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MARIUS PETIPA AND HIS LIFE IN BALLET

We know Marius Petipa as the father of modern Classical Ballet. His career, mostly spent in the Russian Imperial Ballet, that lasted nearly sixty years. Marius Petipa was both a dancer and later a choreographer. He is the best remembered for masterpieces which are still mainstays of ballet such as «*The Nutcracker*», «*Sleeping Beauty*», «*Swan Lake*» and «*Don Quixote*». His contributions to modern classical ballet have been vast and this is in part due not only to his long career but to his experience with all elements of production. From dancing to designing as well as researching, Marius Petipa was able to revolutionize ballet, especially in Russia where he served as ballet master for the Imperial Ballet.

Although the career of Marius Petipa ended without a great deal of fanfare after an unsuccessful production, his legacy remains. While no one will remember that last failed ballet, history will remember his enormous contribution to choreography and dance through the many other pieces he worked. In total, Marius Petipa produced over 50 ballets, reworked over 20 old pieces, and arranged the dancing in over 35 operas [2].

The aim of our article is to investigate theoretical material and to analyze literary works on this theme.

To achieve the aim we have defined such tasks:

1. To learn a biography of the famous choreographer M.Petipa.
2. To describe his life in ballet.

Choreography is the art of designing sequences of movements in which motion, form, or both are specified. Choreography may also refer to the design itself. The word choreography literally means "dance-writing" from the Greek words "χορεία" (circular dance, see choreia) and "γραφή" (writing). A choreographer is one who creates choreographies by practicing the art of choreography [3].

Making visions of dance come alive requires inspiration, determination and refined craft. A choreographer may have vivid ideas for a new work. However, translating this imagination into dancers' bodies and shaping it into a dance that is ready to be performed is a very challenging, yet equally rewarding, process.

For most choreographers, making dance is a passion. The poetry and excitement of movement motivates their creativity and they find their greatest potential for expression

through the unique elements of dance. The one of the most popular and famous choreographer is Marius Petipa. He said: «I can state that I created a ballet company of which everyone said: ‘St. Petersburg has the greatest ballet in all Europe [4]».

Petipa will be forever associated with lavish productions, character and classical dances, big ensemble and dramatic scenes in mime or in *pas d'action* (mime with dance). His dances combine the technical purity of the French school with the virtuosity of the Italian school. He was very involved in the creation of his ballets, researching subject matter extensively and working close with the composer and designer. He created choreography before going to the studio and teaching it to his dancers. He produced more than 46 original works and revised many more (e.g. *Giselle*), of which a large share is still being performed today.

Petipa's ballets have survived more or less intact thanks to the availability of the *Stepanov Method* of notation from 1891 onwards. The method combines the encoding of dance movements with musical notes, in two steps: first, the breaking down of a complex movement and second, the translation of the broken down/basic movement into a musical symbol. The project was taken over by Alexander Gorsky and eventually by Nicholas Sergeyev, a former Imperial dancer, who later brought *Giselle* to the Paris Opéra Ballet and *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Giselle*, *Coppélia* and *The Nutcracker* into The Royal Ballet. These notated versions became the standard choreographic text and have been adopted by nearly every major ballet company in the world [4].

Marius Petipa (born Victor Marius Alphonse Petipa) was the inventor of modern classical ballet. During the latter half of the 19th century Petipa elevated Russian ballet to international acclaim and recognition; the Frenchman who came to be known as «the father of Russian ballet», left a legacy that continues to this day. He greatly expanded the role of male dancers and we have him to thank for the leaping, twirling, breathtaking men's choreography we now see in ballets. His renown is undisputed and his work lives not only in the pages of dance history but in the ballet repertoire of most current Companies.

Petipa rose to fame in St. Petersburg, where he produced more than 60 major ballets and numerous shorter ones over his almost 60-year career. In total, he also reworked over 20 old pieces and arranged the dancing in over 35 operas. His fantasy was absolutely amazing, fueling such all time European classics as «Don Quixote», «The Pharaoh's Daughter», «The Corsair», «The Bayadere» and «Giselle». Still, Petipa owed his biggest triumphs to his majestic staging of Russian ballets set to music by P.Tchaikovsky [8].

Nitpicking and demanding, the ever-tasteful perfectionist Petipa seemed to some an absolutely unbearable person; but it was under his watch that the Mariinsky Ballet (Russia's Imperial Theater, St. Petersburg) made a quantum leap forward to become one of the very best in Europe and the world. Over the course of his career in St. Petersburg as chief ballet master of Russia's Imperial Theater he raised technical standards for dancing and set new ones for choreographing evening-length ballets [1].

M.Petipa wrote his memoirs, which were published in 1906. His highly entertaining remembrances had never before been translated from French into English before their first publication in 1958. Petipa's memoirs reveal many interesting details of his career and the people he worked with, including P.Tchaikovsky and the young A.Pavlova, and provide an insight into his character and genius that it is not possible to gain from any other source [1]. The future ballet star was a slender girl with an «airy» constitution, while at that time a strong build was considered necessary for a dancer in order to perform complicated movements and figures.

It was the great ballet master Marius Petipa who recognized her talent, and Anna Pavlova was finally accepted as a student in 1891. Studying at the Imperial Ballet School with its iron discipline was very hard. The students had to get up early in the morning, take a cold shower, eat breakfast and after that started lessons which would last until evening, being interrupted only by dinner, performances, and brief walks in the fresh air [5].

And so, Frenchman Marius Petipa became ballet master of the Russian Imperial Ballet, a choreographer who had perhaps the biggest impact on the formation of Russian ballet. Petipa's choreography was simple and clean with the same combinations repeated and molded into intricacy with less narration. M.Petipa was able to identify with the idea of Russian ballet being very expressive – despite his being French – and worked to incorporate Russian folk dance into ballet as well as other dances inspired by fairytales.

Petipa produced a classic, *Giselle*, and is responsible for its revival in 1884, as well as the restagings of *Coppélia* in 1884 and *Esmeralda* in 1886.

In Petipa's performances, the dancers were seen as a hierarchy to match court society, starting with the prima ballerina down through the corps de ballet. During his «reign» as a ballet master, a decrease in male dancers was seen, as he focused mostly on female dancers and their role onstage. The function of the male dancer was transformed to that of a supporter for the ballerina in lifts and pirouettes; this stability and permanence was due to the court's requests and contrasted the previous «pursuit of attainable dream [9]».

Petipa worked together with composer P.Tchaikovsky, they produced *The Sleeping Beauty*, considered Petipa's greatest success, along with *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, which was revived in 1894. Second ballet master Lev Ivanov also assisted. Historians agree that «both musically and choreographically *The Sleeping Beauty* is the crowning glory of Russian nineteenth century ballet and includes some of Petipa's finest works». Below is the waltz from *The Sleeping Beauty*, as performed by the Kirov Ballet [10].

To sum up, we would like to introduce a selection of ballets choreographed by Petipa in Russia: *La Fille du Pharaon* (1862), *Floride* (1866), *Le Roi Candaule* (1868), *Don Quixote* (1869), *Trilby* (1870), *La Camargo* (1872), *Le Papillon* (1874), *Les Bandits* (1875), *La Bayadère* (1877), *The Magic Pills* (1886), *The Talisman* (1889), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), *Kalkabrino* (1891), *Cinderella* (music by Baron Shell, 1893), *Swan Lake* (with Ivanov, 1895), *Halte de Cavalerie* (1896), *Raymonda*

(1898), *Ruses d'Amour* (1900), *Les Saisons* (1900), *Les Millions d'Arlequin* (1900), *The Magic Mirror* (1903) [7].

Petipa's «ballet à grand spectacle» called for massive forces, luxurious productions and predictable choreographic components. In constructing the acts of a ballet he selected from a variety of elements: massed scenes, character dances which provided a sense of local color, classical dances (which normally called for a suspension of the narrative) and dramatic encounters between the principal characters, set either as pure mime or in «pas d'action», a mixture of mime and dancing [6].

Speaking about M. Petipa old-timers will never forget this small, old man. After all those years of living in St. Petersburg he left behind the great Russian school of ballet dancing. His productions are all classics now gracing the programs of the world's finest theaters.

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