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| Goleizovsky (Goleizovskii), Kas’ian Yaroslavich (1892-1970) |
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| A Russo-Soviet choreographer, dancer and artist, Kas’ianGoleizovsky was exposed to various art forms from early childhood; dance at the Bolshoi ballet school, fine and applied arts at Moscow’s Stroganov Institute; and music lessons with the celebrated violinist David Krein. This broad education enabled him to perceive dance in terms of line and colour, to integrate costume and choreography, and to infuse visual rhythm, emotional expression, bodily movement and musicality into his artistic explorations. His collaborations with avant-garde visual artists such as Petr Galadzhev, Anatolii Petritsky and Boris Erdman and with composers such as Boris Ber, Matvei Blanter and Sergei Prokofiev were always distinguished by strong mutual understanding. A pre-postmodern choreographer, Goleizovsky moved among very different systems and types of dances, including classic, eccentric, variety, ballroom and music-hall. |
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Training Goleizovsky arrived in St. Petersburg in 1906 to pursue training as a dancer at the Imperial Ballet School, where he studied with Michel Fokine. After graduating in 1909, he danced briefly at the Maryinsky Theatre, and then, from 1910 to 1918, at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. Beginning in 1916, he worked as a choreographer and director for the Mamonov Theatre and for Nikita Baliev’s Chauve-Souris cabaret, for which he staged ‘miniature’ (or short) dance numbers. Together with a group of young enthusiasts, he also founded the Research Studio and later the Ballet Art Studio, a combination school and performing group. Contribution to the Field and to Modernism In late 1919, the Theatre Department of Narkompros (People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment) renamed Goleizovsky’s school the First Instructional Ballet Studio Theatre; at the end of 1921, it became the Moscow Chamber Ballet, with the status of an independent collective. The post-Revolutionary years were immensely productive and witnessed the creation of some of Goleizovsky’s most inventive works. These included Cecile Chaminade’s *Arlechin* (*Harlequin*, 1920)*,* Richard Strauss’ *Salomé* (1922) and *The Faun* (based on Claude Debussy’s *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune / Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*), staged in 1922 at the Hermitage Winter Theatre. For *Faun*, the artist Boris Erdman designed simple, diagonal scaffolding, reminiscent of Alexandra Exter’s elemental scenic constructions for Alexander Tairov’s Moscow Chamber Theatre, and reduced the costumes to a bare minimum, so as to enhance the formal expressiveness of the dancers’ bodies.  Fig.1: Piotr Galadzhev, Faun, 1922. Lithograph of Kasian Goleizovsky’s work for the Moscow Chamber Ballet. Published as the cover for Zrelishcha (Moscow), No. 1 (1922). Courtesy of Central Museum of the Cinema, Moscow.  Goleizovsky’s dancers (among them Liudmila Bank, Boris Efimov, Asaf Messerer and Itta Penzo) were known for their long and flexible limbs, which allowed them to execute his complex, elegant and strikingly modern poses. Bare feet, costumes of transparent cloth dyed according to the mood of the piece and fluid, syncopated movements distinguished his works. *Visions Fugitives*, which premiered in 1922, was the most acclaimed of Goleizovsky’s early experimental works. However, it also invited accusations of pornography because of the dancers’ naked (or near naked) bodies, which Goleizovsky defended as ‘eccentric eroticism’, underscoring the skilful and fluid interconnection and fusion of the bodies on stage. Similar to Lev Lukin, another experimental Moscow choreographer, Goleizovsky revealed the erotic aspects of ballet, above all in works choreographed to the music of Alexander Scriabin, his favourite composer, to whom he dedicated the series *Skriabiniana* in 1962.  Fig.2: Boris Erdman, costume design for a concert number to Chopin choreographed by Kasian Goleizovsky and performed by Liudmilla Gai, Moscow Chamber Ballet, 1923. Courtesy of Goleizovsky Family Archive.  In 1925 Goleizvosky was invited to return to the Bolshoi Theatre as ballet master. With Boris Erdman and the composer Sergei Vasilenko as his collaborators, he choreographed the ballet *Joseph the Beautiful* (1925), a work that built upon his research and exploration of the previous years. In 1928-29, he expanded his repertoire, working successfully for lighter theatres in Moscow and Leningrad, and creating his celebrated number *Girls*, inspired by the American musical stage. In the 1920s, especially, Goleizovsky was fascinated by traditional Spanish dances, which he recreated in a totally contemporary style to music by George Bizet and Sergei Vasilenko (*Lola,* 1929), although he was also attracted to eccentric dances, exemplified by his *Cake-Walk* (1927), to Debussy’s music. Able to move large groups of actors and dancers (thanks to his music hall experience) and to construct acrobatic collective movements (at one time he worked with the circus, even taking lessons in acrobatics), Goleizovsky was recruited to choreograph the mass gymnastic parades of 1938-40, commissions he performed anonymously. With his untiring intellectual curiosity Goleizovsky also worked in the movies, choreographing episodes for Yakov Protazanov’s *Circus* (1932) and *Marionettes* (1934) and for Grigorii Aleksandrov’s *Spring* (1947). Legacy Goleizovsky’s vitality and his undiminished capacity for reinvention and rediscovery were demonstrated by the cycle of triumphant *soirées* he staged at the Bolshoi Theatre in the 1950s and early 1960s. Featuring works such as the *Polovtsian Dances* (1953), *Skriabiniana* (1962) and *Layla and Majnun* (1964), along with a new generation of stellar performers, these performances and the recordings that followed—symptomatic of a more tolerant cultural policy in the years following Stalin’s death—brought him wide acclaim and appreciation.  Fig.3: Daniil Demutskii, photograph of Kasian Goleizovsky’s Marche Funèbre, to the music of Nikolai Metner, 1921. Courtesy Goleizovsky Family Archive, Moscow. Selected List of Works: *The Goatlegged* (1916)  *The Evolution of Dance* (1918)  *The Sonata of Death and Movement* (1919)  *Max und Moritz* (1919)  *Dolls* (1920)  *The Faun* (1922)  *Salomé* (1922)  *Joseph the Beautiful* (1925)  *Teolinda* (1925)  *The Whirlwind* (1927)  *Carmen* (1931)  *Lisztiana* (1931)  *Dionysius* (1933)  *Charda* (1933)  *Bolero* (1934)  *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (1939)  *Polovtsian Dances* (1943)  *Narcissus* (1960)  *Scriabiniana* (1962)  *Leili and Medzhnun* (1964) |
| Further reading:  (Chernova)  (Chernova, Kasian Goleizovsky and Eccentric Dance)  (Chernova, Kas’ian Goleizovsky v teatrakh miniatiur [Kas'ian Goleizovsky and the Theatre of Miniatures])  (Misler)  (Teider) |