Dear all,

Thank you for taking the time to read and share feedback on this chapter – the first draft of Chapter 1 from my dissertation. Broadly, my dissertation focuses on British state support for dance after World War II, honing in on how four institutions – the Arts Council of Great Britain, the BBC, the Royal Opera House, and the British Council – deployed ballet as an ideological, “soft power” tool at home and abroad.

The goal of Chapter 1 is to provide an introduction to the history of how British ballet developed from roughly 1900 to 1945, setting up key tensions and themes that run throughout the project. My overall chapter outline is as follows:

*Ballet Imperial: Dance and the New British Empire after 1945*

Chapter 1: The Idea of British Ballet **(drafted for Jan. 4)**

Chapter 2: “The Best for the Most”: Dance and the Arts Council of Great Britain

Chapter 3: BBC Ballet: Dance on Television and the Will of the People

Chapter 4: The Third Force: The Royal Ballet, Royal Opera House, and the Cold War

Chapter 5: Ballet Empire: Cultural Diplomacy and the British Council

I usually write in two stages – first, I focus on managing the content and narrating an overall arc for the chapter. After that, I try to refine the broader framing, interventions, and takeaways. I am further along with the first step than the second, and would be grateful for suggestions on how I might improve the overall argument and bring this story more into conversation with broader secondary literatures. But really I am open to all comments as I work through these ideas.

Thanks again, and Happy New Year –

–Laura

**CHAPTER 1**

**The Idea of British Ballet**

The death of the Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev in Venice in August 1929 elicited an outpouring of grief in London. At a Russian Orthodox memorial service held in Diaghilev’s honor at the city’s Church of St. Philip, British artists, aesthetes, and socialites stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Russian émigrés, weeping.[[1]](#footnote-1) One journalist wrote that Diaghilev’s passing hit many like “a personal tragedy” – it was as if “the sun had grown cold.”[[2]](#footnote-2) In *The Observer*, the music critic Edwin Evans wailed, “What is to become of the Diaghileff Ballet?”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Diaghilev’s Russian company, the Ballets Russes, had been a highlight of London’s cultural life since its debut in the city in 1911. Founded in 1909 to promote Russian art abroad, the Ballets Russes toured Western Europe and the Americas, presenting brilliant works that – inspired by the German composer Richard Wagner’s concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk,* or “total artwork” – fused music, décor, and movement by trailblazing composers, painters, and choreographers. Traversing nineteenth-century classicism, neo-primitivism, neo-classicism, and surrealism, the travelling company’s repertory – scandalous, satirical, and profound – portrayed ballet as a modern, serious art. During its multi-month London seasons before and after the First World War, the Ballets Russes revolutionized Britons’ perceptions of ballet. Prior to its arrival, ballet was widely seen as a low-status, pleasure-seeking entertainment, more suited to music halls than opera houses. Yet a writer for *The Times* would dub Diaghilev’s productions “the most distinguished entertainment of modern times,” and a clamoring upper and middle class public – enraptured by the Ballet Russes’s performances in venues ranging from the Royal Opera House to the Alhambra Theatre of Variety – begged the impresario to settle permanently in the city.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In mourning, however, lay opportunity. After the Ballet Russes collapsed without its leader, a group of British artists and intellectuals would attempt to fill the void. Devotees of Diaghilev’s work, they met at Soho restaurants and the economist John Maynard Keynes’s home in Gordon Square, where they debated why Britain, unlike Russia, France, Italy, and Denmark, had no state-funded ballet school or company. In fact, it did not even have a permanent professional repertory company. Yet the Ballets Russes, along with the popular Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, who toured the length of Britain with her own troupe from 1912 until her death in 1931, had inspired a national, cross-class thirst for the art, causing ballet schools to mushroom across the country.

Hoping to encourage an emerging crop of British dancers and sustain Diaghilev’s legacy, this group established the Camargo Society, a subscription-based association that sponsored occasional ballet programs at West End theatres from 1930 until 1933. They also threw their support behind the Ballet Club (renamed Ballet Rambert in 1934) and the Vic-Wells Ballet, two companies founded in London in the early 1930s. Throughout the decade, all three of these organizations produced new ballets which featured British dancers and, following Diaghilev’s collaborative model, united British choreographers, visual artists, and composers. Thus, an invented tradition of “British ballet” – cast as a serious, elevated, homegrown art – started to materialize.

Yet while this lofty artistic movement foregrounded British artists, its creative output assimilated a surprisingly wide range of popular and international – and especially Russian – sources. Dramatic ballets by Ninette de Valois, the terse Anglo-Irish founder of the Vic-Wells Ballet, merged classical steps with English folk dances and Central European expressionism. Frederick Ashton, a witty “Bright Young Thing” and a lyrical, romantic classicist, drew on prevalent social dances, American jazz and tap, and nostalgic visions of France, Italy, and Ancient Greece. The somber Antony Tudor trudged from his day job at the Smithfield meat market to Ballet Rambert’s studios, where he created ballets rooted in innovative methods of psychological exploration that gestured toward American and German modern dance. Strapped for cash and wanting more opportunities to perform, the new generation of British dancers who worked for these self-consciously “high art” groups picked up gigs in musical comedies, night-clubs, and films, absorbing different movement styles and keeping the new British ballet movement connected to commercial entertainment.

Furthermore, the Camargo Society, Ballet Rambert, and the Vic-Wells Ballet invited Diaghilev’s Russian artists to perform with and coach British dancers as well as stage Ballets Russes productions. The émigré Nicholas Sergeyev, the former *regisseur* and chief rehearsal master of the Imperial Ballet in St. Petersburg, also produced versions of the Russian classics *Giselle* (1841/1854)*, Coppélia* (1870)*, The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), *The Nutcracker* (1892)*,* and *Swan Lake* (1895) for these groups. While helping British ballet lay claim to an exalted heritage, these artists transformed British dancers and companies into unexpected vehicles for preserving pre-revolutionary Russian culture, enlivening and extending what historian Marc Raeff calls a non-Soviet “Russia Abroad.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

That British ballet had not coalesced around especially “British” subject matter or a particular movement idiom by the end of the decade did not prevent an onslaught of new books and articles from attempting to historicize and demarcate it. Arnold Haskell, the most prominent twentieth-century British writer on dance, lead this charge. Through innumerable popular publications, Haskell created a sweeping history for British ballet – a narrow narrative that downplayed the movement’s popular past and underscored its aristocratic origins. Giving British ballet intellectual foundations, his chronicle validated the movement. It also proved so influential that, despite its flaws, contradictions, and exclusions, it continues to dominate the historiography of British dance.[[6]](#footnote-6) Though scholars have recently departed from Haskell, addressing a greater diversity of styles and artists that contributed to this movement, a deeper story of early-mid twentieth century British ballet, attuned to all of its complexities, contradictions, and entanglements with larger questions of British society and culture, needs to be told.

Attempting to define British ballet, Haskell tied the emerging art to particular national traits, claiming it reflected a specific British “temperament” and “physique.” He also gave the movement a moralistic thrust, arguing that the best ballets reinforced gender conventions and promised to rescue a grand “civilization” increasingly threatened by fascism. Haskell’s oeuvre thus obscured British ballet’s eclectic, subversive elements, creating a disconnect between discourse and practice. His written ideas about ballet, however, would prove enticing to the British state, which by 1939 was showing tentative but serious interest in the movement.

Although the Second World War initially threatened to end the British ballet movement, it ultimately facilitated its triumph. Dislocated from London, the Vic-Wells Ballet (renamed the Sadler’s Wells Ballet in 1940) and Ballet Rambert toured the length of the country, winning support from new government organizations like John Maynard Keynes’s Council for Encouragement of Music and the Arts. Reflecting a growing national demand for the arts, new professional ballet companies multiplied. Performing for large crowds, British dancers warmed new publics of troops and civilians – many working class – to ballet, boosting morale and, through the Blitz and doodlebug air raids, creating a sense of solidarity.

As the war progressed, the gender dynamics and national makeup of British ballet continued to morph. As male dancers joined the forces in droves – made to do so as part a concerted effort to divorce ballet from longstanding associations with “effeminacy” and homosexuality – the repertoires of British groups shifted to foreground female talent. Breaking with the movement’s founding tenets, new openings also arose for male dancers who were citizens of Europe or the dominions. The impact of these changes would be long-lasting.

By 1946, as the Sadler’s Wells Ballet took to the stage of its new home theater, the state-funded Royal Opera House, British ballet had become an official institution, embraced by multiple government organizations and poised to assume patriotic responsibilities in a new era of social democracy, the Cold War, and decolonization. As a vector for national self-understanding in the postwar period, however, the paradoxes that produced it in the early to mid-twentieth century would persist.

**I. The Seeds of a Movement**

In the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras, before the Ballets Russes’s sensational arrival, ballet was a low-status, feminized art in Britain. Young, single, working class British women filled the enormous *corps de ballet* ensembles that appeared in popular theatres across the country. Called “ballet girls,” they spent long hours rehearsing and performing in dirty, hazardous conditions for minimal pay. Many rushed home between call times to cook and launder clothes for younger siblings and invalid parents. With limited classical training, these dancers were unlikely to advance beyond the *corps de ballet.*[[7]](#footnote-7)

Following contemporary entertainment trends, the large music hall and exhibition venues where ballet girls appeared championed spectacle and pleasure.[[8]](#footnote-8) Hundreds of dancers performed in dynamic “supercolossal” productions decked out with colorful costumes, extravagant sets, sparkling music, and electric light displays **[Fig. 1]**.[[9]](#footnote-9) In fantastical acts and *divertissements* featuring topical, nationalist, orientalist, and supernatural themes, ballet girls paraded across the stage, posed in decorative formations, and performed simple unison movements and kick-lines. Often, they wore tight, revealing costumes. Producers hired foreign (usually Italian) ballerinas to star in these shows, their breakneck pointe work and pirouettes adding to the overall pyrotechnical wizardry. Few men danced on these stages, and those that did never appeared among the *corps*.[[10]](#footnote-10) Instead, women frequently performed male roles, dressing in men’s costumes (*en travesti*) and partnering other women.[[11]](#footnote-11) This division of labor and stupendous theatrical context led British theatregoers and a wider public to associate ballet with immoderate entertainment and erotic female bodily display, a view further reinforced by the prostitutes who lingered in music halls’ notorious promenades.[[12]](#footnote-12)

By the 1900s, however, new conceptions of ballet were beginning to pierce through the music hall’s “smoke of noise.” In 1897, the prominent Empire Theatre in London hired the Danish ballerina Adeline Genée to headline its productions. Trained in the exacting technique of the celebrated Danish ballet master August Bournonville, Genée’s dancing was serene, “aloof and dignified” – a distillation of pure classicism.[[13]](#footnote-13) Quickly embraced by British audiences, her style marked a clear departure from the vivacious bravura of her foreign predecessors. At the Empire, Genée mentored a young British dancer, Phyllis Bedells, who subsequently began appearing in soloist roles at the theatre. The artistry of both women stimulated a different kind of admiration for ballet among their viewers – critics began commenting on the “style and expression” of the leading ballerina, rather than “the color of her costume and the shape of her leg.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

As Genée and Bedells recast ballet at the Empire, from 1908 a spate of classical dancers from Russia’s Imperial Theatres began appearing in London, introducing British audiences to the unparalleled technical standards and artistic riches of Russian ballet. In theatres across the city, soloists like Lydia Kyasht, Adolph Bolm, Tamara Karsavina, Mikhail Mordkin, Olga Preobrajenska, and Anna Pavlova performed for packed houses, earning enthusiastic praise. A writer for *The Observer* gushed over the “gracious,” “spirited,” and technically immaculate Pavlova, who “set a new standard” for ballet and whom spectators watched in “spell-bound silence” before bursting into “deafening” applause.[[15]](#footnote-15) For a *Manchester Guardian* reporter, the lively Kyasht was the leading light in this “recent invasion from Moscow and St. Petersburg” – a distinguished performer who “dance[d] her audience into raptures.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

Stimulating excitement and curiosity around ballet, these dancers paved the way for the London debut of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes at the Royal Opera House in June 1911. Watching the company in *Le Pavillon d’Armide* (1907), critics marveled at this remarkable vision of ballet as a serious, sumptuous high art **[Fig. 2 & 3]**.Shockingly, the sentimental tunes, shimmering sequins, and “glare of colour which offended the eyes in most ballets in London” – where the art remained “a frivolous excuse for showing pretty girls” – had, according to one writer, completely vanished. Instead, the Ballets Russes offered expressive orchestral music, “exquisite colouring,” and full-bodied, “graceful movement,” exceeding “anything yet seen in this country.” The dancing of its male star Vaslav Nijinsky, moreover, “border[ed] on the miraculous.” [[17]](#footnote-17) For six weeks Diaghilev’s sophisticated, sensual productions filled the Opera House. According to the writer Arnold Haskell, this theatrical season changed Britons’ “entire attitude to ballet.”[[18]](#footnote-18) Over the next three years, performing for extended runs at the Opera House and elsewhere in London, the company amassed an influential following of British aristocrats, socialites, intellectuals, aesthetes, politicians, and artists. By 1914 Diaghilev’s middle class fan-base was also growing.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Further stimulating Britain’s ballet scene, in 1912 Anna Pavlova presented a historic London season with her own small company. The future photographer Cecil Beaton went to see her perform: he later recalled how the beautiful Russian ballerina appeared onstage like a “floating miracle in white,” blending earthly and spiritual qualities with “delicate precision and discipline”[[20]](#footnote-20) **[Fig. 4]**. Until 1914, Pavlova performed full-length ballets, *divertissements*, and classical, romantic, exotic, and Grecian-styled solos and extracts in successive seasons, appearing not only in London but also in many regional British music halls. She thus began to acquire a large, national, cross-class following, and soon became a household name.[[21]](#footnote-21)

While British spectators largely regarded the Russian and Polish dancers of the Ballets Russes as passionate, powerful, “half wild” foreigners, Pavlova appeal to them as a model of female decorum and respectability.[[22]](#footnote-22) Off-stage, her simple, tailored, feminine attire signaled what historian Lynn Garafola calls an “expressive containment.”[[23]](#footnote-23) Publicizing her company, Pavlova countered stereotypes of hot-blooded Russians and eroticized British ballet girls by consciously presented her art as “educating, idealizing, moralizing, and uplifting,” demanding a trained, “noble” body.[[24]](#footnote-24) From 1912, she taught ballet to a group of privileged British girls at the house she bought in London – some of these dancers would eventually join her company. As Diaghilev’s vision of ballet invigorated audiences, so did Pavlova’s ballerina ideal.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 temporarily ended foreign ballet artists’ visits to Britain. Diaghilev’s troupe travelled to the United States and appeared in Italy, France, and Spain; Pavlova decamped with her company and spent the next five years touring North and South America. By 1915, the Empire and the Alhambra had stopped presenting in-house, large-scale ballets, sending tired ballet girls to look for work elsewhere. A small group of British women dancers, from a new generation that pursued more serious classical training and, inspired by the visiting Russians, dreamt of careers beyond the music hall *corps*, managed to secure engagement as soloists in revues, variety shows, musical comedies, operas, and pantomimes. Yet for Ninette de Valois, one of the most prominent dancers among this set, such formats – “strong” in their “homely tradition,” pageantry, patriotism, and Victorian conventions – seemed “empty” after the rarefied, rigorous visions of dance seen before the war.[[25]](#footnote-25)

While ballet performance stagnated, training opportunities for British dancers grew.[[26]](#footnote-26) In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, only a few theatrical training schools had offered British students consistent, professional ballet instruction.[[27]](#footnote-27) During the war, Serafina Astafieva, a Russian dancer who performed with the Ballets Russes, settled in London and established a dance studio. A talented teacher, her future students would include Lilian Alicia Marks and Patrick Kay, two British dancers who, under the stage names Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin, joined and became stars of Diaghilev’s company in the 1920s. The French-trained pedagogue Edouard Espinosa taught in Pimlico throughout the war. In 1916, reflecting a wider interest in disseminating and improving classical training nationally, Britain’s major dance monthly, *The Dancing Times*, published Espinosa’s training syllabus as well as his article, “Some Errors in Tuition.”[[28]](#footnote-28) Further increasing opportunities, de Valois and Hilda Bewicke, one of Pavlova’s British dancers, offered private and group classes in and around London.

After the war ended, ballet training continued to develop and become more widely accessible in Britain. In 1918 the celebrated Italian ballet master Enrico Cecchetti began teaching in London, and in 1920 the Polish dancer and former Ballets Russes member Marie Rambert opened a school there.[[29]](#footnote-29) From 1922 the pedagogue Nicolas Legat, formerly of St. Petersburg’s Imperial Ballet, also offered classes in the city. With Philip J. S. Richardson, the editor of *The Dancing Times*, Espinosa established the Association of Operatic Dancing.[[30]](#footnote-30) Renamed the Royal Academy of Dance in 1935, this organization offered a codified program of study and standardized annual examinations that teachers and students from across the country began to follow. Popular new contests like the All England Sunshine Dancing Competition, which included a ballet category, further fortified this trend.[[31]](#footnote-31)

This expansion of training reflected wider changing attitudes toward ballet. Although many class-conscious Britons continued to view a stage career as an “unsuitable” option for “well-bred girls,” in the 1920s many middle and even some upper class families began embracing the art as a recreational and potential professional pursuit for their daughters.[[32]](#footnote-32) Historian Karen Eliot notes that it was largely Pavlova who “made it acceptable for girls from ‘good’ families to study, teach, and perform ballet” in this decade.[[33]](#footnote-33) Along with accumulating “well educated and socially well placed” admirers throughout the country, Pavlova, in admitting British women to her company, began to dispel the widely-held notion that, unlike the Russians, “the English cannot dance.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Indeed, in 1923, the future principal dancer Margot Fonteyn, the daughter of a mechanical engineer for the British-American Tobacco Company, began studying ballet at her mother’s insistence. Although she was only four-years-old at the time, in her memoir she recalled, “People talked of dance and dancers. Anna Pavlova was the magic name.”[[35]](#footnote-35) Fonteyn’s contemporary Gillian Lynne recounted a similar experience, explaining, “Mummy had always intended me to learn to dance – most girls did those days.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

Along with Pavlova, Britain’s early-twentieth century physical culture movement paved the way for this shift. Popular with middle class Britons, this movement promoted social and “fancy” dancing lessons for girls – activities that were thought to enhance deportment, posture, and feminine grace.[[37]](#footnote-37) Many future British ballerinas took “fancy” dancing as small children, before they studied ballet. As this new influx of students entered Britain’s multiplying dance schools, ballet began to “gentrify”: by the 1930s, a new tier of privileged women had displaced the maligned ballet girls of the prewar era.

When the war ended, the Russians returned to continue their conquest. Pavlova attracted more and more followers throughout the 1920s, bringing an onslaught of students to ballet. In 1921, propelled by Diaghilev’s nostalgia for a culture lost to the Russian Revolution, the Ballets Russes presented a lavish four-act version of *The Sleeping Princess* at London’s Alhambra Theatre **[Fig. 5]**. Based on the Imperial Ballet’s *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), the production proved financially disastrous for Diaghilev. Although all of the company’s elite devotees came to see the work – among them J. M. Keynes, who sat in the theatre night after night watching his future wife, Lydia Lopokova, dance the role of the Lilac Fairy – it failed to sell enough tickets to counterbalance its heavy costs. Nevertheless, Ninette de Valois claimed, the work would plant a “seed of true appreciation” for “traditional classical ballet” among Diaghilev’s core audience – an appreciation that would, in future, inform the artistic progress of the new British ballet.[[38]](#footnote-38)

As the decade wore on, Diaghilev presented artistically significant neo-classical ballets as well as chic, amusing, cosmopolitan modern works. The latter especially attracted the “Bright Young People,” an irreverent group of bohemian aristocrats and socialites known for their dress-up parties, treasure hunts, same-sex romances, drug addictions, and general love of excess.[[39]](#footnote-39) In 1926, in a nod to these followers, the Ballets Russes staged its own “British” ballet, *The Triumph of Neptune* **[Fig. 6]**. Offering a possible blueprint for British ballet, the work featured music by Lord Berners and a libretto by Sacheverell Sitwell, two high-profile “Bright Young Things,” and drew inspiration from Victoriana and pantomime traditions.[[40]](#footnote-40) It included several familiar characters – a heroic Jack Tar, fairies, an overblown villain, policemen, servants, ogres, and clowns – and fast-changing scenes. *Neptune* ended with a “glittering” transformation scene and a lively rendition of the hornpipe: the British writer Cyril Beaumont found its interpretation of this idiom of British theatre fantastic, “varied and sensational.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

In the same decade that he produced *Neptune*, Diaghilev welcomed a handful of British dancers into the Ballets Russes. After the Russian Revolution, the company – now exiled in the West – struggled to obtain dancers from the Soviet Union, meaning Diaghilev’s talent pool was drying up. He began looking elsewhere for artists. His first British dancer, Hilda Munnings, had joined the company in 1913 – she danced with the Ballets Russes under the stage name Lydia Sokolova until the company disbanded in 1929. From 1918, Diaghilev hired more British artists, including Ninette de Valois, Alicia Markova, and Anton Dolin.[[42]](#footnote-42) In keeping with the Ballets Russes’s cosmopolitan identity, most adopted Russian or continental stage names. In her memoir, de Valois recalled how numerous conversations ensued between British and Russian dancers about their supposedly inherited national differences. De Valois, who was Anglo-Irish, particularly “puzzled” her Russian colleagues, who felt the expressive musicality, speed, and attack in her dancing had “far more in common with theirs than that of… other artists of a purer English strain.”[[43]](#footnote-43) Puzzlement aside, working with the Ballets Russes gave some British dancers first-hand exposure to disciplined training routines of their Russian colleagues, the creative processes and works of leading choreographers Michel Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, Léonide Massine, Bronislava Nijinska, and George Balanchine, and the rigors of presenting full-evening ballet programs with a repertory company. Many would bring the knowledge that they acquired while working with the Ballets Russes to the new British ballet movement.

When Diaghilev died in 1929, his British aficionados lamented that his passing would mean the “death of ballet.”[[44]](#footnote-44) But this moment of crisis proved to be a launching pad. Ballet in Britain was already transforming: a new class of better-trained British dancers was emerging, and Russian artists had widened public respect and admiration for the art. Now, without the bewildering competition of the Ballets Russes, British artists seized the opportunity to generate art and advance a new artistic movement.

**II. New British Ballets, New Origin Stories**

The movement to invent a high art tradition of “British ballet” gained momentum in the 1930s. Although in the previous decade British teachers tried to establish repertory companies with British dancers in Manchester and London, these projects quickly folded. By 1933, three London-based groups – the Camargo Society, Marie Rambert’s Ballet Club, and the Vic-Wells Ballet – had outlasted and surpassed their forerunners. Supported by Diaghilev’s patrons and Russian associates, they carried forth the Ballets Russes’s principles of artistic synthesis as well as the classical traditions of the Imperial Theatres, thus making Russian aesthetics the bedrock of a new British art. Augmenting this underlying internationalism, energetic choreographers devised dynamic, original ballets that merged foreign and local, elite and popular influences, creating a national tradition out of a fluid cultural mélange.

These artistic developments took place against a backdrop of economic tumult, the growing threat of war, and unexpected expansions in the arts. Indeed, throughout the 1930s, new symphony orchestras materialized in London, Manchester, and Glasgow, and in 1934 an opera festival began at Glyndebourne. Repertory theaters presenting new and classic plays sprung up across the country, and as consumerism and mass leisure grew, BBC Radio, which ran the Proms concert series from 1927 and took seriously its self-appointed mission to educate and “lead public taste” in music, became increasingly ubiquitous.[[45]](#footnote-45) “We board buses to the strains of Beethoven and drink our beer to the accompaniment of Bach,” the composer Constant Lambert wrote in 1934. Nevertheless, while Britons took “pride” in their new, BBC-induced “popular appreciation” of classical masters, he groaned, “in the present age it is impossible to escape from *Culture*.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

According to historian Richard Overy, the general interwar mood was “morbid,” and public discourse fixated on the idea that Western civilization was “in peril.”[[47]](#footnote-47) Some cultural leaders and elites began to see the preservation and spread of the arts and particularly high culture as an antidote to social malaise – a corrective to inequities, anarchy, fascism, and the supposedly debasing effects of commercial culture and newly pervasive American films.[[48]](#footnote-48) As three relatively small enterprises, the Camargo Society, the Ballet Club, and the Vic-Wells Ballet remained on the margins of this trend. By the end of the decade, however, new publications – and particularly those by the writer Arnold Haskell – would bring it in line, however imperfectly, with these broader cultural currents and ideas.

The Camargo Society presented its first full evening of ballet at London’s Cambridge Theatre in October 1930. The brainchild of Haskell and the *Dancing Times* editor P. J. S. Richardson, the Society was named after Marie Camargo, a celebrated eighteenth-century French ballerina. Modeled on London’s Stage Society, it produced periodic ballet programs at West End theaters on Sundays and Mondays for a subscriber audience. Haskell later explained that although immediately after Diaghilev’s death “it was sacrilege to suggest that ballet could survive without him,” he and Richardson ultimately decided that, if no one encouraged British artists, there might be “no ballet at all.” Moreover, now that the impresario was gone, the former “snobbery” against endeavors to establish a British ballet company along Diaghilev’s lines was “no longer a factor to be reckoned with.”[[49]](#footnote-49)

The Society’s illustrious committee, collaborators, and subscribers were ensconced in the worlds of the Bloomsbury Group and London’s cultural and political elite. Following Diaghilev, the Society commissioned ballets with new music, designs, and choreography by leading British artists, among them the composers Elisabeth Lutyens, William Walton, and Arnold Bax and the painters Edward Burra, Vanessa Bell, and Duncan Grant. Lydia Lopokova, the Ballets Russes star who married J. M. Keynes in 1925, became the Society’s Choreographic Director. According to her biographer, the Russian ballerina quickly became the group’s “principal advocate” and “main broker of power.”[[50]](#footnote-50) The committee met at Lopokova and Keynes’s home in Gordon Square, and in July 1931 she convinced the economist to join the Society as its Treasurer. While the Society always teetered on the brink of debt, Keynes wielded his personal influence to ensure its survival. According to Haskell, “when things were at their very worst,” the economist only needed to spend “an hour on the telephone” and host “a few tea parties” to bring forth “the necessary guarantee.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Keynes also promoted the Society in the pages of the *New Statesman*, further increasing its profile.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Despite its limited resources, the Society presented original, eclectic works that indicated multiple potential paths for British ballet. Its opening program included *Pomona* (1930), a “small masterpiece” with designs by John Banting, music by Constant Lambert, and choreography by Frederick Ashton that combined pointed angular movements with balletic phrases.[[53]](#footnote-53) Other works included dances by the German refugee Anny Boalth, who drew from the fundamental principles of weight, space, and rhythm devised by the modern pedagogue Rudolf von Laban, and classical variations by the Russian teacher Nicholas Legat. Last on the program was *A Toothsome Morsel* (1930), a comic work by Penelope Spencer, the Ballet Mistress at the Royal College of Music and a revue star: *Morsel* depicted a dowager undergoing “the agonies of the dental parlour” to the strains of a score by Gavin Gordon.[[54]](#footnote-54) Over the next three years, the group presented artistically significant works like *Job* (1931) **[Fig. 7]***, High Yellow* (1932),and *A Day in the Southern Port* (1931), which mixed ballet with Central European expressionism, continental modernism, English folk dances, tap, jazz, and exoticized imaginings of Brazil.

Reaffirming a Russian heritage for British ballet, the Society frequently collaborated with Diaghilev’s former artists. Alicia Markova, Anton Dolin, Tamara Karsavina, Olga Spessivtseva, and Lopokova appeared alongside the Society’s British dancers, bringing star power to its productions and offering examples for younger artists to follow. The Society presented ballets from Diaghilev’s repertory, such as *Les Sylphides* (1909), and Diaghilev’s chief scene-painter, Vladimir Polunin, numbered among its Russian subscribers. It also presented works from the repertory of the Imperial Ballet in St. Petersburg. For a series of performances at the Royal Opera House in 1933, organized by Keynes for delegates attending the World Economic Conference, the Society produced a full-length *Coppélia* and Act II of *Swan Lake*. Nicholas Sergeyev, the former *regisseur* and chief rehearsal master of the Imperial Ballet in St. Petersburg, staged both productions, which starred Lopokova and Markova.

Although the Camargo Society significantly advanced the cause of British ballet, it disbanded in 1934. As a producing organization without its own company, it recruited dancers and choreographers from the ballet schools and troupes run by Marie Rambert and Ninette de Valois. By 1933, the choreographer Frederick Ashton and dancer William Chappell, both of whom worked with these other groups, were groaning to their friend Lopokova about being overworked and underpaid.[[55]](#footnote-55) Sympathetic to these complaints, and believing that the Society had outlived its purpose given Rambert and de Valois’s recent successes and its own ongoing economic struggles, the committee dissolved the Society. Keynes cleared its debts, and donated its sets and costumes to de Valois.

The center of the British ballet movement thus shifted to Rambert’s Ballet Club and de Valois’s Vic-Wells Ballet, both of which shared the Camargo Society’s goal of presenting ballets created and performed by British artists, in the Diaghilev mold. The Ballet Club (renamed Ballet Rambert in 1934) predated the Vic-Wells Ballet, and was the more avant-garde of the two. Its founder and director, the Polish dancer and teacher Marie Rambert, was charismatic, well-read, and inquisitive, with a broad dance background and catholic tastes in art. An early admirer of the American modern dance pioneer Isadora Duncan, Rambert studied eurythmics with Émile-Jacques Dalcroze in Switzerland before joining the Ballets Russes to help Nijinsky rehearse and analyze the rhythmic structures of his revolutionary ballet, *The Rite of Spring* (1913). She performed in some Ballets Russes shows with the company’s *corps* before moving to London in 1914, where she took ballet classes with Astafieva and Cecchetti and appeared in revues. After marrying the English playwright Ashley Dukes in 1918, she opened a ballet school. Training her own students in London, she promoted what one called a “freer concept of dance” that extended beyond academic ballet technique.[[56]](#footnote-56) Although in the dance studio Rambert demanded “classical correctness,” she encouraged “conscious rebellion” against ballet’s strictures in performance and choreography.[[57]](#footnote-57) Under Rambert, fledgling British dancers and choreographers developed into individual, curious artists.

From the mid-1920s, a promising performing group began emerging from Rambert’s school. Rambert arranged for her dancers to appear in occasional operas, charity performances, galas, and at West End theatres. In 1926 her dancers originated a landmark ballet, *A Tragedy of Fashion*, in the actor-manager Nigel Playfair’s famous revue, *Riverside Nights*. Rambert’s first male pupil, the twenty-two year old office clerk Frederick Ashton – a Pavlova enthusiast whom his teacher described as a “skinny young man… with the mournful face of a romantic poet” and naturally graceful, “flowing movements… almost like that of a woman” – choreographed the work.[[58]](#footnote-58) Funny and stylish, *A Tragedy of Fashion* was a critical hit, celebrated especially in British *Vogue*. Ashton danced the lead role of a dandy French couturier who commits suicide after his aristocratic patrons dismiss his latest designs; Rambert appeared as the couturier’s wife, smoking a cigar and doing cartwheels, her hair styled in an Eton crop **[Fig. 8]**. The petite, raspy-voiced Russian painter Sophie Fedorovitch designed the Art Deco costumes and décor. Fedorovitch had recently befriended Ashton and brought him into the “Bright Young People” circle.[[59]](#footnote-59) Ashton – charming, clever, outrageous, and then living on a modest income – was welcomed by his new friends with “open arms and pocketbooks.”[[60]](#footnote-60) Reflecting the satirical, subversive manner of Diaghilev’s 1920s ballets and this exclusive social world, *A Tragedy of Fashion* made the new British ballet a conduit for continental and contemporary fashions.

Along with Ashton, Rambert nurtured a host of British choreographers. As her informal performing group evolved into a company, giving regular performances at the tiny Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill Gate (which she and Dukes purchased in 1933), Rambert encouraged aspiring creators.[[61]](#footnote-61) Soon, Ashton, Susan Salaman, and Andrée Howard were choreographing expressive, sophisticated works that traversed a range of dance styles and content. Ashton’s ballets evoked Elizabethan England, French impressionism, the Italian Renaissance, and Ancient Greece **[Fig. 9-11]**; his choreography blended classicism with modern innovations following those of Diaghilev’s choreographers, as well as country dances, the barefoot, free-flowing style of Isadora Duncan, and orientalist imaginings of foreign forms. Salaman, who gravitated to ballet after working with the theater director Michel Saint-Denis in Paris, tackled subjects moving from French medieval legends to boxing, cricket, and rugby **[Fig. 12]**. Through a movement language of simple, poetic gesture, Howard offered imaginative, introspective meditations on women’s experiences **[Fig. 13]**. A repertory for British ballet thus emerged from Rambert’s little laboratory.

Like the Camargo Society, Rambert turned to Russian artists and art to inspire her dancers and uplift her enterprise. She encouraged her students to emulate Karsavina, Markova, Sokolova, and Leon Woizikovsky, Diaghilev stars who appeared with her company as guest artists.[[62]](#footnote-62) Her dancers learned ballets by Fokine and Nijinsky, variations from *Aurora’s Wedding* (the Ballets Russes’s one-act adaptation of *The Sleeping Beauty*), and *Swan Lake.*[[63]](#footnote-63) Rambert even imbued her ballet classes with a “Russian style.” According to one of her dancers, Rambert’s students thus developed into artists who were less “phlegmatic” and “more expressive” than their British peers, with “something of the glamour of the Russians.”[[64]](#footnote-64)

While Rambert treated ballet like a sacred, sequestered art, her dancers often sought additional work in commercial entertainment.[[65]](#footnote-65) Although her company became more established in the 1930s, it only performed twice a week, for minimal pay. To increase their incomes, Rambert’s dancers appeared in musical comedies, plays, night-clubs, operas, super-cinema programs, and films – in the words of her dancer Leslie Edwards, “any form of entertainment” that needed dancing.[[66]](#footnote-66) In fact, American stage and film stars like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, an influx of American musicals, and the interwar social dance boom had generating a large appetite for dance in British entertainment, and theater managers eagerly hired artists to perform what Arnold Haskell called “some absurdly simple steps for five minutes, at fifteen times the salary they received” from Rambert.[[67]](#footnote-67) Not all of Rambert’s dancers took on these gigs – some had wealthy parents who offered support. But ballet, unsubsidized by the government or local authorities, was still a precarious profession, and Edwards maintains that all of dancers “felt the shoe pinching” that came with the economic downturns of the 1930s.[[68]](#footnote-68) These exploits, which helped artists become more stylistically versatile and gain performing experience, thus kept British ballet connected to commercial entertainment. Popular traditions even seeped into new ballets: Ashton based the cheeky, homoerotic “Popular Song” section of *Façade* (1931) – a decadent ballet with music by William Walton and themes based on Edith Sitwell’s eponymous poems – on one of his and William Chappell’s musical comedy routines **[Fig. 14]**. In other sections of this work, he satirized trendy social dances like the foxtrot, waltz, and tango.

As Rambert cultivated British artists in Notting Hill Gate, Ninette de Valois pursued a more overt and self-consciously national mission for British ballet at the Sadler’s Wells Theatre in Islington. One of the few British members of the Ballets Russes, de Valois danced with Diaghilev’s company from 1922 until 1925. The impresario’s autocratic management style and his commitment to presenting artistically integrated, modern works as well as versions of nineteenth-century Russian classics appealed to her especially, and as a ballet company director she would fashion herself after him.

De Valois opened her own dance school in Kensington in 1926. She was anxious to give British students consistent, high-quality ballet training, and she wanted to lift dance’s reputation nationally – to make it as accepted and respected an art as drama and music.[[69]](#footnote-69) She devised an expansive curriculum for her students: ballet classes drew from French, Italian, and Russian training methods, eurythmics, and “modern-classical” movement inspired by Diaghilev’s choreographers Nijinska and Massine.[[70]](#footnote-70) Her students also studied mime, British and Central European folk dances, dance composition, theater design and make-up, history, drama, languages, and literature.[[71]](#footnote-71) Fostering an atmosphere of discipline and devotion, de Valois framed ballet as a rigorous form requiring broad cultural knowledge.

In 1931, de Valois established her company, the Vic-Wells Ballet, at the Sadler’s Wells Theatre in Islington. Having worked as a choreographer for the director Terence Gray at the Cambridge Festival Theatre and the poet W. B. Yeats at Dublin’s Abbey Theatre, she had decided that, in lieu of a state theater, a repertory theater would be the best home for a permanent British ballet company.[[72]](#footnote-72) The serious, non-commercial nature of these organizations, which aimed to reinvigorate theater through productions of new and classic plays, seemed conducive to de Valois’ creative project.[[73]](#footnote-73) She found a partner in Lilian Baylis, the manager Lambeth’s Old Vic. A former musician and suffragist whom de Valois described as being “possessed with the fervour of a Salvation Lass,” Baylis inherited the Old Vic from her aunt, the social reformer Emma Cons – an associate of Octavia Hill and John Ruskin.[[74]](#footnote-74) Practical, frugal, and devout, Baylis was fiercely committed to her aunt’s vision of bringing high culture to working class audiences by presenting Shakespeare and opera at low prices. Impressed by de Valois’ qualifications, in 1926 Baylis hired her to give the Old Vic’s actors movement training and create dances, plays, operas, and short curtain-raisers. Baylis promised de Valois that the dilapidated Sadler’s Wells Theatre, which she planned to revamp, could house a ballet company.

Thus, while Rambert’s dancers performed for a wealthy, educated coterie in the small theater she owned with Dukes, de Valois launched a ballet company at Baylis’s second “people’s theatre.”[[75]](#footnote-75) The East End venue sold tickets at cinema prices, and while de Valois’ company enjoyed continuing support from the Bloomsbury set, over the years it gradually attracted audience members from various economic backgrounds.[[76]](#footnote-76) Leo Kersley, a local who described himself as “born and raised on the dole,” recalled standing in long lines for sixpenny stools that he and other audience members crammed into the gallery.[[77]](#footnote-77) Another new fan reflected how, although this gallery audience “had no technical knowledge, no discrimination, nothing by which to judge” the Vic-Wells Ballet, “we felt that something wonderful had happened in Islington, and we were prepared to become hysterical in support of it.”[[78]](#footnote-78) Although the British ballet movement kept its distance from the more radical social aims of 1930s “Auden Generation” artists, Baylis brought it in touch with older traditions of social “improvement” and responsibility through art.[[79]](#footnote-79) At the Sadler’s Wells Theatre, British ballet – supported by a widening general public – might bridge the gap between rich and poor.

Along with being a better administrator than Rambert, de Valois was more determined to present British artists and ballets focused on British themes.[[80]](#footnote-80) While Rambert welcomed foreign performers like Kyra Nijinsky, the daughter of Vaslav Nijinsky, and the American choreographer Agnes de Mille, de Valois only wanted British dancers at her school – which became the Vic-Wells Ballet School in 1931 – and in her company. Initially, she engaged Lopokova, Stanislas Idzikowski, Markova, and Dolin, to boost her group’s visibility and revenue. For the lithe, airy Markova, she engaged Sergeyev to stage *Giselle* and *Swan Lake*. Still, she wanted to produce a new generation of stars with British names from her own school. She began nurturing a lyrical, musical English dancer, Margot Fonteyn, who arrived at the Vic-Wells Ballet School in 1933 as a fourteen-year-old. De Valois also cultivated Robert Helpmann, a talented dancer-actor with magnetic stage charisma who joined the company in 1932. Helpmann was Australian, but de Valois – desperate for male dancers – made an exception for him.[[81]](#footnote-81) Assembling a formidable British team, she hired Constant Lambert as the company’s musical director, and in 1935 she poached Ashton from Rambert, appointing him the Vic-Wells Ballet’s resident choreographer. In fact, as the decade wore on, many of Rambert’s artists defected to the Vic-Wells Ballet, lured in by de Valois’ promise of regular salaries and comparative artistic stability.[[82]](#footnote-82) Gradually, the company and its school grew, amassing recognition, dancers from across Britain, audiences, and resources, outpacing Rambert in all quarters.[[83]](#footnote-83)

To stress the seriousness of her British ballet project, De Valois fostered a somber atmosphere at Sadler’s Wells. At the school, Fonteyn recalled, dancers “were brought up very strictly” – de Valois emphasized uniformity over individuality, drilling them mercilessly in technique class.[[84]](#footnote-84) The company’s repertory consisted of the director’s own one-act ballets which – well-constructed, austere, and with strong dramatic roles – often centered on literary or cultural content thought to be especially “British.” Committed to artistic coherence in the Diaghilev manner, de Valois purposefully collaborated with important British painters and composers. Her ballet *The Rake’s Progress* (1935), for instance, reimagined the eponymous drawings by William Hogarth, and included designs by Rex Whistler and a score by Gavin Gordon **[Fig. 15]**. De Valois stated that her works, which sometimes combined ballet with grotesque, grounded gestures evoking Central European expressionism, brought out a “remarkably developed sense of characterization” specific to the “Anglo-Saxon” dancer.[[85]](#footnote-85)

From 1935, as the company gained strength, Russian masterworks and new ballets by Ashton expanded its repertory. By the end of the decade, Sergeyev had staged *The Nutcracker, Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, Giselle,* and *Coppélia* for the company – the full gamut of ballet’s classical canon.[[86]](#footnote-86) Ashton explored a flowing, pure, and romantic classical style. He continued mixing British, continental, and even American influences: his *Les Patineurs* (1937) depicted bourgeois Victorian figure skaters performing bright, virtuosic sequences to music by Giacomo Meyerbeer, while his *A Wedding Bouquet* (1937) portrayed a fantastic and strange French wedding party and included spoken text by the American writer Gertrude Stein. Thus, even de Valois’s more consciously nationalist Vic-Wells Ballet continued growing out of a broad swath of creative sources.

Although Rambert, de Valois, and the Camargo Society pushed British ballet forward, the new movement’s position within Britain’s 1930s dance landscape was hardly stable. In fact, after Diaghilev’s death in 1929 and Pavlova’s in 1931, new professional companies that arrived in Britain began stealing the attention of critics and the public. One was Les Ballets Jooss, a company directed by the choreographer Kurt Jooss, which arrived from Germany in 1933 and settled at Dartington Hall in Devon.[[87]](#footnote-87) Jooss’s group, which included a number of Jewish dancers, performed works that merged balletic gesture with Central European expressionism – his intensely anti-war work, *The Green Table* (1932), was internationally renowned, having won first prize in a competition in Paris. Other international ballet companies featuring Diaghilev’s former choreographers and stars pushed the British movement further from the limelight. In 1933, Diaghilev’s last male star, Serge Lifar, visited London with his new company, and the same year the short-lived but artistically significant company *Les Ballets 1933* launched in London, presenting surrealist and romantic new works by Diaghilev’s final choreographer, George Balanchine.

British ballet’s most formidable competition, however, came from the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo of Colonel Wassily de Basil.[[88]](#footnote-88) A “spin-off” of Diaghilev’s company, this glamorous touring group featured some of its predecessor’s greatest artists, including the choreographer Léonide Massine and ballerina Alexandra Danilova, as well as three fresh-faced stars – young, technically accomplished Russian émigrés who became famous as the “baby ballerinas.” Following Diaghilev, de Basil commissioned collaborative productions, hiring international giants like Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, and Henri Matisse. After its debut London season in 1933, the company returned for long, sold-out annual seasons at the Royal Opera House, amassing an intellectual and vast popular following that only continued to grow. London socialites who adored Diaghilev but turned their nose up at British ballet hosted endless parties for these dancers, and artists and critics noted that the company surpassed even Diaghilev in bringing the Ballets Russes’s vision into Britain’s cultural mainstream.[[89]](#footnote-89) The American choreographer Agnes de Mille, who lived in London from 1933 until 1938, recorded the wild adulation of the company’s British followers, noting that while “expensive spectators in the stalls contented themselves with ‘Bravos’ and gush,” the company’s gallery “devotees gave themselves unrestrainedly to screaming, jumping up and down, beating and railing, hugging one another, slathering at the mouth.”[[90]](#footnote-90) Fonteyn too described how the company would “sweep into London like a forest fire,” its “giant stars burn[ing] up the air.”[[91]](#footnote-91) According to de Valois, for some, the Vic-Wells Company was only just “bearable” from September to May, the months when “there were no Russians to view at Covent Garden.”[[92]](#footnote-92)

Overshadowed by this formidable enterprise, de Valois and Rambert also contended with new local groups. Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin assembled their own company, the Markova-Dolin Ballet, which presented modern and classical productions in London, up and down Britain, and in Europe from 1935 to 1938. The London Ballet, a company established by the British choreographer Antony Tudor in 1938, gave Rambert and de Valois further serious competition.

A product of Rambert’s school and company, Tudor offered another striking alternative for British ballet.[[93]](#footnote-93) Born William Cook, Tudor – who adopted his stage name after the English royal house – arrived at Rambert’s Mercury Theatre in 1928, aged twenty. His father was a butcher in Finsbury, and Tudor, who spoke in a Cockney accent, worked ten hour shifts at the Smithfield meat market. A performance by Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes had inspired him to become a ballet dancer. Sympathetic to this interest, Rambert allowed Tudor to study with her for free in exchange for his work as a caretaker and piano accompanist at the Mercury. Understated, intense, a serious reader and self-taught musician and multi-linguist, Tudor was “heavy-going,” a “strange grey figure” in Rambert’s classes. According to his fellow dancers, Tudor was often pitted against Ashton who, coming from an entirely different social world, was by contrast all “sparkle and colour.”[[94]](#footnote-94) When he began choreographing, however, Tudor proved to be a colossal talent. With works like *Jardin Aux Lilas* (1936) and *Dark Elegies* (1937), he invented an entirely new genre of dance: the psychological ballet **[Fig. 16-17]**. In these dark, dramatic, socially critical and philosophical works, specific movements and gestures externalized the inner states of the figures onstage. Inspired by Michel Fokine, Kurt Jooss, American modern choreographers, and Javanese, Indian, Kabuki, and Spanish dances he had seen in London, Tudor forged a compelling, original idiom for British ballet.

In the late-1930s, Tudor took his talents away from the Mercury and into the East End. In 1937, he started a popular lecture series for working men and women at the Toynbee Hall Settlement House – in this series, he explained and included his students in the process of making new ballets. The success of these lectures inspired Tudor to establish his own company, the London Ballet, at Toynbee Hall. He envisioned an egalitarian group, with the motto “Ballet for All.” Doing away with traditional hierarchies within ballet companies, Tudor decided there would be no soloists, and all of his dancers would receive the same salary. Working class men would run his production team, operating the lights, changing the scenery, and running the box office. Tickets for the company’s debut in December 1938 sold for a mere six pence – the critic A. V. Coton marveled how, at the London Ballet’s debut, the audience consisted mostly of dockers and students, with “few tall coats and backless gowns – and even fewer silk chokers and hobnailed boots” in sight.[[95]](#footnote-95) Tudor created a new ballet for this occasion, *Gala Performance* (1938), which, as a kind of in-joke between choreographer and audience, satirized music hall performances by foreign ballerinas. After Rambert and de Valois, Tudor offered a third, more radical path for British ballet as a social and artistic project. The London Ballet proposed to make serious classical art not only available to working class people who wanted to see it – it also aimed to involve them and their cultural codes in the production and subject matter of ballet. Tudor’s company immediately received support from Leftist British artists and cultural institutes.[[96]](#footnote-96) Sadly, the impending war cut its life short.

As British ballet fermented, its artists traversing genres and melding creative influences, a group of writers published a torrent of books, magazines, essays, and critical reviews that aimed to bolster the movement. Underscoring their devotion to making ballet an “indigenous” art, some of these authors also made practical contributions to British ballet. P. J. S. Richardson of *The Dancing Times*, for instance, co-founded the Association of Operatic Dancing and established the Camargo Society, while the historian Cyril Beaumont, who opened a dance bookshop on London’s Charing Cross Road, co-founded another training organization – the Cecchetti Society – as well as two short-lived ballet companies. As mass media expanded, numerous authors produced impassioned biographies of dancers, ballet histories, memoirs, and fiction. Hoping to tap into a growing reading public and market for ballet, many aimed to further popularize the art while championing specific conceptions of it.

The most influential ballet writer was Arnold Haskell. Haskell, who studied law at Cambridge University before working for the publisher William Heinemann, was a self-declared ballet fanatic.[[97]](#footnote-97) After the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo’s sensational London debut, in 1934 Haskell published *Balletomania: The Story of An Obsession.* Reflecting Britain’s growing appetite for ballet, the book sold 50,000 copies in its first month. It went through two more printings before the end of the year – by 1947, *Balletomania* would go through nineteen editions and reach the United States.[[98]](#footnote-98) By 1939 Haskell had published at least twelve mass-market books on ballet, including a biography of Diaghilev and a 6p Pelican Special titled *Ballet*, along with innumerable essays and articles.[[99]](#footnote-99) In his lifetime, he wrote nearly seventy ballet books. A self-styled ballet expert, both Rambert and de Valois respected his critical authority and occasionally sought his advice on their schools and companies.

A Diaghilev stalwart, Haskell – as opinionated as he was prolific – promoted a particular idea of ballet. His didactic writings aimed to instruct readers about what constituted “good” and “bad” ballet: in *Balletomania*, for instance, he insisted that the art was “so much more than just a pleasant evening’s entertainment.” Building a historiography for ballet almost single-handedly, he produced a narrative that began in the fifteenth-century and swept through Italian, French, and Russian courts and state theaters before culminating with the Ballets Russes – “there are dynasties of dancers,” he wrote, “and a true line of succession.” While his narrative was impressively researched and in some ways accurate, it purposefully erased and denigrated ballet’s past and ongoing contributions to popular theater, framing it as a wholly elite, even mythic art. The interwar period, Haskell claimed, was the moment when “British ballet” truly originated, and he dubbed turn-of-the-century British music hall ballets “degenerate” art – immoral, too acrobatic, unexpressive, tasteless, “musically and artistically negligible.”[[100]](#footnote-100) He thus isolated the British ballet movement from its past and ongoing ties to commercial entertainment. By giving the movement this prestigious history, he hoped to further elevate the art and counteract residual public “snobbery” against it.[[101]](#footnote-101) His triumphant, teleological narrative would prove so influential that subsequent writers continued to replicate it.

Along with giving British ballet a lofty past, Haskell attempted to define its national character and style in a manner that obscured its creative range and complexities. Presenting nations and their citizens as innately distinct, he asserted that ballet reveals how “each nation has its *natural* tempo and characteristic movements, product of *physique* and *environment*.”[[102]](#footnote-102) Physically and artistically, British women dancers were inherently “docile,” neat, and “disciplined” – they were “nuns,” not “bacchantes.”[[103]](#footnote-103) Polite and reserved, they had “sound technique” but lacked the glamour, “spontaneous talent” and rhythm, sweeping expressiveness, and fire of the Russians.[[104]](#footnote-104) (In fact, Haskell often used Russian ballet as a foil for British ballet, despite arguing simultaneously that the latter stemmed from the former.[[105]](#footnote-105)) Ballets like de Valois’s *The Rake’s Progress* (1935), he claimed, were “essentially English,” and he called the Vic-Wells Ballet was the most “national” of Britain’s existing ballet companies.[[106]](#footnote-106) In 1938, as British dancers continued to improve, he went so far as to argue that ballet could be Britain’s “greatest shop-window” and a “propaganda” tool – the art might even convince its continental peers that Britain was not culturally as “backward” in dance and music as some assumed.[[107]](#footnote-107)

As he defined British dancers and advocated for British ballet, Haskell reinforced distinctions between male and female choreographers and performers. Male geniuses, he argued, made the most successful ballets – men were born choreographers, the natural “brains” of ballet, and women its beautiful instruments. Moreover, he argued, the best ballets always reinforced traditional gender codes. They should feature heterosexual romances and show virile, chivalrous male dancers whose movements contrasted fully with those of ethereal, graceful women. An “effeminate” male dancer, Haskell claimed, is “frankly bad,” and will “damage the whole structure of ballet.”[[108]](#footnote-108) Constructing and enforcing this binary in regards to British ballet, Haskell presented the new movement as sexually conservative and non-threatening. By depicting it as socially conventional, he aimed to allay any opposing suspicions and gain it further acceptance in British society.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Furthermore, Haskell linked British ballet to morbid age notions of “civilization,” and contemporary scientific discourse. Appealing to fears about society’s impending collapse as well as science’s pervasive authority, in early 1939 he argued that ballet was a “social and ethical” practice – “one of the few things to-day that separates us mentally from the gorilla.”[[110]](#footnote-110) The art, he claimed, was a kind of scientific endeavour, demanding “artists-physicists” with a keen knowledge of anatomy and methodical mental and physical training. Tying it to notions of cultural “progress,” Haskell called ballet “the scientific development of popular dancing,” a highly “evolved” form.[[111]](#footnote-111) Preserving and spreading it might save Britain, and Western civilization more broadly, from imminent destruction and decline.

By 1939, as Haskell’s influential writings continued to position his own vision of British ballet as the definitive one, inventing and producing history as it was happening, British government organizations began taking an interest in the movement. From late-1936, the BBC’s new TV service filmed ballet dancers for its transmissions: the Rambert company in fact appeared on the service only three days after its launch, performing solos and excerpts from classical works. The British Council, a new organization founded in 1934 to “promote the appreciation of British culture abroad,” sponsored a performance by the Vic-Wells Ballet at the 1937 International Exposition in Paris.[[112]](#footnote-112) Members of the Royal Family attended ballet performances, even requesting a Royal Command Performance by the Vic-Wells Ballet in a new production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, featuring décor by the Russian painter Nadia Benois, at the Royal Opera House in honor of a visit by the French President. Signaling further changes in the status of British ballet, a wealthier public was gradually making its way over to the Sadler’s Wells Theatre.[[113]](#footnote-113) But just as the British ballet movement advanced toward the cultural establishment, war threatened to end it.

**III. War, and the Nation’s Embrace**

When Britain entered the Second World War in September 1939, the government ordered all London theaters to close. De Valois disbanded her company and closed the Vic-Wells Ballet School – the dancer Beryl Grey, then a twelve-year-old student at the school, recalled “sobbing” at the news, being handed a gas mask, and evacuated.[[114]](#footnote-114) Rambert suspended her company’s operations and relocated her school to South-East England. With the dancer Hugh Laing, his lover and close collaborator, Antony Tudor fled to New York and joined Ballet Theater (renamed American Ballet Theater in 1957). Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin also left for the United States.

By November, however, amid the hush of the Phoney War, theaters slowly re-opened, and ballet revived. Rambert’s dancers reunited, performing at London’s Mercury and Duchess theatres and even premiering a new ballet, *Czernyana* (1939), an exuberant send-up of various dance styles by Rambert’s latest protégé, the South African choreographer Frank Staff. The Vic-Wells Ballet reconvened and adapted. Anticipating the call up of musicians for military service, Constant Lambert threw himself into the painstaking task of rewriting the company’s orchestral scores as two-piano reductions. In January 1940, the company – which de Valois soon renamed the Sadler’s Wells Ballet – premiered Ashton’s *Dante Sonata*. Channeling the bleak public mood, this work included ominous music by the Hungarian Romantic composer Franz Liszt. Ashton’s choreography – organic and sculptural, with a loose upper-body – extended beyond the ballet vocabulary, drawing from the British sculptor John Flaxman and French engraver Gustave Doré’s illustrations of Dante’s *Divine Comedy.* The dancers’ long, diaphanous tunics, loose hair, and bare feet evoked the Grecian style of Isadora Duncan. Depicting a symbolic struggle between lightness and darkness – Fonteyn called it a “heart-cry for humanity” – *Dante Sonata* closed with foreboding images of crucifixion.[[115]](#footnote-115) Tentatively and gravely, but not without creative energy, British ballet forged ahead.

In May 1940, the British Council sponsored de Valois’s company on a tour of the Netherlands and Belgium, signaling its ongoing interest in using ballet as a political tool.[[116]](#footnote-116) According to Fonteyn, British officials told the dancers “we would be perfectly safe,” and that their performances would play a crucial role in boosting the morale of and strengthening Britain’s ties with these neutral countries.[[117]](#footnote-117) Indeed, on the company’s opening night in Holland, the audience greeted the dancers with “heart-breaking enthusiasm.” Fonteyn recalled how, in an atmosphere of heightened anxiety, this performance seemed to generate an “exceptional bond of intimacy between performers and public,” British and Dutch, united by the transcendent experience of art and a shared hope that “time could be made to stand still.”[[118]](#footnote-118) Days later, Germany began invading the Netherlands, ending the Phoney War and crushing this collective inward breath. As Nazis swarmed the city, descending from the sky on parachutes, the dancers made a hairbreadth escape, racing across the country in buses before finally managing to get out by cramming into the hold of a cargo ship. They left behind costumes, scenery, and orchestral scores, resulting in the permanent loss of significant works like Ashton’s *Horoscope* (1938) from the company’s repertory.

The Blitz battered British ballet further. By September 1940, Beryl Grey remembered, wailing sirens and air raids had become frequent and “terrifyingly heavy,” pushing Londoners into Anderson huts, the underground, and public shelters.[[119]](#footnote-119) The Sadler’s Wells Theatre was converted into a refuge – although de Valois’ school continued operating there, her company lost its base. Ever resilient, the Sadler’s Wells Ballet began performing at a West End theater, and embarked on near-interminable tours of the provinces.[[120]](#footnote-120)

Domestic tours would sustain the Sadler’s Wells Ballet financially throughout the war, but not without fresh challenges. While the company performed bi-weekly during the 1930s, it now gave a minimum of nine performances per week. Dancers had to adjust to the various sizes and designs of regional stages, often rehearsing in dim lighting and without heat. Travelling on trains with blacked out windows, they slept “like sardines” in packed compartments or in local digs which, due to wartime restrictions, could not guarantee hot water. The women used dyes and sewing tricks to extend the lives of their pointe shoes, which were rationed – Grey recalled how their shoes nevertheless usually shriveled, “causing blisters which burst and left our toes red raw.” Battling injuries, hunger, exhaustion, and illness, the dancers continued this non-stop schedule. Yet they remained fully focused, strengthening their technique, gaining stamina, and tackling new roles in the company’s productions. As their audiences grew, the idea that ballet might “cheer people and raise their spirits” gave these dancers purpose and motivation.[[121]](#footnote-121)

As de Valois’s company crisscrossed the country, Ballet Rambert, which merged with Antony Tudor’s abandoned London Ballet in 1940, presented its own morale-boosting programs in the capital. From early 1941, the company gave up to four performances daily at the London Arts Theatre. The names of these one-hour programs – “Lunch Ballet,” “After Lunch Ballet,” “Tea Ballet,” “After Tea Ballet,” or “Sherry Ballet” – depended on their time of day. They followed the model of the English pianist Myra Hess, who from October 1939 performed at the National Gallery every day between 1 and 2PM. Tickets cost one shilling, and by 1945 over 750,000 people seen Hess’s concerts.[[122]](#footnote-122) Similarly, Rambert called her company’s performances “undeniably a huge success,” attracting reams of “air-raid wardens and night workers.”[[123]](#footnote-123) They even inspired the Ambassador’s Theatre, another London venue, to hire its own ballet company and copy this example.

Like Hess’s concerts, the popularity of these ballet performances reflected a public thirst for the arts that swelled during the war.[[124]](#footnote-124) Kenneth Clark, the Director of the National Gallery who oversaw Hess’s performances, remembered coordinating no publicity except for a single newspaper advertisement for the pianist’s first concert. Weary people nevertheless lined up across Trafalgar Square, and the performance space became so crowded that patrons stood in the back and sat on the floor. At the end, Clark along with most of the audience “was in tears.”[[125]](#footnote-125) Ballet could be equally cathartic, offering spectators a fleeting hour of calm, beauty, and escape.

Indeed, the demand for diversions led new ballet companies to emerge. In 1941, the dancer and choreographer Mona Inglesby founded the International Ballet.[[126]](#footnote-126) This company, which debuted in Glasgow, presented large-scale new and classic works throughout the war. Underscoring the ongoing influence of Russian culture on British dance, Stanislas Idzikowski, who danced with Pavlova and the Ballets Russes, served as the company’s ballet master, and Sergeyev staged many of its classical productions. Other groups that flourished include the Anglo-Polish Ballet (which consisted mostly of British dancers, despite its name), Keith Lester’s Arts Theatre Ballet, John Regan’s Les Ballets Trois Arts, the Pauline Grant Ballet, Lydia Kyasht’s Ballet de la Jeunesse Anglaise, the Ballet Group, Allied Ballet, and Ballet Guild.[[127]](#footnote-127) These companies nurtured strong performers and toured frequently throughout the war, offering steady employment to British artists who continued to dabble in pantomimes, musical theater, plays, operas, and films while bringing ballet to a greater number of Britons.[[128]](#footnote-128) Although the Sadler’s Wells Ballet was quickly becoming the dominant force in British ballet, attracting the best dancers and enjoying the most name recognition and comparative economic stability, these groups expanded the artistic corpus of British ballet and its national audience significantly.

Ballet’s unexpected wartime ascendance was complicated by an increasing deficit of male dancers. Unlike ballerinas, whose work the government now considered vital to civilian morale, male dancers were not exempt from conscription. Some promptly volunteered to fight, while others dreaded being called up. Theatergoer Pat Stone described seeing Ashton appear on stage for the last time before he joined the Royal Air Force in 1941: “He cannot speak as he is on the verge of tears, but just looks with welling eyes at the audience. There are cries of ‘shame’ as de Valois states the Government wants his services.”[[129]](#footnote-129) Ashton worked as an intelligence officer and interpreted aerial photographs for the RAF; other dancers saw active combat in the army and navy, deployed as far as North Africa.

Although Russia and France granted male dancers special dispensations during the war, de Valois and elite ballet supporters like Keynes did not push for comparable exemptions.[[130]](#footnote-130) Along with lacking official support, ballet was still not considered a respectable profession for men in Britain. In fact, some ballet advocates hoped that sending male dancers to war would counteract the British public’s tendency to associate these artists with “effeminacy” and homosexuality. William Chappell, one of the first men to study at Rambert’s school and join de Valois’s company, summarized this longstanding view in his 1948 book, *Studies in Ballet*. Ballet, Chappell explains, was widely viewed as a “despicable and shocking” career for men: any boy who wanted to dance faced “opposition from parents, relations and friends… cries of ‘Sissy’… taunts and teasing” that were impossible to ignore. It was as if becoming a dancer was “a humiliation to his entire world. Worse, really, than being killed in a war.”[[131]](#footnote-131) Such prejudices meant that the few men who pursued dance careers before the war mostly came from poor families and studied ballet on scholarships; others, like Chappell, had relatives who worked in the theater.[[132]](#footnote-132) Ashton, a rare public school boy, had to keep his technique classes a secret from his “horrified” parents.”[[133]](#footnote-133)

Ironically, these associations stemmed from that fabled model for British ballet, Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes. The exotic, strong, and pliant foreigners who danced alongside women in the company’s *corps* and headlined its productions shocked and entranced British audiences. Some became beautiful objects of male audience desire – especially Nijinsky, who traversed gender conventions onstage in androgynous costumes and roles, and whose own romantic relationship with Diaghilev was an open secret.[[134]](#footnote-134) Published photographs and promotional images for the company appealed to and reinforced these associations, as did the company’s high profile British male followers **[Fig. 18]**. Although homosexuality was illegal in Britain, the company’s productions offered a haven for homoerotic fantasy and queer expression – a tradition that British choreographers, Ashton and Tudor especially, carried forth in their own creations.[[135]](#footnote-135) To win British ballet official acceptance and a national status, such associations needed to be undermined – if not eradicated.[[136]](#footnote-136)

As male choreographers, principals, and virtuosos departed, British ballet molded around who was left. Company directors began relying on boys as young as sixteen to perform leading parts despite their limited training.[[137]](#footnote-137) At the Sadler’s Wells Ballet, Fonteyn remembered, these boys “were not the strongest partners,” meaning that the women “learned to fend for themselves,” using their individual strength to muscle through “supported” pirouettes and sequences.[[138]](#footnote-138) Companies began performing more works with heavily-female casts and minimal aerial lifts – something the Russian classics proved particularly conducive to. In a unforeseen throwback to Edwardian era, some women even performed male roles. Thus, while the war wreaked havoc on the progress of British male dancers, constituting what Chappell called a “minor tragedy,” it pushed ballerinas to the forefront.[[139]](#footnote-139)

Along with centering female dancers, the draft created openings within British ballet for men who were not British citizens. At the Sadler’s Wells Ballet, dancers including the Australians Gordon Hamilton and Rex Reid, the Lithuanian-born Alexis Rassine (who had South African citizenship), and David Paltenghi, a Swiss citizen with an English mother, assumed principal roles. Another dancer exempt from the draft was Robert Helpmann – de Valois’s overworked Australian star, who shouldered an increasingly heavy schedule. Along with performing, Helpmann began choreographing for the company, creating works that shifted away from Ashton’s flowing, abstract romanticism and toward dramatic gesture and narrative – his surrealist *Hamlet* (1942), for instance, had more in common with Kurt Jooss and Antony Tudor’s expressive, psychological approaches than Ashton’s oeuvre **[Fig. 19]**.[[140]](#footnote-140) These shifts in male personnel and creative work gradually broadened the interwar idea of British ballet, setting a precedent for white dancers from the dominions and European dancers with British connections to assimilate into this ostensibly national movement after 1945.

Amid these victories, strains, and changes, ballet attracted serious attention from the British government. From 1940, the Entertainments National Service Organization (ENSA) – a semi-independent association founded by two theatrical producers and supported by the Ministry of Labour and the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes – sponsored domestic and international performances by ballet groups for British troops and factory workers.[[141]](#footnote-141) But official investment in ballet increased substantially in 1943, when the Council for Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) invited the Sadler’s Wells Ballet and Ballet Rambert into its fold. Established in 1940, CEMA began operating under the Department of Education in 1942. That year, in a happy twist for British ballet, the Department of Education appointed J. M. Keynes as CEMA’s Director.[[142]](#footnote-142)

With Keynes at the helm, CEMA became the first British government organization to sponsor the performing arts directly and bring culture to the British populace. Part of a wider state embrace of the arts during the war – under the Ministry of Information, the government also funded films and established the War Artists Commission – CEMA recognized artists’ vital role in raising the spirits of disparate audiences who, having mobilized for total war, had money to spare and limited outlets for personal enjoyment. Furthermore, it was undergirded by its elite administrators’ shared belief that spreading high culture could salvage a particular vision of “civilization,” preserved cherished traditions, and counteract fascism.[[143]](#footnote-143) For Keynes, ballet especially could offer the British public reassurance, diversion, and what his close colleague Kenneth Clark called “an assertion of eternal values.”[[144]](#footnote-144)

The funding and institutional support CEMA gave the Sadler’s Wells Ballet and Ballet Rambert further boosted these companies’ public profiles and legitimacy. In fact, after a spat with the Arts Theatre management, Ballet Rambert disbanded temporarily from 1941 to 1943. Recognizing the artistic importance of this group, CEMA reconstituted and began managing it directly, sending eleven of Rambert’s dancers to perform on outdoor stages and in cinemas, factories, hostels for munitions workers, canteens, church halls, and miners’ welfare centers in British villages and towns where they extended British ballet’s reach **[Fig. 20]**.[[145]](#footnote-145) CEMA coordinated these performances around workers’ shifts – occasionally, the dancers performed as late as midnight, appearing on temporary platforms assembled just for their shows and taking class in train corridors while travelling to their next destination. The dancer Brigitte Kelly recalled how the group’s male dancers wore trousers instead of tights during these performances, so as not to “risk barracking from people who had never seen ballet in their life.” After these shows, the dancers often ate in canteens alongside workers, who appeared “mystified as to how these cavorting elves had landed in their factory.”[[146]](#footnote-146)

As ballet reached new British publics with CEMA’s help – and many, according to Marie Rambert, “seemed… to enjoy their first experience” of the art, becoming fast “fans”– in 1943 Arnold Haskell published *The National Ballet: A History and a Manifesto*.[[147]](#footnote-147)In this landmark book, he argued that the wartime achievements of the Sadler’s Wells Ballet were eclipsing those of all its domestic competitors. In fact, the new artistic excellence of this company had made it possible to speak at last of a genuinely “national ballet,” and to “visualize” British ballet’s “position as an artistic force in the post-war international theatre world.”[[148]](#footnote-148) Through its ceaseless London seasons and regional tours, the company reached a wide public. It was even approaching the heights of the Russians: its modern creations were varied and energetic, its classical repertoire strong, and its ballerinas, especially Fonteyn, advancing every day.[[149]](#footnote-149) As Haskell predicted, by the time Germany surrendered in May 1945, the Sadler’s Wells Ballet would indeed become something of a national treasure. On 8 May – V. E. Day – many adoring fans chose to cram themselves into the crowded theatre to see the company in *Coppélia,* witha gaunt but joyful Helpmann waved flags, balloons, and streamers to everyone’s delight.[[150]](#footnote-150)

Indeed, by the end of the war, the Sadler’s Wells Ballet and other British companies appeared to have overcome popular interwar prejudices against British dancers.[[151]](#footnote-151) The poetic, lyrical Margot Fonteyn even showed signs of international star power. The critic Audrey Williamson noted that British ballet had “risen spectacularly in public favour,” displacing the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo as it entered the cultural mainstream.[[152]](#footnote-152) Audiences across the country regularly braved wartime dangers to go to the theatre, queuing for hours for tickets and waiting outside stage doors for autographs. Some even gave the dancers hand-picked bouquets and food from their own cherished rations.[[153]](#footnote-153) In turn, the dancers gave their best performances, hoping to give people some rare, much-needed enjoyment and help them “forget their worries for a while.”[[154]](#footnote-154) Ballet offered a refuge from the uncertainty of daily life, bringing viewers into strange, enchanted worlds of movement, music, and narrative – one theatregoer even called it her “one great consolation” during the war.[[155]](#footnote-155)

Stories of dancers continuing to perform and audience members determinedly staying in their seats as bomb sirens blared even became part of the war’s myth. Beryl Grey recalled how, during one performance of *Swan Lake* by the Sadler’s Wells Ballet, “a doodlebug landed while I was completing a series of double pirouettes… as the orchestra reached the climax the bomb exploded… there was a hushed second of silence, then the performance continued; nobody stirred or left the theatre.”[[156]](#footnote-156) Such experiences, which showed real collective bravery and perseverance, were run-of-the-mill, and according to de Valois, no audience members ever left the theaters.[[157]](#footnote-157)

In June 1945, Keynes assumed the mantle of the new Arts Council of Great Britain. In a BBC Radio broadcast that month, he proudly chronicled CEMA’s successes. He informed listeners that, under the new welfare state, the Arts Council – one of the wartime government’s final initiatives and a unprecedented organ for supporting the arts in Britain – would remain dedicated to its predecessor’s work, offering artists economic security as well as providing education, recreation, and the finest cultural riches to the general public.[[158]](#footnote-158) The arts, with their potential to heal, diminish social divisions, and engender solidarity, now had an official role to play in Britain’s postwar reconstruction – in Keynes’s words, “enlarging our sensibility and purifying our instincts.” He imagined the arts would in fact be critical to this revival, concluding, “we look forward to the time when the theatre and concert-hall and the gallery will be a living element in everyone’s upbringing” – when “artist and public can sustain and live together in that union which has occasionally existed in the past at great ages of a communal *civilised* life.”[[159]](#footnote-159) Ballet, newly accepted as a British art, would be central to this effort.

British ballet’s wartime triumphs and popularity captured the imagination of state officials and cultural elites other than Keynes. At home, the art might be a tool for social management and instruction – democratizing ballet could lead to a refining of customs and tastes, producing “virtuous” new citizens. Like Haskell, some believed it might even turn tired, shabby, “philistine” and “backward” Britain into a nation as cultured as its continental peers.[[160]](#footnote-160) Abroad, ballet could serve as a kind of propaganda, promoting British prestige and reflecting a cultivated, superior self-image while propagating and safeguarding a particular vision of “civilization.”[[161]](#footnote-161) By the end of 1945, the Arts Council was carving out a large slice of its budget for ballet; BBC Television, which re-started in 1946 after being suspended during the war, was making plans for ballet programs; and the British Council was coordinating overseas ballet tours. The Sadler’s Wells Ballet meanwhile began its transition into its new home theater, the state-funded Royal Opera House.

In February 1946, Margot Fonteyn waited in the wings of the Royal Opera House for her entrance as Princess Aurora in the Sadler’s Wells Ballet’s sumptuous new production of *The Sleeping Beauty* **[Fig. 21]**. In the dark, packed theatre sat the Royal Family, Prime Minister Clement Atlee, the Cabinet, Keynes, and Lydia Lopokova. The culmination of the British ballet movement, this performance marked the Sadler’s Wells Ballet’s debut as Britain’s “national company in all but name.” Representing a “new awakening” after the war – a return to order, and hope for a better future – it positioned ballet at the apex of postwar British culture.[[162]](#footnote-162) What began as a “wayward” popular art had transformed into a state institution, a point of national interest and pride – a patriotic statement. As Fonteyn stepped graciously onto the stage, “exquisite and agreeable” in a soft pink tutu and glittering tiara, the eroticized image of the hapless Victorian ballet girl seemed to recede into distant memory.[[163]](#footnote-163)

After the death and destruction of war, this vision – grand and elegant, showing good’s triumph over evil – was beautiful. But ambiguities lingered. *The Sleeping Beauty*, the ballet that would become the Sadler’s Wells Ballet’s calling-card, was not by a British choreographer – staged by Sergeyev, it called Diaghilev’s 1921 *Sleeping Princess* to mind. Robert Helpmann’s dramatic entrance in drag as the wicked witch Carabosse and the ballet’s mass of female performers and spectacular pageantry echoed past and present traditions in British popular entertainment. Moreover, the ballet’s florid, pastel neo-romantic designs exemplified what writer Neil Bartlett describes as their designer Oliver Messel’s “fascination with surface texture, dandyish excess… pastiche and artifice” – said to reflect a “queer aesthetic.”[[164]](#footnote-164) Could British ballet continue to draw a large public in and away from London, and how would the Sadler’s Wells Ballet measure up to emerging and foreign dance companies which, shut out of Britain since 1939, now began to return? Would British ballet ever fully separate itself from the music hall or consolidate around a single style? What might it mean to propagate Russian productions as British masterpieces at home and abroad? How would male dancers and subversive sexualities fit into the state’s cultural schemes, and what did it mean that, through British ballet, the postwar nation would be represented not by a persevering “little man,” but a woman?

1. “Memorial Service: M. Serge Diaghileff,” *The Times*, 26 Aug. 1929, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Quoted in N. MacDonald, *Diaghilev Observed By Critics in England and the United States, 1911-1929* (New York, 1975), p. 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. E. Evans, “Diaghileff: The Man and His Work,” *The Observer*, 25 Aug. 1929, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “M. Serge Diaghileff,” *The Times*, 20 Aug. 1929, p. 15; MacDonald, *Diaghilev Observed*, pp. 379-380. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This chapter thus expands on M. Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939* (New York, 1990), as well as scholarship on British and Russian cultural relations in this period, including: R. Beasley & P. Bullock (eds.), *Russia in Britain, 1880-1940: From Melodrama to Modernism* (Oxford, 2013); J. Pitches, *Russians in Britain: British Theatre and the Russian Tradition of Actor Training* (London, 2012); O. Soboleva & A. Wrenn (eds.), *From Orientalism to Cultural Capital: The Myth of Russia in British Literature* (Oxford, 2017). British ballet’s Russian roots differentiate it from the more hermetic approach taken by the concurrent movement to discover a new “British” mode of classical music, as composers like Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Britten privileged British folk songs, hymns, and literature over international forms. See: A. Blake, *The Land Without Music: Music, Culture, and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (New York, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See: F. Hall, *Modern English Ballet: An Interpretation* (London, 1948); M. Clarke, *The Sadler’s Wells Ballet: A History and an Appreciation* (London, 1955); M. Clarke, *Dancers of Mercury: The Story of Ballet Rambert* (London, 1962); A. Bland, *The Royal Ballet: The First Fifty Years* (London, 1981), Z. Anderson, *The Royal Ballet: 75 Years* (London, 2006). For more recent work: K. Eliot, *Albion’s Dance: British Ballet during the Second World War* (Oxford, 2016); G. Morris, *Frederick Ashton’s Ballets: Style Performance, Choreography* (Binstead, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. I. Guest, *Ballet in Leicester Square: The Alhambra and the Empire, 1860-1915* (London, 1992); A. Carter, *Dance and Dancers in the Edwardian Music Hall Ballet* (London, 2018); B. Barker, *Ballet or Ballyhoo: The American Careers of Maria Bonfanti, Rita Sanagalli and Giuseppina Morlacchi* (New York, 1984); B. Barker (ed.), *Bolossy Kiralfy, Creator of Great Musical Spectacles: An Autobiography* (Ann Arbor, 1988); B. Gregory, ‘Staging British India’, in *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790-1930*, ed. J. Bratton(Manchester, 1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. M. Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910* (London, 1981); L. Jackson, *Palaces of Pleasure: From Music Halls to the Seaside to Football: How the Victorians Invented Mass Entertainment* (New Haven, 2019); R. *McWilliam, London’s West End: Creating the Pleasure District, 1800-1914* (Oxford, 2020);M. O’Neill and M. Hatt (eds.), *The Edwardian Sense: Art, Design, and Performance in Britain, 1901-1910* (New Haven, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. B. Barker, “Introduction,” in *Bolossy Kiralfy*, p. xix. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. J. Pritchard, ‘Enrico Cecchetti and the restoration of the danseur in ballets presented on the London stage at the end of the nineteenth century’, in ‘Selected papers from “An International Celebration of Enrico Cecchetti”’, Society for Dance Research, University of Chichester, 31 July 2005, pp. 1-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See: L. Garafola, “The Travesty Dancer in Nineteenth-Century Ballet,” *Dance Research Journal* 17/18 (1985-1986), pp. 35-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. J. Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London* (New Haven, 2010); J. Donohue, *Fantasies of Empire: The Empire Theatre of Varieties and the Licensing Controversy of 1894* (Iowa City, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. N. de Valois, ‘Kaleidoscope’, in K. Sorley Walker, *Ninette de Valois: Idealist Without Illusions* (London, 1998), p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Barker, *Ballet or Ballyhoo*, p. 233; Guest, *Ballet in Leicester Square,* p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. “A Great Russian Dancer,” *The Observer*, 24 Apr. 1910, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. “The Dancing Master,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 Aug. 1910, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Quoted in Macdonald, *Diaghilev Observed,* p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. A. Haskell, “The Birth of English Ballet,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 87 (1939), p. 788. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. See: L. Garafola, *Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes* (Oxford, 1989); S. Jones, *Literature, Modernism, and Dance* (Oxford, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. C. Beaton, *Ballet* (London, 1951),p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. J. Pritchard, with C. Hamilton, *Anna Pavlova: Twentieth Century Ballerina* (London, 2013); K. Money, *Anna Pavlova: Her Life and Art* (New York, 1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. B. Kelly, *‘Mim’: A Personal Memoir of Marie Rambert* (Alton, 2009), p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. L. Garafola, “Anna Pavlova: A Ballerina of Taste,” Ballerina: Fashion’s Modern Muse, Fashion Institute of Technology, 6 March 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. C. G. Casey, “The Ballet Corporealities of Anna Pavlova and Albertina Rasch,” *Dance Chronicle* 31 (2012), p. 16, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ninette de Valois, *Come Dance With Me* (London, 1957), pp. 34-6, 51-52, 58, 66. On wartime culture: G. Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (London, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Eliot, *Albion’s Dance*; Garafola, *Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes*, pp. 224-231; G. Morris, ‘Developing a Training Style: Ninette de Valois and the Cultural Inheritance of the Early Twentieth Century’, in *Ninette de Valois: Adventurous Traditionalist,* eds. Cave and Worth, pp. 41-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Foreign artists who appeared on London stages also taught short-term courses. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. K. Sorley Walker, “The Espinosas: A Dancing Dynasty, 1825-1992,” *Dance Chronicle* 30 (2007), p. 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. From 1920 to 1922, Cyril Beaumont and Stanislas Idzikowski recorded Cecchetti’s methods for a book, *A Manual of Classical Theatrical Dancing*. Although Cecchetti left Britain in 1923, his pupils perpetuated his methods, as did the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing and the Cecchetti Society (founded in 1930). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Espinosa would break away from the Association in 1930 to found the British Ballet Organisation. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See: B. Grey, *For the Love of Dance* (London, 2018), pp. 7-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. B. Genné, ‘Ninette de Valois’, *International Encyclopedia of Dance* (Oxford, 1998). Also: Kelly, *‘Mim,’*, p. 29, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Eliot, *Albion’s Dance,* p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. P. Noble, *British Ballet* (London, 1949), p. 11; Kelly, *‘Mim’*, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. M. Fonteyn, *Margot Fonteyn: Autobiography* (London, 1975), p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. G. Lynne, *Dancer in Wartime* (London, 2012), p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body: Beauty, Health, and Fitness in Britain 1880-1939* (Oxford, 2010); F. Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity in Interwar Britain* (Oxford, 2013); T. Buckland, *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870-1920* (New York, 2011); D. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London, 2016), pp. 94–146. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. De Valois, *Come Dance With Me*, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See: M. Green, *Children of the Sun: A Narrative of ‘Decadence’ in England after 1918* (London, 1976); D. J. Taylor, *Bright Young People: The Rise and Fall of a Generation, 1918-1940* (London, 2007); Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies* (London, 1930). *Les Noces* (1923); *Les Biches* (1924); *Apollo* (1928); *Prodigal Son* (1929). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See: A. Witchard, “Bedraggled Ballerinas on a Bus Back to Bow,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 13 (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. C. Beaumont, *The Diaghilev Ballet in London: A Personal Record* (London, 1951), pp. 266-267. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Other British dancers who performed with the Ballets Russes in the 1920s include Rupert Doone, Hilda Bewicke, Vera Clarke (Savina), Dorothy Coxon (Koksova), Errol Smith (Addison), Eileen Luck (Astafieva), Rebecca Iles (Wanda Evina), Margaret Craske (Krasnova), Leighton Lucas (Lukine), Elenor Phillips (Eleanora Marra), and Ursula Moreton (Mortonova). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. De Valois, *Come Dance With Me*, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. A. Haskell, *Balletomania: The Story of an Obsession* (London, 1934), p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Blake, *The Land Without Music*, p. 56. By 1939, ¾ of all British homes had a radio. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. C. Lambert, *Music Ho!: A Study of Music in Decline* (London, 1934), pp. 201-203. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. R. Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London, 2009), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See: D. LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain between the Wars* (Oxford, 1988); M. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground* (New York, 1998); K. Guthrie, *The Art of Appreciation: Music and Middlebrow Culture in Modern Britain* (Oakland, 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Haskell, “The Birth of English Ballet,” p. 790. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. J. Mackrell, *Bloomsbury Ballerina: Lydia Lopokova, imperial dancer and Mrs John Maynard Keynes* (London, 2008), p. 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Haskell, *Balletomania*, p. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes, Volume 28: Social, Political, and Literary Writings*, ed. D. Moggridge (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 320–322. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. M. Rambert, *Quicksilver: The Autobiography of Marie Rambert* (London, 1972), p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. A. Robinson, “Penelope Spencer (1901-93): Dancer and Choreographer: A Chronicle,” *Dance Research* 28 (2010), p. 63.. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Mackrell, *Bloomsbury Ballerina*, p. 322. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Kelly, *‘Mim’,* p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Rambert, *Quicksilver*, p. 108. Rambert did not teach *pas de deux*, character, or composition classes at her school. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., p. 47. On Ashton: D. Vaughan, *Frederick Ashton and his Ballets* (London, 1977); J. Kavanagh, *Secret Muses: The Life of Frederick Ashton* (New York, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. On Fedorovitch: Kelly, *‘Mim’*, p. 47. Through this group, Ashton came in contact with some of his future artistic collaborators, including Cecil Beaton, Edward Burra, Oliver Messel, William Walton, the Sitwells, Lord Berners, and Constant Lambert. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. T. Sutton, *The Making of Markova: Diaghilev’s Baby Ballerina to Groundbreaking Icon* (New York, 2013), **p. ?** [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. The Mercury Theatre seated 150 people and was only 18 feet wide and 18 feet deep, thus contributing to the intimate, “small-scale” nature of many of the Rambert groups productions, which came to be referred to as “Chamber Ballets.” [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Rambert, *Quicksilver*, p. 132. As the 1930s progressed, members of the decade’s new Ballets Russes groups also appeared as guest artists. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Other Diaghilev works presented included: Fokine’s *Carnaval* (1910), *Le Spectre de la rose* (1911), and *Les Sylphides*, and Nijinsky’s *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1912). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Kelly, *‘Mim’*, p. 48, 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Brigitte Kelly likened Rambert’s school and company to a “religious sect” where “you were expected to live and breathe ballet to the exclusion of all else.” Ibid, p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. L. Edwards, *In Good Company: Sixty Years with the Royal Ballet* (Alton, 2003), pp. 19-20. Harold Turner, Maude Lloyd, Prudence Hyman, William Chappell, and Ashton all took on commercial gigs – Ashton danced and choreographed for C.B. Cochran’s grand theatre productions and late night cabarets at the London Trocadero. On popular clogging groups like the Lancashire Lads, which Turner auditioned for, see: L. Norton and F. Franklin, *Frederic Franklin: A Biography of a Ballet Star* (Jefferson 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Haskell, *Balletomania*, pp. 203-204. On the interwar social dance boom: A. Abra, *Dancing in the English Style: Consumption, Americanisaiton and National Identity in Britain* (Manchester, 2017); J. Nott, *Going to the Palais: A Social and Cultural History of Dancing and Dance Halls in Britain, 1918-1960* (Oxford, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Edwards, *In Good Company,* p. 20.. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. De Valois, *Come Dance With Me*, p. 33; N. de Valois, *Invitation to the Ballet* (London, 1937). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Walker, *Ninette de Valois*, p. 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Walker, *Ninette de Valois,* p. 65; K. Neatby, *Ninette de Valois and the Vic-Wells Ballet* (London, 1934), p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Jones, *Literature, Modernism, and Dance*, pp. 34-40, 83-85; R. Cave, *Collaborations: Ninette de Valois and William Butler Yeats* (Alton, 2011); T. Gray, *Dance-Drama: Experiments in the Art of the Theatre* (Cambridge, 1926). De Valois also appeared in Yeats’s productions and ran the Abbey’s short-lived School of Ballet. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. On the repertory theatre movement: N. Marshall, *The Other Theatre* (London, 1947); G. Rowel and A. Jackson, *The Repertory Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain* (Cambridge, 2001).. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. N. de Valois, Step by Step: The Formation of an Establishment (London, 1977)., p. 35. On Baylis: E. Schafer, *Lilian Baylis: A Biography* (Hatfield, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Regular attendees at the Mercury Theatre included Jacob Epstein, Margot Asquith, Rebecca West, and Elizabeth Bowen. Brigitte Kelly writes that while Baylis “wanted to bring culture to the poor… Rambert was not interested in the poor.” See: Kelly, ‘*Mim’*, p. 51, 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See: H. Hammond, “Ninette de Valois, the Bloomsbury Group, and the role of visual culture in the formation of the early Royal Ballet,” in in *Ninette de Valois: Adventurous Traditionalist*, pp. 183-192. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. L. Kersley, “The Vic-Wells Era,” The Dancing Times, Mar. 1981, pp. 384-385; J. Cruickshank, “Leo Kersley Obituary,” *The Guardian*, 17 July 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. E. Ring, *Up the Cockneys!* (London, 1975), p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. On the Auden Generation: S. Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* (Princeton, 1972); Green, *Children of the Sun*, p. 261. On Ruskin’s ongoing influence on interwar British art: Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. vii. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Kelly writes that “Unlike de Valois, who had a vision and worked and planned to create a great ballet company, Rambert… planned only from day to day.” Kelly, *‘Mim’*, p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. On Helpmann: K. Sorley Walker, *Robert Helpmann: A Rare Sense of Theatre* (Alton, 2009); R. Cave and A. Meadmore (eds.), *Robert Helpmann: The Many Faces of a Theatrical Dynamo* (Alton, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Rambert, *Quicksilver*, pp. 146-7. “Defectors” included Ashton, Chappell, Harold Turner, Pearl Argyle, Peggy van Praagh, David Paltenghi, and Pauline Clayden, among others. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. De Valois began offering dancers from across the country scholarships to her school in the mid-1930s. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Fonteyn, *Autobiography*, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Quoted in A. Haskell, *Ballet: A Complete Guide to Appreciation, History, Aesthetics, Ballets, Dancers* (Harmondsworth, 1938), p. 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. See: B. Genné, ‘Creating a Canon, Creating the ‘Classics’ in Twentieth-Century British Ballet’, *Dance Research* 18 (2000), pp. 132-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. On Kurt Jooss: A. V. Coton, *The New Ballet: Kurt Jooss and his Work* (London, 1946); K. Elswit, *Watching Weimar Dance* (Oxford, 2014). On dance at Dartington Hall: L. Nicholas, *Dancing in Utopia: Dartington Hall and its Dancers* (Alton, 2007); A. Neima, “Dartington Hall and the Quest for ‘Life in its Completeness’, 1925-45,” *History Workshop Journal* 88 (2019), pp. 111-133. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. On the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo: C. Beaumont, *The Monte Carlo Russian Ballet,* (London, 1934); A. Stokes, *Russian Ballets* (London, 1934); K. Sorley Walker, *De Basil’s Ballets Russes* (London, 1982); V. Garcia-Marquez, *The Ballets Russes: Colonel de Basil’s Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, 1932-1952* (New York, 1990); J. Chazin-Bennahum, *Rene Blum and the Ballets Russes: In Search of A Lost Life* (Oxford, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. See: Haskell, *Ballet: A Complete Guide*, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. A. de Mille, *Dance To the Piper* (New York, 2015), p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Fonteyn, *Autobiography*, pp. 58-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. De Valois, *Come Dance With Me*, p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. On Tudor: J. Chazin-Bennahum, *The Ballets of Antony Tudor: Studies in Psyche and Satire* (New York, 1994); M. Topaz, *Undimmed Lustre: The Life of Antony Tudor* (Lanham, 2002); D. Perlmutter, *Shadowplay: The Life of Antony Tudor* (New York, 1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Kelly, *‘Mim’,* pp. 78-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. A. V. Coton, *Writings on Dance, 1938–1968* (London, 1975), p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. S. Prickett, *Embodied Politics: Dance, Protest, and Identities* (Alton, 2013), p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Haskell, *Balletomania*, p. xiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Genné, “Creating a Canon,” p. 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. These included: *Vera Trefilova* (1928); *Some Studies in Ballet* (1928); *Anton Dolin* (1929); *Penelope Spencer* (1931); *The Marie Rambert Ballet* (1930); *Diaghileff* (1935); *Prelude to Ballet* (1936); *Balleto-mane’s Scrapbook* (1936); *Ballet: A Complete Guide* (1938); *Ballet Panorama* (1938); *Dancing Around the World* (1938); *Balletomane’s Album* (1939). To make his books more readable, Haskell frequently peppered them with gossip and sentimental anecdotes. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Haskell, *Balletomania*, p. 7, 18?, 183-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Haskell, *Ballet: A Complete Guide*, p. 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. A. Haskell, *Prelude to Ballet: An Analysis and Guide to Appreciation* (London, 1936), pp. 72-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Haskell, “The Birth of the English Ballet,” p. 790; Haskell,; *Balletomania*, p. 8?. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Haskell, *Ballet: A Complete Guide*, p. 197, 207, 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Until the late 1930s, Haskell, hardly a ballet “chauvinist,” often declared that he personally preferred Russian dancers. Haskell, *Balletomania*, p. 3; Haskell, *Ballet: A Complete Guide*, p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Haskell, *Prelude to Ballet*, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Haskell, *Ballet: A Complete Guide*, pp. 14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Haskell, *Prelude to Ballet*, pp. 90-2. Also: A. Haskell, Some Studies in Ballet (London, 1928), pp. 53-4, 87; A. Haskell, *The Marie Rambert Ballet* (London, 1930), p. 28, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. **Literature to contextualize: Houlbrook, Light, etc.** [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Haskell, “The Birth of the English Ballet,” p. 785. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Haskell, *Balletomania*, p. 76, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. A. Sinclair, *Arts and Cultures* (London, 1995), p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. L. Edwards, *In Good Company*, p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. B. Grey, *For the Love of Dance*, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Fonteyn, *Autobiography,* p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. At The National Archives: BW 2/244; BW 2/243. With ENSA, the Council sent the company on a tour of Belgium and France in 1945. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Fonteyn, *Autobiography*, p. 75. The Council was steered at the time by the ballet lover Lord Lloyd. On the Council’s wartime exploits: E. Corse, *The Battle for Neutral Europe: British Cultural Propaganda During the Second World War* (London, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Fonteyn, *Autobiography*, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Grey, *For the Love of Dance*, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Between September 1939 and May 1945, the company performed in Newcastle, Leicester, Leeds, Birmingham, Southsea, Brighton, Cambridge, Nottingham, Glasgow, Bradford, Hull, Liverpool, Sheffield, Manchester, Bristol, Stratford, Blackpool, Burnley, Harrogate, Bournemouth, Cardiff, Cheltenham, Bath, Exeter, Burnley, Edinburgh, York, Hanley, Coventry, Derby, Eastbourne, Aldershot, Bolton, Wimbledon, Birmingham, and Hammersmith, among other towns and cities. Late in the war, the Sadler’s Wells Ballet often danced at the open air theater in Victoria Park in London’s East End, which accommodated roughly 2,000 people per performance. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Grey, *For the Love of Dance*, p. 19-20, 21, 23; Lynne, *A Dancer in Wartime*, p. 65, 92, 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. “Hess, Dame Myra (1890-1965,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Rambert, *Quicksilver*, p. 129, 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. This revival included the re-starting of the Proms at Albert Hall, the re-opening of concert halls throughout the country, the flourishing of new and old plays and revues, new successes for The Hallé Orchestra, London Philharmonic, London Symphony, and musical soloists like Eileen Joyce as well as Hess. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. K. Clark, *The Other Half: A Self-Portrait* (London, 1977), p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. See: M. Inglesby, with K. Hunter, *Ballet in the Blitz: The History of a Ballet Company* (Suffolk, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. See: Eliot, *Albion’s Dance*. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Lynne, *A Dancer in Wartime,* p. 138; Kelly, *‘Mim,’* pp. 127-128, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. P. Stone, “Dancing Under the Bombs, Part II,” *Ballet Review* 13 (1985), pp. 95-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. De Valois explained away her decision: “I didn’t see the difference, frankly, between pianists, violinists, and dancers. If the other artists had to go, to make an exception of dancers would have been terrible.” Quoted in Kavanagh, *Secret Muses*, p. 271. According to the dancer Richard Ellis, however, de Valois at first tried to keep male dancers out of the war. Interview with R. Ellis and C. Du Boulay, 1976, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, \*MGZMT 3-986. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. W. Chappell, *Studies in Ballet* (London, 1948), p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. See: Michael Somes, Harold Turner, Walter Gore, Leo Kersley, Stanley Holden. Chappell joked that “the gift of dancing is rare in the economically secure classes.” Chappell, *Studies in Ballet,* p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Quoted in “Sir Frederick Ashton,” *The Times*, 20 Aug. 1988, p. 10.. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. L. Garafola, “The Sexual Iconography of the Ballets Russes,” in *From Russia With Love: Costumes for the Ballets Russes, 1909-1933* (Canberra, 1999), pp. 56-65; L. Garafola, “Reconfiguring the Sexes,” in L. Garafola, *Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance* (Middletown, 2005 pp. 179-193; K. Kopelson, *The Queer Afterlife of Vaslav Nijinsky* (Stanford, 1998); P. Stoneley, *A Queer History of the Ballet* (Abingdon, 2010); R. Burt, *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities* (London, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. See: Kavanagh, *Secret Muses;* Burt, “Ballet”; Stoneley, *A Queer History of the Ballet.* [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. K. Eliot, “Marking Time: The British Danseur and the Second World War,” *Dance Research Journal* 37 (2005), p. 58; P. Ziegler, *London At War* (London, 1995), pp. 49-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. De Valois, *Come Dance With Me*, p**. ?**; According to Brigitte Kelly, the dancer Robert Harrold, “a raw young recruit with a round baby face… recalled that he was literally thrown on, ‘without a clue as to what I was supposed to be doing.’” Kelly, *‘Mim’*, p. 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Fonteyn, *Autobiography,* p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Chappell, *Studies in Ballet,* p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Kavanagh, *Secret Muses*, p. 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Artists who worked with ENSA included Gracie Fields, George Fornby, Old Vic Company, and Yehudi Menuhin. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. On CEMA: J. Weingartner, *The Arts as a Weapon of War* (New York, 2006); F. M. Leventhal, “‘The Best for the Most’: CEMA and State Sponsorship of the Arts in Wartime, 1939-1945,” *Twentieth Century British History* 1 (1990), pp. 289-317; R. Weight, “State, Intelligentsia and the Promotion of National Culture in Britain, 1939-45,” *Historical Research* 69 (1996), pp. 83-101. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. See: S. Hynes, *A War Imagined* (New York, 1992); R. Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes: Volume Two, The Economist as Saviour, 1920-1937,* p. 223, 322, 408; Sinclair, *Arts and Cultures,* pp. 26-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Clark, *The Other Half*, p. 28. Skidelsky writes that, when it came to Keynes and the Camargo Society, “patronage mingled in Maynard’s mind with larger purposes.” Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes*, p. 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. The Rambert-London Ballet had been dissolved after the manager of the Arts Theatre manager refused to increase their pay. See: Ministry of Information Film: Worker and War-Front Magazine, no. 10, Feb. 1944 <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060005141>. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Kelly, *‘Mim’*, pp. 135-136. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Rambert, *Quicksilver*, p. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. A. Haskell, *The National Ballet: A History and a Manifesto* (London, 1943), p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Ibid., p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Lynne, *A Dancer in Wartime*, pp. 212-213. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Noble, *British Ballet*, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. A. Williamson, “English Ballet, 1944,” p. 733.. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. See: Lynne, *A Dancer in Wartime,* p. 167; Grey, *For the Love of Dance,* p. 37; Fonteyn, *Autobiography,* p. 81, 82, 84; Rambert, *Quicksilver,* p. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Lynne, *A Dancer in Wartime,* p. 140. Also: De Valois, *Come Dance With Me*, p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. P. Stone, “Dancing Under the Bombs, Part I,” *Ballet Review* 12 (1985), p. 79. Like other audience members, Stone became a faithful devotee, going night after night to watch the same works over and over again and comparing multiple ballerina’s interpretations of the principal role. Also see: Haskell, *The National Ballet*, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. B. Grey, *For the Love of Dance,* p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. See: Lynne, *A Dancer in Wartime;* Fonteyn, *Autobiography,* p. 83; De Valois, *Come Dance With Me*, pp. 141-142; Rambert, *Quicksilver,* p. 171. **[Pat Stone diaries]** [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. See: Sinclair, *Arts and Cultures*, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes, Volume 28*, p. 368, 371-372. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. See: N. Annan, *Our Age: Portrait of a Generation* (London, 1990), p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. On protecting civilization: Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes,* p. 8, 408. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Anderson, *The Royal Ballet*. p. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Chappell, *Some Studies in Ballet,* p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. N. Bartlett, “Theatrical Types,” in *Queer British Art* (London, 2017), pp. 81-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)