex classical dance segments

involving a large corps de ballet, soloists, and principal dancers."[117] The dream scene is exactly that.

In one section captured on film, little girls dressed as flowers are lying on the stage, propped on their elbows facing the audience with their fingers laced beneath their chins. Tao-Khoa performs a supported promenade with the Warrior (*tour lent*). He holds both of her hands as he slowly turns her from *attitude* to *arabesque*. She folds her working leg in through *passé*, opens it to the front at 90º (*développé*), and bends the leg in quickly for a series of finger turns in *retiré devant*. Just behind the principal couple, warriors of light perform promenades with female soloists in *arabesque* and *attitude*, also holding the women by both hands. The soloists' shapes are related to the shapes that the principal dancers are making; all of the couples move through slow, off-balance positions where the woman and man lean away from each other as the woman balances on one pointe. Meanwhile, the women of the corps de ballet kneel in formation radiating along downstage diagonals. They face the principal couple at center stage and perform *cambrés*, bending their torsos forward, sideways, and back while their arms circle overhead, extending the movement of their bodies. They then sit back on one heel with the other leg stretched out on the floor (pointing toward center stage) and look away from Tao-Khoa as they undulate their arms. The women of the corps stand and move into straight lines at the right and left sides of the stage, perpendicular to

[117] Ezrahi, 49.

the front of the stage. They face the center and alternate arabesques with *cambrés* forward and backward. Two warriors lift Tao-Khoa, holding her horizontally above their heads. (While the Warrior is free, he partners two of the female soloists in *renversés*.) Tao-Khoa faces downstage with her chest open to the audience and her ankles crossed behind her, knees slightly bent. Tao-Khoa waves her extended arms to the side as they raise and lower her. After they set her down, she performs two double piqué turns in attitude moving upstage. The Warrior catches her waist as she spins and supports her as she extends her leg behind and her torso forward in *penché*. The women of the corps de ballet and the soloists form concentric semi-circles open to the audience to display the principal dancers. As Tao-Khoa turns slowly en pointe, the women of the corps de ballet perform a slow *bourrée* turn. The women of the corps de ballet drop to one knee and *cambré* again as the soloists in the middle lines pose with their partners in *arabesque*. Tao-Khoa and the Warrior continue their promenade through various *penché*, *arabesque*, and *attitude* positions. With one arm around her waist, he lifts her against his side and keeps turning. Then, he sets her down. She walks off to the side, and he follows.[118] This segment lasts about 1.5 minutes, and it clearly demonstrates Leonid

[118] "Repetitsii G. Ulanovoi baleta 'Krasnyi mak,'" YouTube, Allga383, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7SrR7hDSmc (accessed May 12, 2021). The film was featured in *Absoliutnyi slukh* on February 16, 2011. The principal dancers are Galina Ulanova (Tao-Khoa) and Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Lapauri (Voin).

Lavrovskii's use of a classical dance ensemble with corps de ballet, soloists, and principal dancers.

In another section that was filmed, Tao-Khoa sits on the Warrior's right shoulder. He walks forward as the girls dressed as poppies *pas courru* forward and backward with their arms stretched out, alternately raising and lowering their arms in front of their torsos. Smaller children join in waves. The Warrior kneels and Tao-Khoa steps off of his shoulder. She walks downstage and performs an arabesque before traveling back upstage to the Warrior with a *jeté entrelacé*. The poppies kneel in a semi-circle, hold hands, and lean back and forth. Tao-Khoa unfolds one leg to the front at 90º and then bends that leg in for a series of turns, supported by the Warrior. She finishes the turns in the pose *attitude derrière* and leans forward as he promenades her to *arabesque*. She lifts her torso to finish in first arabesque. The warriors of light lift Tao-Khoa in turn; she runs between them and they support her abdomen and the thigh of her raised leg to lift her overhead in *arabesque*. Later, she runs downstage on a diagonal and launches herself horizontally into the Warrior's arms.[119] He tosses her into *arabesque* and she folds one leg in to a turned-in *retiré* position while the other remains extended behind

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[119] The first part of this phrase (when Tao-Khoa launches herself toward the Warrior) is very similar to choreographer Vasilii Ivanovich Vainonen's daring conclusion to the duet "Val's Moshkovskogo" (Moshkovskii Waltz), here performed by Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia and Petr Andreevich Gusev in 1940: "Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia – Petr Gusev (1940)," YouTube, wwwplieru, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOLXxga1gPw (accessed May 12, 2021). The rest of the lift is different in *The Red Flower*.

her (and turned out). The Warrior presses her over his head in this position before running into the center of the stage and lowering her to waist-height as he spins. The other warriors lift their partners onto their shoulders; the women balance on their stomachs with their feet crossed in fifth position, knees softly bent, as Tao-Khoa does in the other clip. The older girls *bourrée* in fifth position into a line and kneel with one arm in third position and the other in second position. The Warrior sets Tao-Khoa with her knees balanced on his thigh and his arm around her waist. She rests an arm around his shoulders and tilts her head toward him.[120]

Both of these brief fragments from Tao-Khoa's dream scene in Act II show extensive use of classical ballet vocabulary as well as ensemble structures wherein the soloists and corps de ballet (and children) frame, reinforce, and augment the dancing of the principal characters. This is precisely the sort of choreography that critics accused Leonid Lavrovskii, Vasilii Ivanovich Vainonen, and Rostislav Zakharov of expunging from the repertoire of the state academic theaters of opera and ballet in the 1930s and 1940s.[121] Obviously, the annihilation of classical dance and even classical dance performed in abstract ensembles was not complete. The difference, as I argue in Chapter 6, is that in *The Red Poppy* and

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[120] Prezident Gvineiskoi Respubliki v Sovetskom Soiuze (1959): RGAKFD k/f d. 15728. There is an iconic photograph of this final pose in the collection at Muzei GABT.

[121] Victor Vanslov, "Russia: Theatrical Dance since 1917," trans. and ed. Elizabeth Souritz, *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Selma Jean Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), accessed via *Oxford Reference Online* (January 30, 2020).

The Red Flower, the complex classical ensembles do "advance a narrative plot."[122] Even though film of Act II from the 1949 production has not yet come to light, still photographs from the earlier production indicate that Act II in 1949 looked a lot like Act II in 1957.[123] These types of classical ensembles were a central part of the 1949 production, too.

Bodying Forth a Relationship: Tao-Khoa and Li Shan-fu

The farewell scene is mostly gesture and little dance. The dream scene is all dance and no gesture. A third scene that was captured on film exemplifies how Leonid Lavrovskii integrated both types of movement vocabulary in a single scene to explain the plot of *The Red Flower*. Late in Act I, Li Shan-fu tries to prevent Tao-Khoa from thanking the Soviet Captain for his support of the striking coolies. In the libretto, this scene is indicated by two sentences: "Tao-Khoa approaches the Soviet Captain and expresses to him her gratitude for the joy he brought to her people. Li Shan-fu is outraged with Tao-Khoa."[124] Here, Lavrovskii used a combination of dance and vernacular gesture to explain the relationship between Tao-Khoa and Li Shan-fu and Tao-Khoa's excitement about the Soviet visitors.

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[122] Ezrahi, 49.

[123] See collected photographs at Muzei GABT and in Georgii Petrusov, *The Bolshoi Ballet* (Moscow: Museum Moscow House of Photography, 2004), 52-55.

[124] RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309, l. 5.

In the fragment of film, Tao-Khoa goes up to the Soviet Captain, who is consulting with one of his sailors near the bottom of the gangway. Li Shan-fu pulls her back downstage, making a wide arc toward the center. He grips her left wrist roughly with his right hand and a knife glints in his left. Tao-Khoa comes unwillingly, first taking small steps en pointe while averting her face, and then lunging backward to try to get out of his grasp. They stare at and circle each other. She pushes her right hand against his arm, again trying to free herself. He jerks her left arm upward and she rises into an *attitude*. Now, she turns her face away as he promenades her: he holds her arm over her head and turns her on one pointe. But this is not the kind of promenade that Tao-Khoa performs in her dream in Act II. In this promenade, her supporting leg (the leg she is standing on) is also bent. She looks broken and in peril. Li Shan-fu seems to be controlling her, and she cannot escape.

They continue the struggle like this. When Li Shan-fu lets go of her arm, she backs away from him warily (*pas courru*) and then looks for the Soviet Captain. Li Shan-fu moves out of the camera angle, but he is likely consulting with the Boss, who later appears at the side, glowering. Li Shan-fu sheaths his knife and chases Tao-Khoa down again. This time, he grabs both of her hands. She pulls one knee up in front of her (turned in) and holds it there as a barrier while Li Shan-fu turns her around on the pointe of her other shoe. He releases her hands and grabs her waist. She pulls her leg in, spinning rapidly. She manages to get away from him

and rushes over to the Soviet Captain, who is now conferring with some of the coolies. Just as she has tapped the Captain's shoulder to get his attention, Li Shan-fu grabs her wrist again, and he puts his body between her and the Captain, raising his other hand (palm toward the Soviet Captain) as if to apologize for Tao-Khoa's interruption and backing away. The Captain watches them retreat until the camera pans back toward the center. Another struggle. Tao-Khoa spins on one foot in a parallel *retiré* position. She runs back to the Captain and again Li Shan-fu drags her away.

Tao-Khoa pushes against Li Shan-fu's shoulders this time and backs downstage. He points emphatically toward the seaside restaurant. She tenses her shoulders and neck, shaking her head decisively "no." Though her arms are held by her sides, tension radiates through her fists. As the Captain crosses upstage towards the gangway, Tao-Khoa makes a break for him. Again, Li Shan-fu catches her arm. He pulls her through a *jeté entrelacé*, and she whirls away with a series of *tours chaînés*, coming to a stop in front of the disapproving Boss. Meanwhile, the Soviet Captain has realized that something is amiss. He takes a couple of steps toward Li Shan-fu, who shrinks away and wrings his hands nervously. Tao-Khoa backs away from the Boss uncertainly, toward Li Shan-fu, but Li Shan-fu is coming downstage (away from the Captain) and misses her. She reaches the coolies upstage but almost immediately Li Shan-fu "calls" Tao-Khoa by raising his arm. She "hears" him and slowly turns to face him. He summons her by flinging his raised

arm toward the ground, "Come here!" She breathes heavily, clearly upset, her neck and shoulders still tense. She takes a couple of reluctant steps toward him, looking disgusted. Then another couple of steps. He runs over and grabs her by the waist, lifting her almost overhead. She twists her shoulders and head from side to side and extends her legs, alternating right and left as if she were pedaling an upside-down bicycle. But Li Shan-fu holds her firmly. He brings her down for a few steps only to repeat the lift. She presses her hands against his in an effort to free herself. She escapes once more and is caught again. Suddenly, Van Li-chen swoops in and lifts her straight over his head. He carries her away from Li Shan-fu, and a group of coolies line up to block Li Shan-fu's path. He cannot follow her. Van Li-chen deposits Tao-Khoa near the Soviet Captain. She catches the Captain's hand, kisses it quickly, and kneels at his feet. The Captain pulls his hand back in surprise. Her shoulders slump in shame. The Captain lifts her to her feet and comforts her. She rises en pointe.[125]

The scene uses a mixture of dance and relatively simple gestures. Tao-Khoa moves primarily via *pas courru*, a fluttering, turned-in step on pointe. In fact, almost all of her dancing in this scene is turned in. Her dancing positions are distorted because her legs are parallel to each other instead of turned out at the

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[125] Two angles on this scene were filmed in 1957 and can be found on RGAKFD k/f d. 21346. Part of the scene was also shown on the Russian television channel "24 Doc" and is available online: "Galina Ulanova in The Red Poppy," YouTube, reanimato1, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKdwPHpHE8k (accessed May 12, 2021).

hips. Her legs are parallel in the turns. She is only really turned out in the *attitude* promenade, but even there the supporting leg is bent, which breaks the line (and basic technical rules of pointe work). None of the poses are good classical poses, and this warping of the classical positions conveys her distress. Even without the libretto to guide reception, Tao-Khoa looks like she does not want to be part of that relationship. Throughout the scene, whenever she is physically connected with Li Shan-fu or under his gaze, her whole body communicates strong negative emotions.[126]

The gestures that Tao-Khoa and Li Shan-fu use in this scene are few. She balls up her fists and shakes her head. She averts her face from Li Shan-fu or tries to stare him down. He points at the restaurant, "calls" to her, and insists that she come to him. These gestures are faint fragments of nineteenth-century mime gestures for one character to summon another or for characters to convey anger. But these are not extremely theatrical gestures. What is left of the gestures is basically quotidian movement. The least quotidian moment is the, "Come here!" That is odd primarily because Li Shan-fu cannot actually speak the words, and

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[126] In principle, this is not unlike Mikhail Fokin's theory of choreography, as he wrote about it in 1914. Lynn Garafola summarizes, "[Fokin] advocated a 'mimetic of the whole body': 'Man can. . . and should be expressive from head to foot,' he asserted" (*Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* [1989, repr.; New York: Da Capo Press, 1998], 24). Ellipsis Garafola's. Further research will be required to determine the extent of Fokin's influence—through his writings or choreography—on choreographers such as Lavrovskii, who was relatively young when Fokin emigrated. Fokin's choreography was rarely included in GABT's repertoire in this period, but Lavrovskii trained in Petrograd and may have been exposed to Fokin's ballets there.

obviously Tao-Khoa would not be able to see him merely pointing, since she has her back to him. (But, this being a ballet, she can "hear" his pointing.)

This scene exemplifies how choreographer Leonid Lavrovskii combined vernacular gesture and dancing to communicate the plot of *The Red Flower*. The dancing was distorted to illustrate Tao-Khoa and Li Shan-fu's troubled relationship. And the full-body tension plus non-theatrical gestural vocabulary explained Tao-Khoa's yearning to escape from Li Shan-fu and thank the Soviet Captain, while Li Shan-fu tried desperately to prevent her from doing either. This combination of simplified gesture and expressive dancing, I suggest, moved Soviet ballet closer to telling stories exclusively through dance.

Retiring *The Red Flower*

The last performance of *The Red Flower* at the Bolshoi Theater was on April 14, 1960. At the end of the 1959-1960 theatrical season, GABT administration discussed a draft repertoire plan for the 1960-1961 season. *The Red Flower* was scheduled for revival (*kapital'noe vozobnovlenie*) by choreographer Leonid Lavrovskii and designer Vadim Fedorovich Ryndin with a premiere on April 24, 1961. Then, that line of the plan was crossed out.[127] As of the time of this writing,

[127] RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 340, ll. 91-92. The draft repertoire plan is not dated, though the materials are filed chronologically and the draft repertoire plan is between meeting minutes dated June 3 and August 25, 1960.

no version of *The Red Poppy* has been in the repertoire at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow since 1960.

It is hard to say exactly why *The Red Flower* disappeared when it did. The timing of the ballet's withdrawal from the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire roughly coincided with the Sino-Soviet split.[128] The GABT production's withdrawal may have had something to do with rising tensions between China and the Soviet Union, especially since the Bolshoi Theater was frequented by diplomatic delegations. I suspect, though, that the Chinese setting had less to do with the ballet's withdrawal than other factors. For example, if the withdrawal had an explanation pertaining to subject matter, it seems more likely that the theme of international revolution was the problem and the Chinese setting was a coincidence. As Khrushchev tried to prove that the Soviet Union was not interested in fomenting communist revolutions abroad, a ballet celebrating communist revolution in any other country, especially if such a revolution was depicted as inspired by Soviet characters and Soviet ideals, might have sounded off-key. The theme of international revolution, which was reasonably contemporary in 1927, was no longer contemporary and in fact had come to represent the exact opposite of the Kremlin's official position in international

[128] Lüthi, 175. Edward Tyerman associates the ballet's fate with the Sino-Soviet split in "The Search for an Internationalist Aesthetics: Soviet Images of China, 1920-1935" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014), 350n902.

relations. Therefore, it seems more likely that the revolutionary spirit of the ballet that so appealed to Soviet artists and audiences was by early 1960 the ballet's most serious flaw.

Arsen Degen and Igor' Stupnikov claim that the ballet "vanished" (*ischez*) from all Soviet stages in the late 1950s.[129] I have not found evidence that *The Red Poppy/The Red Flower* was banned. Productions at other Soviet theaters of opera and ballet continued to run beyond the last performance at the Bolshoi Theater. There were even new productions in the Russian cities of Kuibyshev in 1961 and Volgograd in 1962, so versions of the ballet were still presented to Soviet audiences, even after the GABT production fell out of the repertoire.[130] O. S. Sapanzha and N. A. Baladina also describe consumer goods—including statuettes and perfumes—based on characters and motives from the ballet that were produced in Soviet factories into the 1960s.[131] There was even a postage stamp commemorating *The Red Flower* (Krasnyi tsvetok) in 1962.[132]

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[129] Arsen Degen and Igor' Stupnikov, eds., *Balet. 120 libretto* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo "Kompozitor-Sankt-Peterburg," 2008), 233.

[130] E. P. Belova et al., eds., *Russkii balet, Entsiklopediia, Bol'shaia Russkaia Entsiklopediia* (Solgasie, 1997), s.v. "Krasnyi mak," http://www.pro-ballet.ru/html/k/krasn3y-mak.html (accessed July 2, 2019).

[131] O. S. Sapanzha and N. A. Baladina, "Balet 'Krasnyi mak' v prostranstve sovetskoi povsednevnoi kul'tury," *Vestnik Akademii Russkogo baleta im. A. Ia. Vaganovoi* 1, no. 48 (2017): 35-37.

[132] Sapanzha and Baladina, 38. Simon Morrison claims that "the original title of the ballet was restored" as a result of the Sino-Soviet split [*Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016], 253). I think it more likely that the title only changed at GABT, and most or all other productions in the Soviet Union and abroad ran

Perhaps *The Red Flower* was a casualty of one of the Thaw's generational shifts, just a few years later than the Thaw came to other genres and institutions.[133] Galina Ulanova, one of GABT's most famous interpreters of the role of Tao-Khoa in both *The Red Poppy* (1949) and *The Red Flower* (1957), retired in the spring of 1960. Nikita Khrushchev signed off on the order for Ulanova's pension on March 21, 1960.[134] There were other ballerinas who danced the role, but beyond that role and this production, GABT's ballet troupe was approaching a generational shift. Choreographer Iurii Nikoalevich Grigorovich staged his first ballet for the Bolshoi Theater, *The Stone Flower*, in 1959.[135] He returned as GABT's Chief Choreographer in 1964 and served as choreographer-artistic director for the Bolshoi Ballet company until the 1990s.[136] But this generational shift was not

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under the title *The Red Poppy* (Krasnyi mak) before and after 1957. In other words, the other productions' titles never changed, so they did not need to be restored.

[133] Generational shifts are important lenses through which other historians have studied the effects of the Thaw. See for examples Ezrahi, Bittner (who found less evidence of [age-determined] generational shifts the more he looked for them), and Kathleen E. Smith, who found age to be a significant factor in how Soviet citizens experienced the Thaw. According to collected programs at Muzei GABT, there were four Tao-Khoas, three Van Li-chens, and four Li Shan-fus between 1957 and 1960. Sof'ia Nikolaevna Golovkina, another performer of Tao-Khoa, retired from the stage in 1959 (Zarubin, 372). Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia retired in 1963 (Zarubin, 388). Iurii Fedorovich Gofman and Iurii Grigor'evich Kondratov, who danced Van Li-chen, also retired around 1960 (Zarubin, 373, 383). Two of the dancers who performed Li Shan-fu retired, too, around this time: Aleksei Ermolaev in 1958 and Sergei Koren' in 1960 (Zarubin, 377, 383).

[134] Rasporiazhenie SM SSSR #831r: RGALI f. 648, op. 7, d. 330, l. 2.

[135] *Kamennyi tsvetok* used music by Sergei Sergeevich Prokof'ev and a version of Mira Aleksandrovna Mendel'son-Prokof'eva and Leonid Lavrovskii's libretto (revised by Grigorovich). The ballet had designs by Simon Bagratovich Virsaladze, and choreography by Grigorovich (Zarubin, 195).

complete in 1957. Amid the uncertainty of the early Thaw years, GABT returned to *The Red Poppy*.

Chapter Conclusion

The meetings about the future of *The Red Poppy* again provide concrete evidence of professional debate—they demonstrate that Soviet artists, administrators, and bureaucrats were not following a detailed blueprint handed down from above but were actively negotiating the ideological, artistic, and practical realities of making art in one of the Soviet Union's most prestigious cultural institutions. In preparing to revise the libretto and other aspects of the staging, GABT artists and administrators solicited and carefully considered constructive criticism from a Chinese graduate student, using Zeng Xiufu's comments and suggestions as the basis for discussions about the future of *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater. But in the end, GABT prioritized the interests of Soviet artists and audiences over the complaints from Chinese spectators; with the new production of *The Red Flower*, GABT's artists and administrators sought to define, protect, and develop the genre of Soviet ballet.

The similarities that I uncover in the production processes between the 1949 and 1957 versions of *The Red Poppy* indicate that the Khrushchevian Thaw had not yet penetrated GABT's ballet company by the mid-1950s and serve as an

[136] Gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii Bol'shoi teatr Rossii,"Iurii Grigorovich," Liudi teatra, https://www.bolshoi.ru/persons/ballet/359/ (accessed June 28, 2019).

example of how the Thaw was experienced on different timelines in different realms of Soviet culture and different cultural institutions. While there were genuine fissures in Soviet literature, the Thaw was as yet barely discernible at the Bolshoi Ballet due to the genre's lengthy production timeframes and GABT's inertia as the country's largest theatrical institution.

Even so, surviving film fragments from *The Red Flower* reveal that the production embodied an incremental advancement in Soviet ballet's progress toward telling dramatically coherent stories without the conventional mime gestures of nineteenth-century ballet. I argue that Leonid Lavrovskii's combination of pedestrian mime gestures with danced storytelling constituted an intermediate stage en route to the through-danced ballets that began to appear on other Soviet stages at the end of the 1950s and at the Bolshoi Theater by the early 1960s. This was not, perhaps, innovation on the scale of what Nikita Khrushchev had in mind when he urged Soviet workers to slough off their Stalin-era fear and apply themselves to building a more efficient society. But it was a step forward in the Sovietization of ballet.

For the Bolshoi Theater's 1957 production of *The Red Flower*, the libretto was revised to reflect Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States: gone were the American villains from the 1949 production, replaced by more ambiguous enemies. The revisions to the libretto also surpassed the 1949 libretto in terms of dramatic coherence. The role of Tao-Khoa was further drained

of emotional and political independence, though she gained a dimension of shrewdness that had not been apparent in the earlier productions. As in the 1949 libretto, what Tao-Khoa lost in character, the Chinese hero Van Li-chen gained. Overall, the producers focused on developing *The Red Flower* as a Soviet ballet for Soviet audiences.

Conclusion

> "Russia is a very balletic country, and there are musical theaters and ballet companies in many cities. It's a good inheritance that we have received from the Soviet Union."
>
> —Aleksei Miroshnichenko (2020)

Of the three versions at the State Academic Bolshoi Theater of the Soviet Union (GABT), the first production of *Red Poppy* was the most significant in the history of Soviet ballet and therefore ballet more broadly. Ten years after the premiere, GABT dancer-choreographer Igor' Aleksandrovich Moiseev observed about the 1927 production: "The ballet *Red Poppy*, for all the criticism of this ballet, for all of its flaws, all the same, is it a good thing that it was created? It's a good thing. Audiences were shown for the first time that one can dance about this subject. Until [*Red Poppy*], there were many disagreements—is it possible to dance about Soviet subject matter?"[1] By this account, the original production of *Red Poppy* secured a place for ballet in Soviet culture, in accordance with the pedagogical imperative for all artistic production in the Soviet Union. Art for art's sake was out, but art for socialism's sake was welcome and encouraged. As long

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The epigraph comes from an interview conducted by Alina Artes which appeared on the website for the Russian television channel "Kul'tura" on November 24, 2020. Miroshnichenko served as a member of the jury for the television competition show "Bol'shoi balet," which was filmed in the summer of 2020. The interview was part of the publicity for the show: "Aleksei Miroshnichenko: 'Artist baleta – est' to, chto on tantsuet'," Smotrim.ru, https://smotrim.ru/article/2489533 (accessed May 24, 2021).

[1] Stenogramma po voprosam baleta pod predsedatel'stvom tov. P. M. Kerzhentseva (October 7, 1937): Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva) f. 962, op. 3, d. 300, l. 15.

as ballet could tell edifying stories, it deserved government investment and Communist Party support. The imperative to dance edifying stories narrowed the focus of Soviet ballet choreography for decades, largely foreclosing the non-narrative forms that prevailed in Western Europe and the United States at the same time. The first version of *Red Poppy* almost instantaneously salvaged ballet from the imperial dustbin and set the genre on course to become an important part of Soviet socialist culture.

But, as powerful as the first version of *Red Poppy* was, the later versions in 1949 and 1957 were not reconstructions of the original ballet. They were new versions with their own logics that embodied changing priorities in Soviet culture. Once it had been established that one could dance Soviet subject matter, that was no longer sufficient. The bar was raised, and ballets had to be revised for new generations of artists and audiences. Parsing what changed from one version of *The Red Poppy* to the next illuminates how ballet in the Soviet Union was imbued with political significance that was recognized by Soviet artists and administrators as well as by foreign allies. The later versions of *The Red Poppy* demonstrated ballet's participation in Soviet theater's wider project to stage ever more cohesive, plausible plots peopled by characters with whom Soviet audiences could identify (and easily spotted villains). These later productions are evidence for ballet historians that studying how a single "ballet" changes over time in the course of restagings is a valuable complement to studying the first productions of multiple

ballets in a narrow timeframe.[2] The subsequent versions of the "same" ballet shed light on the different conditions of the reproductions in addition to representing limited resonances among the times and places that choose, in however varied forms, to stage a particular ballet.

By almost any measure—number of productions, number of cities in which it was staged, number of performances, number of spectators—*The Red Poppy* was the most successful ballet by a Soviet composer for the first half of the Soviet period. Its fame in the Bolshoi Theater repertoire may have been eclipsed by later Soviet ballets, especially *Spartacus*,[3] but even at the Bolshoi Theater, *The Red Poppy* set records for the number of performances exceeded by only a few prerevolutionary classics such as *Swan Lake*. This is astonishing when *The Red Poppy*'s seasons-in-repertoire are compared with *Swan Lake*. There is no season in this period when *Swan Lake* was not performed, while there were gaps between the

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[2] Analyzing different ballets that premiered within a short timeframe in relation to one another is a common methodological approach in ballet historiography. Much of the detailed historical research about ballet focuses on premieres without following particular ballets through later reproductions across time or space. See, for examples, Judith Chazin-Bennahum, *Dance in the Shadow of the Guillotine* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988) and Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). My project follows the "same" ballet over time as it was reproduced by generations of artists.

[3] *Spartak*, with choreography by Iurii Grigorovich, premiered at GABT on April 9, 1968: Gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii Bol'shoi teatr Rossii, "Spartak," Repertuar teatra, https://www.bolshoi.ru/performances/47/ (accessed September 9, 2019). There had been earlier versions of *Spartacus*, but Grigorovich's became the most famous and remains in the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire today, more fifty years after its premiere. For more on the different versions of *Spartacus*, see Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 201-231 and 270-271.

three versions of *The Red Poppy*. In fact, *Red Poppy/The Red Poppy/The Red Flower* was only in the Bolshoi Theater's repertoire for about eighteen years between 1927 and 1960. But when *The Red Poppy* was in the repertoire (especially the 1927 and 1949 versions), it was one of the most frequently-performed productions at the Bolshoi Theater. Because it was widely attended and repeatedly produced, *The Red Poppy* is an important touchstone for understanding Soviet ballet and Soviet culture.

The Red Poppy quickly became a Soviet classic. It was a ballet about international socialist revolution by Soviet artists for Soviet audiences. The ballet presented flawed and flattened representations of Chinese characters. And it presented Soviet audiences with Soviet characters in the persons of the Soviet Captain and Soviet sailors. It held up a mirror to Soviet people, reflecting their solidarity and revolutionary energy. More than reflecting, *The Red Poppy* amplified Soviet people's revolutionary spirit. Like socialist realism *avant la lettre*, the original production showed Soviet people as they should have been and as many wanted to be. The Bolshoi Theater's later productions aimed to keep refining the characters and the plot, to remake the revolutionary ballet from contemporary perspectives in 1949 and 1957. Therefore, the three productions embodied different periods in Soviet cultural life. The last production involved focused attempts to improve the embodiment and national spirit of the Chinese characters, to make them more realistic. But just as *La Bayadère* was not really about India or

for Indian audiences when it was staged at the Bol'shoi Kamennyi Teatr in St. Petersburg in 1877, none of the versions of *The Red Poppy* was really about China or for Chinese spectators. Fundamentally, *The Red Poppy* was about Soviet identity and Soviet artists' work to advance the genre of ballet and their society. Through productions and reproductions of *The Red Poppy* at the Bolshoi Theater, Soviet artists transformed the art form intimately associated with European courts of centuries past into an eminent embodiment of Soviet socialism.

Ballet may be the best example of Soviet efforts to transform an elite art form into a form of popular culture. There were many attempts to provide mass audiences with what Soviet leaders deemed to be the best European cultural traditions (and Soviet improvements on these traditions). This process in ballet was conspicuously successful. Soviet leaders wanted to transform ballet audiences. They opened the former Imperial Theaters of Opera and Ballet to working-class audiences and developed outreach strategies to engage mass audiences. They sponsored the creation of new ballets and new versions of existing ballets on the assumption that the right repertoire would transform Soviet citizens into builders of socialism. In the process, the pedagogical imperative for Soviet arts stimulated creativity in ballet and artists transformed the art itself. Soviet ballet told new kinds of stories and artists experimented with different corporeal methods for telling those stories. The results were ballets that were popular with and beloved by mass audiences.

Thirty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, ballet remains extremely popular in Russia. As choreographer Aleksei Miroshnichenko remarked in 2020, "Russia is a very balletic country, and there are musical theaters and ballet companies in many cities. It's a good inheritance that we have received from the Soviet Union."[4]

[4] Aleksei Miroshnichenko, interview by Alina Artes, "Aleksei Miroshnichenko: 'Artist baleta – est' to, chto on tantsuet'," Smotrim.ru, https://smotrim.ru/article/2489533 (accessed May 24, 2021).

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Appendix A

Libretto for *Red Poppy* (1927)

Red Poppy

a ballet in 3 acts, 8 scenes
with an apotheosis

composer
R. Glier

librettist
M. Kurilko

Dramatis Personae

Tao-Khoa:[1] an actress
Li Shan-fu: her fiancé
Chief overseer: her father

Hips: an Englishman, harbormaster
Captain of the Soviet ship
Manager of the restaurant and opium parlor
Two Chinese conspirators
An old Chinese magician
Magician's assistant
A boy, who announces acts at the Chinese theater

Coolies, policemen, overseers, Chinese women, English officers, courtesans, female dancers from Malaysia, Russian and other foreign sailors, errand boys, phoenixes, gods, goddesses, flowers, butterflies, grasshoppers, European women, lackeys, and others

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The libretto is taken from an illustrated booklet sold at the Bolshoi Theater in 1930, a copy of which is held at the A. A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatrical Museum (Gosudarstvennyi Tsentral'nyi Teatra'nyi Muzei imeni A. A. Bakhrushina f. 62, op. 1, d. 272, ll. 19-45).

[1] The heroine's name varies slightly in spelling in different versions of the libretto and other documents. Because the implications of the variations do not bear on my argument, and because the documentary sources for each production do not always agree on a single spelling, I will transliterate her name from Russian consistently as "Tao-Khoa" for all three productions of *Red Poppy/The Red Poppy/The Red Flower* at the Bolshoi Theater. Edward Tyerman discusses the possible etymologies associated with the name of the ballet's heroine ("Resignifying *The Red Poppy*: Internationalism and Symbolic Power in the Sino-Soviet Encounter," *Slavic and East European Journal* 61, no. 3 [2017], 454-458).

Act I

A Soviet ship arrives in a Chinese port. Gangplanks are lowered from the ship. The unloading proceeds. Chinese laborers (coolies) schlep the crates of freight under the supervision of overseers. To the audience's right, obscured by a folding panel shaped like a giant fan, there is a Chinese restaurant that is frequented by Europeans. Sailors, soldiers, and courtesans gather here. The manager of the restaurant summons Malaysian dancers to entertain his guests; eight scantily-clad young women appear and they dance. However, their performance is not particularly successful with the patrons of the restaurant. The latter disdainfully fling a handful of small change at the Malaysian dancers. The manager of the restaurant, feeling anxious about the reputation of his establishment, suggests a new entertainment to the Europeans.

Now Tao-Khoa herself appears to entertain them. Tao-Khoa is a famous Chinese performer, beloved by the entire city. This is clearly demonstrated as bearers arrive carrying a richly decorated palanquin. Parting the curtains, Tao-Khoa (her name means "red poppy" in Chinese) bows to acknowledge the people's applause. The bearers set the palanquin down in front of the restaurant. Europeans crowd around it with curiosity. Tao-Khoa steps out of the palanquin and dances a little dance of greeting with a fan in her hands. The Europeans are delighted. They lead her into the restaurant, treating her like a favorite toy. For her part, Tao-Khoa wants to see the Europeans' dances. Two young women oblige her with a

demonstration of a foxtrot. One sailor, who is more captivated than the others by Tao-Khoa, invites her to dance the foxtrot. Tao-Khoa accepts his invitation, but after just a few movements, she gets out of step and abandons the dance with a laugh. However, she knows her own dance. They invite her to entertain the restaurant's patrons, and she willingly banters with them.

At this moment a young Chinese man dressed in half-European attire enters the restaurant. This is Li Shan-fu, Tao-Khoa's fiancé. Li Shan-fu is a member of that breed who is ready for anything; one meets such people especially often in port cities, where the evil exponents of all nations have dealings with each other. Li Shan-fu even visited Europe, but the one thing that should be pointed out is what he took away from there: a thorough acquaintance with the negative side of European civilization. He ascends the steps of the restaurant and watches the exhilarated Tao-Khoa with a surly expression. In an instant, under his gaze, Tao-Khoa sheepishly crumples and takes on a humbled appearance. She was brought up amid old Chinese traditions. In accordance with this outlook, woman is an inferior being who should with all humility submit to the will of her male guardian. Li Shan-fu is Tao-Khoa's future husband, chosen by her father, and thus she is obligated to listen unquestioningly to him. She does not know of anything that she has done wrong, but under his gaze, she feels that he is somehow dissatisfied. However, from Li Shan-fu's perspective, this is simply a tactic, a method by which he keeps tabs on the power of his influence on Tao-Khoa. He does not have

anything against her selling her artistry to the patrons of the restaurant; he has secret agreements with the restaurant manager. Li Shan-fu would not think twice about selling his fiancée, if he was given a well-paying opportunity. The fan-shaped movable wall of the restaurant closes.

Meanwhile, as the Europeans, feeling themselves to be the masters of China, continue to amuse themselves, the real proprietors of the country, the Chinese, have to work. The unloading of the Soviet ship continues. The porter-coolies get tired; they move with difficulty. The overseers do not give them respite, flogging those coolies who, in the overseers' opinion, work too sluggishly. The senior overseer, a Chinese man in a white jacket, is Tao-Khoa's father. One of the coolies, whose strength is gone, falls. The overseers beat him in vain. He does not get up. The rest of the coolies try to intervene on behalf of their comrade, but the local Chinese police come to the assistance of the overseers. The coolies run to the Soviet ship with the request to stand up for them. The ruckus also attracts the attention of the harbormaster, the Englishman Hips. Hips offers his assistance to the Captain of the Soviet ship. In Hips's opinion, force is the only method to compel the "rebellious" coolies to again address themselves to the interrupted work. But the Captain maintains a different perspective. After talking with his sailors, he arranges with them that they will help the coolies. And just like that, at the Captain's whistle, the sailors form two living chains on the gangplanks and start to transfer crates from hand to hand. Instantly, the work goes faster because each

worker has to expend much less strength. Having recovered, the coolies in turn fall in to work under the protection of the Soviet sailors. Now, since they are not working under the cane, their work is much more productive. The unloading is quickly finished.

The Englishman Hips is very upset by the conduct of the Soviet sailors. He believes that it is the business of Europeans to rule and the business of the Chinese to work. Therefore, he wants to make sure that the Soviet sailors' example of a humane relationship toward the coolies does not exert a "corruptive influence" on the Chinese. However, Hips does not reveal to anyone his frustration with the Soviet Captain and in fact engages the Captain in an amiable conversation.

But the Soviet sailors' noble act did not make an impression only on the coolies—it also impressed Tao-Khoa. For the first time in her life, she saw that between Europeans and Chinese there could be relations not only of master and slaves but also comradely relations. She wants to somehow express to the Captain her great admiration for him. She showers him with flowers. The sincere Captain does not understand what is happening and throws off the flowers. Tao-Khoa again rushes up to him. Stepping in, Li Shan-fu roughly pulls Tao-Khoa aside. He is on board if she will pander to the restaurant's regular guests, but she should not flirt with this "Bolshevik." The fight between Tao-Khoa, who is trying to explain herself to the Captain, and Li Shan-fu, who is preventing her from making her point, takes the form of a half-classical, half-ballroom dance (*poluklassicheskogo,*

poluzhanrovogo tantsa) duet of bitterly warped poses. The Captain does not immediately observe what is going on between Tao-Khoa and Li Shan-fu, but when he does see that a strong man is beating a weak woman, he intercedes on behalf of the unfortunate Tao-Khoa.

Tao-Khoa dances for the guests in the restaurant. She performs a Siamese dance, wearing long golden fingernails on her fingers. The poses in her dance imitate statues of divine beings from old Buddhist traditions.

Then, she bids farewell to her audience, settles into her palanquin, and departs.

Evening. Darkness falls. The rested coolies are dancing. Chinese women wearing brightly-colored clothing and the scantily-clad Malaysian dancers join the coolies. Sailors on leave from some sort of trading vessel appear. On this type of ship, the crew is often mixed. One sailor is Japanese, another is Black, the third is Norwegian, the fourth—American, and the fifth has a wild look about him, wearing an inside-out fur pelt. He is a native of one of the Melanesian islands. They dance. The Russian sailors cannot contain themselves. They slide down from the ship along the ropes and break into the crowd. For their turn, the Soviet sailors plunge into a dance to the song "The Little Apple" ("*Iablochko*").

Act II

Scene One

A Chinese opium parlor. The same owner manages the restaurant for the Europeans and this opium den. The smoking parlor is even connected to the restaurant. Chinese errand boys (that is, children who are flunkies) scurry about, getting the place ready. Dancers gather for rehearsal. While waiting for Tao-Khoa to arrive, they look over pictures embroidered on silk. Tao-Khoa appears. She rehearses a dance with her friends. After they leave, Hips enters. Out of concern for "the vicious influence of the Bolsheviks" on the Chinese, he prepares to get rid of the Captain of the Soviet ship. But he would prefer that this be done by someone else's hands. Everything has already been thought through. They will entice the Captain to the opium den and stab him to death. The perpetrators will be Li Shan-fu, the chief overseer (Tao-Khoa's father), and two other Chinese men, one a nationalist and the other the old actor-magician. Tao-Khoa should lure the Captain in. Having arranged everything, Hips leaves for the restaurant to await the showdown.

The Captain strolls along the shore with a few sailors. Tao-Khoa, not suspecting the conspirators' true intention, invites the Captain into the opium parlor. Her mission seems a convenient extra opportunity to see the person whom she already loves, even as she does not yet fully understand her own feelings for the Captain. The conspirators tasked Tao-Khoa with charming the Soviet Captain.

This goal accords with Tao-Khoa's own wish to show the Captain how fond she is of him; an order for charm transforms into authentic enchantment.

The conspirators make it appear that they just happen to be patrons of the smoking parlor, however Li Shan-fu needs a pretext to attack the Captain. He has already seen that the Soviet Captain does not tolerate strong people treating badly weaker ones. Li Shan-fu hits Tao-Khoa, figuring that the Captain will intervene on behalf of a young woman being beaten. Li Shan-fu's assumption is correct. The Captain flings Li Shan-fu away from Tao-Khoa. Then, armed with knives and as if coming to the defense of their comrade, the conspirators throw themselves at the Captain. At the deciding moment, though, Tao-Khoa places her body in front of the Captain, giving him time to whistle for the sailors who were walking nearby. The Captain is saved. Hips appears. Seeing that the assassination attempt had failed, he did not betray his frustration to anyone. One might suppose that he is genuinely happy to meet the Soviet Captain by how amicably he takes the Captain's hand. They depart.

The conspirators are annoyed with Tao-Khoa for having fouled up their plan. They set Li Shan-fu against her. He beats her savagely. She sinks to the mat, letting her hands fall to the floor and burying her face in them. Hips appears again. Observing the European figure, the Chinese again take hold of their knives. They think that it is the Captain. Upon seeing Hips, they stow away their weapons. The

Englishman calms them down. He makes the point that overt action will not do. Hips has another method of running the Captain out of town.

The conspirators leave. The old Chinese actor consoles Tao-Khoa, who is crying. He orders the manager of the smoking parlor to bring a pipe with opium. Tao-Khoa settles herself more cozily on the cushions. She and the old actor smoke and drift off to sleep.

Scene Two

The next scenes represent Tao-Khoa's dream. Her first visions are hazy. It seems to her that she is submerged in water. Gigantic shadows of fish flicker in front of her. They zigzag back and forth, faster and faster. Then everything becomes blurry, blends together, and goes dark.

Scene Three

Now, Tao-Khoa dreams of an old temple. In the depths of the temple, there is a colossal figure of Buddha. In the corners, there are four fantastically decorated pagodas in which stand statues of goddesses. Tao-Khoa sees how the goddesses come to life, step off of their pedestals, and dance. When they return to their niches, a festive procession appears. Men and women in rich, ancient attire march forth ceremoniously. The participants in the procession carry on their shoulders a representation of an enormous dragon, just as might have been seen not so long ago in Chinese folk festivals. Tao-Khoa sees herself. They are carrying her in a sedan chair. Little by little, the procession loses its unhurried character. The

participants step more quickly. The men perform a war dance with swords. The movements of the dancers gradually become faster. They more ferociously brandish their weapons. But again, everything darkens, merges together, and Tao-Khoa sees a different scene.

Scene Four

The dream leads her farther and farther away. She is dreaming that she wants to visit the far West, where ancient Chinese legends locate the kingdom of happiness, the kingdom of fairies who live in the "lunar palaces" by jaspidean lakes. She is already close to the kingdom of happiness. She sees a strange valley in the mountains. One after another, phoenixes (legendary birds of Chinese tales) flit through the valley. In the dream, it seems to Tao-Khoa that the phoenixes resemble people. Men in blue and green tights portray the phoenixes. On their backs they have fixed, colorful wings. Tao-Khoa also sees herself in this valley. But the phoenixes block her path at every turn. They gather around and enclose her in a living chain. This battle with the phoenixes takes the form of a grand classical dance with four cavaliers.

Scene Five

After all this, Tao-Khoa manages to get to the western kingdom of happiness. It is a marvelous, light-filled garden. There, there are gods and goddesses in golden headdresses and clothing of delicate colors, pale pinks and dark blues. The garden is full of flowers, butterflies, and grasshoppers. But every flower, every insect, here

has the face and body of human. Little dandelions look like children. Some wear their yellow crowns like wide-brimmed hats, while others in full bloom remind one of powder puffs. Poppies and lotuses emerge from the earth, and coming to life, transform into young women. The poppies have red skirts, and the lotuses have white ones. Flowers, butterflies, and gods dance. Tao-Khoa is most captivated by the dance of one of the gods. He appears, preceded by four boys clothed in light blue and yellow. The god himself is dressed the same as the boys. During his dance, he folds himself in half while jumping and bends so far back that his feet almost touch the nape of his neck; he hovers in the air with his legs drawn to the side. But even in this kingdom of happiness, Tao-Khoa does not find serenity. First of all, the phoenixes fly here, too, chasing her. Second, she notices that only the red poppies seem to sympathize with her. All of the rest of the flowers and the insects, too, side with the phoenixes. Therefore, every time Tao-Khoa manages to free herself from the phoenixes, the red poppies raise their heads, and the rest of the flowers droop. On the other hand, when the phoenixes are celebrating, the other flowers are also jubilant. Tao-Khoa's dream concludes with a symbolic vision: a junk rises from the cliffs into the sky, a ship with red sails. As the junk rises higher, the butterflies, gods, goddesses, and flowers lower their heads. Only the poppies stretch their arms toward the ship.

All of these visions from Tao-Khoa's dream, according to the author of the libretto and the producers of the ballet, are supposed to illustrate in vivid form Tao-

Khoa's internal struggle, that dissonance in her inner world, which materialized as a result of the influence of meeting the Soviet Captain. The bonds of religious belief and popular superstitions press upon her. The producers tried to show this in several purely symbolic scenes: the procession to the Buddhist temple supposedly reveals to the audience that the living roots of old religion are still to be found in Tao-Khoa's soul, the phoenixes should represent ancestral traditions that inhibit Tao-Khoa's instincts toward freedom, the red poppies should stand for a revolutionary new beginning, and the butterflies, lotuses, grasshoppers, and the rest typify all that is obsolete in China.

Act III

Evening at the harbormaster's party. Elegant ladies and their officers dance the Charleston.

European and Chinese actors were invited to entertain the guests.

Among the Chinese entertainers, a European cabaret singer performs. The lackeys carry her in on a huge platter. The audience clearly prefers her tango to the Chinese acts.

The ball resumes. Ladies and English officers dance a Boston waltz. As they dance, they exit to another hall. Hips is left alone. He waits for the arrival of the Chinese conspirators. They are arranging to poison the Captain of the Soviet ship during the Chinese tea ceremony. Hips and Li Shan-fu slip behind the screens and

the Englishman pours poison into the teacup which is destined for the Captain. Tao-Khoa, concealing herself behind another screen, overhears their agreement and sees what they are doing. She is horrified. But her terror grows when her father and fiancé tell her that she is the one who must give the poisoned tea to the Captain.

An agonizing internal battle ensues between the deep-seated custom requiring Tao-Khoa to obey her father and fiancé and fear for her beloved Captain. Hips manages to rationalize her hesitation. He reasons like a true Englishman: he believes in the all-powerful effectiveness of gold. One can buy any person, and a person of the "inferior races," such as a Chinese person, can be compelled to do anything for money. It seems to Hips that this is why Tao-Khoa hesitates—she does not know how she will be rewarded for her service. In order to overcome Tao-Khoa's indecision, he shows her the jeweled signet ring shining on his hand and places the ring on her finger.

Tao-Khoa mechanically accepts his gift. The conspirators are convinced that Hips has won Tao-Khoa over to their side.

The Soviet sailors appear, led by their Captain. They are invited to the party. Recognizing Tao-Khoa, the Captain exchanges friendly greetings with her and is about to walk on when Tao-Khoa stops him.

The Captain tells the sailors that he will catch up with them presently, and he alone remains there with Tao-Khoa. Tao-Khoa implores him not to attend the

party. She tells him of her love. Kneeling before him, she begs the Captain to carry her with him and away from China. The Captain pities her as he would a child. He explains that he cannot return her feelings. He is destined for another duty; his mission is to serve the revolution. Trying to make himself clear, he plucks a red poppy from a bouquet of flowers and raises it like a banner.

Meanwhile, the preparations for the "tea ceremony" begin. A great many nattily attired servants, with innumerable gestures and bows, hand cups around to the guests. Tao-Khoa should present tea to the Captain because he is the honored guest. Hips informs the Captain that the ceremony is very complicated and invites him to feast his eyes on it, insisting that the Chinese tea ceremony is a unique art blessed by eternal traditions. This is the Captain's first tea ceremony, so he curiously observes Tao-Khoa's movements. But to the Chinese conspirators and Hips, it is clear that the ceremony is taking too long. Tao-Khoa flirtatiously dances in front of the Captain, offering him the cup but quickly pulling it back as soon as he tries to take it from her hand. She tries everything she can to postpone the deciding moment. She comes closer to the group of Chinese conspirators, among whom are her father and her fiancé, and implores them with a look to rescue her from this dreadful responsibility. But they sweetly smile and at the same time discreetly threaten her. Finally, Tao-Khoa hands the cup to the Captain. He is already touching the poison to his lips, when at the last instant Tao-Khoa knocks the cup from his hand. General pandemonium. Li Shan-fu, seeing that the

assassination attempt has failed, on a furious impulse, shoots at the Captain, but he misses. Protecting their Captain, the Soviet sailors flee. There is complete panic among the guests. Hips calls over his personal aide and gives him orders. The aide summons officers and marches away at their head. The women, left without their partners and seeing that the ballroom has suddenly transformed into a military camp, run away. Rebellious Chinese partisans known as the "Red Spears" infiltrate the mansion undetected.[2]

Tao-Khoa, climbing on the guard rail, looks out to sea. She sees the Soviet ship in the harbor and watches as it raises its anchor and departs for the open ocean. Tao-Khoa is happy that the Captain is safe.

At this moment, Li Shan-fu notices Tao-Khoa. Beside himself with fury and believing it to be entirely her fault that the assassination attempt on the Captain failed, he shoots at her. She is mortally wounded. The conspirators run, except for Tao-Khoa's father.

Hips's mansion is taken over by the destitute Chinese people. The "Red Spears," among whom are many people who knew and loved Tao-Khoa as an

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[2] The Red Spears were groups of peasant rebels active mostly in Northern China, especially in the 1920s. Elizabeth J. Perry writes that "[t]he name 'Red Spears' referred to the most common weapon of the group: a wooden spear to which was affixed a decorative red tassel" (153). I am grateful to Lucille Chia for clarifying the appropriate translation of the rebel groups' name into English and for directing me to Perry's book. For more on the Red Spears's origins and activities, see Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), especially Chapter 5. For earlier Soviet understanding of the Red Spears, see *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia* (1937), s.v. "*krasnye piki*," https://dlib.rsl.ru/viewer/01008005019#?page=343 and https://dlib.rsl.ru/viewer/01008005019#?page=344 (accessed November 25, 2018).

actress, pick up her body and place it on a palanquin, covered by a red banner. Children surround the palanquin. Recovering consciousness, Tao-Khoa turns to the children. She tells them about revolution, about that which has gained momentum. She tells them that they should fight for freedom and, fishing the red poppy that the Captain gave her out of her tunic, she bestows the flower upon the children. This flower now acquires the significance of a revolutionary emblem and the child to whom Tao-Khoa gives the flower hold it in his hands, just like a red flag. Tao-Khoa dies.

As a result of the death of his daughter, Tao-Khoa's father reaches a breaking point. He joins the revolutionaries.

The apotheosis represents the future triumph of the Chinese proletariat. An enormous red poppy lights up in the sky. Multitudes of poor Chinese people, liberated from the Europeans' power, move toward the red poppy. From above onto the palanquin with Tao-Khoa's body pour the petals of countless red poppies.

Appendix B

Libretto for *The Red Poppy* (1949)

The Red Poppy[1]

A Ballet in 3 Acts, 13 Scenes

Composer
R. M. Glier

Librettists
M. I. Kurilko and V. D. Tikhomirov

Act I

Scene 1

The ballet is set in the 1930s in a large port on the Chinese coast. Beyond the stone parapet stretches the dark blue, mirror-like surface of the gulf. Harbor buildings tower all around.

Longshoremen are busy putting goods that had been delivered by an American ship into warehouses. Overseers urge the coolies on. The workers are worn out by hunger and the back-breaking work.

A group of foreign "masters" of China—American and English officers accompanied by richly attired ladies, businessmen who are leaders of concessions and banks—arrive via rickshaws at the waterfront restaurant. The brazen American

[1] This libretto is translated from a booklet sold at the Bolshoi Theater in 1954, a copy of which is held at the Russian State Archive for Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva f. 648, op. 7, d. 388, ll. 32-37ob). This booklet does not contain a list of characters at the beginning.

Boss stands out among those arriving. Li Shan-fu, a rich Chinese businessman and reactionary who is the proprietor of the city's entertainment establishments, bows before the Boss with singular obsequiousness and plenty of courtesies. Li Shan-fu carries out the Boss's special assignments.

Work at the port continues. The exhausted coolies carry innumerable crates with labels from American trading companies. The managers in charge of the arriving goods look on with satisfaction as the crates disappear one after another into the depths of the warehouses.

It is as if everything is calm at the port. But if you really look closely at the expression on the faces of the coolies and catch the looks that they throw at the Boss and Li Shan-fu, it will become clear how great a loathing the coolies have for these "gentlemen." And especially audacious and telling is the face of the young coolie Ma Li-chen. His face expresses not only hatred but also brave resolve to fight.

There is a brief lull in the unloading. A palanquin appears on the square in front of the restaurant. The workers' beloved actress, Tao-Khoa, emerges from the palanquin. She sweetly and affably exchanges greetings with the dockworkers. Every one of the coolies wants to shake her hand, say a few words, and express his affections. Tao-Khoa lingers a little longer near Ma Li-chen—evidently, they are bound by some common interests. Li Shan-fu approaches Tao-Khoa. Seizing her

roughly by the hand, he shoves Tao-Khoa toward the doors of the restaurant: the Boss himself wishes to see her dance.

The activities at the port carry on as usual. The line of coolies undulates, the men bent double under the heavy freight. One of the coolies falls beneath his burden. The overseers mercilessly beat the worker who has fallen, forcing him to get up. Ma Li-chen and his friends witness this. They stand shoulder-to-shoulder in front of the enraged overseers, defending their comrade. Warily, ready for pushback, the coolies gather around. The overseers are forced to fall back.

Ma Li-chen lifts the load under which his comrade had fallen and throws it to the ground. The big crate labeled "cigarettes" splinters and... out of the crate tumble American carbine rifles. Stunned by this sight, the coolies stand frozen in consternation. So those are the kinds of goods the American bosses are importing to China. That's the kind of fate the Americans are preparing for the coolies' homeland.

In a blistering rage, Ma Li-chen addresses the coolies. He calls for them to strike. All of the coolies, as one, unite behind their leader. The dockworkers go on strike.

Scene 2

Inside the waterfront restaurant. Here Li Shan-fun entertains his foreign allies and benefactors with dances by Malaysian performers. But parking themselves at the tables, these "bearers of Western civilization" are more interested

in themselves, their ladies, and their alcoholic beverages. After the Malaysian dancers, Tao-Khoa performs. The restaurant's regular customers are also indifferent and impassive to Tao-Khoa's dance, which is suffused with elegance and expressivity.

However, the Boss himself is interested in Tao-Khoa herself and expresses the desire to meet her. Li Shan-fu sycophantically prods Tao-Khoa toward the Boss's table. Tao-Khoa strains with all her might to leave the restaurant, but Li Shan-fu prevents this by blocking her path. Barely concealing her revulsion, Tao-Khoa is forced to pair off with the Boss to take part in the collective dancing.

Appearing unexpectedly, the harbormaster informs the Boss of the Soviet vessel's approach.

Scene 3

Outside again on the square in the port city. In the harbor stands the Soviet ship delivering grain, a present from the Soviet trade unions to the starving Chinese workers. The square is empty. The police scared the people away. But little by little, by groups and individuals, people filter into the square. These are the city's poor, workers, and peasants, coming to see the Soviet ship and—importantly—the people from the Soviet Union. The policemen surveille their every step.

The Boss and Li Shan-fu leave the restaurant, accompanied by their accomplices. They watch the Soviet ship with undisguised hatred. At Li Shan-fu's instruction, the harbormaster goes up to the Captain of the Soviet ship and, with

malicious joy, informs the Captain that the dockworkers are on strike and there is no one to unload the Soviet ship.

The Boss and Li Shan-fu scrutinize the Soviet Captain. They are focused on one goal: to provoke an incident with the Russians.

But the Soviet Captain quickly makes a decision. At his signal, a team of Soviet sailors rushes out on the deck and down the gangway. They set to work unloading their own ship. The sailors pass sacks of grain from hand to hand.

The Chinese people observe with joyful amazement the harmonious, organized work of the Soviet people. Unwittingly, each Chinese person thinks about his own forced labor.

More and more people gather at the port. The police are not in a position to deter them. General joyfulness emerges among the Chinese workers as they welcome the bounty from the Soviet trade unions. Ma Li-chen breaks away from the group of striking workers and, on behalf of his comrades, asks the Soviet Captain for permission to participate in the unloading. The coolies join the Soviet sailors. The vigorous, sprightly work is in full swing.

The coolies present the Soviet Captain with their humble gift—a basket of fruit—as a sign of appreciation and love for the Soviet people. It is time for a break in the work. The Chinese people express to the Soviet sailors their feelings of love and friendship.

Tao-Khoa watches everything that is happening with extraordinarily joyful excitement. The Soviet "small land" (*"malaia zemlia"*) and Soviet people reveal before her eyes a new world—a world of humaneness and unity. In these moments, Tao-Khoa feels a yearning for freedom awaken in her soul. Tao-Khoa goes up to the Soviet Captain and expresses to him her gratitude for the happiness and joy that he had brought to her people.

The Chinese people ask Tao-Khoa to dance in honor of the Soviet guests, and Tao-Khoa gladly agrees. She performs the "dance with the golden fingernails," eliciting exuberant applause from those in attendance. Li Shan-fu approaches Tao-Khoa and presents her with a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the Boss, who had seen her dance.

The Soviet Captain beckons to a flower seller. He selects a big red poppy from her basket and presents this flower to Tao-Khoa. With an expression full of joy and gratitude, Tao-Khoa accepts the Soviet Captain's priceless gift. She presses the red poppy to her heart.

The coolies enter the middle of the square, led by Ma Li-chen. They perform for the Soviet sailors a dance full of unbridled intensity and passion, each movement conveying the will of the Chinese people for independence and freedom and their determination to fight.

In response, the Soviet sailors perform the beloved sailors' dance known as "The Little Apple" ("*Iablochko*"), an exhilarating dance suffused with displays of

Russian courage and strength. "The Little Apple" evokes an enormous surge of optimism in the Chinese people.

In an instant, the whole square comes together in a mass dance of friendship. It is a joyous meeting of the Chinese working people with people from the land of Soviets.

Act II

Scene 1

Tao-Khoa's room, which opens into a small garden. Tao-Khoa is alone. She sits lost in thought, remembering the recent events, how dramatically her life has been stirred up. She goes to the vase in which the red poppy stands and takes in her hand the flower that was given to her by the Soviet Captain. The images of Soviet people, imbued with sincere, lofty beauty and nobility, form in her memory.

Ma Li-chen comes into the room from outside. Exchanging greetings with Tao-Khoa, he hands her a package of revolutionary leaflets. Tao-Khoa hides the leaflets, then with a glance to Ma Li-chen indicates the door to the next room—there, Ma Li-chen can hold a meeting of the striking workers. Ma Li-chen conceals himself behind the woven wall-hangings.

A group of girls, Tao-Khoa's students, comes into the room. Their dancing lesson begins. The girls try hard to imitate Tao-Khoa's graceful movements. While

the lesson is going on, a few of Ma Li-chen's comrades in revolutionary work pass through the room and on into the room next door to join Ma Li-chen.

The girls leave. Tao-Khoa is alone again. She picks up the red poppy and gazes at it thoughtfully.

Li Shan-fu slips into the room without a sound. His accomplices wait outside. Li Shan-fu sneaks up on Tao-Khoa. He sees the red poppy in her hand, the gift from the Soviet Captain. In a blazing rage, Li Shan-fu rips the red poppy from Tao-Khoa's hands and throws it on the floor. In fury, Li Shan-fu threatens Tao-Khoa. Tao-Khoa breaks loose from his hands and runs for the exit, but there she is met by Li Shan-fu's sinister accomplices. Some coolies who are passing by the house save Tao-Khoa from assault at the hands of Li Shan-fu's posse.

The Boss appears. Li Shan-fu rushes up to the Boss with the red poppy in his hands. His whole body trembles with hatred as he explains to his master how Tao-Khoa cherishes and preserves this blossom, this symbol of conflict. The Boss nods his head knowingly—he shares Li Shan-fu's hatred and indignation.

Like a person possessed, Li Shan-fu whips out a knife and impales the red poppy with it; his accomplices join him. This is a conspiracy against the Chinese people, against the Soviet Captain; it is a vow to fight to the death against the ideas of freedom and peace. The Boss expresses his approval: Li Shan-fu correctly understands the intention of his master.

Tao-Khoa, fulfilling the requirement of hospitality, serves the Boss a cup of tea. With one look at this cup, a thought emerges from the depths of the Boss's mind. He throws a significant look at Li Shan-fu. They understand each other. The Boss leaves, accompanied by Li Shan-fu's accomplices.

Li Shan-fu remains with Tao-Khoa. He gives free rein to his raging fury.

Suddenly, the door bursts open and Ma Li-chen comes into view. Seeing the rugged figure of the young coolie, Li Shan-fu runs out of the room. Ma Li-chen summons his friends from the other room. They console Tao-Khoa warmly and tenderly and then bid her farewell. Tao-Khoa remains alone. After everything that has happened, all her strength is gone. Wanting to distract her thoughts, she places the little aquarium on a small table and feeds the fish. In a half-conscious state, she stares at the green water, at the pearly glints of the swimming fish. Everything swims before her eyes. Tao-Khoa drifts off to sleep.

Scene 2

Tao-Khoa dreams that she is alone and helpless, standing alone under a sky as black as an abyss. A beast sneaks up to an enormous copper gong, which resembles the moon, and strikes it. Beneath the moaning strokes of the gong, a ghastly procession appears. Fearsome, grotesque images advance one after another. The dark, terrifying past of Feudal China—a kingdom characterized by lawlessness, privation, and iniquity—can be understood through these images. A

dragon-person, the sovereign of this kingdom, appears carried on an enormous shield. And Tao-Khoa recognizes in the dragon-person traces of Li Shan-fu.

Terrifying and wild, like a nightmare, the movements of the dance of the forces of darkness become sharper and more monstrous. Li Shan-fu's minions drive the procession of exhausted people onward. Li Shan-fu torments the poor enslaved folk...

And suddenly a bright ray of sun pierces the hopelessness of the dark kingdom. A radiant, sunlit youth flies through the sky. At the head of his own army of light, the youth boldly invades the kingdom of darkness. Tao-Khoa recognizes in the youth Ma Li-chen. The army of light swoops down fearlessly on Li Shan-fu and his dark forces. A fierce battle ensues. Ma Li-chen and his comrades in arms win; the dark forces are driven out. The dark kingdom of Feudal China recedes into the past. Ma Li-chen and his soldiers perform a celebratory victory dance.

Scene 3

And later in Tao-Khoa's dream: everything is awash in sunlight. A broad, multi-colored rainbow stretches across the clear morning sky. Tao-Khoa is among Ma Li-chen's soldiers of light. Ma Li-chen meets her, extending his hands, and together with him she rejoices in the victory of light over darkness, freedom over oppression.

Scene 4

Ma Li-chen brings Tao-Khoa to an enchanted garden full of marvelous flowers and trees. The free and joyful Tao-Khoa and her girlfriends dance for the victorious warriors. Her dreams have come true: a kingdom of friendship and happiness had come to be. And she sees a fantastically wonderful red poppy blossom as bright as a flame illuminating people with the light of joy and freedom.

Scene 5

The visions of the dream fade away. Tao-Khoa sits at the little table with her face pressed against the aquarium. Ma Li-chen arrives with his friends, waking Tao-Khoa from her dream.

Act III

Scene 1

The European sector of the city. Night. Dancing couples can be seen through the grand, brightly lit windows of a mansion. Muffled sounds of the Charleston can be heard.

On the street, there is an uneasy, tense stillness. A tight cluster of rickshaw drivers sits under a large tree. They are quietly discussing something. Coolies, Ma Li-chen's comrades, join the rickshaw drivers.

Li Shan-fu's friends are arriving at the entrance to the mansion. Coming from the opposite direction are foreign officers leaving the mansion. The officers summon rickshaws and drive away.

Ma Li-chen appears. He approaches the group of rickshaw drivers and calls upon them to join the battle against oppression. The coolies and rickshaw drivers listen hungrily to his words, their faces full of determination.

A rickshaw rushes up to the mansion. Its passenger—the Boss—is grim and frustrated. When the rickshaw driver requests payment for the trip, in irritation, the Boss slaps the driver's face with his glove.

At the entrance to the mansion, squirming sycophantically, Li Shan-fu meets the Boss; together with his master, Li Shan-fu disappears through the doors.

Ma Li-chen draws himself up to his full height and points to the lit windows of the mansion. He indicates to the rickshaw drivers and coolies that there—there is being organized a conspiracy against their homeland, against the working people. And everyone, following their leader, turns faces blazing with hatred toward the mansion. At this moment, the Boss appears on the balcony. Searchingly, anxiously he peers down below. The gazes of the workers and the Boss meet.

AT THE FRONT OF THE STAGE: Ma Li-chen runs along the street in the dark. Carefully glancing around, he pastes up a revolutionary proclamation.

Scene 2

The town square, on which has been erected a folk theater. Ma Li-chen appears.

After a moment, the Boss, Li Shan-fu, and their associates enter the theater. All of them settle down on the right side.

The Soviet Captain arrives at the square with a group of sailors. The Boss courteously greets the Soviet Captain, who politely replies.

The Chinese people joyfully welcome the Soviet guests. The Soviet Captain and sailors settle into the best seats to the left of the theater's stage.

The performance begins with the nimble "Dance with a Ribbon." After that are the "Dance with Small Drums" and the virtuosic "Acrobat's Dance."

Amid general shouts of appreciation from the audience, the master of ceremonies announces Tao-Khoa's dance. The people's dancer performs the "Dance with a Parasol" which elicits tumultuous applause from the spectators.

The performance is over, and the spectators get up from their seats. At this moment, a mysterious masked actor appears from behind the curtain. He performs a dance interlude.

An image of an enslaved coolie, overcome by perpetual servitude, materializes before the audience. He is replaced with a sharply satirical image of a capitalist, a foreign "master" of China. Indignant at this display, the Boss and his retinue leave the theater in anger. The masked actor's characterizations are

suffused with thought and feeling, yielding a lifelike portrayal. The Chinese people receive each movement of the artist with screams of approval and thunderous ovations. The Soviet guests also properly honor the actor's artistry.

The actor throws off his mask, and everyone recognizes that it's Ma Li-chen, the leader of the local people's fight for emancipation, a person beloved and respected by the working masses. Ma Li-chen concludes his inspired performance with a fervent call to revolution, to the overthrow of domination by foreign and domestic bourgeoisie.

AT THE FRONT OF THE STAGE: The Boss and Li Shan-fu are full of anger and spite. They understand that the situation is critical for them, and they are looking for a way out. In pairs, young women carrying cups of tea pass by the Boss and Li Shan-fu. The young women are on their way to the theater for a tea ceremony in honor of the Soviet guests. Li Shan-fu stops one of the young women and takes the cup from her. The young women exit.

The Boss and Li Shan-fu move to the side. The Boss holds the cup. Li Shan-fu pours poison into it. Tao-Khoa observes this scene.

Li Shan-fu calls Tao-Khoa over and orders her to serve the cup with poison to the Soviet Captain. At first, Tao-Khoa does not believe her eyes. Then, she throws herself at Li Shan-fu and the Boss, pleading with them. But they are adamant in their decision. They insist. Tao-Khoa is to serve the poison. The Boss and Li Shan-fu exit. Tao-Khoa remains alone in despair and horror.

Scene 3

Back to the folk theater in the square. The Boss and Li Shan-fu return to the folk theater. The group of young women bearing cups of tea enters. Li Shan-fu, calling Tao-Khoa over, gives her the cup with poison in it and orders her to serve the poisoned cup of tea to the Soviet Captain. Tao-Khoa refuses. Li Shan-fu stands firm, and Tao-Khoa takes the cup in her hands. Her dance with the tea cup expresses mortal terror and disarray of the soul.

She hands the cup to the Soviet Captain, who watches her attentively and then turns a searching gaze toward the Boss. The Boss calmly returns the Soviet Captain's look. Tao-Khoa's eyes say more than words and the Soviet Captain with a sharp motion thrusts the cup to the ground.

All of the people leap to their feet in enormous excitement. Everyone's eyes search for the criminal who had nearly deprived the Chinese people's friend, the Soviet Captain, of his life. Ma Li-chen points his finger at the Boss and Li Shan-fu, "It's them!"

AT THE FRONT OF THE STAGE: In confusion and fear, the Boss and Li Shan-fu run down the street. Their malicious plot is exposed. They save themselves from the people's anger. The Boss halts Li Shan-fu: "We need to destroy Ma Li-chen by any means necessary." Li Shan-fu prepares for this. He dresses himself in a coolie's jacket and hides a revolver in his pocket.

Scene 4

The port. Night. The revolution has begun in the city. The police forces run about all discombobulated. Ma Li-chen runs through with his militant comrades. The square of the port city empties out. With precise steps, the Soviet Captain and a group of Soviet sailors march toward the dock. The return to their ship, ready to depart. Tao-Khoa runs after them. She has in her hands the Soviet Captain's gift: the red poppy blossom. Tao-Khoa catches up to the Captain. In these brief moments, she wants to communicate to her friend, the person from the Soviet land, everything that fills her heart. She wants to tell the Captain about how, in him, for the first time in her life she encountered a friend of downtrodden and oppressed people. She shows the Captain the red poppy, which she will cherish as a dear memento of the Soviet people, as a symbol of faith in the bright future for the Chinese people. The Soviet Captain tenderly bids farewell to Tao-Khoa. He and his sailors depart.

The uprising in the city spreads. The unlucky foreign "masters" flee the city in a panic. The military officers and policemen run, dropping their weapons. A crowd of revolutionaries bursts onto the square. Ma Li-chen leads them with a red flag in his hands. With delight and admiration, Tao-Khoa welcomes more and more crowds of people to the square. Raising himself up onto the barricade, Ma Li-chen addresses the people, "We won! Power is in our hands!" And at that moment, concealed behind the backs of the workers, Li Shan-fu appears in

disguise. Raising the revolver, he aims at Ma Li-chen. Tao-Khoa sees what Li Shan-fu is about to do and at the moment of the shot, she throws herself toward Ma Li-chen, shielding him with her body. She falls, the casualty of the traitor's bullet. Dozens of hands catch her. Li Shan-fu is arrested. Surrounded by the people, pressing to her chest the prized red poppy, the people's heroine Tao-Khoa expires. The people silently bow before her on their knees. Ma Li-chen is the first from the crowd to rise. In the name of Tao-Khoa, who died for the happiness of the people, Ma Li-chen vows to lead the fight for the people's emancipation to a victorious conclusion. The revolutionaries surround him in steely resolve.

Scene 5

Years have passed. The great Chinese people achieved their historic victory, freeing their homeland from oppression by the foreign and domestic bourgeoisie. The free people, brave and majestic in their intensity and power, stand under the national flag of democratic China.

Appendix C

Libretto for *The Red Flower* (1957)

The Red Flower[1]

A Ballet in 3 Acts, 13 Scenes

Composer
R. Glier

Librettists
M. Kurilko and V. Tikhomirov

Act I

Scene 1

The ballet is set in the 1920s in a large port on the Chinese coast. Beyond the stone parapet stretches the dark blue, mirror-like surface of the gulf. Harbor buildings tower all around.

Longshoremen are busy putting goods that had been delivered by an European ship into a warehouse. Overseers urge the coolies on. The workers are worn out by hunger and the back-breaking work.

A group of foreign "masters" of China—businessmen who are leaders of concessions and banks, accompanied by richly attired ladies—arrive via rickshaws at the waterfront restaurant. Li Shan-fu, a Chinese businessman who is the

[1] This libretto is translated from a booklet held at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva f. 3045, op. 1, d. 309). The booklet was printed in a run of 10,000 copies in November 1957 (l. 9ob.).

proprietor of the city's entertainment establishments, bows before the Boss with singular obsequiousness and plenty of courtesies. Li Shan-fu carries out the Boss's special assignments.

Work at the port continues. The exhausted coolies carry the innumerable crates from foreign trading companies. The managers in charge of the arriving goods watch with satisfaction as the crates disappear one after another into the depths of the warehouses.

It is as if everything is calm at the port. But if you really look closely at the expression on the faces of the coolies and catch the looks that they throw at the Boss and Li Shan-fu, it will become clear how great a loathing the coolies have for the masters. And especially audacious and telling is the face of the young coolie Van Li-chen. His face expresses not only hatred but also brave resolve to fight.

There is a brief lull in the unloading. A palanquin appears on the square in front of the restaurant. The workers' beloved actress, Tao-Khoa, emerges from the palanquin. She sweetly and affably exchanges greetings with the dockworkers. Every one of the coolies wants to shake her hand, say a few words, and express his affections. Tao-Khoa lingers near Van Li-chen—an intense feeling connects them. But Li Shan-fu approaches Tao-Khoa. Seizing her roughly by the hand, he shoves Tao-Khoa toward the doors of the restaurant: the Boss himself wishes to see her dance. Tao-Khoa exits. Van Li-chen and his comrades need her help. She must be obedient.

The activities at the port carry on as usual. The line of coolies undulates, the men bent double under the heavy freight. One of the coolies falls beneath his burden. The overseers mercilessly beat the worker who has fallen, forcing him to get up. Van Li-chen and his friends witness this. They stand shoulder-to-shoulder in front of the enraged overseers, defending their comrade. Warily, ready for pushback, the coolies gather around. The overseers are forced to fall back.

Van Li-chen lifts the load under which his comrade had fallen and throws it to the ground. The big crate labeled "cigarettes" splinters and... out of the crate tumble carbine rifles. Stunned by this sight, the coolies stand frozen in consternation. So, those are the kinds of goods the foreign bosses are importing to China. That's the kind of fate they are preparing for the Chinese people.

Van Li-chen calls for the coolies to strike. All of the coolies, as one, unite behind their leader. The longshoremen and dockworkers go on strike.

Scene 2

Inside the waterfront restaurant. Here Li Shan-fun entertains his foreign allies and benefactors with dances by Malaysian performers. But parking themselves at the tables, these "bearers of Western civilization" are more interested in themselves, their ladies, and their alcoholic beverages.

After the Malaysian dancers, Tao-Khoa performs. The restaurant's regular customers are also indifferent and impassive to Tao-Khoa's dance. However, the Boss is interested in Tao-Khoa herself. Li Shan-fu sycophantically prods Tao-Khoa

toward the Boss's table. Tao-Khoa wants to leave the restaurant, but Li Shan-fu blocks her path. Barely concealing her revulsion, Tao-Khoa is forced to accompany the Boss to take part in the collective dancing.

Appearing unexpectedly, the harbormaster informs the Boss of the Soviet vessel's approach.

Scene 3

Outside again on the square in the port city. In the harbor stands the Soviet ship delivering grain, a present from the Soviet trade unions to the starving Chinese workers. The square is empty. The police had scared the people away. But little by little, by groups and individuals, people filter into the square. These are the city's poor, workers, and peasants, coming to see the Soviet ship and—importantly—the people from the Soviet Union. The policemen surveille their every step.

The Boss and Li Shan-fu leave the restaurant, accompanied by their accomplices. They watch the Soviet ship with undisguised hatred. At Li Shan-fu's instruction, the harbormaster goes up to the Captain of the Soviet ship and, with malicious joy, informs the Captain that the dockworkers are on strike and there is no one to unload the Soviet ship.

The Boss and Li Shan-fu scrutinize the Soviet Captain. They are focused on one goal: to provoke an incident with the Russians.

But the Soviet Captain quickly makes a decision. At his signal, a team of Soviet sailors rushes out on the deck and down the gangway. They set to work unloading their own ship. The sailors pass sacks of grain from hand to hand.

More and more people gather at the port. The police are not in a position to deter them. The Chinese workers joyfully welcome the gift from the Soviet trade unions. Van Li-chen breaks away from the group of striking workers and, on behalf of his comrades, asks the Soviet Captain for permission to participate in the unloading. The coolies join the Soviet sailors.

Tao-Khoa watches the proceedings. She is thrilled. The Soviet people opened for her a new world—a world of humaneness and unity. Tao-Khoa goes up to the Soviet Captain and expresses to him her gratitude for the joy that he brought to her people. Li Shan-fu is outraged with Tao-Khoa.

The coolies ask Tao-Khoa to dance in honor of the Soviet guests, and Tao-Khoa gladly agrees. She performs the "Dance with the Golden Fingernails." Li Shan-fu has to pretend that he is not opposed to his dancer performing in the town square. He goes up to Tao-Khoa and presents her with a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the Boss, who had seen her dance.

The Soviet Captain selects a big red flower from a flower seller's basket and presents it to Tao-Khoa. With an expression full of joy and gratitude, Tao-Khoa accepts the Soviet Captain's gift. She presses the flower to her heart.

Van Li-chen and the coolies come into the middle of the square. They perform for the Soviet sailors a dance full of unbridled intensity, conveying the will of the Chinese people for independence and freedom and their determination to fight.

In response, the Soviet sailors perform the beloved sailors' dance known as "The Little Apple" ("*Iablochko*"), a dance suffused with displays of Russian courage and strength.

It is a joyous meeting of the Chinese working people with people from the land of Soviets.

Act II

Scene 1

Tao-Khoa's room, which opens into a small garden. Tao-Khoa waits for Van Li-chen. He doesn't come and still doesn't come. Tao-Khoa worries. Finally, Van Li-chen arrives. He hands her a package of revolutionary leaflets. Tao-Khoa hides the leaflets and shows Van Li-chen to the door to the next room—there, Van Li-chen can hold a meeting of the striking workers. Van Li-chen gratefully embraces Tao-Khoa. They fervently speak of their love, of the wonderful future which is coming for them when they won't have to hide their feelings and won't have to rely on Li Shan-fu and his master.

Van Li-chen grasps the red flower—the gift from the Soviet Captain, which Tao-Khoa has carefully guarded—and the dawn of freedom and happiness for the common people breaks across the sky of China.

A group of girls, Tao-Khoa's students, comes into the room. Their dancing lesson begins. While the lesson is going on, a few of Van Li-chen's comrades in revolutionary work pass through the room and on into the room next door to join Van Li-chen.

The girls leave. Tao-Khoa is alone again. She gazes thoughtfully at the red flower.

Li Shan-fu slips into the room. His accomplices wait outside. Li Shan-fu came to chastise Tao-Khoa for her unauthorized performance in front of the crew from the Soviet ship and the dockworkers. But he immediately sees the red flower in her hand. In a blazing rage, Li Shan-fu rips the flower from Tao-Khoa's hands and throws it on the floor. In fury, Li Shan-fu threatens Tao-Khoa. Tao-Khoa breaks loose from his hands and runs for the exit, but there she is met by Li Shan-fu's sinister accomplices.

Some coolies who are passing by the house save Tao-Khoa. They get into a fight with Li Shan-fu's co-conspirators. The Boss, who is walking nearby, witnesses the struggle. Li Shan-fu rushes up to him. Li Shan-fu's whole body trembles with hatred as he explains to his master how Tao-Khoa cherishes and preserves the red flower. The Boss shares Li Shan-fu's hatred and indignation.

At this moment, the Soviet Captain passes by on the street outside. Like a person possessed, Li Shan-fu whips out a knife and impales the red flower with it; his accomplices join him. This is a conspiracy against the Chinese people, against the Soviet Captain; it is a vow to fight to the death against the ideas of freedom and peace. The Boss expresses his approval: Li Shan-fu correctly understands the intention of his master.

Tao-Khoa wants to learn about what her enemies are conspiring. She brings a cup of tea and presents it to the Boss, but the conversation abruptly ceases. Glancing at the cup presented to him, some sort of thought occurs to the Boss. He throws a significant look at Li Shan-fu. They understand each other. The Boss leaves, accompanied by Li Shan-fu's accomplices.

Li Shan-fu remains with Tao-Khoa. He gives free rein to his raging fury, flinging himself at her with both fists. Hearing her cries for help, Van Li-chen rushes in. Li Shan-fu scampers in a heartbeat.

Van Li-chen lovingly consoles Tao-Khoa. Then, passing through to his comrades, he orders them to disperse. They warmly bid Tao-Khoa farewell and depart.

Van Li-chen embraces Tao-Khoa: she does not have to wait much longer, soon she will be free—the reign of oppression and disenfranchisement is coming to an end. A little more courage and strength are required.

Tao-Khoa nods her head. She will be his most trusted comrade and assistant. Van Li-chen clasps her hand firmly and leaves.

Tao-Khoa is left alone by the aquarium with fish. In a half-conscious state, she stares at the green water, at the pearly glints of the swimming fish. Everything swims before her eyes. Tao-Khoa drifts off to sleep.

Scene 2

Tao-Khoa dreams that she is standing alone under a sky as black as an abyss. A beast sneaks up to an enormous copper gong and strikes it. Beneath the moaning strokes, a ghastly procession appears. Advancing one after another are fearsome, grotesque images of the dark, terrifying past of Feudal China, an empire characterized by lawlessness, privation, and iniquity. They carry a dragon-person, the sovereign of this kingdom, on an enormous shield. And Tao-Khoa recognizes Li Shan-fu in the dragon-person.

The dances of the forces of darkness are terrifying and wild, like a nightmare. Li Shan-fu's minions drive the procession of exhausted people onward. Li Shan-fu torments the poor haggard folk...

And suddenly a bright ray of sun pierces the hopelessness of the dark kingdom. At the head of the army of light, a radiant youth boldly invades the kingdom of darkness. It's Van Li-chen! The army of light swoops down fearlessly on Li Shan-fu and his dark forces. A fierce battle ensues. Van Li-chen wins; the dark forces are driven out.

Scene 3

And later in Tao-Khoa's dream: everything is awash in sunlight. A broad, multi-colored rainbow stretches across the clear morning sky. Tao-Khoa is among Van Li-chen's soldiers of light. Van Li-chen meets her and together with him she rejoices in the victory of light over darkness, liberty over oppression.

Scene 4

Van Li-chen brings Tao-Khoa to an enchanted garden full of marvelous flowers and trees. The free and joyful Tao-Khoa and her girlfriends dance for the victorious warriors. Her dreams have come true: a kingdom of friendship and happiness had come to be. And she sees a fantastic red flower as bright as a flame illuminating people with the light of joy and freedom.

Scene 5

The visions of the dream fade away. Tao-Khoa sits at the little table with her face pressed against the aquarium. It's morning.

Act III

Scene 1

The European sector of the city. Night. Dancing couples can be seen through the grand, brightly lit windows of a mansion.

On the street, there is an uneasy, tense stillness. A tight cluster of rickshaw drivers sits under a large tree. They are quietly discussing something. Coolies, Van Li-chen's comrades, join the rickshaw drivers.

Li Shan-fu's associates are arriving at the entrance to the mansion. Coming from the opposite direction are foreign guests leaving the mansion. The foreigners summon rickshaws and drive away.

Van Li-chen appears. He approaches the group of rickshaw drivers and calls upon them to join the battle against oppression. The coolies and rickshaw drivers listen hungrily to his words.

A rickshaw rushes up to the mansion. Its passenger—the Boss—is grim and frustrated. When the rickshaw driver requests payment for the trip, in irritation, the Boss slaps the driver's face with his glove.

At the entrance to the mansion, squirming sycophantically, Li Shan-fu meets the Boss; together with his master, Li Shan-fu disappears through the doors.

Van Li-chen points to the lit windows of the mansion. He indicates to the rickshaw drivers and coolies that there—there is being organized a conspiracy against their homeland, against the working people. At this moment, the Boss appears on the balcony. Searchingly, anxiously he peers down below. The gazes of the workers and the Boss meet.

AT THE FRONT OF THE STAGE: Van Li-chen runs along the street in the dark. Glancing around, he pastes up a revolutionary proclamation.

Scene 2

The town square, on which has been erected a folk theater. Van Li-chen appears.

After a moment, the Boss and Li Shan-fu enter the theater.

The Soviet Captain arrives at the square with a group of sailors. The Chinese people joyfully welcome the Soviet guests. The Soviet Captain and sailors settle into the theater's best seats.

The performance begins with the "Dance with a Ribbon." After that are the "Dance with Small Drums" and the virtuosic "Acrobat's Dance."

Amid general shouts of appreciation from the audience, the master of ceremonies announces Tao-Khoa's dance. The people's dancer performs the "Dance with a Parasol."

The performance is over, and the spectators get up from their seats. At this moment, a mysterious masked actor appears from behind the curtain. He performs a cheerful dance interlude. But he soon removes his mask, and everyone recognizes that the actor is Van Li-chen.

Van Li-chen address the people. He speaks passionately about the situation of the Chinese workers and peasants, who are denied basic rights, and about the foreign and domestic capitalists who are plundering the country. Van Li-chen calls the Chinese people to fight. The people eagerly take up Van Li-chen's call.

The irate Boss, Li Shan-fu, and their associates leave the performance.

AT THE FRONT OF THE STAGE: The Boss and Li Shan-fu, full of anger and spite, stand backstage at the theater. In pairs, young women carrying cups of tea pass by the Boss and Li Shan-fu. The young women are on their way to the theater for a tea ceremony in honor of the Soviet guests. Li Shan-fu stops one of the young women and takes the cup from her. The young women exit.

The Boss holds the cup. Li Shan-fu pours poison into it. Coming out of the wings, Tao-Khoa observes this. Li Shan-fu notices her. He is afraid that she has seen everything, but Tao-Khoa feigns ignorance.

Li Shan-fu orders Tao-Khoa to go to the theater.

Scene 3

Back to the folk theater in the square. The Boss and Li Shan-fu return to the folk theater. The group of young women bearing cups of tea enters. Li Shan-fu, calling Tao-Khoa over, gives her the cup with poison in it and orders her to serve the poisoned cup of tea to the Soviet Captain.

Tao-Khoa takes the cup in her hands. She is fearful and at a loss, but a warmhearted look from Van Li-chen instills in her strength and confidence—she knows what to do. Tao-Khoa hands the cup to the Soviet Captain, but her eyes say more than words. The Soviet Captain watches her attentively and then turns a searching gaze toward the Boss. The Soviet Captain abruptly throws the cup to the ground.

All of the people leap to their feet in alarm. Who is the criminal who nearly deprived the Chinese people's friend, the Soviet Captain, of his life? Van Li-chen points at the Boss and Li Shan-fu.

AT THE FRONT OF THE STAGE: In confusion and fear, the Boss and Li Shan-fu run down the street. Their malicious plot is exposed. They save themselves from the people's anger. The Boss halts Li Shan-fu and orders him to destroy Van Li-chen by any means necessary. Li Shan-fu prepares for this. He dresses himself in a dockworker's jacket and hides a pistol in his pocket.

Scene 4

The port. Night. The revolution has begun in the city. The police forces rush about all discombobulated. Van Li-chen runs through with his militant comrades.

The square of the port city empties out. With precise steps, the Soviet Captain and a group of Soviet sailors march toward the dock. The return to their ship, ready to depart.

Tao-Khoa runs after them. She wants to tell the person from the Soviet land everything that fills her heart. For the first time in her life, she encountered a friend of downtrodden and oppressed people. She shows the Captain the red flower, which she treasures as a precious memento of the Soviet people, as a symbol of faith in the bright future for the Chinese people. The Soviet Captain tenderly bids farewell to Tao-Khoa and departs.

The uprising in the city spreads. The foreign "masters" flee the city in a panic. The military officers and policemen run, dropping their weapons. A crowd of revolutionaries bursts onto the square. Van Li-chen leads them with a red flag in his hands. With delight and admiration, Tao-Khoa welcomes more and more crowds of people to the square. And suddenly she comes face to face with Li Shan-fu in disguise. For the first time ever, Li Shan-fu bows down in terror under Tao-Khoa's gaze. He scurries away like a coward, and Tao-Khoa doesn't succeed in capturing him.

Raising himself up onto the barricade, Van Li-chen addresses the people, who have taken power into their own hands. And at that moment, concealed behind the backs of the workers, Li Shan-fu raises the pistol and aims at Van Li-chen. Tao-Khoa sees this and throws herself toward Van Li-chen, shielding him with her body. She falls, the casualty of the traitor's bullet. Dozens of hands catch her. Li Shan-fu is arrested.

Surrounded by the people, pressing to her chest the prized flower, the people's heroine Tao-Khoa expires. The people silently bow before her on their knees. Van Li-chen rises before the crowd. In the name of Tao-Khoa, who died for the happiness of the people, Van Li-chen vows to lead the fight for the people's emancipation to a victorious conclusion.

Scene 5

Years have passed. The great Chinese people achieved their historic victory, freeing their homeland from oppression by the foreign and domestic bourgeoisie. Under the national flag of democratic China are the free Chinese people, brave and majestic in their intensity and power, on the path toward new victories.

Appendix D

Dramatis Personae: Historical Actors

Alternate transliterations, spellings, and names are included in parentheses. Professional details refer to historical actors' relevance to this project.

"GABT Director" is the administrative director of the theater. I translate "pedagog-repetitor" as "coach" and "baletmeister-repetitor" as "ballet master."

First Name	Patronymic	Last Name		Roles (relevant to this dissertation)
Rudol'f	Petrovich	Abikh	1901-1940	specialist in Persian studies, military intelligence officer, and journal editor
Adolphe	Charles	Adam (Adan)	1803-1856	composer
Sergei	Vasil'evich	Aleksandrovskii		GABT Director
		Andreev		theater scholar
Aleksandr	Ivanovich	Anisimov	1905-1976	head of GUMU (1949-1951), GABT Director (1951-1955)
Boris (Igor')	Vladimirovich	Asaf'ev (Glebov)	1884-1949	ballet composer, musicologist
Nikolai	Nikolaevich	Aseev (Shtal'baum)	1889-1963	poet, screenwriter
Lev	Samoilovich	Bakst	1866-1924	designer
Aleksandr	Nikolaevich	Benois (Benua)	1870-1960	designer, publicist
V.	Ia.	Balaban		VKpDI bureaucrat (1942), head of GABT artistic production sector (1948-1949)
George (Georgii)	Melitonovich	Balanchine (Balanchivadze)	1904-1983	dancer, choreographer
Andrei	Melitonovich	Balanchivadze	1906-1992	composer
Dem'ian (Efim)	(Alekseevich)	Bednyi (Pridvorov)	1883-1945	poet, playwright
Vladimir	Petrovich	Begichev	1828-1891	ballet librettist

First Name	Patronymic	Last Name		Roles (relevant to this dissertation)
Lavrentii	Pavlovich	Beriia	1899-1953	member of TsK VKP(b)/KPSS (1934-1953), member of the Politbiuro TsK VKP(b) (1946-1952), member of Prezidium TsK VKP(b) (1952-1953)
Vladimir	Ivanovich	Blium	1877-1941	theatrical critic ("Sadko"), Glavrepertkom official
Iakov	Osipovich	Boiarskii (Shimshelevich)	1890-1940	VKpDI Deputy Chairman (1936-1937), Chairman of TsK Rabis (1929-1936)
Jean		Börlin	1893-1930	dancer, choreographer with Ballets Suédois
Aleksandr	Porfir'evich	Borodin	1833-1887	composer
Valerii	Iakovlevich	Briusov	1873-1924	poet, minor official in cultural-literary institutions
Andrei	Sergeevich	Bubnov	1884-1938	RSFSR People's Commissar of Enlightenment (1929-1937)
Sergei	Alekseevich	Bugoslavskii	1888-1945	musicologist, music critic
Nikolai	Ivanovich	Bukharin	1888-1938	Member of TsK RKP(b)/VKP(b), Politbiuro, Orgbiuro
Vakhtang	Mikhailovich	Chabukiani	1910-1992	choreographer, dancer
Petr (Peter)	Il'ich	Chaikovskii (Tchaikovsky)	1840-1893	composer, conductor
Irina	Aleksandrovna	Charnotskaia	1908-198?	GABT dancer
Lew(ellyn)	Farr	Christensen	1909-1984	choreographer, dancer, artistic director
Willam	Farr	Christensen	1902-2001	choreographer, dancer, artistic director
Mikhail	Ivanovich	Chulaki	1908-1989	composer, GABT Director (1955-1959)
M.	A.	Churova		GABT literature section (1950s)
Jean (Giovanni)		Coralli (Peracini)	1779-1854	ballet librettist and choreographer
Clement Philibert	Léo	Delibes	1836-1891	composer
Sergei	Pavlovich	Diagilev	1872-1929	impresario, publicist
Aleksei	Denisovich	Dikii	1889-1955	stage director erstwhile director for *Red Poppy* (1927)
Vladimir	Vladimirovich	Dmitriev	1900-1948	designer
Mikhail	Ivanovich	Doller	1889-1952	film director
Angela	Isadora	Duncan	1877-1927	modern dance choreographer, dancer, teacher
Ivan	Ivanovich	Dzerzhinskii	1909-1978	composer
Il'ia	Grigor'evich	Erenburg	1891-1967	author, journalist, translator

First Name	Patronymic	Last Name		Roles (relevant to this dissertation)
Boris	Iakovlevich	Eifman	1946-	choreographer, artistic director of St. Petersburg State Academic Theater of Ballet
Avel'	Safronovich	Enukidze	1877-1937	Secretary of VTsIK (1918-1922), TsIK SSSR (1922-1935)
Boris	Robertovich	Erdman	1899-1960	designer
Aleksei	Nikolaevich	Ermolaev	1910-1975	GABT dancer, pedagogue, choreographer, ballet librettist
Iurii	Fedorovich	Faier	1890-1971	GABT conductor, GABT orchestra musician
Nikolai	Trofimovich	Fedorenko	1912-2000	Soviet translator, diplomat, Head of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Far East Bureau (1952-1955), Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (1955-1958)
Leonid	Aleksandrovich	Fedorov	1892-1960	designer
Vasilii	Vasil'evich	Fedorov		superintendent of GABT Production-Technical Department (approximately 1927-1930), employee/administrator at other Moscow theaters, amateur historian, collector of theatrical materials
Fedor	Fedorovich	Fedorovskii	1883-1955	designer, GABT Chief Designer (1927-1929, 1947-1953)
Mikhail (Michel)	Mikhailovich	Fokin(e)	1880-1942	dancer, choreographer, pedagogue
Nikolai	Mikhailovich	Foregger (Foregger fon Greifenturn)	1892-1939	stage director, choreographer
Mikhail	Markovich	Gabovich	1905-1965	GABT dancer, superintendent of GABT ballet troupe (1935), coach, Director and Artistic Director of GABT Filial (1941-1943)
Vadim	Moiseevich	Gaevskii	1928-	ballet critic
		Galitskii		participant in debate on the ways forward for Soviet ballet (April 19, 1932) from Kyiv
Mikhail	Petrovich	Gal'perin	1882-1944	ballet and opera librettist, GABT literary consultant
Jules	Théophile	Gautier	1811-1872	ballet librettist, theatrical critic
Ekaterina	Vasil'evna	Gel'tser	1876-1962	GABT dancer
Vasilii	Fedorovich	Gel'tser	1840-1908	ballet librettist
Gennadii	Isaevich	Geronskii (Ianov)	1900-19??	ballet critic, journalist

First Name	Patronymic	Last Name		Roles (relevant to this dissertation)
		Gladlev		participant in GABT discussion of *The Red Poppy* (January 8, 1955)
Aleksandr	Konstantinovich	Glazunov	1865-1936	composer, conductor
Reingol'd	Moritsevich	Glier(e)	1875-1956	composer, conductor composer for *The Red Poppy*
Nikolai	Vasil'evich	Gogol' (Ianovskii)	1809-1852	author, playwright, publicist
Kas'ian	Iaroslavich	Goleizovskii	1892-1970	GABT dancer, choreographer, ballet librettist
Nikolai	Semenovich	Golovanov	1891-1953	GABT conductor, GABT Chief Conductor (1948-1953)
Aleksandr	Iakovlevich	Golovin	1863-1930	artist, designer
Sof'ia	Nikolaevna	Golovkina	1915-2004	GABT dancer, pedagogue, Director of Bolshoi Ballet School (1960-2001)
Anatolii	Dmitrievich	Golovnia	1900-1982	cinematographer
Vladimir (Vol'f)	Il'ich (Gil'kovich)	Golubov	1908-1948	theatrical critic, ballet critic
Nikolai	Nikitovich	Goriainov		head of GUMT
Maksim (Aleksei)	(Maksimovich)	Gor'kii (Peshkov)	1868-1936	author
Aleksandr	Alekseevich	Gorskii	1871-1924	dancer, choreographer
Iurii	Nikolaevich	Grigorovich	1927-	dancer, choreographer, GABT Chief Choreographer (1964-1995)
Boris	Evseevich	Gusman	1892-1944	GABT administrator
		Iakovlev		participant in GABT discussion of *The Red Poppy* (January 8, 1955)
Boris	Mikhailovich	Iarustovskii	1911-1978	Arts Sector OPA TsK VKP(b), Culture Sector OPA TsK KPSS, musicologist
I.	P.	Il'in		GABT administrator
Leonid	L'vovich	Isaev		GABT Head of Production Sector (1920s)
Lev	Ivanovich	Ivanov	1834-1901	dancer, choreographer of the Imperial Russian Theaters
Viktor	Petrovich	Iving (Ivanov)	1888-1952	theatrical critic
Mikhail	Ivanovich	Kalinin	1875-1946	Chairman of VTsIK (1919-1938), one of the leaders of TsIK SSSR (1922-1938), Chairman of Presidium of Supreme Council of the Soviet Union (1938-1946)

First Name	Patronymic	Last Name		Roles (relevant to this dissertation)
Lev	Borisovich	Kamenev (Rozenfel'd)	1883-1936	member of Politbiuro (1917-1925), Chairman of VTsIK (1917)
Emmanuil	Isaakovich	Kaminka	1902-1972	actor, reciter who performed on the variety stage
Emmanuil	Iosifovich	Kaplan	1895-1961	stage director
Semen	Solomonovich	Kaplan (Kaplun?)	1912-1983	GABT dancer
A.		Karmanov		composer
Vladimir	Semenovich	Kemenov	1908-1988	academic secretary for Stalin Prize Committee, Chair of VOKS (1940-1948), Deputy Minister of Culture (1954-1958)
Platon	Mikhailovich	Kerzhentsev (Lebedev)	1881-1940	Chairman of VKpDI (1936-1938)
Aram	Il'ich	Khachaturian	1903-1978	composer
Nikandr	Sergeevich	Khanaev	1890-1974	GABT Deputy Director (1950s), opera soloist
G.	V.	Khesin		VUAOP Director
Boris	Sergeevich	Kholfin	1913-1992	GABT dancer
Nikita	Sergeevich	Khrushchev	1894-1971	First Secretary of CPSU (1953-1964), Chairman of SM SSSR (1958-1964)
Petr	Semonovich	Kogan	1872-1932	literary critic, literary historian, professor
Grigorii	Alekseevich	Koloskov		GABT Director (late 1920s)
Iurii	Grigor'evich	Kondratov	1921-1967	GABT dancer
Aleksandr	Iosifovich	Konstantinovskii	1906-1958	designer
Sergei	Gavrilovich	Koren'	1907-1969	GABT dancer, ballet master
Konstantin	Alekseevich	Korovin	1861-1939	designer, artist, publicist
Boris	Sofronovich	Kowerda (Koverda)	1907-1987	assassin
		Kozlov		member of GABT Artistic Council, tram conductor
Sergei	Vasil'evich	Kozlovskii	1885-1962	designer
Aleksandr	Abramovich	Krein	1883-1951	composer
Viktorina	Vladimirovna	Kriger	1893-1978	GABT dancer, pedagogue, artistic director of Moscow Artistic Ballet, choreographer, ballet critic, head of the GABT Museum
Vladimir	Semenovich	Kruzhkov	1905-1991	Deputy Superintendent OPA TsK VKP(b)
Evgenii	Pavlovich	Krylatov	1934-2019	composer
Vsevolod	Valerianovich	Kurdiumov	1892-1956	ballet librettist, actor

First Name	Patronymic	Last Name		Roles (relevant to this dissertation)
Mikhail	Ivanovich	Kurilko	1880-1969	designer, GABT Chief Designer (1924-1927) designer and librettist for *Red Poppy* (1927); designer for *The Red Poppy* (1949), and *The Red Flower* (1957)
		Kuznetsov		GABT dancer, prospective ballet librettist
Aleksandr	Aleksandrovich	Lapauri	1926-1975	GABT dancer, choreographer
V.	V.	Lapin		GABT Head of Lighting Sector (late 1920s)
Iurii (Mikhail) (Ikhl-Mikhl)	(Aleksandrovich/ Zalmanovich)	Larin (Lur'e)	1882-1932	publicist, economist, head of Larin Commission (1921)
Lev	Aleksandrovich	Lashchilin	1888-1955	GABT dancer, choreographer choreographer of *Red Poppy* (Acts I and III, 1927)
Leonid	Mikhailovich	Lavrovskii (Ivanov)	1905-1967	dancer, choreographer, GABT Chief Choreographer (1944-1956, 1959-1964) choreographer of *The Red Poppy* (1949) choreographer of *The Red Flower* (1957)
Polikarp	Ivanovich	Lebedev	1904-1981	Deputy Superintendent of the Bureau of Art UPA TsK VKP(b) (1941-1945), Superintendent of Bureau of Art UPA TsK VKP(b) (1945-1948), VKpDI Chairman (1948-1951)
Vladimir	Il'ich	Lenin (Ul'ianov)	1870-1924	Chairman of SNK RSFSR (1917-1924) and SNK SSSR (1922-1924)
Ia.	L.	Leont'ev		GABT administrator
Ol'ga	Vasil'evna	Lepeshinskaia	1916-2008	GABT dancer
Fedor	Vasil'evich	Lopukhov	1886-1973	dancer, choreographer, briefly served as artistic director of GABT ballet troupe, ballet librettist
Vladimir	Apollonovich	Losskii	1874-1946	GABT opera soloist, operatic stage director, GABT Deputy Director for Artistic Affairs
Anatolii	Vasil'evich	Lunacharskii	1875-1933	RSFSR People's Commissar of Enlightenment (1917-1929)
Kenneth		MacMillan	1929-1992	dancer, choreographer, artistic director of Royal Ballet
Vasilii	Vasil'evich	Makarov		collector of theatrical documents and ephemera
Elena	Konstantinovna	Malinovskaia	1875-1942	GABT Director (1920-1924, 1930-1934), head of GosAkTeatrov
Evgenii	Moiseevich	Mandel'berg	1900-1966	ballet librettist

First Name	Patronymic	Last Name		Roles (relevant to this dissertation)
Pavel	Aleksandrovich	Markov	1897-1980	stage director, theatrical critic
Boris	Aleksandrovich	Matrunin	1895-1959	designer
Vsevolod (Karl Kazimir)	Emil'evich (Teodor)	Meierkhol'd (Maiergol'd)	1874-1940	stage director
Aleksandr	Shamil'evich	Melik-Pashaev	1905-1964	GABT conductor
Mira (Maria-Cecilia)	Aleksandrovna (Abramovna)	Mendel'son-Prokofieva	1915-1968	ballet librettist
Vladimir	Evgen'evich	Meskheteli (Chogoshvili)	1902-1957	GUTiMU
Asaf	Mikhailovich	Messerer	1903-1992	GABT dancer, pedagogue, choreographer, artistic director of GABT ballet troupe (1943-1944)
Sulamif'	Mikhailovna	Messerer	1908-2004	GABT dancer, coach
Nikolai	Aleksandrovich	Mikhailov	1906-1982	Minister of Culture (1955-1960)
Igor'	Aleksandrovich	Moiseev	1906-2007	GABT dancer, choreographer, founder of State Academic Folk Dance Ensemble of the USSR
Viacheslav	Mikhailovich	Molotov (Skriabin)	1890-1986	Chairman of SNK SSSR (1930-1941), member of TsK CPSU (1921-1957)
Mikhail	Mikhailovich	Mordkin	1880-1944	GABT dancer, choreographer
Boris	Arkad'evich	Mordvinov	1899-1953	GABT opera and ballet director
Vladimir	Leonardovich	Nardov (Knipper)	1876-1942	GABT opera director
Vaslav (Vatslav)	Fomich	Nijinsky (Nizhinskii)	1889-1950	dancer, choreographer
Pavel	Ivanovich	Novitskii	1888-1971	theater critic, Head of Artistic Division of Glavnauka Narkompros (1925-1929), Deputy Chief of the Administration of Theaters (1932-1936)
Viktor	Aleksandrovich	Oranskii (Gershov)	1899-1953	composer
Serafim	Mikhailovich	Oreshnikov		GABT administrator
V.	V.	Panteleev		GABT (late 1920s)
Anna	Pavlovna (Matveevna)	Pavlova	1881-1931	dancer, of the Imperial Russian Theaters, artistic director, pedagogue, coach, choreographer
Marius	Ivanovich	Petipa	1818-1910	dancer, choreographer of the Imperial Russian Theaters
Grigorii	Stepanovich	Pirogov	1885-1931	GABT opera soloist
Adrian	Ivanovich	Piotrovskii	1898-1937	ballet librettist, dramaturg

First Name	Patronymic	Last Name		Roles (relevant to this dissertation)
Boris	Vladimirovich	Pletnev	1902-1979	ballet librettist, dancer
Boris	Aleksandrovich	Pokrovskii	1912-2009	GABT opera director
Dmitrii	Mikhailovich	Popov	1900-1952	Deputy Superintendent OPA TsK VKP(b)
Aleksandr	Germanovich	Preis	1905-1942	opera librettist
Vladimir	Alekseevich	Preobrazhenskii	1912-1981	dancer, GABT dancer, superintendent of GABT ballet troupe (1960-1962)
Sergei	Sergeevich	Prokof'ev	1891-1953	composer, conductor
Vsevolod	Illarionovich	Pudovkin	1893-1953	film director
Tsezar' (Cesare)		Puni (Pugni)	1802-1870	composer
Aleksandr	Sergeevich	Pushkin	1799-1837	author, poet, playwright
Isaak	Moiseevich	Rabinovich	1894-1961	designer
Sergei	Ernestovich	Radlov	1892-1958	stage director
Aleksandr	Ivanovich	Radunskii	1912-1982	GABT dancer, ballet master, choreographer
Aleksandr	Efimovich	Razumnyi	1891-1972	film director
Vladimir	Aleksandrovich	Riabtsev	1880-1945	GABT dancer, choreographer, superintendent of GABT ballet troupe (1924-1925)
Arnol'd	Savel'evich	Roitman	1907-1971	GABT conductor, pianist, accompanist
Gennadii	Nikolaevich	Rozhdestvenskii	1931-2018	GABT conductor
Vadim	Fedorovich	Ryndin	1902-1974	designer
Jules-Henri	Vernoy	de Saint-Georges	1799-1875	ballet librettist
		Shapovalova		participant in debate on the ways forward for Soviet ballet (April 19, 1932)
Sergei	Vladimirovich	Shashkin	1911-1980	superintendent of GABT repertoire section (1930s), superintendent of GABT ballet troupe (1943-1952), GABT Deputy Director (1952-1958)
Dmitri	Dmitrievich	Shostakovich	1906-1975	composer
Vasilii	Vladimirovich	Shmidt	1886-1938	Deputy Chairman of SNK SSSR (1928-1930), Deputy People's Commissar for Agriculture (1930-1931), Judge for SNK SSSR (1931-1933)
Aleksandr	Petrovich	Smirnov	1877-1938	Secretary of TsK VKP(b) (1928-1930)
Ivan	Vasil'evich	Smol'tsov	1892-1968	GABT dancer, choreographer, coach, superintendent of GABT ballet troupe (early 1930s)
Viktor	Vasil'evich	Smol'tsov	1900-1976	GABT dancer, pedagogue

First Name	Patronymic	Last Name		Roles (relevant to this dissertation)
Valentin		Smyshliaev		director
Sergei		Sokolov		designer
Aleksandr	Vasil'evich	Solodovnikov	1904-1990	GABT Director (1948-1951)
S.	G.	Sorokin		GABT administrator (mid-to-late 1920s)
Iosif	Vissarionovich	Stalin (Jughashvili)	1878-1953	General Secretary of CPSU (1922-1953), Chairman of SM SSSR (1941-1953)
Konstantin	Sergeevich	Stanislavskii (Alekseev)	1863-1938	stage director
V.		Strauss		film director
Aleksandr	Iakovlevich	Tairov (Kornblit)	1885-1950	stage director
P.	A.	Tarasov		OPA TsK VKP(b)
D.	I.	Tarkovskii		Director of Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies
Irina	Viktorovna	Tikhomirnova	1917-1984	GABT dancer
Vasilii	Dmitrievich	Tikhomirov	1876-1956	GABT dancer, choreographer, pedagogue choreographer of *Red Poppy* (Act II, 1927)
		Tikhonov		participant in debate on the ways forward for Soviet ballet (April 19, 1932)
Aleksandr	Romanovich	Tomskii	1905-1970	GABT dancer, artistic director of GABT ballet troupe (1957-1959), superintendent of GABT ballet troupe (1964-1970)
Aleksandra	Sergeevna	Tsabel'	1910-1996	GABT dancer, superintendent of GABT ballet troupe (1953-1958)
Viktor	Ivanovich	Tsaplin	1903-1968	GABT dancer
Isaak	Samoilovich	Turkel'taub	1890-1938	stage director, professor
Galina	Sergeevna	Ulanova	1910-1998	dancer, GABT dancer, coach
Agrippina	Iakovlevna	Vaganova	1879-1951	pedagogue, dancer of the Imperial Russian Theaters, choreographer
Vasilii	Ivanovich	Vainonen	1901-1964	GABT choreographer
Vladimir	Aleksandrovich	Varkovitskii	1916-1974	ballet librettist, choreographer, pedagogue, dancer
Aleksei	Alekseevich	Varlamov	1920-1978	GABT dancer, coach
Sergei	Nikiforovich	Vasilenko	1872-1966	composer, conductor
Simon	Bagratovich	Virsaladze	1909-1989	designer
Petr	Lazarevich	Voikov	1888-1927	Soviet plenipotentiary to Polish Republic (1924-1927)

First Name	Patronymic	Last Name		Roles (relevant to this dissertation)
Boris	Ivanovich	Volkov	1900-1970	designer
Nikolai	Dmitrievich	Volkov	1894-1965	ballet librettist
Kliment	Efremovich	Voroshilov	1881-1969	Member of the Politbiuro TsK VKP(b) (1926-1952) and Presidium TsK KPSS (1952-1960)
Emi		Xiao	1896-1983	Chinese poet and translator
Vasilii	Alekseevich	Zadorskii		GABT Assistant Director (ca. 1943), GABT Deputy Director (1944-1949)
Rostislav	Vladimirovich	Zakharov	1907-1984	dancer, GABT choreographer and opera director (1936-1956), artistic director of GABT ballet troupe (1936-1939), director and artistic director of Bolshoi Ballet School (1945-1947)
Natan (Isaak)	Abramovich	Zarkhi (Gurevich)	1900-1935	film scenarist
Xiufu (Siu-fu)		Zeng (Tszen)		Chinese PhD student at TsK KPSS Academy of Social Sciences (1953)
Andrei	Aleksandrovich	Zhdanov	1896-1948	Head of UPA TsK VKP(b) (1939-1940), member of Politbiuro TsK VKP(b) (1939-1948)
Leonid	Alekseevich	Zhukov	1890-1951	GABT dancer, choreographer
German (Herman)	Leont'evich	Zhukovskii	1913-1976	composer

Appendix E

Lists of Ballet and Opera Titles

These are the ballets and operas mentioned in the text and footnotes. Where available, the title's classification according to contemporary Soviet distinctions among Russian classics, Western European classics, and Soviet works is listed.

Ballets

Title	Russian Title	Classification
The Adventures of Aldar-Kose	*Prikliucheniia Aldarkese*	Soviet
La Bayadère	*Baiaderka*	Russian classic
Le Biches	*Lani*	
The Bright Stream	*Svetlyi ruchei*	Soviet
The Bronze Horseman	*Mednyi vsadnik*	Soviet
Chipollino	*Chipollino*	Soviet
Chopiniana	*Shopeniana*	Western classic
Cinderella	*Zolushka*	Soviet (Prokof'ev)
The Coast of Happiness	*Bereg schast'ia*	Soviet
Coppélia	*Koppeliia*	Western classic
Le Corsaire	*Korsar*	Western classic
Don Quixote	*Don Khixot*	Russian classic
The Dragonfly	*Strekoza*	Soviet
La Esmeralda	*Esmeral'da*	Russian classic
Ever Fresh Flowers	*Vechno zhivye tsvety*	
Fadetta (Sylvia)	*Fadetta (Sil'viia)*	Western classic
La Fille du Pharaon; The Pharaoh's Daughter	*Doch' faraona*	Russian classic
La Fille Mal Gardée	*Tshchetnaia predostorozhnost'*	Western classic
The Flames of Paris	*Plamia Parizha*	Soviet
The Fountain of Bakhchisarai	*Bakhchisaraiskii fontan*	Soviet
Gayane	*Gaiane*	Soviet
Giselle	*Zhizel'*	Western classic
Gypsies	*Tsygany*	Soviet
Harlequinade	*Arlekinada*	Russian classic
The Hypocrites	*Komedianty*	Soviet

Title	Russian Title	Classification
Joseph the Marvelous	*Iosif Prekrasnyi*	Soviet
Karnaval; Carnival	*Karnaval*	(varied by version)
Laurencia	*Laurensiia*	Soviet
Legend of Love	*Legenda o liubvi*	Soviet
Lileia	*Lileia*	Soviet
The Little Humpbacked Horse	*Konek-Gorbunok*	Russian classic (Pugni)
The Little Stork	*Aistenok*	Soviet
Lola	*Lola*	Soviet
Lost Illusions	*Utrachennye illiuzii*	Soviet
The Magic Mirror	*Volshebnoe zerkalo*	Russian classic
Marco Spada	*Marko Spada*	
Mayerling	*Maierling*	
Members of the Komsomol	*Komsomolia*	Soviet
The Merry Wives of Windsor	*Vindzorskie prokaznitsy*	Soviet
Mirandolina	*Mirandolina*	Soviet
"Moshkovskii Waltz"	"Val's Moshkovskogo"	
The Nutcracker	*Shchelkunchik*	Russian classic
Pages of Life; Ruby Stars; Life	*Stranitsy zhizni; Rubinovye zvezdy; Zhizn'*	Soviet
Paquita	*Pakhita*	
Petrushka	*Petrushka*	
"Polovtsian Dances"	"Polovetskie pliaski"	Russian classic
The Prisoner of the Caucasus	*Kavkazskii plennik*	Soviet (Asaf'ev)
Raymonda	*Raimonda*	Russian classic
The Red Detachment of Women	*Krasnyi zhenskii otriad*	
The Red Flower	*Krasnyi tsvetok*	Soviet
Red Poppy; The Red Poppy	*Krasnyi mak*	Soviet
Rodin	*Roden*	
Romeo and Juliet	*Romeo i Dzhul'etta*	Soviet
The Scarlet Flower	*Alen'kii tsvetochek*	Soviet
The Scarlet Sails	*Alye parusa*	Soviet
Sheherezade	*Shekherezada*	Russian classic
Shurale	*Shurale*	Soviet

Title	Russian Title	Classification
The Sleeping Beauty	*Spiashchaia krasavitsa*	Russian classic
The Soccer Player	*Futbolist*	Soviet
Spanish Capriccio	*Ispanskoe kaprichchio*	Russian classic
Spartacus	*Spartak*	Soviet
The Stone Flower	*Kamennyi tsvetok*	Soviet
The Story of the Stone Flower	*Skaz o kamennom tsvetke*	Soviet
Swan Lake	*Lebedinoe ozero*	Russian classic
La Sylphide	*Sil'fida*	
Tchaikovsky	*Chaikovskii*	
Three Fat Men	*Tri Tolstiaka*	Soviet
Le Train Bleu	*Goluboi ekspress*	
La Vestale	*Vestalka*	
The Would-Be Wooer	*Mnimyi zhenikh*	Soviet
Youth	*Iunost'*	Soviet

Operas

Title	Russian Title	Classification
Aida	*Aida*	Western classic
The Barber of Seville, or The Useless Precaution; Il barbiere di Siviglia, ossia L'inutile precauzione	*Sevil'skii tsiriul'nik*	Western classic
The Bartered Bride	*Prodannaia nevesta*	
The Decembrists	*Dekabristy*	Soviet
Boris Godunov	*Boris Godunov*	Western classic
Demon	*Demon*	Russian classic
Eugene Onegin	*Evgenii Onegin*	Russian classic
Faust	*Faust*	Western classic
Fra Diavolo ou L'Hôtellerie de Terracine	*Fra-D'iavolo, ili Gostinitsa v Terrachine*	Western classic
The Great Friendship	*Velikaia druzhba*	Soviet
Halka	*Gal'ka*	
Ivan Susanin; A Life for the Tsar	*Ivan Susanin; Zhizn' za Tsaria*	Russian classic
Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District	*Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda*	Soviet

Title	Russian Title	Classification
Lakmé	*Lakme*	Western classic
Love for Three Oranges	*Liubov' k trem apel'sinam*	Soviet
Madame Butterfly; Madama Butterfly	*Chio-Chio-San; Madam Batterfliai*	Western classic
The Mastersingers of Nuremberg; Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg	*Hiurnbergskie Meisterzingery*	Western classic
Mazepa	*Mazepa*	Russian classic
Mother	*Mat'*	Soviet (both versions)
Ruslan and Liudmila	*Ruslan i Liudmila*	Russian classic
Sadko	*Sadko*	Russian classic
The Tsar's Bride	*Tsarskaia nevesta*	Russian classic
Wholeheartedly	*Ot vsego serdtsa*	Soviet