

Choreography Sketches as a Representational System of Dance Recording: From M. Petipa to M. Fokine

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Abstract

The author of the article considers one of the most important early stages in the creative process in the work of a choreographer regarding choreographic work associated with iconic detent dance. Through analysis of sketchy graphics created by famous masters such as M. Petipa and M. Fokine, creativity, which evolves from one track to another, is analyzed and an attempt is made to identify and articulate those installations that are suitable for staging work of choreographers. Here the main issues dealt with are the typologies and the common features of visual forms and key scheme and the dance records sign system specific to each of the masters are identified. The essence and associated nodal concepts concerning ways to draw in the act of creating choreographic image and the creative vision for Ballet are traced.

Keywords: Ballet, Ballet Piece, Chronotope, Dance Record, Exposition, Staged Work, Sign System

1. Introduction

In the long history of ballet, one can particularly emphasise two epochs - 19th and early 20th centuries, when the greatest number of works appeared, demonstrating the desire to solve the problems of staged choreography, as well as developing a serious targeted approach to them. We are not talking about the volume and comprehensiveness of works created in the field of ballet, but about the depth of penetration into selected issues of graphic presentation of dance directing, since the total number of such works in these times became more diverse. To date, many important areas of the theory of choreography still survive intact. These include choreography graphics, often associated with the ups and downs of practical experiments, which was not described and conceptualised from beginning to end by the creators. Nevertheless, certain provisions are stipulated in the works of famous choreographers and their successors who were engaged in graphical artwork. Only a few memories survived in the memoirs of contemporaries who witnessed the creativity of the dance masters. Thus, the work of ballet

dancers and choreographers in the field of visual fixation of the dance is less studied; it has never been the subject of a special study. There is nothing written about it in the literature. Remaining as optional, this phenomenon is usually excluded from art reasoning. Meanwhile, this work is relevant to a particular art world. It is a special creative element that lives by its own regulations. The use of fine materials by choreographers is rightful, as well as material taken from life, which is of interest to the choreographer. Do not forget that the choreographer will thought develops and enriches with the development and enrichment of fine forms. In ballet, there is a certain artistic system, which can be fully revealed only by means of the image. That is why, ultimately, dance is doomed by its functional, purely professional purpose to be attributed to a shabby director's development. The greatest interest in this regard is the study of imaging techniques in the course of creating choreographic character. The artistic creativity of the choreographer is seen as a process similar to designing items. However, the problem of expressive figurative and plastic form is not removed, though it is contingent primarily on function. The creative process of

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developing choreographic character is viewed as it were “from the inside out”. The study of fine art of dance masters is accompanied by in-depth study of compositional graphic tools, based on analysis and experimental study of the properties of the art form.

2. Materials and Methods

For dance masters, image is a kind of representational system. But just as line and color do not represent the artistic image, the original sketch as well as shooting in this case do not represent artistic creativity. Impartial cribbing from nature is amateurish, though assent to new stages of philosophical and artistic generalisations, expressed in the diversity of aesthetic pursuit, is a lively contradictory form dominant of the choreographic process of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This is the subject of our research.

For the analysis, we chose the artwork of two famous masters of choreography -, whose creative work spans the 19th century, and M. Fokin, reformer of the Russian ballet of the late 19th - early 20th centuries. The study attempts to disclose the specifics of choreographers' fine arts in their ways of functional thinking for specific performance, as well as considering it to be a diagnostic imperative way of mastering the world of dance. The field of our study includes mostly graphic images in which the depth of thought and high visual culture of directing choreographer are interrelated inseparably¹⁻⁹. They represent sketches, diagrams and episode pictures of the performance, which are significant in themselves, because we are talking about the images of famous choreographers, each of whom is associated with one or another conception, formulation or period of creativity. They are arranged in the sole sequence, regular for a given case, which is dictated by the general intent of the performance, its main defining idea. Sometimes they are based on a kind of directing choreographer's diary that collects their thoughts, reasoning, stories about their own performances; sometimes they are arranged based on the “hard” director's script. This is everything that occurs daily, away from the theatre audience's eyes, in all its complex dialectics, the ideas, which are yet difficult to generalise; however, the presence of historical distance helps to detect intrinsic, natural essence hidden under the wrapper of accidental.

did his work step by step. One of the important periods is creation and work on the libretto, which was

written either by himself, or processed according to the tastes, understanding, and time requirements. The study of the era, costumes, and accessories allowed him to give clear assignment (oral or written) to performance artists. Finally, we would like to note that his famous mass dances, rich plastic staging, and even the whole music score were composed after pre-designing complex dancing schemes and fixing them in the drawings. Thus, the clarity of “plastic” and emotional thoughts were achieved, as well as the ability to count on the merger, exceptional simplicity of ideas in choreographic images of the most challenging dance combinations 4.

Schematic drawings of have a variety of advantages, even compared to experienced dance photographers. First of all, they are much deeper in perceiving space in its dance transformation. The organizing principle of each depicted female dancer of the corps de ballet, conventionally indicated in general graphically, are the intuitive features of constant contact with the movement of all other dancers, and this strongly reveals presence of choreographer's thinking. Graphic drawings with lots of figures and objects unfold their narrative in a sequence, characteristic to symbolic writing. Often rows of images include inputted graphical icons resembling prehistoric petroglyphs or Egyptian hieroglyphics. They complement each other in terms of meaning and composition, emphasizing the perception orientation and sequence. However, the temporal sequence of images almost never reflects its temporal length. Simultaneity becomes a time base streak to cover the spatial combination of figures and details, also given in streak. The interrelation of gestures, postures and items, as well as items and human, represent the characters in not so much spatial as topographical context. Sometimes large scale images of human shapes are a sign of their importance, rather than an indication of the geometric magnitudes in the space (much like the Egyptian reliefs and wall paintings). However, these choreographic sketches not only assume the image of space, but the shapes as well – symbols are considered in the space, they look like the combination of front and profile images, made at a right angle or when looking at them from above. The entire internal birth mechanism of the action and the character is often absent. The creative method of here belongs exactly to those mechanisms, which usually remain “behind the scenes”. They do not give comprehensive information about future components of performance, its semantic and figurative-expressive aspect: about the fable, the style, and the manner of performance, though conveying a different thing, namely composition and tempo-rhythm.

Significant relationships between temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically mastered by choreographers in drawings can be called the chronotope (time-space). In choreography, the graphical chronotope represents the adunation of spatial and temporal marks in a meaningful and concrete concept. The time here is stretched, becoming long, and includes rows and chains of figures-characters; the space intensifies, draws into the time movement of the dance. Figures of the dance unfold in space, and the space is comprehended and measured by time. This intersection of rows and merging of marks characterise chorographical chronotope 5.

Petipa and Fokine break down graphic material inside the sketches on rhythmic blocks, set priorities, and determine the compositional drama of each episode of dancing movement. The principle of dynamic equilibrium and correctly found scale of the artwork allows one to combine quite diverse figure patterns and schemes in a single whole, arranged on a plane, and to create on their basis a multifaceted exposure.

Surviving choreography sketches - exposures of to scenes from ballets include "King Kandal" by (available at the Bakhrushin State Central Theatre Museum), "Sleeping Beauty" (1890), the "Nutcracker" (1892) (available at the Bakhrushin State Central Theatre Museum). These are top views and motion schemes to specific acts and scenes. These are search options for a cord groups, their relocation and shape. We see the stage from the height of bird flight. The singularity of the author's opinion gives rise to a geometry that naturally turns into the symbolism. In some drawings performed with graphite pencil and ink, one can see how the right solution comes to mind.

The drawings are already half of the performance. In other words, the ballet is alive not owing to the essence of the movement, but linear building of shapes. From this point of view, the "King Kandal" seems to me typical Baroque. Fairy ballet shows of this kind are long gone. Now the performances are built differently. But the art of creating broad choreographic artworks and large shape compositions must be learnt from Petipa³.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Graphic Images and Choreographic Direction by M. Petipa

Petipa worked not only on the corps de ballet groups' schematics and mass scenes. He used to make sketches

of the actual dance movements and shape poses. For example, there exist sketches of several female dancers with tulle (fabric) for the "Mlada" ballet, the sketches of supporting duet movements for the "La Bayadere" and "Mlada" ballets, grotesque drawings of buffoons and characteristic movements of the Slavic dance from the "Mlada" ballet, a sketch of the final scene (Odette and Prince), and the image of a bird of prey for the "Swan Lake" ballet. The abstractive schematic drawings, each resembling petroglyphs of primitive art, give rapid fixation of steps, prisiadkas, moves, pirouettes and other movements, their transitions, repetitions, stops, etc. They are very important for a choreographer since they contain a dynamically technical sense of the future dance. Profile drawings of several female dancers with tulle from the "Mlada" ballet is a foretype, forcing to recollect poetic dancing like aerial scenes of the "La Bayadere" ballet.

In the drawings to "Sleeping Beauty", a significant place is taken by graphical sketches of the waltz to the first act. Here, as nowhere else, one can see digits, crosses, circles, points, arcs, lines, and arrows, showing the number of participants (women, men and children), the structure of the corps de ballet, and the soloists variations. Petipa is looking for the image of the dance, and we see the gradual construction of the waltz figures. Groupings are sometimes spare, not cluttering the area of sheet (stage floor), sometimes solid and compact, shapes are symmetrical, balanced or opposite - asymmetrical and dynamic. Property (baskets, garlands, and flowers), which is so important in this ballet, is also involved in creation of the artistic image.

Choreographer F. Lopukhov notes: "... the image contains the main thing: the idea of garlands. A very beautiful group with the exact lineup of performers came up from this image" 3. Numbers in the circles that are located at different points of the sheets are the characters of the play: Aurora, the Lilac Fairy, Karaboss Fairy, etc. Of course, it is impossible to imagine the appearance of these characters by their schematic drawings, nevertheless they indicate the direction of the culminating points of the plot device, acts and patterns of the play. Intellectually, the drawing hand of M. Petipa is alive with professional idea, frozen on paper.

3.2 Graphic Images and Choreographic Direction by M. Fokine

Exposure drawings of choreographer are similar to the sketches by, though from an artistic point of view, they

are more professional as they are drawn more in detail. Artistic talent of, the author of the first edition about the choreographer, which today is a rarity: "... he was a regular visitor to the Hermitage Museum and art galleries of the Russian Museum, where he mastered the brush and copied paintings of Russian and foreign artists. Later, his choreographic works so clearly represented the favor of the promising artistic background, which have developed in him under the impression of catholically aesthetic inclinations" 2. Graphical drawings of choreographer can be clearly divided into two groups.

First group represents plans (top views) of choreographic breakdown. Fokine's sketches are not a monumental Baroque clutter like those drawn by Petipa. Sketches are of a multi-part composite character. The sheet is divided into parts (small formats) like a ballet performance is isolated to the acts, pictures and scenes. Sketches of groups of actors with their compositional linear, circular, oval, diagonal, grouped or multiple breakdown follow one by one in chronological order under the numbers of 1, 2, 3, etc. 6 We see not the end result, but the observation process, the search process that shows one of the unsolved mysteries of creativity that is especially attractive. The exposition of the dance's order for the "Fire Bird" ballet to Igor Stravinsky's music is solved exactly in this manner (1910, Museum of Theatrical and Musical Culture in St. Petersburg).

Another group of drawings consists of the profile sketches of single, two or three figure compositions. The drawings are specific, each showing a certain movement of dynamic or static poses. It's not only the scheme, but also the motion manner – sketches to the "Blue God" (1911) and "Egyptian Nights" (1908) ballets. Even at the initial stage, these ballets are distinguished by a deep sense of style of the choreographic text, the originality of its perception.

In the chronology of the sketches to the "Blue God" ballet to music, we see the evolution of the movement from a single figure to two-figures, and further three-figures breakdowns. The movement develops from dynamics to statics. The graphic line of Fokine's pencil picks up almost without corrections the proportions and gestures of male and female figures; we feel the hand of the artist⁷.

In the sketches of dance groups to "Egyptian Nights" by A. Arensky, particularly attractive is the stylised central shape of a female, standing on the podium, looking like she descended from sculpted originals of Hermitage or

the Cairo Museum collections. This indicates that M. Fokine deeply studied monuments of Egyptian art⁸.

The image of magnificent Baroque dance is depicted in the drawings for the "Awnings Dreams" ballet to the music of Mozart (1921). Three shapes of King, Queen and the little Page, who supports the tail of the Queen, vary the shapes of circular dance, moving towards the viewer in a horizontally-linear manner. "These drawings, masterfully performed with black ink, create an image of a lush and pompous Baroque style, so clearly manifested in costumes of the 18th century. Heavy frame skirts, tight bodice, high hair, powdered wigs, ceremonial movements and slow demonstrative poses – all of this can be seen in such a small, though expressive choreographic sketches by. They contain the narrative and figurative seance, stay on the verge of choreographers' exposures and mounted conceptions"⁸.

Thus, the immediate world of ballet-master, transferred to the plane, required a different study, different measure of the reality. And because of the effort to keep the whole "grand style" of ancient Egypt, ancient Greece or the French Baroque, follows their stylistic logic and at the same time follows the logic of the libretto. The categories of space and time here have their own specifics. It seems like the artist – ballet-master exists simultaneously in two time layers – then and now. On the one hand, poetics set by dramaturgy adjusts to styling, offers accordingly painted visuals, and on the other hand, recorded fragment of the play has a historical projection.

4. Conclusion

Thus, we reviewed the existing rare material that raises a deep layer of hidden and secret knowledge that lurks behind the outer shell of choreographic images. The basis of our analysis consists in graphical sources that cannot be directly available to non-specialists. This causes certain duality in our attitude to this knowledge. On the one hand, there is a certain elitism of the subject, and on the other hand – an objective need to make it known to a wide audience. And not by accident, though quite natural is that a purely theoretical issues of the ballet theater development, including the preservation, restoration and reconstruction of the performances, are associated with practical aspects of visual creativity and the symbolic system of dance recording. This relationship is in line with fruitful traditions of Russian ballet-master ideas,

to which the contacts of the dance with fine art were a starting point, a fundamental postulate, a living reality of artistic creation and cultural development.

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