

dancers whose movements it inspires. Whatever may have been the merit of a Fokine, a Nijinsky, a Massine, each time that they met a work of Stravinsky, they were carried away. Except for the *Danses du Prince Igor*, except for the *Spectre de la Rose* (to whose memory remains attached the name of that living corpse, W. Nijinsky), except for a few happy moments in other spectacles, *Les Biches*, *Les Matelots*, *Le Tricorne*, *La Boutique Fantasque*, *Parade*, etc., nothing remains of all the repertory of the Ballet Russe but the eight ballets by Stravinsky. Only the composer of *Petrouchka*, of the *Sacre*, of *Noces*, of *Pulcinella*, of *Apollon*, created music sufficiently persuasive for the lines of the spectacle to gleam as if illuminated from within. Whether it is classical ballet, choreographic recital or pure rhythm, it is Stravinsky, every time, who supports the spectacle with his vigor of rhythm, his powerful conceptions. Stravinsky's ballets can dispense with stories, even with action, for on the foundation pillars of his rhythm, his tempo, is reared a pure and vast pediment, a mobile marble, the evidence of a great idea conceived by a musician. With other composers, ballets which have no subjects fall short of complete realization. On the other hand it is impossible to have a Stravinsky ballet without *action* for the idea of its *subject* would illuminate it just the same. A pure musician, Stravinsky has always been his own poet. Unlike Wagner, he has no need to write the text of his dramas; he has only to ponder on his art and let his spirit shine through.

Had Diaghilev done nothing but enable Stravinsky to create these eight ballets, would not his work share their immortality?

### III. A Lone Fighter

NICHOLAS ROERICH

Diaghilev has gone. Something far greater than an individual force has passed with him. We may regard the entire achievement of Diaghilev as that of a great individual, but it would be still more fitting to regard him as a true representative of the whole movement of synthesis, an eternally young representative of the great moment when modern art shattered so many conventionalities and superficialities.

The entire life of Diaghilev was a stormy one, as is the life of every true representative of vital art. More than once our personal relations were overshadowed and more than once renewed in the closest contact. Diaghilev was the first to express his faith in the artistic value of my painting, *The Messenger*. Then in 1900, at the time of the Paris Exhibition Universelle, he requested my painting, *The March*, for his section, but this had been previously promised by me elsewhere and because of my involuntary refusal, our relations were strained. I became editor of the magazine *Art* published by the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of Art, and Diaghilev was again disturbed, fearing that I would be involved in official circles. But the waves of life brought us together once more and our great artist, Seroff, proved the splendid intermediary.

In 1906 Diaghilev came to ask me for the designs for *The Polovetsky Camp*. It was a joyous period when the best French critics, such as Jacques Blanche, were heralding the Russian ballet and Russian art. I was no longer bound with the Academy of Fine Arts, and thus, without friction, could take part in the exhibitions of Diaghilev and *Mir Isskustva*, of which I became president in 1910, closely participating in its movements. From this time on nothing clouded my relationship with Diaghilev.

There followed the productions of *Prince Igor*, *Ivan the Terrible*, and *Kitege* of Rimsky-Korsakov; our final work together was *Le Sacre du Printemps* and a revival of *Prince Igor* in 1920 in London when Diaghilev invited me there from Sweden. I saw him for the last time in 1923, in Paris, and I recollect this meeting, so peaceful and full of the memories of friendship.

One could have many disagreements with Diaghilev and yet not feel them as personal. Only the question of art or some vital activity can permit such conflict and peace. And because of this no one remembers his conflicts with Diaghilev, but recollects only the great constructive work accomplished in this stormy tide of art, in the hurricane of work for the benefit of humanity that produced so much that was of the best and most stirring.

Diaghilev was not one to advocate a drowsy life. From childhood, being himself a highly talented musician, he recognized the future path of art. It was not superficial modernism. He was

not a superficial "wearer of the green carnation," but a sincere knight of evolution in beauty.

I remember how, during the exhibition of *Mir Isskustva* in 1903, one evening I completely changed my painting, *The Building of the City*. During the process, Diaghilev came, and when he saw the painting, he grasped my arm and said, "Not one stroke more! This is the real expression. Away with academic forms!"

This motto, "Away with academism," in the meaning of Diaghilev, was not a destructive one. He understood and revealed with new splendor the beauty and genius of Moussorgsky. He valued the best moments of Rimsky-Korsakov. Against contemporary prettiness, he evoked the power of Stravinsky. And it was he who so carefully caressed the art of Prokofiev and the most interesting French composers and artists.

Only one who knew him personally during the time of his most bitter fight for art, at the time of indescribable difficulties, could value his constructive genius and refined sensibility. His co-workers recollect how once in Paris, on the evening of a day when he was as active as usual and no one had sensed any danger in the air, Diaghilev said to his assembled friends, "Now you deserve to have a calm supper; today we were almost ruined, and only five minutes ago I heard that all has been settled!"

And with the smile of a great consciousness he carried forward all his battles for art. He assumed on his own shoulders entire responsibility, never sparing his own name. Those who have held his enterprise to be a personal one, and him to be an impresario working for himself, are of evil mind and tongue. These are slanders against a crusader in the service of beauty. Dispensing his name liberally, he covered with his own responsibility many events and personalities. I remember times of difficulty, most critical moments, when he said: "Well, I alone shall sign. Please hold me alone liable for this." This was not the mark of egoism, but the sign of the great, lone fighter who knows why he holds his sword and shield.

Was he narrow in his opinions? In his historical exhibitions of portraits, he gave us the entire story of Russia from its very beginning, with equal reverence for the modern as for the old, even the ikon painters. In his magazine *Mir Isskustva* he



LE SACRE DU PRINTEMPS. BY STRAVINSKY

*Design by Nicholas Roerich*

This is the original scene created by the artist, to whom the composer dedicated the work, for its initial production in 1912. Mr. Roerich is preparing a new décor for the American stage premiere of the *Sacre* in April which Leopold Stokowski will conduct.

was equally impartial to the most modern artists and the finest discoveries in old masters. Being sensitive he felt the sources from which came renaissance and rejuvenation. His productions were real festivals of beauty, not extravagant fictions. They were feasts of enthusiasm, of faith in the enlightened future, where all the real values of the past were cherished as true milestones of human progress.

Without the slightest popularizing or vulgarizing of art, he revealed true art in all its manifestations. To recount all the productions, exhibitions and artistic enterprises of Diaghilev, is to write a history of Russian art from the nineties to 1929.

Recall the sensation of the magazine, *Mir Isskustva*, his work with Princess Tenishev, all the exhibitions—historical, foreign and modern Russian—, innumerable productions of ballets and operas throughout the world. His name in time may be confounded with too many conceptions to which he himself might not have subscribed, for he was generous and never niggardly with his name. When he felt that it would be useful, he gave it freely—his one and only possession.

A sensitive, noble man, brought up in the best conditions, he encountered war, revolution, all life's hurricanes, with the smile of wisdom. This wisdom is, as always, the sign of synthesis. Not only did he expand his consciousness but he refined it and thus he could equally understand the past and the future.

When, during the first productions of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, we encountered the enraged outburst of public opinion, he smiled and said, "This is victory! Let them hiss, let them cry! Inwardly they already feel its value and only the conventional mask is hissing. You will witness the results." In ten years came the real understanding and the result.

Recollecting the personality and work of Diaghilev, we recall one of the noblest and the most gigantic records of synthesis. His broad understanding, his unconquerable virility and faith in beauty have provided a beautiful, unforgettable example for the young generation. Thus they learn how to guard the values of the past to serve the most constructive victories of the future.

With unspeakable joy we recollect the glorious epopée of Diaghilev!