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Landmarks in the Life of the Reconstructed "Sacre"

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In the midst of the centenary year of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, when *Avant* asked us to contribute something about our reconstruction of this legendary ballet, we knew the pace of our peripatetic lives would not allow us to write a new text. Much of the year we are away from our London base to stage the works that we have reconstructed or created through Ballets Old & New, our dance and design partnership.

But we travelled even more during the *Sacre* centenary, participating in conferences, festivals, exhibitions and lecture series as well as staging our productions. So we suggested that *Avant* publish in Polish the diary we wrote while first producing *Sacre* in St. Petersburg at the Mariinsky, the theatre which gave the world this ballet's original creators: the composer, Igor Stravinsky; scenarist and designer, Nicholas Roerich and choreographer, Vaslav Nijinsky.

The Mariinsky production and diary marked a turning point in our work. That was 2003, about halfway through the twenty-five years between our 1987 world premiere of the reconstruction with the Joffrey Ballet in the United States and the far flung celebrations of the *Sacre* centenary.

Now 2013 has come and gone. Perhaps the ghosts from the riotous Parisian *Sacre* of 1913 are glad for some peace and quiet. For our part, the two of us appreciate the chance for Polish readers to share our 2003 diary, entitled "Seven Days from Several Months at the Mariinsky."

Yet another landmark in the history of our project came in 2011, when Krzysztof Pastor and the Polish National Ballet invited us to stage *Sacre* at the Teatr Wielki, where Nijinsky's parents had danced. That was reason enough to cherish the opportunity to do *Sacre* in Warsaw. But also, the dancer Marie Rambert, who had served as Nijinsky's assistant for rehearsals in 1913, was Polish, and a special bond had existed between them. Rambert's notes on a Stravinsky piano score were crucial to our reconstruction and Millicent published them in facsimile in her book *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace* (Pendragon, New York, 1996). Furthermore, many of Sergei Diaghilev's dancers in the so-called Ballets Russes were actually Polish, as documented by the Wielki's archivist, Pavel Chynowski, in the souvenir programme for *Sacre* performances there.

All of these facts added to our excitement about the Warsaw production. We were not disappointed. The dancers and design staff gave themselves passionately to the process and have kept the work in repertoire since its 2011 premiere. In our new book, *The Lost Rite* (London, 2014) we feature the Wielki dancers in Shira Klasmer's 400 stop-frame photographs of the choreography, each one linked to a quote from critics or participants in the original *Sacre*. So the reader can follow the ballet visually while "hearing the voices" of 1913. We like to think that the book is part of Nijinsky's repatriation as a Polish artist, although it covers, of course, the full quarter century of our work on *Sacre*.

As an introduction to the 2003 Mariinsky diary which follows, we have prepared an album of photographs from our work with the Polish National Ballet. The reconstructed *Sacre* is featured in a number of films and can be seen periodically in the dozen or so countries around the world where we have set the ballet. We hope Polish readers of *Avant* will have the chance to see the ballet live onstage at the Teatr Wielki and by mid 2014 they can "read" *Sacre* in *The Lost Rite*.

All pictures in the Diary are published with kind permission
of Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer.

Persons:

Slava: Vyacheslav Khomyakov
Lyudmila Sveshnikova
Alexei Mironov
Kristina Ivanenko
Tatiana Bessarabova
Sonya: Sofia Yadchenko
Pavel Gershenson
Tanya: Tatiana Noginova
Irina Sitnikova
Andrei Garbuz