



PRESENTS

BALLETS RUSSES



A film by Dan Geller and Dayna Goldfine.
A fifty-year journey through the lives of the revolutionary artists who transformed dance.

Running Time: 120 Minutes

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Geller/Goldfine P R O D U C T I O N S

Ballets Russes Synopsis

Ego, politics, war, money, fame, glamour, love, betrayal, grace... and dance. *Ballets Russes* is a feature-length documentary covering more than fifty years in the lives of a group of revolutionary artists. It tells the story of the extraordinary blend of Russian, American, European and Latin American dancers who, in collaboration with the greatest choreographers, composers and designers of the first half of the 20th century, transformed ballet from mere music hall divertissement to a true art form.

From 1909, when Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev premiered his legendary Ballet Russe company in Paris, to 1962 when Serge Denham's Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo performed for the last time in Brooklyn, Ballets Russes companies brought their popular, groundbreaking and often controversial choreographies to big cities and small towns around the world. Along the way, these artistic visionaries left their mark on virtually every other area of art and culture – from stage design, painting and music to Hollywood and Broadway. Through their inclusive cosmopolitanism, they also put the first African-American and Native American ballerinas on the stage.

Using intimate interviews with surviving members of the Ballets Russes companies (now in their 70s, 80s and 90s) as well as rare archival materials and motion picture footage, *Ballets Russes* is both an ensemble character film and an historical portrait of the birth of an art form. It traces a narrative line from the Diaghilev-era beginnings in turn of the century Paris – when the likes of Nijinsky, Balanchine, Stravinsky, Picasso and Matisse united in an unprecedented artistic collaboration – to the heyday of the 1930's and '40's American tours when the artistry and glamour of the Ballets Russes dazzled audiences, whose only prior experience with dance had been vaudeville, to the twilight years of the 1950's and early 60's when – despite sold-out houses – rising touring expenses, competition from new rivals and internal mismanagement brought the Ballets Russes to a close. The film culminates with the first and only Ballets Russes Reunion Celebration, which was held in 2000 in New Orleans, bringing together nearly 100 surviving dancers, most of whom had not seen each other in more than fifty years.

Ballets Russes is narrated by the Tony Award-winning actress Marian Seldes, and includes interviews with: Irina Baronova, Yvonne Chouteau, Yvonne Craig, Frederic Franklin, Alan Howard, Nathalie Krassovska, Dame Alicia Markova, Nina Novak, Marc Platt, Wakefield Poole, Tania Riabouchinska, Mia Slavenska, Tatiana Stepanova, Maria Tallchief, Tamara Tchinerova Finch, Miguel Terekhov, Nini Theilade, Raven Wilkinson, George Zoritch and Rochelle Zide. It also includes rich posthumous portraits of George Balanchine, Alexandra Danilova, Leonide Massine and other notable dance pioneers.

Geller/Goldfine

PRODUCTIONS

BALLETS RUSSES – KEY PERSONNEL

Dan Geller and Dayna Goldfine, Producers/Directors/Editors/Writers

For over sixteen years, Emmy-award winning directors/producers Dan Geller and Dayna Goldfine have jointly created critically-acclaimed multi-character documentary narratives that braid their characters' individual personal stories to form a larger portrait of the human experience. In *BALLETS RUSSES* they fuse this approach with the performance and archival style of their 1988 award-winning *ISADORA DUNCAN: Movement from the Soul*, to make a documentary that operates at both an emotional and an intellectual level; a movie that will appeal not only to dance lovers, but to a broad general audience. In addition to *ISADORA*, Geller and Goldfine's work includes *NOW & THEN: From Frosh to Seniors*, which premiered theatrically in October 1999 and aired on PBS in October 2000 as the lead program of the Independent Lens series; *KIDS OF SURVIVAL: The Art and Life of Tim Rollins + K.O.S.* (1996), a feature-length documentary about the South Bronx-based art group Tim Rollins & K.O.S., which aired on Cinemax in September 1998 and was the recipient of two national Emmy Awards; and, *FROSH: Nine Months in a Freshman Dorm* (1994). *FROSH* was nominated by the Directors Guild of America for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in the Documentary Form and was selected by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as one of the outstanding documentaries of 1994. Geller and Goldfine have received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rudolf Nureyev Dance Foundation, the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, the William Bingham Foundation, the LEF Foundation, the Fleishhacker Foundation, Dance Films Association and the Pacific Pioneer Fund. Geller graduated from Cornell University with a B.A. in history and received his M.A. in documentary production from Stanford University. Goldfine holds a B.A. in feminist studies from Stanford University, and received her film training at De Anza College in Cupertino, California.

Robert Hawk, Producer

Robert Hawk, longtime advisor to filmmakers and film festivals, has had his own business, ICI (Independent Consultation for Independents) for ten years, and been a part of the independent film scene for over twenty. His producer credits include: Jim Fall's *TRICK*, Alex & Andrew Smith's *SLAUGHTER RULE*, Kevin Smith's *CHASING AMY* and Rafal Zielinski's *DOWNTOWN*. Starting with his involvement in documentary as a researcher on Rob Epstein's Oscar-winning *TIMES OF HARVEY MILK*, he has been credited with discovering and/or nurturing the talents of such filmmakers as Smith (*CLERKS*, et.al.), David Siegel and Scott McGehee (*BEE SEASON*; *DEEP END*), Nathaniel Kahn (*MY ARCHITECT*), Paul Devlin (*POWER TRIP*; *SLAMNATION*) and *BALLETS RUSSES*'s Dan Geller and Dayna Goldfine (*KIDS OF SURVIVAL*, et.al.). He has consulted on narrative films as varied as Moises Kaufman's *LARAMIE PROJECT*, Terry George's *SOME MOTHER'S SON*, Lisa Krueger's *MANNY AND LO* and Jon Shear's *URBANIA*, as well as on hundreds of documentaries including Oscar winners/nominees *COMMON THREADS*, *COMPLAINTS OF A DUTIFUL DAUGHTER*, *IN THE SHADOW OF THE STARS*, *REGRET TO INFORM* and *TROUBLESOME CREEK*. In 1985, Hawk founded San Francisco's Film Arts Festival, a showcase for independent filmmakers of Northern California, and was its director for eight years.

BALLETS RUSSES – KEY PERSONNEL continued...

Douglas Blair Turnbaugh, Producer

An internationally recognized authority on the Ballets Russes, Douglas Blair Turnbaugh currently serves as a member of the governing board of the Conseil International de las Danse – UNESCO, and was Chairman of the 2000 Ballets Russes Reunion/Celebration. He was Director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Foundation, was the first dance critic of New York Magazine, is a member of New York University's Biography Seminar, and is a regular contributor to numerous arts publications. Turnbaugh is the author of *Duncan Grant the Bloomsbury Group; Private: The Erotic Art of Duncant Grant*; and, *Diaghilev, Kochno, Lifar* (forthcoming). He studied ballet with Ballets Russes teachers in Seattle, Mexico City, Paris, and at the School of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in New York.

Jonathan Dana, Consulting Producer/Producer's Rep

Jonathan Dana has been a motion picture producer, distributor, and consultant since 1971. From 1979-1981, he was Director of Acquisitions and Development at The Samuel Goldwyn Company. From 1981-1989, he served at the Atlantic Entertainment Group, ultimately rising to the position of President of Motion Pictures and Television. From 1989-1994, he served as President and CEO of specialized distribution company Triton Pictures. Mr. Dana has been associated with such dramatic films as THE SPITFIRE GRILL, STORMY MONDAY, PATTY HEARST, EXTREMITIES, PALMETTO, WISH YOU WERE HERE and A WORLD APART, such comedies as TEEN WOLF, VALLEY GIRL and DROWNING MONA, such foreign language films as TOTO LES HEROS and THE HAIRDRESSER'S HUSBAND, and such feature documentaries as Steven Hawking's A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME, Eleanor Coppola's HEARTS OF DARKNESS: A FILMMAKER'S APOCALYPSE, Michele Ohayon's 1998 Oscar nominee COLORS STRAIGHT UP, and SANDSTONE, Mr. Dana's produced and directed debut film. His recent pictures as a producer/producers rep include STANDING IN THE SHADOWS OF MOTOWN, winner of the National Society of Film Critics Best Non-Fiction Film of 2002; THE BOYS OF 2ND STREET PARK for Showtime (2003) and BROADWAY: THE GOLDEN AGE, Co-Winner, Best Non-Fiction Film of 2004, NY Critics Circle Online. As a rep, Mr. Dana has handled THE COCKETTES, winner Los Angeles Film Critics Film Best Non-fiction Film (2002), and is currently repping the sleeper indy hit WHAT THE BLEEP DO WE KNOW?, released by Samuel Goldwyn and Roadside Attractions. Upcoming projects include BIGGER THAN THE SKY, starring John Corbett, Sean Astin, and Amy Smart, for MGM, and THE GRAVEDANCERS, set for production in early 2005.

Gary Weimberg, Editor

Gary Weimberg has spent the last two decades making award-winning documentaries as an editor, director, and producer. He has won two national Emmy awards for Editing (EARTH AND THE AMERICAN DREAM, HBO, 1992; LOYALTY AND BETRAYAL: A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN MOB, Fox, 1994). Two other documentaries that he edited were nominated for Academy Awards (MEMORIAL, 1989; and, SUPERCHIEF: THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF EARL WARREN, 1991). In 1999 he was nominated as Outstanding Documentary Director by the Director's Guild of America for his controversial political documentary, THE DOUBLE LIFE OF ERNESTO GOMEZ GOMEZ, PBS 1999 – a program that contributed directly to the Presidential Pardon and release of 12 political prisoners who had already served 19 years in prison. Recently, as part of Luna Productions, he has produced a series of documentaries for non-profit organizations that have helped to raise over \$1.4 million for worthy causes.

BALLETS RUSSES – KEY PERSONNEL continued...

Todd Boekelheide, Original Score

Todd Boekelheide started working in film in 1974 as a member of the staff at American Zoetrope, Francis Ford Coppola's production company in San Francisco. In 1976 he left to work as an assistant editor on STAR WARS, and went on to edit picture and sound on THE BLACK STALLION two years later. This film kindled an interest in film music, so he began music studies at Mills College in Oakland, California. As he began to develop his film scoring career, he also specialized as a rerecording mixer, and won an Oscar for mixing the music on AMADEUS in 1984. He has scored several feature films, including DIM SUM and NINA TAKES A LOVER, and numerous documentaries, notably HEARTS OF DARKNESS: A FILMMAKER'S APOCALYPSE. In 1999 he won an Emmy for his score for the documentary KIDS OF SURVIVAL: The Life and Art of Tim Rollins and the KOS. Up-to-date credits information can be found at www.tobomusic.com.

David Conte, Original Score

David Conte is Professor of Composition at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he teaches composition, conducts the Conservatory Chorus, and teaches a class in film music. Educated at Cornell University, he is Composer-In-Residence with the San Francisco-based theater company Thick Description. Conte is the composer of three operas: THE DREAMERS, THE GIFT OF THE MAGI, and FIREBIRD MOTEL, as well as a musical, THE PASSION OF RITA ST. JAMES. He has published over 60 works with E.C. Shirmer Music Company, and his work is represented on numerous commercial recordings. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Paris, where he was one of the last students of the legendary teacher Nadia Boulanger, and worked with Aaron Copland in 1982 preparing a study of the composer's work.

Marian Seldes, Narrator

Marian Seldes made her Broadway debut in 1947 in John Gielgud's production of MEDEA. Since then she has been a featured actress in 30 Broadway and Off-Broadway shows, including her 1967 Tony Award-winning performance as Julia in Edward Albee's A DELICATE BALANCE. Seldes has received four Tony Award nominations for her work in FATHER'S DAY (1971) – for which she also received a Drama Desk Award – DEATHTRAP (1978), RING ROUND THE MOON (1999) and DINNER AT EIGHT (2003). In addition, she has received two Obie Awards for her performances in THE GINGER MAN and ISADORA SLEEPS WITH THE RUSSIAN NAVY. She was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame in 1996. Seldes also has had an extensive film career including roles in MONA LISA SMILE, THE HAUNTING, AFFLICTION and Woody Allen's HOLLYWOOD ENDING. Her numerous television credits include appearances in IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK, PLAINSONG and TRUMAN. Seldes studied ballet for many years and made her stage debut in 1942 not in theater, but as a dancer in American Ballet Theatre's PETROUCHKA, where she performed alongside many of the BALLETS RUSSES dancers including Alexandra Danilova, Alicia Markova, Irina Baronova and Leonide Massine.

Geller/Goldfine P R O D U C T I O N S

***BALLETS RUSSES* – Filmmakers’ Statement & Production Notes**

In January 2000, our Co-Producers, Robert Hawk and Douglas Blair Turnbaugh, came to us with the idea of filming what they described as a once-in-a-lifetime event. The event was the first ever official reunion of Ballets Russes dancers, and it was to be held that June in New Orleans, Louisiana.

At the time, neither of us knew very much about ballet, but we were intrigued for a number of other reasons. Our last three documentaries had been about groups of young people in their teens and early 20s, and we were excited by the opportunity to make a film about people at the opposite end of the age spectrum. We were also taken with the thought of spending time with a group of people who had lived their lives so fully in the arts – many of the Ballets Russes dancers were still actively engaged in the art of dance well into their 70s, 80s and even 90s. And, finally, after a decade of working in the cinema verite style, and we thought it would be fun to tackle a historical project – to go back to our roots as it were, given that our first documentary experience as a team was making the history and performance-based *Isadora Duncan: Movement From the Soul* (1988).

We figured that at the very least we should film a handful of preliminary interviews with some of the Ballets Russes dancers who were planning to attend the reunion. Then based on these interviews we could decide whether we had the makings of a film on our hands. So, in March 2000, we cashed in some frequent flier miles and took our camera and sound package to New York where many of the dancers now lived. It only took a few interviews to convince us that we did indeed have the subject of our next documentary: on that first morning, Raven Wilkinson walked into the room with her gripping story of breaking the color barrier as the first African-American woman to dance in a major ballet company. And, the next day we met Frederic Franklin, possibly the most active octogenarian we’d ever encountered and certainly one of the most fabulous raconteurs.

We were hooked. We spent a week filming in Los Angeles, where we met the feisty and glamorous Mia Slavenska as well as Tania Riabouchinska – one of the three “Baby Ballerinas,” who in the 1930s and ‘40s, had captured the hearts of audiences around the world – and, who invited us to film the daily ballet class she taught. And, then it was off to New Orleans for the Reunion – four jam-packed days of reliving Ballets Russes experiences with nearly 100 former Ballets Russes dancers who had flown in from places as far away as Australia, Brazil, Venezuela and Denmark, and who for the most part, had not seen each other for more than 40 years.

By the end of the Reunion we’d interviewed 40 of the dancers, and felt sure that among them we had found our principal subjects. From there we arranged trips to several of their homes where we continued to film. Among many places, our travels took us to: Dallas, Texas, where Nathalie Krassovska still runs her school of dance in a studio at the back of her house; Salina, Oklahoma, where Miguel Terekhov and Yvonne Chouteau now live; and, London, England, where at age 92 Dame Alicia Markova still coached young dancers at the London Studio Centre. We also spent

BALLETS RUSSES – Filmmakers’ Statement & Production Notes continued...

alot of time in Cincinnati, Ohio filming Frederic Franklin as he set Ballets Russes choreographies on the Cincinnati Ballet and danced character roles in that company’s performances. During those first two years of the production we found ourselves falling more and more in love with ballet. What had started as a mere curiosity about a world that was previously unknown to us, had become a passion, and we found ourselves spending night after night watching performances of the San Francisco Ballet, here in our home town.

By the end of 2001, we’d completed most of our filming and preliminary research. The next challenge was to figure out how to bring the dancers’ stories to life in a dramatic and visually evocative way. And so began our search for archival materials. This exploration took us first to Chicago and Ann Barzel, who was one of the first dance critics in America and an early pioneer in dance cinematography. Starting in the early 1930s, Barzel filmed the Ballets Russes companies using a wind-up 16mm camera while standing in the wings, the balcony and at the foot of the stage. The result was nearly 20 hours of privileged footage, sometimes a bit shaky and grainy, but exquisite nonetheless. At 94, Barzel was spending her days cataloguing her footage for donation to the Newberry and Chicago Public Libraries and she more than generously gave us access to all of it.

Another rich source of archival motion picture footage was uncovered in Australia after an exhaustive internet search. Beginning in the mid-1930s, the Ballet Russe company run by Col. Wasily de Basil had toured regularly through Australia, and two men (Dr. Ringland Anderson and Ewen Murry-Will) had followed along on these tours, between them shooting over 30 hours of astonishing 16mm footage – much of it in color and often capturing backstage antics, as well as performances. Today all of this footage (most of it never before seen by a public audience) is housed at ScreenSound, an archive in Australia, and after much back-and-forth, we were able to have access to it. The Dance Collection at the New York Library for the Performing Arts and Jacob’s Pillow also generously made their archival motion picture catalogues available to the project.

Perhaps the most unexpected and delightful archival footage, however, came from the Ballets Russes dancers, themselves. Miguel Terekhov gave us his 8mm footage, which captured the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo’s bus tours of the 1950s. Mia Slavenska contributed several hours worth of 16mm performance and backstage footage shot by her husband in the 1940s and ‘50s. And, a fabulous and forgotten stash of 1950s performance footage shot by Glenn Olson, one of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo’s corps dancers, was discovered by Olsen’s boyfriend, after Olsen’s death in 2002.

In addition to the archival motion picture footage, *Ballets Russes* features more than 400 archival stills. The vast majority of these came from the private collections of the dancers we interviewed. But many were found through years of daily eBay searches, which turned up nearly every Ballets Russes program published between 1933 and 1962, as well as countless magazine articles, books, ticket stubs and other memorabilia. Some of the most beautiful stills were taken by Maurice Seymour, a gifted dance photographer. Seymour’s son, Ronald, a talented photographer in his own right, generously provided these to the production.

BALLETS RUSSES – Filmmakers’ Statement & Production Notes continued...

Once the interviews and supporting verite scenes were shot and the archival materials gathered, we began an editing process that ultimately lasted more than two-years – far longer than any edit we had ever before been involved with. This process proved to be a daunting, but thrilling experience as we slowly felt our way towards fusing the rich history of the Ballets Russes companies with the idiosyncratic stories told by the Ballets Russes dancers during their interviews – stories that were by turn funny, poignant and very revealing. Throughout this process we were acutely aware of a responsibility to capture and honor an important artistic heritage that was in danger of disappearing. The surviving Ballets Russes dancers spoke often of their wish to pass on their legacy to the next generation of dancers, and we hope that by making this film we have done our part to ensure that this happens.

Geller/Goldfine P R O D U C T I O N S

BALLETS RUSSES

Dancer Biographies (in alphabetical order)

Irina Baronova (born 1919): Baronova was one of the three famous “Baby Ballerinas” (along with Tatiana Riabouchinska and Tamara Toumanova). She was discovered by George Balanchine in 1931 in the Paris dance studio of Olga Preobrajenska (the great prima ballerina of the Russian Imperial Ballet). Baronova was not quite 13 when she joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1932. She danced with various Ballets Russes companies between 1932 and 1941 and also with Ballet Theatre and Leonide Massine’s Ballet Russe Highlights. Baronova starred in four films: *Florian* (1940), *Yolanda* (1943), *Train of Events* (1949) and *A Toast to Love* (1951). She also appeared in the musical *Bullet in the Ballet* and the comedy *Black Eyes* (both in London in 1946). Irina Baronova now lives in Australia where she is writing her memoirs, which are slated for publication in late-2005.

Yvonne Chouteau (born 1929): Chouteau was one of five American Indian ballerinas from Oklahoma who danced with the various Ballets Russes companies. When she was 12 years old, she left Oklahoma for New York City, where she was given a scholarship to the School of American Ballet. In 1943, at age 14, she joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo where she rose from the corps de ballet to ballerina. Her first solo role was *Prayer* in *Coppelia* (1945), for which she was coached by the great ballerina Alexandra Danilova. She married Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo soloist Miguel Terekhov in 1954 and together they established the first fully-accredited dance department in the United States at the University of Oklahoma, Norman (1962). Yvonne Chouteau is retired and lives in Oklahoma.

Yvonne Craig (born 1937): Craig joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1954 at the age of 16 and danced in the corps and then as a soloist until 1957. After leaving the Ballet Russe she went to Hollywood, where she appeared in 16 films and over 60 television series. She is perhaps best known for her role as Batgirl in the *Batman* television series. Other notable television appearances include the Green Woman in *Star Trek* and *Dobie Gillis*. During her film career she co-starred in two movies with Elvis Presley: *It Happened at the World’s Fair* (1963) and *Kissin’ Cousins* (1964). Yvonne Craig currently lives in Southern California.

Frederic Franklin, CBE (born 1914): Franklin was born in Liverpool and made his debut as a dancer in Paris in 1931 in a show starring Josephine Baker. He returned to England where he joined the Markova-Dolin Ballet in 1935. While dancing with that company, Franklin was discovered by Leonide Massine who hired him as premier danseur for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1938. During his first season with the Ballet Russe Franklin was cast as the Baron in Massine’s *Gaite Parisienne*, where he partnered Alexandra Danilova for the first time. Thus was launched one of ballet’s most legendary partnerships – a partnership that lasted for nearly 20 years. In 1952, Franklin took a break from the Ballet Russe to form the Slavenska-Franklin Ballet together with ballerina Mia Slavenska. The most important work to come out of this partnership was the ballet version of Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire*, choreographed by Valerie Bettis, and in which Franklin danced the role of Stanley Kowalski. Franklin returned to the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo

BALLETS RUSSES – Dancer Biographies continued...

In 1954, and stayed until 1956 as maitre de ballet. He directed the National Ballet of Washington from 1963 to 1974 and the Cincinnati Ballet from 1984 to 1986. Franklin returned to the stage in 2000 to perform character roles with both American Ballet Theatre and the Cincinnati Ballet. He continues to appear with these companies in the roles of Madge the Witch in *La Sylphide*, the Tutor in *Swan Lake* and Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*. Franklin was named Commander of the Order of the British Empire in June 2004 at the age of 90. He currently lives in Manhattan but still travels the world setting Ballets Russes choreographies.

Alan Howard (1931-2003): Howard joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1949 as a corps member. He rose to premier danseur in 1954 (becoming one of the first Americans to attain that rank) and remained with the company until 1960. Howard founded the Pacific Ballet in San Francisco in the early 1960s. Between 1973 and his death in 2003, Alan Howard trained numerous dancers in both Europe and the United States.

Nathalie Krassovska (born 1918): Krassovska comes from a family of dancers – her grandmother was a soloist with the Bolshoi Ballet and her mother danced with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. She studied alongside the "Baby Ballerinas" Irina Baronova and Tamara Toumanova at Olga Preobrajenska's school in Paris, and then danced with George Balanchine's Les Ballets 1933. Krassovska joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1935 as a soloist and soon was promoted to ballerina. After leaving the Ballet Russe in 1950, she danced with the London Festival Ballet until 1960. Nathalie Krassovska currently lives in Dallas, Texas where she runs the Krassovska School of Ballet Jeunesse.

Dame Alicia Markova (1910-2004): Markova is widely considered to be one of the greatest British ballerinas of the 20th century, and certainly one of the most famous Giselles of all time. In 1924, Sergei Diaghilev discovered the then Alicia Marks taking lessons in a London studio and hired her for his Ballets Russes on her 14th birthday. She was renamed Alicia Markova and remained with Diaghilev's company until it disbanded with his sudden death in 1929. Markova returned to London where she danced with the Vic-Wells Ballet and Ballet Rambert before co-founding the Markova-Dolin Ballet in 1935 with Anton Dolin. In 1938 she joined Leonide Massine's new Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Markova left the Ballet Russe for Ballet Theatre in 1941, where she danced until 1946. Markova spent the next four years guest starring with companies around the world and then, in 1950, she co-founded (again with Anton Dolin) the London Festival Ballet, which is now the English National. When she retired from the stage in 1963, she became the director of the Metropolitan Opera Ballet in New York. Markova returned to London in 1974 and continued to teach and give master classes there until well into her 90s. Her death on December 2, 2004 truly marked the end of an era – Alicia Markova was the last surviving member of Diaghilev's Ballet Russe.

Nina Novak (born 1927): Novak studied at the School of the Warsaw Opera House as well as under Bronislava Nijinska. She joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1948 and was promoted to ballerina at the end of her first season with the company. She remained with the Ballet Russe until 1962, serving as ballet mistress on top of her roles as ballerina. Nina Novak now lives in Caracas, Venezuela where she founded and continues to run Ballet Classico.

Marc Platt (born 1915): Born Marcel Le Plat, he became one of the first Americans to dance with the Ballet Russe, after being discovered by Leonide Massine as a teenager in Seattle. Le Plat's name was quickly Russianized to Marc Platoff and he soon rose from the corps to soloist rank, dancing

BALLETS RUSSES – Dancer Biographies continued...

roles such as King Dodon in *Coq d'Or*. In 1939, Platt became the first American to choreograph for the Ballet Russe with his *Ghost Town* (music by Richard Rodgers). Platt remained with the Ballet Russe until 1942, when he left for a career on Broadway and in the movies. His most famous Broadway role was as the “Dream” Curly in the original cast of *Oklahoma!* (1943). Platt’s many film roles include Dan in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, as well as star turns in *Tonight and Every Night* and *Down to Earth* (both with Rita Hayworth). In 1962, he became the director of the ballet and producer at Radio City Music Hall. Marc Platt now lives in Santa Rosa, California.

Wakefield Poole (born 1936): Poole grew up in Jacksonville, Florida and was one of the many young dancers who traveled to New York in the mid-1950s with the dream of joining the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. In 1957, he won a coveted spot in the Ballet Russe corps, but the difficult Ballet Russe bus tours (with their incessant one-night stands) soon left Poole pining for New York. He returned there in 1960 to become a dance captain on Broadway. In 1971, with the release of his landmark gay porn film *Boys in the Sand*, Poole’s career took a new turn. His numerous adult gay films were known for their visual artfulness and use of classical music. Poole’s post-film career included a stint as executive chef for Calvin Klein. He lives in Florida.

Tatiana Riabouchinska (1917-2000): Riabouchinska was one of the three famous “Baby Ballerinas” (along with Irina Baronova and Tamara Toumanova), who was discovered by George Balanchine in 1931 in a Paris dance studio. She was 15 when she joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1932. Riabouchinska remained with the Ballet Russe until 1942 and then became a guest ballerina with major companies all over the world including Ballet Theatre, the London Festival Ballet, the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas and Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. In 1943, she married the dancer and choreographer David Lichine and together they became one of the ballet world’s most beloved couples. Riabouchinska and Lichine were involved in two major Walt Disney projects: as the models for Hyacinth Hippo and Ben Ali Gator in *Fantasia* (1940); and, as the dancing silhouettes in *Make Mine Music* (1946). In the 1950s they founded a dance school in Beverly Hills, where they trained actors and actresses as well as dancers. In fact, Riabouchinska trained Anne Bancroft for her role as the prima ballerina in the film *The Turning Point*. Riabouchinska continued to teach at a studio in West Hollywood until the day she died.

Mia Slavenska (1914-2002): Slavenska was born in Yugoslavia and was a child prodigy, making her stage debut at the Zagreb National Opera House in 1921. She joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo as a ballerina in 1938, already having made a name for herself by touring Europe as a soloist, winning the gold medal in the 1936 Berlin Dance Olympics and starring in the film *La Mort du Cygne*. Slavenska stayed with the Ballet Russe for four seasons and then continued to dance with the company on and off as a guest artist through the 1950s. In 1952, she co-founded the Slavenska-Franklin Ballet (along with Frederic Franklin) and became famous in the role of Blanche in that company’s production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (choreographed by Valerie Bettis and based on the play by Tennessee Williams). Slavenska was on the dance faculty at UCLA from 1969 to 1983, and also taught at California Institute for the Arts.

Tatiana Stepanova (born 1924): Stepanova joined Col. de Basil’s Original Ballet Russe in 1939 at the age of 16, after studying with Olga Preobrajenska in Paris. She rose to become one of its star ballerinas during the War years as the company toured exhaustively throughout Latin America. She retired from dancing in 1946 to marry a long time admirer. Tatiana Stepanova currently lives with her husband in Boston.

BALLETS RUSSES – Dancer Biographies continued...

Maria Tallchief (born 1925): One of the greatest American ballerinas of the 20th century, Tallchief joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo as a member of the corps in 1942. From the Osage Tribe, she was another of the five American Indian ballerinas from Oklahoma to dance with the Ballet Russe. Tallchief soon rose to soloist rank and was spotted by George Balanchine, who almost immediately asked her to marry him. The two did marry in 1947 and Tallchief left the Ballet Russe to dance with Balanchine's Ballet Society (soon to become the New York City Ballet). Under Balanchine's tutelage she became legendary for her starring role in his *Firebird*. And although her marriage to Balanchine ended in 1952, Tallchief remained with the New York City Ballet as its prima ballerina until 1965. After leaving the stage, she became director of the Chicago Ballet. Maria Tallchief currently lives in Chicago.

Tamara Tchinarova Finch (born 1919): Tchinerova Finch studied alongside the “Baby Ballerinas” Irina Baronova and Tamara Toumanova in the studio of Olga Preobrajenska, and joined the de Basil and Blum Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo as a soloist during its first season in 1932. She danced with the Ballet Russe until 1939 when she chose to remain in Australia at the close of the Company's tour there. Tchinerova Finch danced with several Australian ballet companies and is credited with making a significant contribution to the development of ballet in that country. While in Australia, she met and married the actor Peter Finch and worked with him on a number of films before leaving Australia to make her home in England. Tamara Tchinerova Finch currently lives in London where she is a dance writer.

Miguel Terekhov (born 1928): Terekhov joined Col. de Basil's Original Ballet Russe in 1943 at the age of 14 while the company was on tour in his native Uruguay. He remained with the company until 1947. Terekhov later joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and danced with that company until 1958. In 1956, he married Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo ballerina Yvonne Chouteau. Together they founded the first fully-accredited dance department in the United States at the University of Oklahoma, Norman (1962). They also founded the Oklahoma City Civic Ballet. Miguel Terekhov is now retired and lives in Oklahoma.

Nini Theilade (born 1916): Theilade was born in Java, Indonesia. Considered a child prodigy, she embarked on a series of solo recital dance tours in Europe and America at the age of 14. Theilade was discovered at one of these recitals by Max Reinhardt, who cast her as Queen of the Fairies in his film, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Theilade herself created some of the choreography in this film, most notably the pas de deux that she danced with Mickey Rooney. Theilade joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1938 and danced leading roles in Leonide Massine's *Nobilissima Visione*, *Bacchanale*, and *St. Francis*. She left the company during the war to return to Europe, where she continued to dance and choreograph. Theilade is credited with introducing symphonic ballet to Denmark. Nini Theilade lives in Denmark where she teaches at a university dance department.

Raven Wilkinson (born 1936): When Wilkinson was accepted into the corps of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1954, she became the first African American woman ever hired as a permanent member of a major ballet company. Wilkinson rose to soloist during her second season and stayed with the company for six years. Ultimately she was forced to give up her position in the Ballet Russe when increasingly hostile racism made it impossible for her to tour in the South. After leaving the company, she joined a convent for 8 months before deciding to return to dance. Finding that no other American ballet companies would hire her, Wilkinson went to Holland, where she danced as a soloist

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with the Dutch National Ballet. In 1974, she returned to America to perform character roles with the New York Metropolitan Opera. Raven Wilkinson lives in New York City and continues to perform with the Opera.

George Zoritch (born in 1917): Zoritch studied with Olga Preobrajenska alongside the “Baby Ballerinas” Irina Baronova and Tamara Toumanova before joining the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1935. Zoritch rose from soloist rank to become premier danseur and danced with the Company from 1935-1940 and again from 1957-1962. He also was a star with the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas. Zoritch danced in several Hollywood movies during the 1940s and 50s – most notably in the Begin the Beguine sequence of *Night and Day*. After retiring from the stage, Zoritch opened a school in Los Angeles. In 1973 he joined the dance faculty of the University of Arizona at Tucson, where he established the ballet program. Zoritch currently lives in Arizona.

Rochelle Zide (born 1938): Zide joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo corps in 1954 on her sixteenth birthday and was soon promoted to soloist. She stayed with the company until 1958, when she left to become a principal dancer and ballet mistress at the Joffrey Ballet. Zide later became a prima ballerina at New York City Opera Ballet, artistic director of the Netherlands Dance Theater, director of the ballet program for Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, professor of dance at Adelphi University, director of the New Zealand School of Dance, and professor of ballet and dance history at Butler University. Rochelle Zide currently lives in Tucson, Arizona.

Geller/Goldfine **P R O D U C T I O N S**

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BALLETS RUSSES – CREDITS continued...

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Archival Motion Pictures Courtesy of

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Australian Ballet

Film World & Cinesound Movietone Productions

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Jacob's Pillow (with thanks to Norton Owen)

Oddball Film & Video

Glenn Olson (with thanks to Marc Austen)

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Miguel Terekhov

WPA Film Library

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