



Contemporary Dance in Russia

Ekaterina Vasenina



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ITI-INFO

Bilingual (Russian and English) review ITI-INFO is published by the Russian Centre of the International Theatre Institute quarterly. For theatre professionals and those who want to learn more about theatre life beyond national boundaries. Overall aim of the Review is to help establish and promote artistic and business contacts in the performing arts.

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Published by Russian Theatre Union in collaboration
with ITI-info magazine in 2011.

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Contemporary Dance in Russia

“Contemporary dance in Russia is about the same age as Gorbachev’s “Perestroika.” To a great extent it was because of “Perestroika” that Russian contemporary dance was called into being and proved to be in tune with it: demolition of classical dance traditions through contemporary dance echoed in demolition of totalitarian state body. While construction of new elites, communities and aesthetics were undergoing under direct influence of the political climate. Gorbachev's Perestroika and Derrida's deconstruction that came into Russia one after another, became the cornerstones for contemporary art dissemination in the country.” - Ekaterina Vasenina, the author of the book *Russia’s Contemporary Dance. Dialogues*, thinks that.

The following selection of Vasenina’s publications intends to give the reader a glimpse of contemporary dance as a performing arts genre and features of its development in the present-day Russia.

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Contemporary Dance in Russia

Yesterday's Expectations and Today's Mindset

Contemporary Dance in Russia is about the same age as Gorbachev's Perestroika. To a great that was because of Perestroika that Russian contemporary dance was called into being and proved to be in tune with it: demolition of classical dance traditions through contemporary dance echoed in demolition of totalitarian state body. While construction of new elites, communities and aesthetics were undergoing under direct influence of the political climate. Gorbachev's Perestroika and Derrida's deconstruction that came into Russia one after another, became the cornerstones for contemporary art dissemination in in the country.

Contemporary dance came as one of reactions to changes in social life. Non-classic, non-totalitarian movement wasn't necessarily expressed as a protest. It became possible. Founders and members of new dance companies felt incredible enthusiasm. They were convinced they would open a new dance era for a huge country. Freed body was happy to misbehave, be delirious, unexpectedly brake or assert itself in a new way, draw newly gained senses, expressing through the body developing and transforming liberties. This was a kind of 'primary' dance that creates healthy basis for existence and that precedes the dance of *personality*. Such dance would exist simply because there is a body.

People wanted to sing different, new songs, they wanted to dance different dances without knowing exactly how but having much enthusiasm, which for a long time remained the main fuel for Russian contemporary dance community. Workshops of international choreographers and dancers, festivals of American and European contemporary dance, organized with support of foreign embassies by [Vladimir Urin](#), [Natalya Chernova](#), [Olga Korablina](#), [Lev Shulman](#), [Margarita Mojzes](#) became an additional stimulus. Workshops of the world renowned artists in Moscow and various national dance platforms (French or Dutch, for instance) gave possibilities for Russian dancers to try themselves in foreign schools and academies. Many of them once having graduated from [Angers](#), [Rotterdam](#), [Lyon](#), [Wuppertal](#) didn't come back to Russia. Yet they were eager to give workshops for very modest fees in their native country knowing how useful they can be here.

Euphoria period gave birth to a number of names and companies that still define the landscape of contemporary dance in Russia in our days. These are [Tatiana Baganova's Provincial Dances in Yekaterinburg](#), [Olga Pona's Theatre of Contemporary Dance in Chelyabinsk](#) (www.olgapona.com). Their survival and later success were the result of determination and persistence of companies' leaders, broad contacts, and good management, which choreographers and dancers self-acquired in parallel with learning dance techniques during their internships abroad. A member of a dance company should possess multiple skills: he/she should be able to clean the floor before the performance, design and then make the costumes, assemble the set, design lights and sound, he/she should be able to live with very modest money and better know where to look for it.

In 2005 Russian Dance Theaters Agency TSEKH (www.tsekh.com) produced a film *Three Kamarinsky*, "about the first generation of Russian contemporary

choreographers” as it was attested by its creators. The film tells only about three choreographers: **Tatiana Baganova, Olga Pona, Alexander Pepelyaev**. Their names are the most cited among the festival audience and media, but that first generation included many others: **Olga Bavdilovich** from **Vladivostok**, **Natalya Agulnik** from **Kaliningrad**, **Lev Shulman** and **Oleg Petrov** from **Yekaterinburg**, **Vladimir Pona** from **Chelyabinsk**, **Natalya Fiksel** from **Novosibirsk**, **Nikolay Ogryzkov**, **Gennadiy Abramov**, **Andrey Timofeev** and **Alla Sigalova** from **Moscow**, **Alexandr Kukin** from **St. Petersburg**. All these people are interesting and unique. They all moved alone on intuition, overcame much and achieved much simply because they wanted contemporary dance to be there in their cities.

Being ideally foreign to any hierarchies, art of contemporary dance did not embrace the communists’ idea of equality and brotherhood. Only those who learned to deal with foundations and administration officials actually survived. There was not (and there still is not) any infrastructure basis that would provide for sustainability at present and expand horizons for this art in future. Despite this, new names and new generations keep being discovered: **physical theatre Ëd** in **St. Petersburg** started its web resource (www.dance-buro.ru) about contemporary dance in **St. Petersburg**; **Irina Afonina's theatre-studio for contemporary choreography** (www.moderndance.ru) became well-known in **Moscow** by giving classes of modern dance to the very young kids and later putting them into adult performances. The youth takes classes with the same as ever aims and goals: to acquire a new body and create a new world with it, but this time it happens without any political motives. Yet Russian contemporary dance always taught to feel infrared radiations of true revolutions and this is both it’s strength and weakness at the same time.

Today contemporary dance became an incorporated part of contemporary art in Russia. **Golden Mask National Theatre Award and Festival** (www.goldenmask.ru) has been having contemporary dance as a separate nomination for 7 years now. Contemporary ballets are in the repertoire of leading Moscow Theatres – **Bolshoi** (www.bolshoi.ru) and **Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Music Theatre** (www.stanislavskymusic.ru). Tours of established contemporary dance companies have much success.

First faculty for contemporary dance was founded 5 years ago at the **Ekaterinburg University for the Humanities (Arts)**. Applicants are examined by **Tatiana Baganova**, leader of the leading Russian contemporary dance company **Provincial Dances**. The founder of the very faculty and **Provincial Dances**, **Lev Shulman**, currently runs a project of contemporary dance education for teenagers from orphan homes in **St. Petersburg** (*Green House Project* supported by Embassies of some European countries).

Vaganov Academy of Russian Ballet (www.vaganova.ru) has done much for institutionalization of contemporary dance education.

Some of the graduates of foreign dance schools and soloists of dance companies return to Russia.

Kristina Ogryzkova, daughter of **Nikolay Ogryzkov** who was a founder of the first contemporary dance school in **Moscow** in 1992, after her farther's death made her decision to return from **Holland** to **Moscow** to succeed her farther.

Dmitry Fedotenko, who has worked with **Francois Verret's** company, and his partner and wife **Natasha Kuznetsova**, who has worked with **Mathilde Monnier** in **Montpellier** accepted proposal for production in Russia.

Elena Fokina, who has been a soloist of **Wim Vandekeybus Company** for 10 years, is now planning for a production in Russia.

Dennis Boroditsky having worked for several years with **Bill T. Jones Company** in the **U.S.** founded his own **Dennis Boroditsky Dance Company** in **Moscow** (bd-dance.com).

Every year **Moscow** hosts contemporary dance summer school organized by Russian Dance Theaters Agency TSEKH. *TSEKH* is also the organizer of **International Contemporary Dance Festival** taking place every year in December.

Russian contemporary dance, having lost much of the credibility that the society granted it in the 1990s, in 2000s plunged into everyday laborious work which remains the only way to sustainable development. Unable to change it's past, Russian contemporary dance is working to form it's future, which holds many prospects.

Dance Festivals in Russia

How and Why, Problems and Prospects

Russia holds many contemporary dance festivals, some of which replace the ones that disappear. One of the first such festivals was held in the USSR in **Vladivostok in 2000. It was organised by choreographers **Olga Bavdilovich (Vladivostok)**, **Natalia Agulnik (Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski)**, **Olga Pona (Chelyabinsk)**, **Eugene Panfilov (Perm)**, **Natalia Fiksel (Novosibirsk)** and critic **Natalia Chernova (Moscow)**. One of the recent additions to the festival list, “**Diversia**” in **Kostroma** (see below). You can see the full list of major present-day festivals in the post-Soviet space below. Two of the most stable regular festivals of long-time standing are the **TSEKH in Moscow** and **Open Look in St. Petersburg**.**

The best-known festival projects and classes are arranged in **Moscow** by Russian Agency for Dance Theatres TSEKH. It was 10 years last year that the **Moscow TSEKH festival** marked its first edition. This festival is a flagship for many enthusiasts of the Russian contemporary dance, also having a quite opponents in the camp of the lovers of a “dance”, because the TSEKH’ s strategies are oriented towards Europe, so the founders of the festival **Elena Tupyseva** and **Aleksandr Pepelyaev** come from their reliance on the concept-and-performance view of dance as a form. The **TSEKH festival** is held in December, showing virtually all the significant dance shows created in Russia over the previous theatre season www.tsekh.ru

St. Petersburg’s Open Look festival was launched by **Vadim Kasparov** and is held in June and July. It is oriented towards jazz aspects (versions) of contemporary choreography. **Vadim Kasparov’s** wife **Natalia** is a contemporary dance instructor and choreographer with a jazz tilt to it. As well as the **TSEKH**, this festival maintains large-scale collaboration with a number of embassies and cultural centres. Its strong emphasis is on master-classes taught by European and U.S. instructors. Along with evening performances of mainly Western and a few **St. Petersburg** tutors, the festival supports a programme of master-classes of European and U.S. dance experts, www.kannondance.ru/project.php.

The working languages of the **TSEKH** and **Open Look** are Russian and English.

Aside from the same-name festival, the agency TSEKH also organises two other important projects: the **Summer School** and running alongside it the festival named “**Personal Affair**”.

Dancers and choreographers of different skills and their particular time-sheets can become a part of the **TSEKH Summer School** other significant events, a summer school with its three blocks of classes. The TSEKH’s summer classes have always been the venues for holding castings for European dance groups and watching performances of project productions of Summer School students. For producers, attending classes of Summer School were a welcome opportunity to watch dancers of different skills and styles rehears at one and the same time in July and August. www.tsekh.ru The **TSEKH Summer School** has always offered a variety of master classes in somatic, anatomy, breathing and various contemporary dance techniques.

For the 4 years of holding summer schools, the TSEKH “**Personal Affair**” festival features debut performances of non-verbal theatre dancers www.tsekh.ru, with stage productions and performances of students of summer schools. All these years they performed at the **Acting Hall** platform www.aktzal.ru. This way, along with the opportunity to estimate the physique of Summer School students, the scope of their artistic aspirations, the origins of their concepts and ways of their stage presentation could have been assessed. “**Personal Affair**” focuses on performance shows, which, as a rule do not have much dancing.

The **St. Petersburg** festivals where quite a few amateur and professional groups from that city, **Archangelsk**, **Karelian region** and other dance theatre groups of **North Western Russia** include “**Slovo I Telo**” (Body Word) www.bodyword.spb.ru, “**Isolenta**” (Insulation Tape), and “**Okno**” (Window) www.bodyword.spb.ru.

The duo dancers’ festival arranged by the company **Dialog Dance** friendly to the TSEKH is held in **Kostroma** in September. Its format is easy to understand, with only duos participating, which helps to save on the festival’s budget and ease the participants’ own expenses. Duos from Russia and abroad come to **Kostroma**. www.dialogue-dance.ru/diversia_rus.html. “**Diversio**n” is a new festival that is growing from one strength to another thanks to the ability of its organizers to demonstrate managerial skills year on year and as well as present-day managers capable of working in various foundations and speaking different languages. “**Diversio**n” has much in store for it.

The festival of contact improvisation “**Movement on the Volga**” was launched in **Yaroslavl** more than 15 years ago, and is held on odd years in August. To a certain degree it has become a starting point and a reason for doing something good for **Kostroma’s** young people. The two cities are only a two-hour bus ride apart from each other, an insignificant distance by Russian measure. American influence is felt until now, because one of the founders of the festival was **Lisa Fest**, a relation of the famous children’s psychologist Benjamin Spoke. For the first time in Russia American and European instructors taught various body-mind techniques, including Alexander’s technique and the art of performance. One of the enthusiasts of the festival “**Movement on the Volga**” **Aleksandr Girshon**, www.girshon.ru, is now based in Moscow, teaching contact improvisation and dance-movement therapy to quite a few students in Russia and elsewhere. The festival is not at its best at present, lacking funding and new ideas despite what its organisers do to keep it going. Nevertheless, best European solo performers including **Julien Hamilton** (**Britain**) or **Oleg Sulimenko** (**Austria**) come to perform here.

One of the most representative contemporary dance festivals with a large-scale programme of morning master classes and night performances, as well as a specialist ballet dance panel of judges has for 23 years been the **International Contemporary Choreography festival** in **Vitebsk** www.artmark.mm.by featuring groups from the post-Soviet space countries, including Moldova, Ukraine and Estonia, the fact that has a special value after the loss of cultural and administrative ties due to the formation of the post-Soviet space. One of important aspects of running the festival is the one that the present-day Byelorussian choreography has achieved a stimulus for development, with many groups working in **Vitebsk**, **Gomel**, **Grodno** and **Minsk**, to name some of them. It is exactly **Vitebsk** where contemporary dance groups from Russia that for some reasons are unable to come to Moscow. These include “**The Panther**” from **Kazan** (Tatarstan) and **Olga Zimina’s** dance theatre from **Sarapul** (Mordovia). Thanks to its geography, **Vitebsk** can form a diversified festival programme, because it is easy to reach from Moscow, ST. Petersburg, and the Baltic and European states.

The working languages of most contemporary dance festivals in Russia and Belarus are Russian and English. Producers, who arrive here, are sometimes amazed at watching the artistry of young contemporary dancers, their physiques, and the absence of excessive demands when it comes to signing contracts. It’s better to not waste time. They will soon learn their worth.

Festivals Mapping

Mapping of Contemporary Dance Festivals in Russia, Ukraine, the CIS and Baltic Countries

Moscow

Russian Dance Theatres Festival TsEKh

Period: December, first fortnight

Frequency: Annual

First Edition: 2001

Additional Info: Russian platform for contemporary dance companies with focus on conceptual dance multimedia and performance genres. Festival is non-competitive. The Dance Theatres Agency TsEKh also produces premieres and tours of renowned international dance companies.

Venue: Aktovy Zal at PROEKT_FABRIKA contemporary art centre

Organizer: Russian Dance Agency TsEKh

Contact person: Elena Tupyseva, director

Web: www.tsekh.ru

Lichnoe Delo (Personal Profile), International Festival of Non-Verbal Theatre

Period: June

Frequency: Annual

First Edition: 2006

Additional Info: Russian platform for emerging dance artists from Russia, CIS, Baltic States and Europe. Non competitive.

Venue: Aktovy Zal at PROEKT_FABRIKA contemporary art centre

Organizer: Russian Dance Agency TsEKh

Contact person: Elena Tupyseva, director

Web: www.tsekh.ru

Russian National Theatre Festival and Award “The Golden Mask”, Contemporary Dance Nomination

Period: April, first part of the month

Frequency: Annual, Contemporary Dance nomination was introduced in 2003

Additional Info: Best contemporary dance performances of previous theatre season from all over Russia. Competition.

Organizer: Russian Theatre Union, Ministry for Culture of the Russian Federation

Web: www.goldenmask.ru

The Four Elements International Festival: Ethnica, Theatre, Novation, Choreography

Period: October, first part of the month

Frequency: Annual

First Edition: 2002

Additional Info: Contemporary dance performances with ethnic components in music, choreography, costumes. From 2010 the Festival includes two competition programmes: for children and for adults

Venue: No permanent venue

Organizer: The “Soglasie Centre” of Traditional Culture

Contact person: Angella Golubeva

E-mail: zentrsohlasie@yandex.ru

Web: 4fest.ru

International Contact Improvisation and Performance Festival*Period:* July*Frequency:* Annual*First Edition:* 2006*Additional Info:* Non-competitive. The festival includes workshops of the leading contact improvisation trainers, jams and performances by the trainers.*Venue:* Buddhist Center "Kunpenling" and sports halls "Nadezhda" in town Pavlovsky Posad (Moscow region) that resides 70 km from Moscow.*Performances take place in* Aktovy Zal or Meyerhold Centre in Moscow*Organizer:* Contact Improvisation and Performance Festival*Contact person:* Anjela Doniy, director*Web:* contactfestival.ru**Moscow Footlights, International Festival of Contemporary Dance***Period:* June*Frequency:* Biannual (even years)*First Edition:* 1994*Venue:* Pushkin Theatre, Novaya Opera (New Opera) theatre*Additional Info:* The Festival presents performances of Russian chamber ballet 'Moskva' and dance companies from Europe, Japan, South America.*Organizer:* Chamber Ballet 'Moscow', Nakolai Basin, managing director and producer*Web:* www.balletmoskva.ru**Saint Petersburg****Open Look, International Summer Festival of Contemporary Dance***Period:* June, end of month - July, beginning of month*Frequency:* Annual*First Edition:* 1999*Venue:* St. Petersburg theatres and venues*Additional Info:* The Festival presents latest tendencies in the world of contemporary dance from Europe and USA to the Russian audience. No competition*Web:* phpwww.kannondance.ru/project.php**OKNO Dance Festival***Period:* May, end of month*Frequency:* Annual*First Edition:* 2007*Venue:* St. Petersburg clubs*Additional Info:* Festival presents young experimental dance companies active in interdisciplinary field. The programme includes workshops. Non-competitive*Web:* www.dance-buro.ru/news/okno10-dance-festival.html**Ekaterinburg****Na Grani (On the Edge), Contemporary Dance Festival***Period:* December, first part of month*Frequency:* Annual*First Edition:* 2007*Additional Info:* Platform for the Ural contemporary dance companies, both renowned and emerging. No competition*Web:* www.muzkom.net/on_the_verge

Yaroslavl

International Festival of Movement and Dance on the Volga

Period: August, end of month

Frequency: Biannual (even years), next edition is in 2012

First Edition: 1999

Additional Info: Platform for Yaroslavl and Kostroma dance and performance companies. The festival programme includes performances of Russian and international companies and workshops. No competition

Venue: Yaroslavl and Kostroma. No permanent venue

Organizer: Association of Contemporary Dance and Performance (Yaroslavl), Link Vostok (USA). Nadezhda Proshutinskaya, Lisa First

Web: art-of-movement.livejournal.com/2010/07/13/

E-mail: horosheva_da@mail.ru

Kostroma

Diversia, International Contemporary Dance Duets Festival

Period: September, end of month

Frequency: Annual

First Edition: 2007

Additional Info: The festival features contemporary dance duets from Russian and abroad. Non-competitive

Organizer: Dialogue Dance School & Company. Evgeny Kulagin, director; Ivan Estegneev, art director

Fax: +7(4942)471404

Phone: +7(4942)300285

Address: 156000, Russia, Kostroma, st. Erohova, 3A

Web: www.dialogue-dance.ru

E-mail: dialoguedance@gmail.com

Vitebsk, Belarus

International Festival of Modern Choreography

Period: November, end of month

Frequency: Annual: Russian and International competitions are held every other year (2010 was the year of an International competition)

First Edition: 1987

Additional Info: The Festival presents a diverse range of contemporary choreography from Belarus, Russia, former Soviet Union countries, China and Europe

Venue: Vitebsk City Theatre

Web: artmark.mm.by

Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine

Drugie Tantsi (Other Dances), International Contemporary Dance Festival

Period: April, end of month

Frequency: Annual (between 2002-2008). Temporarily suspended

Web: www.freedance.org.ua

Vilnius, Lithuania

New Baltic Dance Festival

Period: May, first part of month

Frequency: Annual

First Edition: 1997

Venue: City theatres and venues, Arts Printing House

Web: dance.lt

Riga, Latvia

Time to Dance, International Contemporary Dance Festival

Period: June

Frequency: Annual

First Edition: 2006

Venue: Dailes Theatre of Riga

Web: dance.lv

Rakvere, Estonia

Baltoscandal, International Theatre Festival

Period: July

Frequency: Biannual (even years)

First Edition: 1994

Web: www.baltoscandal.ee/2010/?lang=en

Alamaty, Kazakhstan

Central Asia Contemporary Dance Festival

Period: April, end of month

Frequency: Annual

First Edition: 2006

Venue: Almaty Choreography School named after Seleznev, The Arts Academy named after Zhurgenova.

Heels Together

Contemporary Dance at the Golden Mask Festival

Contemporary choreography in Russia is evolving at an accelerated rate. The Golden Mask festival added a separate category for this rapidly developing genre.

Modern choreography theatre “D.O.Z.S.K.I” of Minsk skillfully interprets the folk dance tradition and the Belorussian national dress. The fluidity of lines characteristic of the Slavic dances is faceted by the inherent firmness of the Belorussian character and complemented with contemporary dance techniques. **Olga Labovkina, director of the “Karakuli” Dance theatre of Minsk** – a striking and explosive dancer, played the part of the bride in the ballet “**The Wedding**”, set to the mix of music from contemporary composers, and with it she proved herself as a fearless grotesque actress. **Labovkina** ponders the feeling of emptiness that haunts the bride at the height of festivities.

In the festival’s competitive program, the **theatre of Nations** presented **Alla Sigalova’s choreographed novella titled “Poor Liza” set to the music of Leonid Desyatnikov.**

When celebrities perform contemporary choreography, it draws attention to contemporary dance. And the production of “**Poor Liza**” features famous actress **Chulpan Hamatova** and the **Bolshoi** theatre’s leading dancer **Andrei Merkuryev**. **Merkuryev** has a clever, precise and pointedly caustic manner, as he walks through the choreographic language of Erast – a capricious young man, who fell in love with a florist named Liza. **Chulpan Hamatova** has sharp arms, elbows at right angles, squirrel-like ultrafast gesticulation, back that arches backwards almost to the point of breaking (all joking aside, the “arch of hysteria”, utilized by the female dance modernists of the beginning of last century, was something they discovered in female psychiatric wards). **Hamatova** performed the part of Liza so brilliantly and in such a dramatically pointed manner that she managed to rise to the level of and even to outdo **Merkuryev’s** solo, trumping the man that grew up on the ballet classics at the **Mariinsky theatre** and the contemporary choreography of **Neumeier, Ratmansky** and **Forsythe** to become a unique dancer of his time.

Contemporary Choreography theatre under the direction of Irina Afonina made its debut in the competitive program with the production of “**The Dormitory**” by **Yekaterina Kislova**. To date the **Contemporary Choreography theatre** is the best private school in **Moscow** that teaches contemporary dance to children four years of age and up. “**The Dormitory**” was performed by the theatre’s older students, who have now themselves become instructors. This production brings us back to the simple things – our relationships with our family and friends, our neighbors; the dormitory is regarded as the model for the world order. Performing on stage that evening were **Egor Maslov, Lika Shevchenko, Mikhail Kolegov** and **Ekaterina Nedoseikina** – some of **Moscow’s** best contemporary dancers and the theatre’s child alumni.

Olga Pona’s Chelyabinsk theatre of Contemporary Dance demonstrated its new production “**A Man Is Muzhik Who Has Found His Identity**”. The show illustrates the following quote by **Viktor Erofeyev**: “A Russian muzhik gets back to his feet from all fours. Let’s switch from the old fingers-throughour-hair to a comb, from an armored car to perfume, from foul language to English, from moonlighting jobs to profits, from literature to television, from collective farm to private business, from drinking sprees to cocktail receptions, from

humiliation to male dignity.” During the half-hour of stage time six male dancers get up from all fours and awkwardly but surely move toward the podium, where they perform a spectacular fashion defile – a grand introduction of male conquerors that have grown comfortable in the modern world.

The Dennis Boroditsky Dance Company, a young Moscow ensemble, entered the competitive program of the **Golden Mask Festival** for the first time. A year and a half ago, their production of **“I Wish You Had Understood Me...”** received the Grand Prix of the **International Festival of Modern Choreography** in **Vitebsk**, Belarus. **Dennis Boroditsky** has a gymnastic past, and he also worked in **Igor Moiseyev’s** ensemble. But it was his work in the American dance company **Bill T. Jones** that became his main aesthetic influence. Boroditsky’s choreography is of pro-American persuasion: powerful soft lines, energetic foot and leg work, strong flying hands, American geometry of thought as a whole.

Larisa Alexandrova’s production of “Casting Off” for “Evgeny Panvilov’s Ballet” theatre of Perm is compositely arranged, successful from a dramaturgic perspective and tells the story of how girls want to get married and how poorly they later fare in marriage. First there is a band of neat wind-up dolls that march to the rhythm of the “acceptable” contemporary dance, but then everything seems to go mad – the wind-up figurines move discordantly out of time, yearning for freedom and happiness. The grooms pick them up, shower them with flowers, shove them inside the stiff carcasses of the wedding skirt-houses, from which the girls cannot escape without outside help.

New movements appear as more complex in relation to the already established ones. As proof of that is the production of **“Dido and Aeneas” by the distinguished American choreographer Mark Morris to the music of Henry Purcell**, first performed in 1989 in the **Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie** of **Brussels** as part of the “Legendary Performances and Names” program. The plot of this ancient Greek tragedy about Dido, who killed herself over Aeneas’s betrayal, is embodied in a historically appropriate dance language: it is as if antique vase drawings suddenly came to life. The musicality of **Mark Morris** came through full force in “Dido”: one cannot say that music was used in this production. Rather here they serve the music, and the action mostly resembles strict liturgy, filled with the language of modern dance. When watching “Dido”, one can clearly see that the Modern Age originates from Greece, and that the ancient Greek tragedy is best recreated with the language of modernist dance.

It was by lucky accident that **Moscow** had the occasion to see the choreography of a **New York based company “Aszure Barton and Artists”**: having found out that “Dido and Aeneas” is heading to the **Golden Mask Festival**, the U.S. Department of State offered to bring Aszure Barton’s company along as well and took active part in helping with the organization of their tour. The premiere of **Aszure Barton’s** most recent work – **“Busk”** – took place in 2009. Both the **Baryshnikov Arts Center**, which has enjoyed a long and fruitful collaboration with **Aszure Barton**, and **Canadian Consulate’s Fine Arts Department** (**Barton** was born in Canada) took part in the creation of this production. **“Busk”** is a scintillating mix of musical-inspired jazz style, street dance, elements of cabaret dance and street pantomime (a busker is a street musician) set on a solidly woven lyrical core. Six dancers dressed in baggy black clothing, illuminated brightly enough to reveal all the nuances of the fine plasticity of movement (**Aszure Barton** actively utilizes the play of hands, the trembling of fingers, the detailed gestures, the expressive isolated movement of parts of the body), demonstrate very eloquent, expressive acting.

Barton’s second production, **“Blue Soup”**, is a collection of fragments of the more interesting works of the recent years. The most striking episodes of **“Blue Soup”** are mass ritual dances, performed by dancers dressed in bright turquoise lounge suits. The merging of the ballet tradition and ethnic originality resulted in a “centaur”-dancer that triumphs in a macabre pas de deux one minute and exults in a savage prayer the next. Stomping loudly with their bare feet, digging their heels firmly into the floor, the New Yorkers unraveled our perception: an infectious dancer creates a spectator, creates the present, the

here and now. Barton's company energetically realizes the best ideas of dance modernism of the early 20th century. A powerful, strong gesture that awakens the best feelings in the spectator, the will to live. **Barton**, ever loyal to modernist traditions, expertly gives meaning to the impulse of dance modernism, born in response to the war of 1905.

The rainbow of feelings and the truth of everyday life that was embodied in dance at the 2010 **Golden Mask Festival** gave great pleasure to all fans of the unorthodox dance mentality.

Just Smile and Wave

Russian-European Festival "Intradance": Why and What For

After two years of preparation, a grant from the European Union in the amount of one million Euros, shortlisting of 120 choreographers from 18 European countries and 38 companies from Russia, premieres in Russian cities the Intradance Festival finally arrives in Moscow. Seven European choreographers, who wanted very much to work in Russia, staged their productions in seven Russian contemporary dance companies that were willing to try any type of an experiment. The diplomatic level of this event is capable of changing the political will with regards to Russian contemporary dance.

As a result, the European contemporary dance understood that everything in Russia is not as hopeless as it seemed, and the Russian one understood that everything in Europe is not as rosy as it appeared. The new combinations of common advantages and disadvantages can now be created directly, on a private level. Productions created within the framework of Intradance remain in theaters' repertoires, the European Union wants to take them back to Europe (the grant didn't plan for these expenses) in order to test the viability of those productions on its own public and see whether it is worth to continue supporting the choreographers.

Wake up and go to work

The Danish choreographer Lotte Sigh set her production of "The Good, the Bad and You" in collaboration with Nail Ibragimov's Kazan chamber ballet Panther. Thanks to Intradance Moscow's general public saw this wonderful team for the first time. "Panthers" always managed to impress with their magnificent technique, delicate artistry, palpable stream of energy. Lotte Sigh wrote for them a very "physical", very spectacular show with high injury risk – the dance lexicon proposed by her presupposes traumas. The theme of violence and suppression of one man by another continued to manifest itself in a number of other productions as well. Violence and loneliness is the leitmotif of contemporary European dance choreography, which has pinned it as timely for years, while lacking the resolve and the responsibility to express its attitude toward it. The blurred ethical evaluation of oneself and the surrounding world does little to help contemporary choreography develop. The artistic search splashes about in stagnant waters of caution and lack of clear aesthetic manifestations. In that context the arrival of European choreographers to Russia can be viewed as an attempt at developing new aesthetic forms with new human material.

"True Style" by German choreographer Christoph Winkler was produced in collaboration with the Ėd Physical Theatre of Saint Petersburg, which wrote funny texts for the show on the subject of "Why we are here": "Artyom is here because he left the Eifman ballet," "Sasha is here because he moved from Cherepovets," "Tanya is here because she dropped gymnastics, and because she is compact." Winkler created a charming medley of everything that interests him – folk and disco dance, hip-hop and conceptual performance. Ėd's strength is its clownery. Our contemporary dance is so serious with regard to itself, so unsmiling – and Artyom Ignatiev, Alisa Panchenko, and, especially, Alexander

Lyubashin and Tanya Tarabanova have every prospect of forming its unique image following the path of dance clownery.

“Cow Parsnip... A True Story” by Rachid Ouramdane is co-produced with Irina Brezhneva’s Migrazia Project from Kirov. There is no music or choreography in “Cow Parsnip”. There are sounds and the swaying, which can be considered as the characteristic oriental meditative “sway”, but the majority viewed the performance, where somnambulist dancers walked around on stage for an hour, as a challenge and a provocation. “I was interested to see how viable my work would be with the new audience,” says Ouramdane. “I did what I usually do on principle. The ensemble from Kirov is not much different from a company from the suburbs of Paris. I always try to change the level of sensitivity of the company and the audience, and I don’t always choose an easy way to do it.” It’s an admirable statement, but the production had about as much audience appeal, as one would get from watching someone sleep.

As a matter of fact, Ouramdane’s words characterize very well the persistent fixation, canonization of aesthetic successes of European contemporary dance of the last decades. From that perspective Russia is just another local market, where one can “sell” the already formed language of the dance and also check that language’s viability and flexibility.

The picturesque world and plasticity of movement in the production of **“This Is Not a Love Song” by Dutch choreographers Uri Ivgi and Johan Greben in collaboration with Tatiana Baganova’s Provincial Dances theatre of Yekaterinburg** originated from performances of Israel’s Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company, where Ivgi worked. We saw the defense-capable Israeli choreography, powerful and filled with elements of Middle Eastern pagan dances, with “squatty” springing legs, collective shamanistic rituals. In **“This Is Not a Love Song”** those were transformed into dances of protest aimed at the enemies of Israel and totalitarianism in general. The overarching social metaphysics were present only in the music. The aggressive lexicon of the dance, the grey prison-camp clothes and pistol fingers defined the theme, but the production didn’t quite make it as a show about totalitarianism. By its very nature contemporary dance captivates the audience only when a performer lives it, when they lend it their breath, their energy, their personal attitude toward its subject. **“This Is Not a Love Song”** is not the only production we would like to wish this upon.

Portuguese choreographer Victor Hugo Pontes produced his “Far Away From Here” in collaboration with Moscow’s Liquid Theatre. Famous for its street performances, its plays with space, the Liquid theatre now needed to develop its acting technique, and it managed to do just that. The small and light Svetlana Kim, who danced her parts better than everyone else, also turned out to be a wonderful singing dramatic actress: her willingness to experiment and to overload was fostered in her by Gennady Abramov’s Class of Expressive Plastic Movement.

We would like to recognize as successful the production of **“Mirlifor” by Belgian choreographer Karine Ponties in collaboration with the Dialogue Dance Company from Kostroma.** “Mirlifor” was memorable thanks to its well-structured and psychologically sound human relations, the irony-filled dance on the subject of people embittered with each other. The performance has delicately ridiculed puerility, so incredibly tiresome in the adults.

Olga Pona’s Chelyabinsk theatre of Contemporary Dance performed the choreography of Asier Zabaleta of Spain in the production of “Next” that talks about the power of the collective, about how it can endow a man with strength one minute and spit him out the next. The theme of loneliness is resolved without aggression, by means of comprehensible lexicon.

A discussion between people, who have different perceptions of the dance, is anything but simple. All-in-all we were disappointed by the use of only a small part of the dance alphabet. The isolation of contemporary dance from

the process of development of the world culture is both strange and sad. Such isolation contradicts the original ideas behind the free dance, for it must and can be understood by anyone who is interested in experimenting with movement. Ideally contemporary dance is infinitely diverse and unpredictable, like the utopian "free man", and nothing prevents us from furthering that ideal, enriching it and aspiring to it.

Mentioned In Contemporary Dance in Russia

places

Angers
Archangelsk
Austria
Britain
Brussels
Chelyabinsk
Cherepovets
Gomel
Grodno
Holland
Kaliningrad
Karelian region
Kazan
Kirov
Kostroma
Lyon
Minsk
Montpellier
Moscow
New York
North Western Russia
Novosibirsk
Perm
Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski
Rotterdam
Sarapul
Spain
St. Petersburg
U.S.
Vitebsk
Vladivostok
Wuppertal
Yaroslavl
Yekaterinburg

people

Aleksandr Girshon
Aleksandr Pepelyaev
Alexander Lyubashin
Alexander Pepelyaev
Alexandr Kukin
Alisa Panchenko
Alla Sigalova
Andrei Merkuryev
Andrey Timofeev
Artyom Ignatiev
Asier Zabaleta
Aszure Barton
Christoph Winkler
Chulpan Hamatova
Dennis Boroditsky
Dmitry Fedotenko
Egor Maslov
Ekaterina Nedoseikina

**Elena Fokina
Elena Tupyseva
Eugene Panfilov
Forsythe
Gennadiy Abramov
Henry Purcell
Igor Moiseyev
Irina Afonina
Irina Brezhneva
Johan Greben
Julien Hamilton
Karine Ponties
Kristina Ogryzkova
Labovkina
Larisa Alexandrova
Leonid Desyatnikov
Lev Shulman
Lika Shevchenko
Lisa Fest
Lotte Sigh
Margarita Mojzes
Mark Morris
Mikhail Kolegov
Nail Ibragimov
Natalia Kasparova
Natalia Agulnik
Natalia Chernova
Natalia Fiksel
Natalya Agulnik
Natalya Chernova
Natalya Fiksel
Natasha Kuznetsova
Neumeier
Nikolay Ogryzkov
Oleg Petrov
Oleg Sulimenko
Olga Bavdilovich
Olga Korablina
Olga Labovkina
Olga Pona
Olga Zimina
Rachid Ouramdane
Ratmansky
Svetlana Kim
Tanya Tarabanova
Tatiana Baganova
Uri Ivgi
Vadim Kasparov
Victor Hugo Pontes
Viktor Erofeev
Vladimir Pona
Vladimir Urin
Yekaterina Kislova
Mathilde Monnier**

festivals

**Diversia
Golden Mask National Theatre Award and Festival
International Contemporary Choreography festival
International Contemporary Dance Festival
International Festival of Modern Choreography
Intradance**

**Open Look
Personal Affair
TSEKH**

schools

**Ekaterinburg University for the Humanities (Arts)
TSEKH Summer School
Vaganov Academy of Russian Ballet**

venues

**Acting Hall
Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie**

companies

**Aszure Barton and Artists
Bill T. Jones
Bolshoi
Chelyabinsk theatre of Contemporary Dance
Contemporary Choreography theatre
D.O.Z.S.K.I
Dennis Boroditsky Dance Company
Dialog Dance
Dialogue Dance Company
Ěd Physical Theatre
Eifman ballet
Evgeny Panvilov's Ballet
Francois Verret's company
Isolenta
Israel's Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company
Karakuli
Kazan chamber ballet Panther
Liquid Theatre
Mariinsky theatre
Migrazia Project
Movement on the Volga
Okno
Provincial Dances
Slovo I Telo
Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Music Theatre
Theatre of Contemporary Dance
Theatre of Nations
Theatre-studio for contemporary choreography
The Panther
Wim Vandekeybus Company**

productions

**A Man Is Muzhik Who Has Found His Identity
Blue Soup
Busk
Casting Off
Cow Parsnip... A True Story
Dido and Aeneas
Far Away From Here
I Wish You Had Understood Me...
Mirlifor
Next
Poor Liza
The Dormitory
The Good, the Bad and You
The Wedding
This Is Not a Love Song
True Style**



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