

SERGE DE DIAGHILEFF'S BALLET RUSSE

And a Brief Description of Its Leading Dancers

By Aybern Edwards

THE Diaghileff Ballet Russe makes its first long-heralded appearance in America at the Century Opera House on the seventeenth of January. After a short two weeks' run there, and a tour of the leading American cities, it will displace the singers at the Metropolitan Opera House for four weeks, beginning on the third of April.

Serge de Diaghileff, regisseur and founder, has gathered about him the fifty or more principals, which, it was specified in his contract, must accompany him. The great color works of Leon Bakst, stage decorations, settings and costumes, will be carefully conveyed across the ocean. A full symphony orchestra will be assembled to play the works of Debussy, Borodin, Rimski Korsakov, Stravinsky and other composers, and the repertoire of seventeen ballets will include such widely different ballets as the Oriental and exotic "Scheherazade"—the most popular of all the ballets—and the imaginative and decorative "Papillons."

WARSLAV NIJINSKI and Thamar Karsavina will head the troupe. Nijinski excels all the male dancers of our generation. He is not merely a great dancer, arrayed in the dress and playing the role of the characters he assumes. Not only does he depict the actions and the gestures of an individual typical character, but he portrays the spirit of all the varieties of that type. In "Petrouchka," he is not a mime reproducing the mechanical gestures of a puppet; he epitomizes the spirit of Russian doll-dom. In "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," as well, he is not a type of faun assumed at hazard. He has absorbed something of every quality we have heard ascribed to such beings. Nothing is forgotten. In the ballet "Carnaval," as *Harlequin*, he is the spirit of mischief. Again in "Scheherazade," he reveals the cruel, sensuous atmosphere of the Arabian Nights. His impersonation shows his soul. In such ballets as "Les Sylphides" and "Le Pavillon d'Armide," he combines his perfect technical knowledge of his art with pure beauty. Add to this an *elevation*, a *pas de bailon* and an

entrechat that has never been equaled, and it is easy to see why his figure now stands alone in modern dancing.

Thamar Karsavina, supreme in the mimetic field, is more than a dancer and more than a

while she stands unrivaled in her own. In "Les Sylphides" and ballets of this general type she proves herself the equal of the leading orthodox dancers of to-day, while in "L'Oiseau de Feu" the critics declare that she accomplishes effects which no dancer of the present day can approach. In all, there is a charm pervading her work too elusive for description, and at the same time too obvious to need it.



LUBOV TCHERNICHOWA

Schneider, Berlin

One of the most talented and beautiful of the younger principals in Diaghileff's ballets, in "Narcisse," a mythological Greek dance-drama by Leon Bakst

mere mimetic illustrator of music. She has mastered these stages, and through them has evolved to a state where she penetrates the inner significance of her dances. This it is, which enables her to fill no less than fourteen different parts, none of which have anything in common. It enables her to challenge comparison with her rivals in their special field,

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ADOLF BOLM, choreographic director and principal mime in many of the ballets, is the true embodiment of manlike vigor and virility. In the dance of victory, a dazzling moment from that Twelfth Century picture of Russia, *Prince Igor* (Bolm) is veritably a triumphant conqueror, maddened with the lust of war. His wild leaps in the air, holding his bow on high, are almost removed from human art, beyond its earthly boundaries.

Leonide Massin is, in appearance, a young Apollo. To his activities as a dancer he adds a clear and technical knowledge of dancing. With Bolm he acts as choreographic director.

LUBOV Tchernichowa, Alexandra Wassilewska, Lydia Sokolova, Sophie Pflanz, Nicolas Kremneff, Enrico Cecchetti, Alexander Gavrilov and Nicolas Zverew are other principals in the ballet. All became members of the Imperial Ballet School in Petrograd at the age of nine or ten. All of them, too, followed that course until the age of fifteen. Then came their authorized debuts on the professional stage. The characteristic feature of the ballets of Diaghileff is that there are no stars. All and every one of the dancers has followed the same career. It is a system of entire equality in a country of absolute despotism. A perfected artistic unit, from the top to the bottom of the choreographic ladder, a unit in which every dancer has his or her individual place and value, is what Diaghileff has always striven to achieve. This naturally leads to a highly artistic and satisfying ensemble which bids fair to be one of the artistic sensations of the winter.