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BALLET IN RUSSIA

Ballet in Russia was created by foreigners and yet it is most definitely «Russian». In the 17th century ballet was introduced into Russia by the second Romanov ruler Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich (1629-1676, reigned from 1645) for his wedding festivities.

Peter the Great (1672-1725) took a personal interest in dancing at his court by bringing in Western dances and taking part in them himself.

The formal beginning of Russian ballet can be traced back to a letter written in 1737 to the Empress Anne (1693-1740) by the teacher of gymnastics at the Imperial Cadet School [2].

The request by Frenchman Jean Batiste Lande (died 1748 in St Petersburg) was granted on May 15, 1738 and the first Russian school of dancing was given two rooms in the Old Winter Palace. Later this school became the St. Petersburg Imperial Ballet School.

Catherine the Great, a great patron of the arts, established the Directorate of the Imperial theatres, giving it control over ballet. At a Moscow Orphanage in 1774 she started a ballet school under the direction of Filippo Beccari [3].

In 1801 Charles-Louis Didelot (1767–1837) sparked the first great period of ballet. He is considered to be the «father of the Russian ballet». His productions were seen at the St. Petersburg Bolshoi Theatre, latter called the Maryinsky. The son of French choreographer and first dancer of the Swedish Royal Theater, Charles Louis Didelot studied first with his father and later at the school of the Paris Opéra. He made his debut at the Opéra in 1791 in one of Gardel's popular productions and later studied under August Vestris and Marie Madeleine Guimard. However, the teacher

having the most impact on Didelot's technique and subsequent choreographic style was Jean Dauberval, whose influence as a teacher was as great as the ballets he choreographed. From Dauberval, Didelot learned pantomime and imaginative ways to portray characters effectively [4].

Didelot is also credited with introducing considerable change in stage costume and was the first to use flesh colored tights for women at the opera in the same year. In 1998, his rather skimpy, short costumes came under attack in England where he was blamed for corrupting the morals of the audiences who saw his ballets [5]

It is Didelot who is credited with having laid the foundation for the famous St. Petersburg school style. His work as head of the St. Petersburg ballet school was remarkable. He revolutionized the entire system of teaching and his contributions are considered vital to the history of the school on a par with those who followed: Cecchetti, Fokine, and Vaganova. He retired as the result of a quarrel with Prince Gagarin, Intendant of the Imperial Theaters [1].

It's presented the early periods of development of Russian Ballet.

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