

A Thousand Encores:
**THE BALLETS
RUSSES IN
AUSTRALIA**

A **STUDY GUIDE** BY KATE RAYNOR



<http://www.metromagazine.com.au>



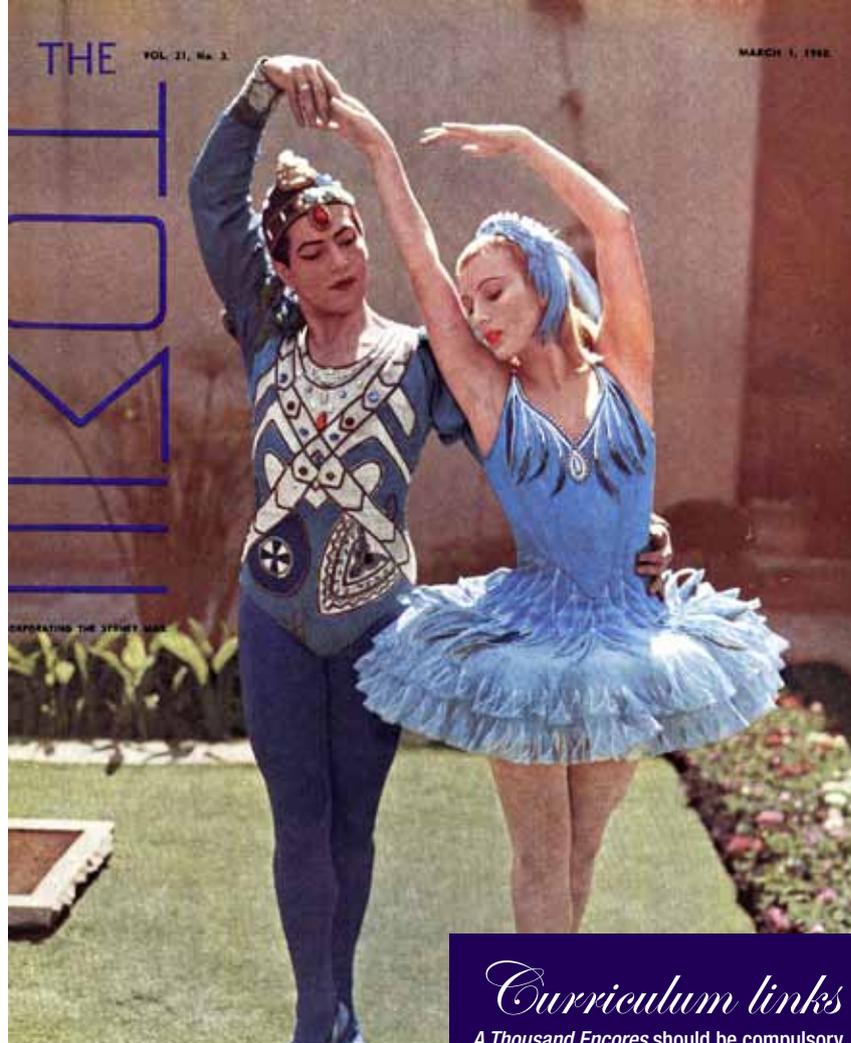
SCREEN
AUSTRALIA

<http://www.theeducationshop.com.au>

A Thousand Encores tells the fascinating and important story of how one of the greatest ballet companies of the twentieth century – the celebrated Ballets Russes – came to Australia and awoke the nation, transforming the cultural landscape of conservative 1930s Australia and leaving a rich legacy that lasts to this day.

IN 1936, the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo stepped off a boat into the bright Australian sunlight. With avant-garde music by great composers like Stravinsky, and exotic sets and costumes designed by leading modernist artists, the Ballets Russes was a sensation. Over five years from 1936 to 1940 they came to Australia three times, winning the hearts and minds of Australian audiences and ultimately sowing the seeds for Australian ballet today.

A Thousand Encores is brought to life using a rich archival resource. Australia has the largest collection of Ballets Russes footage in the world and an impressive photographic record, with the most famous pictures taken by a young Max Dupain. His glamorous shots transformed the dancers into overnight celebrities. Seeing this material and hearing the vivid recollections of former Ballets Russes ballerinas (now in their 90s) and Australians who witnessed the ballets in the 1930s, the excitement and impact of this remarkable company emerges. Despite the conservative climate of the time, with the prevailing focus on sport, rather than high art, Australians were hungry to experience the best in avant-garde music, dance and art – all that the Ballets Russes embodied. Seeing the radical sets and costumes of European modernists like Miró, Picasso and de Chirico inspired a generation of Australia's greatest artists, including Grace Cossington Smith, Jeffrey Smart and Sidney Nolan. Some went on to add their own unique talents to Ballets Russes productions. For a young Nolan, designing the set and



costumes for the ballet *Icare* fostered a lifelong involvement with ballet and theatre, and changed the direction of his art.

At the end of their Australian tour in 1940, a number of Ballets Russes dancers chose not to return to war-torn Europe. They established ballet schools and companies in their new country, setting the stage for professional ballet in Australia today and igniting a passion for dance in future generations of Australians.

A Thousand Encores travels from the past to the present, weaving history with a contemporary tale. We follow acclaimed choreographer Graeme Murphy as he returns to his old company, The Australian Ballet, to breathe new life into perhaps the most famous Ballets Russes creation of all, *The Firebird*. Based on a Russian fairytale, *The Firebird* was first performed in Paris in 1910 to great acclaim. Murphy and his partner Janet Vernon are very much aware of the weight of history and the huge expectations that greet any new production

Curriculum links

A Thousand Encores should be compulsory viewing for all secondary school teachers and students with a genuine interest in the history of Australian art and culture. The Ballets Russes tours laid the foundations for our own involvement in ballet as an art form. Indeed, the world-renowned The Australian Ballet would be impossible to imagine without this history. In addition, the Ballets Russes offered Australian audiences an entrée to the great modernist artists of the European avant-garde, and this film is wonderful in the way in which it ultimately celebrates *all* the arts.

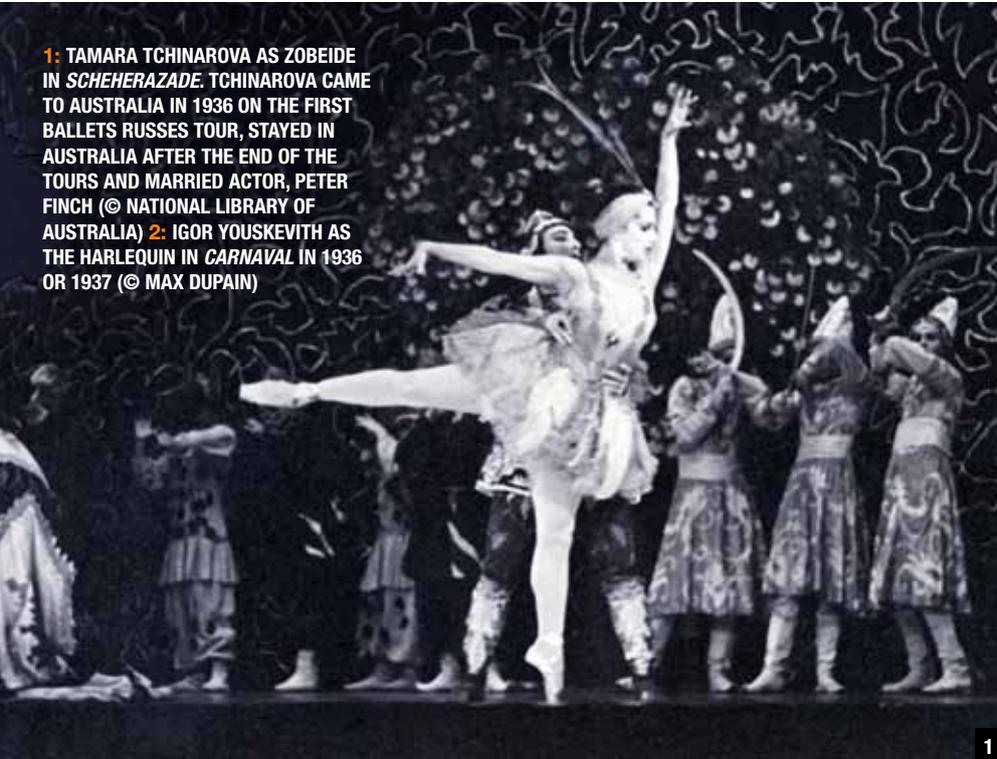
A Thousand Encores has relevance to the following Key Learning Areas: Art (Dance, Music, Theatre, Art and Design), Cultural Studies, History (Australian and 1930s–1940s) and SOSE/HSIE. It could also fit into themed English units focusing on identity (cultural, historical, artistic), character and relationships.

Victorian teachers are encouraged to contact The Australian Ballet for information about their engaging education programs.

of this classic ballet. The film follows the sometimes stormy process from rehearsal through to opening night. The Australian Ballet, Murphy, Vernon and the magical *Firebird* ballet that finally emerges, are all part of a living legacy that goes back to those 1930s Ballets Russes tours of Australia.

ABOVE: THE COVER OF *THE HOME* MAGAZINE, 1 MARCH 1940, FEATURING TATIANA RIBOUSHINSKA WITH HER HUSBAND DAVID LICHINE. ALTHOUGH RIBOUSHINSKA WAS KNOWN FOR HER SPEED AND GRACE, SHE WAS ALSO THE MODEL FOR THE HIPPOPOTAMUS BALLERINA MISS UPANOVA IN THE WALT DISNEY ANIMATED FILM *FANTASIA* (1940). PERFORMING ARTS COLLECTION MELBOURNE.

1: TAMARA TCHINAROVA AS ZOBEIDE IN *SCHEHERAZADE*. TCHINAROVA CAME TO AUSTRALIA IN 1936 ON THE FIRST BALLETS RUSSES TOUR, STAYED IN AUSTRALIA AFTER THE END OF THE TOURS AND MARRIED ACTOR, PETER FINCH (© NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA) 2: IGOR YOUSKEVICH AS THE HARLEQUIN IN *CARNAVAL* IN 1936 OR 1937 (© MAX DUPAIN)



DISCUSSION POINTS & ACTIVITIES

The main aim of this guide is to present a wide variety of teaching and learning opportunities based on the film, ranging in sophistication and complexity. Teachers are encouraged to pick and choose tasks that suit the particular interests and abilities of their students and the timeframes within which they are operating – not to work through the guide systematically. Most of the activities target literacy outcomes: speaking and listening, reading and writing. There are also activities that address film analysis, ICT and creative thinking. Some of the statements presented in quotation marks are intended to be thought-provoking or controversial and can be used in a number of ways: as a focus for discussion, debate or oral presentations; and as a direction for further research, analysis or creative writing tasks.

The Flaming Stars of the Ballets Russes

‘THESE FASCINATING PEOPLE FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD.’ – Max Dupain

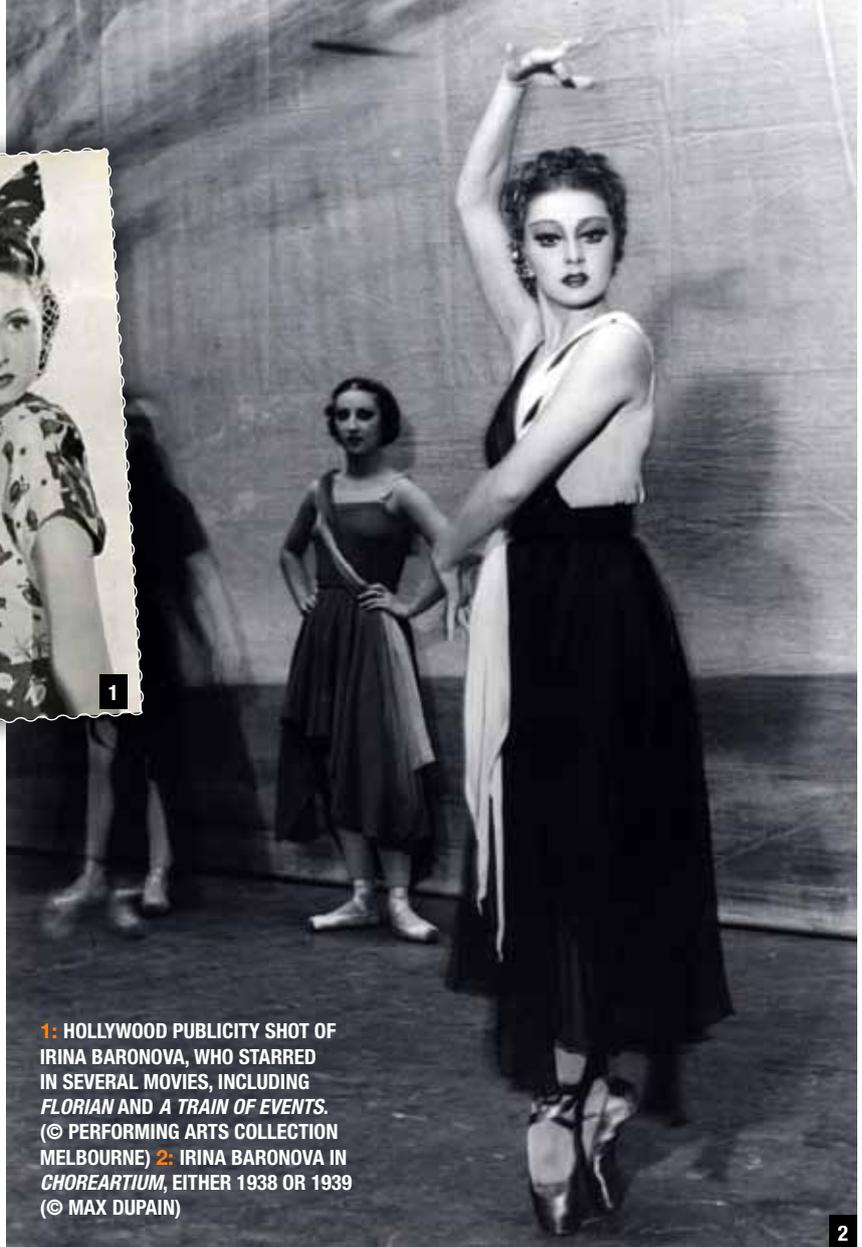
- Compile a list of the key figures in the Ballets Russes. Divide the class into small groups to re-research one of these figures and present their findings to the class. Consider: Sergei Diaghilev, Igor Stravinsky, Michel Fokine, Colonel Wassily de Basil, René Blum, Léon Bakst, Alexandre Benois, Léonide Massine, George Balanchine, Serge Lifar and Vaslav Nijinsky.

Consult the Resources section at the end of this guide for some possible starting points.

- Diaghilev and Stravinsky’s relationship was intensely productive on an artistic level, but stormy and tempestuous on a personal level. They died estranged and many years apart, but, perhaps fittingly, they were reunited in death, buried just metres away from each other on the island of San Michele in Venice. Stravinsky once said: ‘Diaghilev and I were on good terms and bad terms, in good times and bad times, but, after all, he was my brother.’ Conduct some further research into

the history of these two fascinating men and their turbulent relationship.

- ‘Stravinsky’s name should be prominent in any account of the legendary Ballets Russes.’ Discuss.
- ‘Diaghilev’s true talent was as a “collector of geniuses”.’ Discuss.
- What can you find out about the magazine Diaghilev founded, *World of Art*?
- In what ways could Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes be considered to embody the principles of ‘total theatre’? (Consider Graeme Murphy’s comments on *Firebird*’s blend of music and dance: ‘It’s no longer dance or music, it’s something even more communicative and important, something sublime that arises out of their encounter.’ Murphy speaks of ‘a mosaic of sounds’, where the music, the movement and the dancers’ bodies form symbiotic relationships alongside the other crucial elements: lighting, sets and costumes.)
- Nicolette Fraillon, The Australian Ballet’s Music Director and Chief Conductor, describes Diaghilev as ‘an incredible *force majeure*’. What do you think she means by this?
- There were in effect two Ballets Russes companies: Diaghilev’s and the later Monte Carlo company of de Basil and Blum. What continui-



1: HOLLYWOOD PUBLICITY SHOT OF IRINA BARONOVA, WHO STARRED IN SEVERAL MOVIES, INCLUDING FLORIAN AND A TRAIN OF EVENTS. (© PERFORMING ARTS COLLECTION MELBOURNE) 2: IRINA BARONOVA IN CHOREARTIUM, EITHER 1938 OR 1939 (© MAX DUPAIN)

ties and differences can you trace between these two versions of the troupe?

- The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo premiered in Paris in 1932. Why was the company called ‘de Basil’s kindergarten’ prior to this performance and what happened afterwards? (De Basil recruited a number of teenage ballerinas for the refashioned company and the press were sceptical about this, but the premiere was a huge success.)
- ‘The key to understanding the significance of the original Ballets Russes lies in identifying the founding impulse in visual arts and design – think of Bakst and Benois – not primarily in dance.’ Discuss.
- Michel Fokine, *The Firebird’s* choreographer, is credited with fusing acting and dance, and extending the limits of ballet as an art form. Compile a list of his major works and achievements.
- Who were the Baby Ballerinas and why were they important to the success of the Ballets Russes’ tours to Australia? (The Baby Ballerinas were the young superstars Irina Baronova, Tamara Toumanova and Tatiana Riabouchinska. They caused a sensation and were an important part of marketing and promoting the tours.) Discuss the idea of celebrity. Who are today’s ballet celebrities? Has the market-

ing of ballet changed since the 1930s and 1940s? Has the audience for ballet changed?

- The early Ballets Russes dancers were predominantly trained in the style of the Imperial Russian Ballet. What does this style emphasise? Choose one of the key ballet training techniques (for example, Cecchetti, Vaganova method, Bournonville School, Balanchine or Royal Academy of Dance), and in bullet points outline its main principles and goals.

The Ballets Russes: On Tour and in Australia

‘THE THRILL AND GLAMOUR OF THE MOST EXCITING OF THE ARTS OF THE THEATRE COMES TO AUSTRALIA WITH THE FAMOUS MONTE CARLO RUSSIAN BALLET OF COLO-NEL DE BASIL.’ – *Newsreader*

‘PEOPLE AFTER SIXTY YEARS STILL REMEMBER US AND I THINK THAT’S A WONDERFUL THING TO BE VERY PROUD OF. THE BALLETS RUSSES: WE MADE A COLOSSAL DIFFERENCE.’ – *Anna Volkova*

- Mention is made in the film of the hardships endured by the dancers on tour (‘tours of hell’, to quote Nicolette Fraillon): the frantic pace, the long hours on trains and the tremendous dedication required. On the American tours, over a hundred cities would be visited during a four-month season. Imagine you are one of the Baby Ballerinas. Write a diary account of an ‘average week’ on tour.
- Why did the dancers enjoy the long sea voyage to Australia and how did they manage to rehearse? (It gave them a chance to relax; and they rehearsed on the ship’s deck!)



1: TAMARA TOUMANOVA
 (© NATIONAL FILM AND
 SOUND ARCHIVE) 2: TAMARA
 TCHINAROVA IN *SCHEHERAZADE*



- What was the scale of the first tour to Australia in 1936? (Staggering: around eighty dancers with sets and costumes for twenty-one ballets.)
- How did the Australian tours compare to the American tours for the dancers? (In Australia, the dancers spent weeks at a time in each city, so the pace was less hectic, and they enjoyed the friendliness of the Australian people.)
- What did Tamara Tchinarova know about Australia before her first visit? (Not very much: 'All we knew was the legend that it was a country with criminals.')
- What were the Tait brothers' initial concerns about the Ballets Russes that docked in Adelaide? (There were mumblings that this was not the proper company but a second-rate group of Polish hacks.)
- The premiere performance of the Ballets Russes in Adelaide in October 1936 was a spectacular success, and the ten-week tour was extended to ten months. What factors do you think might account for how receptive Australian audiences were to the company?
- Discuss the controversy surrounding the avant-garde ballet *Les Présages*, choreographed to Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*. It caused outrage in Europe but was very well received in Australia. What factors might account for its different reception?
- In what ways could the tours by the Ballets Russes to Australia be thought to constitute our Cultural Revolution?
- 'The Ballets Russes brought cutting-edge European high art to a mainstream Australian mass audience – and the Australian audiences loved it!' Discuss.
- Choose one of Max Dupain's beautiful photographs of the Ballets Russes dancers (see <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an7518182>>) and present an analysis of it to the class.
- During the time in which the Ballets Russes reigned supreme, many dancers from Anglo backgrounds were given Russian names. As a fun exercise, give yourself and your classmates names suitable for Russian ballet stars.
- Ten Ballets Russes dancers stayed behind in Australia when the company headed for South America in 1940. What factors might have informed their decisions to stay? What can you find out about the paths their lives took here?
- Design a program to celebrate the centenary of the Ballets Russes. This activity could be designed to take several lessons and culminate in a major assessment item. Consider including profiles of key personalities, a brief history, a timeline of significant events, an account of the impact the company had on ballet, a map showing the extent of world tours, sketches of sets and costumes, etc. What key performances would you include on the bill and why? Ensure the design of your program captures the spirit and essence of the Ballets Russes.
- Discuss the legacy of the Ballets Russes. Consider statements such as Colin Peasley's: *Without the Ballets Russes coming to Australia, there would be no dance in Australia. They engendered so much passion for dance that little dance schools sprang up everywhere, and not just dance schools, but dance schools that understood what classical ballet was about.* And Nicolette Fraillon's comment: *We wouldn't have an Australian Ballet, we wouldn't have a Queensland Ballet, we wouldn't have a*

West Australian Ballet; we wouldn't have any of the companies in Australia without the Ballets Russes tours.

- 'The movie footage shot by amateur filmmakers Dr Joseph Ringland Anderson and Dr Ewan Murray-Will – an ophthalmologist and dermatologist respectively – of the gorgeous young Russian and French performers dancing on the beach is full of a lightness of being. The dancers dance for sheer joy and with a sense of freedom and exuberance that is incredibly touching to watch, some seventy years later. We are left with the poignant impression of the dancer's mortal body captured on film in their most perfect state.' Discuss.

FIREBIRD: Bringing Light to a Darkened World

'THIS IS NOT JUST *FIREBIRD*. THIS IS *FIREBIRD* WITH CONNECTIONS BACK AND BACK AND BACK AND BACK IN TIME ... MOST OF ALL I WANT IT TO HAVE A LINK TO THAT OTHER WORLD – TO THE BALLETS RUSSES THAT WAS SO IMPORTANT TO US ALL AS CREATORS.' – Graeme Murphy

'ANY STRAVINSKY SCORE FOR CHOREOGRAPHY IS DAUNTING AND THE MORE YOU UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE SCORE, THE MORE DAUNTING IT BECOMES, BECAUSE THEY ARE SUCH BRILLIANT WORKS.' – Nicolette Fraillon

- Using the internet as a research tool, write an account of the legend of *The Firebird*. (Teachers please note: there are a number of variations among the different versions of the tale. This is worth highlighting for students and could serve as the basis of an exercise in itself, identifying differences and looking at context and source in an effort to explore and explain areas of divergence.)
- How might the premiere of *The Firebird* in 1910 differ from the premiere of Murphy and Vernon's version in 2009? Approach this question from as many angles as possible: consider, for example, the people who would have attended the two productions; the



1: DANIELLE ROWE AND KEVIN JACKSON IN THE 2009 AUSTRALIAN BALLET PRODUCTION OF *FIREBIRD* (© THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET, ALEX MAKEYEV) 2: LANA JONES IN THE 2009 AUSTRALIAN BALLET PRODUCTION OF *FIREBIRD* (© MICAH WALKER)



- venues of the two performances; the age, training and backgrounds of the performers; the sets and costumes; the critical and public reception.
- Find a couple of reviews of The Australian Ballet's recent production of *Firebird*.
- How old was Stravinsky when he composed the score for *The Firebird* in 1910? (He was twenty-eight.)
- Play Stravinsky's marvellous score for *The Firebird* to the class. During the session, have students jot down adjectives and draw sketches according to how the music strikes them.
- What does Murphy mean when he describes *The Firebird* as 'musi-

cally Byzantine'?

- 'The *Firebird* was never intended to be a genuine embodiment of traditional Russian folklore. It was an exotic image of Russia packaged for the consumption of sensation-hungry Parisian audiences. Diaghilev's Russia was always designed for international export'. Discuss.
- What did Benois mean when he described *The Firebird* as 'a fairy tale for grown-ups'?
- Why did Pavlova withdraw from *The Firebird* before its premiere? (She disliked the music!)
- Design a costume for the Firebird and for the evil Kostchei. Annotate your designs. Would your Firebird be male or female? Why?
- Why are Murphy and Vernon so aware of the history and weight of expectation that accompanies any restaging of *The Firebird*? What particular challenges might confront a choreographer tackling such a highly regarded classic?
- How does *The Firebird* work as an analogy of what the Ballets Russes did for Australian culture? (Consider the film's opening narration, where the bird is described as 'bringing light to a darkened world'.)



LEFT: IRINA BARONOVA WITH STUDENTS OF THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET SCHOOL, OF WHICH SHE WAS PATRON (© THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET SCHOOL)

History & Background: Another Time, Another Place

‘WELL NEARLY EVERY YOUNG MAN THOUGHT EVERY BALLET DANCER WAS A POOFTER AND REFERRED TO THEM AS THAT. THE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENT IN AUSTRALIA WAS OPPRESSIVE AND POSITIVELY INHIBITING.’

– Yvonne Harris

- Construct a timeline for the period covered in this film, noting the dates of significant global historical events and important ballet moments.
- Australian Culture: Then & Now. Draw up a table with two columns and note down some of the ways our society has changed since the time of the first Ballets Russes tour.
- It is noted that culture in 1930s Australia was primarily focused on sport and the great outdoors – men playing football and cricket. There was no national opera or ballet companies. (The Australian Ballet was founded in Melbourne in 1962; its school was established in 1964.) Choose a national arts

body or organisation and write a history of it and its place in the huge cultural shift that has taken place since the Ballets Russes first toured.

- Do you think Colonel de Basil’s criticisms of Australians were accurate? (The film includes a shot of a newspaper fragment in which he is quoted as saying, ‘Australians lack the art, finesse, fine feeling, grace, deportment, sensitiveness ...’) How did Actors Equity and the Musicians’ Union react to de Basil’s position? (They threatened to close down the theatres and there was a huge public uproar against de Basil.) How did de Basil make peace? (To diffuse the situation, de Basil held a competition to design a ballet on an Australian theme. Donald Friend’s drawing for the story of Ned Kelly won the prize in 1940, but it was never produced.) If his derogatory comments were true then, are they still true today? When did things start to change and what were some of the forces that brought about this shift in our culture?
- ‘A *Thousand Encores* is a snapshot

of our cultural history that leaves you marvelling at how far we have come from the conservative and oppressive culture that reigned all those years ago.’ Discuss.

- Write a profile of the Tait brothers’ company, J.C. Williamson Ltd., explaining its significance to theatre in Australia (and New Zealand) at this time.
- Do you think, from what you see in this film, that ballet was more popular in the 1930s and 1940s than it is today? Give reasons and evidence from the film to account for your position.
- What was ballet called in the 1920s when Anna Pavlova toured Australia and how did it differ from what the Ballets Russes offered? (It was called ‘operatic dancing’, and Pavlova offered brief set pieces, little fragments, whereas the Ballets Russes staged lavish, full blown productions.)
- What were the main options for Australian dancers in the 1930s? (Vaudeville or moving overseas.)
- What do you think the National Library of Australia’s curator of dance does?



1



1: PAUL PETROFF AND LUDMILLA LVOVA ON BUNGAN BEACH (© NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE) 2: LUDMILLA LVOVA ON BUNGAN BEACH (© NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE) 3: PAUL PETROFF ON BUNGAN BEACH (© NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE)

2



3

Why did the directors of the NSW and Victorian art galleries, Lionel Lindsay and J.S. McDonald, refuse to show the exhibition? Where was it shown in New South Wales? (It was shown at David Jones department store.)

- Lovely Irina Baronova was a marketer's delight, and the film includes material from an advertising campaign in which her image was used to sell cigarettes. Design an ad campaign featuring a principal dancer from The Australian Ballet. Explain your choice of product, the associations with dance you would want to tap into, etc.
- Describe the reaction of the audience and the cast when the performance of *Les Sylphides* was interrupted with news that Paris had fallen to the Nazis. How did the company support the war effort?
- What happened to René Blum? (He died in Auschwitz.)

Murphy, Vernon & the World of Australian Ballet

- Choose an important figure in the history of Australian ballet such as Sir Robert Helpmann or Dame Peggy van Praagh and discuss their legacy.
- Graeme Murphy and Janet Vernon are hugely important to the Australian dance scene. Write an outline of their careers and an account of their significance to the Australian arts scene.
- Discuss Murphy's approach to choreography. Consider his statement: 'My problem is, I refuse to pre-choreograph, because that denies the dancers their involvement in the creative period.' He speaks of the importance of collaborating with the dancers, not imposing movements on them but allowing them to own the work and imbue it with part of their soul.
- Janet and Graeme have an occasionally tempestuous relationship in the rehearsal studio. As Graeme says, 'We used to empty studios with our cold war screaming.' Explain the dynamic and the vari-

- How would you describe Robert Menzies' attitude to modern art? (At this time he was Australia's attorney general.) How does Jeffrey Smart describe Menzies? ('And of course you wouldn't expect him to know anything about painting anyway. He was a philistine, a vulgarian.') What sorts of works do you think Menzies might have wanted to include in his Academy of Art?

- Three thousand people a day turned up at the Melbourne Town Hall to view the first significant exhibition of overseas modern art, the Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art. How does this compare with the audiences for blockbuster exhibitions today? What artists were included in this exhibition? (van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne, Léger, Matisse)

ous roles each adopts within this creative partnership.

- If there's someone in the class who is passionate about ballet, have them explain to the class what it means to them. If there's someone in the class who dislikes ballet, get them to explain why.
- Discuss the incredible athleticism, strength and stamina of male ballet dancers, particularly for any ignorant students buying into stereotypes about the effete, effeminate world of ballet.
- How does The Australian Ballet stand on the international ballet scene? Consider Irina Baronova's comment: 'They're very talented, beautifully trained and the whole company and the atmosphere and what comes over the footlights – I consider it the best company in the world now'.

The Visual Arts in Dance and Beyond – Perverts & Degenerates?

'IT WAS NO ACCIDENT THAT WHAT WAS AFTERWARDS KNOWN AS THE BALLETS RUSSES WAS ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED NOT BY PROFESSIONALS OF THE DANCE, BUT BY A CIRCLE OF ARTISTS, LINKED TOGETHER BY THE IDEA OF ART AS AN ENTITY. BALLET WAS THE NATURAL THEATRICAL EXPRESSION OF THE WORLD OF ART IDEOLOGY, WITH ITS INDIFFERENCE TO REALISM OR REPRESENTATION, ITS LOVE OF THE DECORATIVE, THE EXOTIC, THE MAGICAL, ABOVE ALL, ITS ENTHUSIASM FOR A KIND OF WAGNERIAN "GESAMTKUNSTWERK",* IN WHICH EVERY ELEMENT WOULD CONTRIBUTE IN EQUAL MEASURE TO A COMPLETE ROUNDED ARTISTIC IMPRESSION.' – Alexandre Benois, *Memoirs*

'IT WAS LIKE THIS WORLD THAT THEY [THE ARTISTS] IMAGINED, THAT THEY WANTED TO GO TO. AND THE EXPERIENCE ACTUALLY CAME TO THEM. IT WAS JUST LIKE HAVING A PIECE OF PARIS IN MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY.' – Barry Pearce, Head Curator of Australian Art, Art Gallery of NSW

- Compile a list of the many high-profile visual artists who were involved with the Ballets Russes. Divide the class into small groups

Credits

DURATION: 56 minutes

YEAR OF PRODUCTION: 2009

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:
Sharyn Prentice

DIRECTOR & WRITER:
Mandy Chang

PRODUCERS: Marianne Latham
& Lavinia Riachi

EDITOR: Karin Steininger

CAMERA: Peter Coleman &
Micah Walker

NARRATOR: Jane Menelaus

SOUND: Terry Chadwick,
Leo Sullivan & Will Sheridan

to research one of these figures and present their findings to the class. Consider: Dali, Picasso, Matisse, Miró, de Chirico, Braque and Utrillo.

- Could you describe the Ballets Russes as having a particular, distinct aesthetic?
- It is noted that our art traditions in the 1930s were radically different to those dominating continental Europe. While we had the Heidelberg School, the Europeans had Surrealism and Expressionism. Choose a painting representative of trends in Australian art at this time and compare and contrast it with a work from a major European artist.
- Why were the Ballets Russes important to Jeffrey Smart and what sorts of words does he use to describe their impact? ('I think it was like a flash of lightning coming through'; 'It was vivid and it was lively. It was a touch of another world. Simply marvellous.') The film's director, Mandy Chang, says of her interview with Smart

in Tuscany: 'The impression it [the Ballets Russes] made on him as a fifteen-year-old boy is still vivid. Almost ninety now, he remembered almost every detail of the music, sets and costumes for each ballet as if it were yesterday.'

- Discuss the influence of *Icare* on Nolan's subsequent paintings, particularly in terms of relationships between figures and landscapes. What did he aim to do with his designs? (Nolan wanted to break down the dancers into abstract forms and meld their bodies with the sets.) How was *Icare* received at its first staging? (It received twenty curtain calls, demonstrating a dramatic shift in the aesthetic of the Australian audience over the period from 1936 to 1940.)
- Design a PowerPoint presentation on one of Bakst's stunning costume designs for the Ballets Russes or one of his sketches of Nijinsky.
- The narration notes: 'The public fell in love with the beauty of dance and so did Australian artists. Its magic inspired an avalanche of painting and drawing'. Choose one of these images and analyse it.

A Closer Look at the Film

'THIS WASN'T JUST A "BALLET" STORY, SET IN A TIME CAPSULE OF THE 1930S, BUT AN EPIC STORY ABOUT TWENTIETH-CENTURY CULTURE THAT ENCOMPASSED THE BEAUTY AND WONDER OF DANCE, ART AND MUSIC. I WAS ABOUT TO ENTER AN EXOTIC WORLD WITH A RICH HISTORY THAT SPANNED A CENTURY AND CROSSED MANY CONTINENTS. THE SEEDS OF THE FAMOUS BALLETS RUSSES BEGAN IN RUSSIA, TOOK ROOT IN PARIS AND EVENTUALLY FOUND THEIR WAY TO THE UNLIKELY CONTINENT OF AUSTRALIA, WHERE FROM 1936 ONWARDS, THIS REMARKABLE COMPANY PROCEEDED TO HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT ON OUR ART AND CULTURE.' – Mandy Chang, Writer/Director, *A Thousand Encores*

- Make a list of the types of material included in the film (for example, newsreel footage, home movie footage, still photographs, interview material, rehearsal footage).
- Imagine you are the film's produc-

*Trans. Gesamtkunstwerk: universal artwork, synthesis of the arts, comprehensive artwork, all-embracing art form, total work of art, or total artwork. See <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gesamtkunstwerk>>.

ers, Sharyn Prentice, Marianne Latham and Lavinia Riachi, seeking funding for this project. Write an outline of your intentions, the purpose and value of the film.

- Design a poster to promote this film. Annotate your design choices, font, colour scheme, layout, etc. How would you select representative images?
- Write a review of the film to be published in a daily newspaper.
- Write a fifty-word synopsis of the film to be published in a television guide.
- Who is the audience for this film? Do you have to like ballet to enjoy this film?
- Consider the film's title. Make a list of other possible titles.
- How might the filmmakers have chosen the narrator? What qualities would they have been looking for?
- If you were making a film on this topic, is there anything you might choose to do differently?
- 'A *Thousand Encores* explores a relationship that transformed our cultural landscape.' Discuss.
- Consult the list of credits on page 9 of this guide. Choose one role and write an outline of this person's responsibilities during the production of the film.
- Imagine you had the opportunity to interview the director, Mandy Chang. Write a list of five questions that intrigued you about this project. Exchange these with another student and formulate responses.
- What can you find out about the film's production company, Flaming Star Films?

Resources

Books

Irina Baronova, *Irina: Ballets, Life and Love*, Penguin, New York, 2005.

Alexandre Benois, *Memoirs*, Moura Budberg (trans.), Chatto & Windus, London, 1960.

Martha Bremser, *Fifty Contemporary Choreographers*, Routledge, New York, 1999 (includes material on Graeme Murphy).

Jeff Busby, *Beyond 40: The Australian Ballet Celebrating 40 Years of Dreams*, ABC Books for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney, 2002.

Mark Carroll, Nicolette Fraillon & Patrick McIntyre (eds), *Ballets Russes in Australia, 1936–40*, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 2008.

Eileen Chanin & Steven Miller with Judith Pugh, *Degenerates and Perverts: The 1939 Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2005.

Jonathan Cross (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

Ann Dils & Ann Cooper Albright (eds), *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Conn, 2001.

John Drummond, *Speaking of Diaghilev*, Faber and Faber, London, 1997.

Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, Picador, New York, 2002.

Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989.

Lynn Garafola & Nancy Van Norman Baer (eds), *The Ballets Russes and its World*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1999.

Vicente García-Márquez, *The Ballets Russes: Colonel De Basil's Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, 1932–1952*, Knopf/Random House, New York, 1990.

S.L. Grigoriev, *The Diaghilev Ballet, 1909–1929*, Dance Books Ltd., London, 2009.

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