

“The Creation of New Forms”

Igor Stravinsky’s Choreodrama *The Rite of Spring* in the Context of the “Theater Reform around 1900”¹

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Abstract: This article explains how Stravinsky—together with the choreographer Vaclav Nijinsky and inspired by Georg Fuchs and Edward Gordon Craig—aimed at creating “new dance forms” with his *The Rite of Spring*, premiered in 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Through the rhythms of his composition, he intended to put both the dancers and the audience into a physically experienceable state of intoxication, thus integrating the audience into the action on stage. By providing insight into her 2020 doctoral dissertation *Igor Stravinskijs Theater der Zukunft: Das Choreodrama Le Sacre du printemps im Spiegel der “Theaterreform um 1900”* (Igor Stravinsky’s theater of the future: The choreodrama *The Rite of Spring* as reflected in the “theater reform around 1900”), Zickgraf demonstrates how this intention is connected with the “theater of the future” and with Stravinsky’s meeting with central proponents of the pan-European theater reform movement at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Russian impresario Sergei Diaghilev’s company Ballets Russes broke with conventions and presentation principles of classical ballet. This was apparent at the latest on 29 May 1913 with the premiere of *The Rite of Spring*²—a ballet (as it is generally termed) created jointly by Igor Stravinsky, Vaslav Nijinsky, and Nicholas Roerich. Even years later, journalists and contemporary witnesses spoke about said evening—about the radical aesthetic that had been heard and seen in the Paris Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on the one hand, and about

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- 1 This text is based on my interdisciplinary study (musicology, dance and cultural studies) *Igor’ Stravinskijs Theater der Zukunft: Das Choreodrama Le Sacre du printemps im Spiegel der “Theaterreform um 1900”* (Paderborn: Fink, 2020).
 - 2 See Sibylle Dahms, Monika Woitas, Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller, Marianne Bröcker, et al., “Tanz,” in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, vol. 9, *Sachteil* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998), cols. 328–31.

the tumult that was said to have broken out when Stravinsky, Nijinsky, and Roerich confronted the audience with their “images from heathen Russia”³ on the other.⁴

Today Diaghilev is considered a ballet reformer, and his Ballets Russes is regarded as the most successful and influential ballet company of the twentieth century.⁵ *The Rite* itself advanced to the status of an “avatar of modernity”⁶ and a “Jahrhundertwerk”⁷ and the much-described chaos of its premiere to “perhaps the greatest theater scandal of the twentieth century.”⁸

In view of these effusive epithets, as well as the fact that Stravinsky characterized *The Rite* in 1912 as a “choreodrama”⁹ that would replace the ballet in its

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- 3 Cf. the wording of the program for the premier at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Saison Russe, May 29, 1913, 26, printed in Hermann Danuser and Heidi Zimmermann, eds., *Avatar of Modernity: “The Rite of Spring” Reconsidered* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 2013), 417: “Le Sacre du Printemps. / Tableau de la Russie païenne en deux actes, de Igor Strawinsky et Nicholas Roerich. / Musique de Igor Strawinsky / Chorégraphie de Nijinsky / Décors et Costumes de Nicholas Roerich.”
 - 4 Esteban Buch provides a good overview of the often contradictory accounts of persons who attended the premiere of *The Rite of Spring*. See Esteban Buch, “The Scandal at ‘Le Sacre’: Games of Distinction and Dreams of Barbarism,” in *Avatar of Modernity*, ed. Danuser and Zimmermann, 59–78.
 - 5 See Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), vii–xiii.
 - 6 Cf. the title of the edited volume published by the Paul Sacher Stiftung on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the premier of *The Rite* in 2013: *Avatar of Modernity*.
 - 7 Hermann Danuser and Heidi Zimmermann, “Multifarious Rites of Passage: An Introduction,” in *Avatar of Modernity*, ed. Danuser and Zimmermann, 9.
 - 8 Gabriele Brandstetter, “Grenzgänge II: Auflösungen und Umschreibungen zwischen Ritual und Theater,” in *Grenzgänge: Das Theater und die anderen Künste*, ed. Gabriele Brandstetter, Helga Finter, and Markus Weßendorf (Tübingen: Günter Narr Verlag, 1998), 17: “vielleicht größte[n] Theaterskandal des 20. Jahrhunderts.” All translations from German in this contribution are my own.
 - 9 Letter from Stravinsky to Nikolaj Findejzen from December 2/15, 1912, edited in Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky, *Perepiska s russkimi korrespondentami. Materialy k biografii*, ed. Viktor Varunc, 3 vols. (Moscow: Kompozitor, 1998–2003), 1:386: “Первая мысль о моей новой хореодраме ‘Весна священная’ появилась у меня еще при окончании ‘Жар-птицы’ весной 1910 года.” Trans. in Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through Mavra*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996), 1:861–2: “The first thought of my new choreodrama ‘Vesna svyashchennaya’ came to me when I was still finishing ‘The Firebird’ in the spring of 1910.” See also Stravinsky, cited in *Peterburgskaja Gazeta*, September 27, 1912 (Julian calendar), trans. and cited in

then present form,¹⁰ it is astonishing that such a key work of modern theater¹¹ has yet to be discussed in connection with the "theater of the future"—a label used in a series of treatises, manifestos, and programs that began appearing sporadically in Germany from 1870 on and then, around the turn of the century, increasingly throughout Europe and Russia.¹²

All these texts were written with the intention of reforming (European) theater and are today subsumed under the general heading "theater reform around 1900." The protagonists of this reform included the German author and theater-maker Georg Fuchs, and the British actor and director Edward Gordon Craig.¹³ Like all of their fellow reformers, these two theorists sought a new form of drama and therefore discussed, among other things, what the new actor should look like in it.¹⁴ Georg Fuchs, who was interested in the authenticity and naturalness of the moving human body and therefore demanded that the actors act out of their unconscious inner being,¹⁵ was convinced that the actors in the new drama needed to follow the model of the dancer. Fuchs was namely of the opinion that drama was "the most highly spiritual and most differentiated application of the art of dance,"¹⁶ and he therefore stated in his 1905 treatise *Schaubühne der Zukunft*: "Drama is possible without word and without sound, without scene and without dress, purely as rhythmic movement of the human body."¹⁷

Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, 2:982. For the sake of simplicity, I nevertheless continue to refer to *The Rite* as a ballet in the following.

- 10 Stravinsky in an interview in *Birževye vedomosti* from September 25, 1912, 5, cited in Vera Krasovskaja, *Russkij batetnyj teatr načala dvadcatogo veka*, 2 vols. (Leningrad: Iskustvo, 1971), 1:432.
- 11 On the term "modern theater" and the approaches of theater studies to modernity in stage direction and dramatic art, see Christopher Balme, ed., *Das Theater von Morgen: Texte zur deutschen Theaterreform (1870-1920)* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1988), 11-2.
- 12 See *ibid.*, 11.
- 13 On the theater reform discussion around 1900 as a pan-European phenomenon as well as the main demands of the movement, see *ibid.*, 9-29.
- 14 See Manfred Brauneck, *Theater im 20. Jahrhundert: Programmschriften, Stilperioden, Reformmodelle* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1995), 64.
- 15 On Georg Fuchs and the unconscious state he demanded of the actors or dancers, see Zickgraf, *Igor' Stravinskij's Theater der Zukunft*, 105-12.
- 16 Georg Fuchs, "Der Tanz," in *Flugblätter für Künstlerische Kultur* 6 (1906): 13: "die höchst-vergeistigte und differenzierteste Anwendung der Tanzkunst."
- 17 Georg Fuchs, *Die Schaubühne der Zukunft* (Berlin and Leipzig: Schuster & Loeffler, 1905): 41: "Das Drama ist möglich ohne Wort und ohne Ton, ohne Szene und ohne Gewand, rein als rhythmische Bewegung des menschlichen Körpers."

Gordon Craig was considerably more radical than his colleague in his demands for the new actor. He espoused the belief that the director—in his opinion the only true artist of the theater—should impress his ideas on the actors from outside. The only task of the performers on the stage would therefore be to carry out the will of the director on the stage.¹⁸ In favor of this overriding design concept of the director (or control over the actors), Craig ultimately called for the actor to simply be done away with altogether and replaced by an (über-)marionette.¹⁹ In his essay “The Actor and the Über-Marionette,” published in 1908 and discussed throughout Europe and Russia, he thus wrote: “The actor must go, and in his place comes the inanimate figure—the über-marionette we may call[] him.”²⁰

If one considers *The Rite* as that which it was originally intended to be, namely as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, composed of music, dance, and possibly scenery as elements of equal standing,²¹ and if one furthermore takes into account the closely knit web of connections between the Ballets Russes and theater reform,²² it quickly becomes clear that Stravinsky was interested particularly in realizing three points together with Nijinsky and Roerich on the night of *The Rite*’s premiere: (1) *controlling* movements (through the rhythms of the music); (2) creating new forms (of dance) without models, which were to develop in a state of *hypnosis* and reflect the rhythms emanating from the music; and (3)

18 Uta Grund uses the image of the “designer” in this context to illustrate Craig’s design idea. See Uta Grund, *Zwischen den Künsten: Edward Gordon Craig und das Bildertheater um 1900* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 137.

19 On the idea and concept of the über-marionette, see, among others, *ibid.*, 118; Manfred Brauneck, *Theater im 20. Jahrhundert: Programmschriften, Stilperioden, Kommentare, vollständig überarbeitete und erw. Neuausgabe* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2009), 214–8; Manfred Brauneck, *Die Welt als Bühne: Geschichte des europäischen Theaters* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999), 3:858–9.

20 Edward Gordon Craig, “The Actor and the Über-Marionette,” in *The Mask. A Monthly Journal of the Art of the Theatre* 1/2 (1908): 11–2.

21 See Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, as well as the following quotation: “To begin with—and that is something musicologists are apt to forget—‘The Rite’ is not just a piece of music. It originated, very self-consciously, as a ‘Gesamtkunstwerk,’ a mixed-media synthesis, and belongs to the historians of dance and stage design, as well as music.” Richard Taruskin, “Resisting ‘The Rite,’” in *The Rite of Spring* at 100, ed. Severine Neff, Maureen A. Carr, and Gretchen G. Horlacher with John Reef (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 417.

22 These connections are described for the first time in detail in Zickgraf, *Igor’ Stravinskij’s Theater der Zukunft*, especially 77–207.

integrating the audience (in the theater) into the action on stage by means of *collective intoxication*.²³

As I aim to demonstrate in this paper, it may be concluded from these three points that Stravinsky presented his own personal "theater of the future" to the audience on the night of the premiere. It is possible, for example, to identify connections in particular between the two protagonists of the theater reform introduced above—Georg Fuchs and Gordon Craig—and the composer Stravinsky as well as the choreographer Nijinsky. In the following, I will present two examples—one about Stravinsky and Georg Fuchs and one about Nijinsky and Gordon Craig—to demonstrate how these connections are expressed in the sources and to what extent they influenced the creation of *The Rite*.

Stravinsky and Fuchs

As far as Stravinsky is concerned, we know that by the summer of 1911 he must have already read Georg Fuchs's reform text "Der Tanz,"²⁴ which had been published in 1906 in the *Flugblätter für künstlerische Kultur* in Stuttgart and in 1910 in Saint Petersburg in a Russian translation ("Tanec"²⁵).²⁶ Stravinsky seems more than enthusiastic about Fuchs's text when he writes in a letter to Andrej Rimsky-Korsakov: "I shall not rest until you have read this article and given me your opinion in writing, with your signature attached, confirmed by the local police."²⁷

23 On these three points, see the detailed account in *ibid.*, 77–181.

24 Fuchs, "Der Tanz."

25 Georg Fuks, "Tanec," trans. L. Krasil'sčik, in *Fial strastej* (Saint Petersburg, 1910), 59–96.

26 Stravinsky first mentions the Russian translation of Fuchs's text in a letter to Andrej Rimskij-Korsakov from September 24/October 7, 1911. See Stravinsky's letter to Andrej Rimskij-Korsakov from September 24/October 7, 1911, edited in *Perepiska*, 1:300–1. However, I succeeded in demonstrating (on the basis of diverse sources and documents) that Stravinsky must have already read Fuchs's text before the summer of 1911. See Zickgraf, *Igor' Stravinskij's Theater der Zukunft*, 105–51.

27 Excerpt from Stravinsky's letter to Andrej Rimskij-Korsakov from September 24/October 7, 1911: "Я не успокоюсь раньше, чем ты не прочтешь этой статьи и не выскажешь мне своего мнения на бумаге, скрепленной твоей подписью, засвидетельствованной местной полицией." English translation in Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring: Russia and France, 1882–1934* (London: Cape, 2000), 171.

In the second paragraph, he then adds by way of justification: “What could be better and more wonderful than the development of established artistic forms? Only one thing—the creation of new forms.”²⁸

Here Stravinsky invokes the “new (art) form” as the better and more appealing alternative to continuing to develop existing (art) forms, and then attempts, as it were, to convince Rimsky-Korsakov to commit himself—as he himself has—to such a creation of new forms.²⁹

Yet it is Georg Fuchs who, in the aforementioned essay “Der Tanz,” calls for the creation of new (dance) forms.³⁰ And this call must be viewed in a larger (cultural-)political context:³¹ with his commitment to the theater reform, Fuchs had set himself the goal of achieving increased physicality in society (in the medium term) and renewing German culture (in the long term).³² He saw the new (dance) form as an initial step in pursuit of this goal. The means he had chosen for this purpose was a “stage in the modern style,”³³ on which the “independently creative”³⁴ woman was to dance in a new form, thus serving as a model for the future culture.³⁵ In the text, he therefore calls on individuals endowed with “formal potency”³⁶ to develop the “new dance forms”³⁷ he desired.

In the last dance of *The Rite*, the *Danse Sacrale*, it is a woman who—as numerous contemporaries attest—dances in an entirely new form. The influential patron of the arts Harry Graf Kessler, for example, recounts the following in his diary entry from May 29, 1913:

Evening, premiere of *Sacre du printemps*. An entirely new choreography and music; Nijinsky's dance style as different from Fokine's as Gauguin's

28 Excerpt from Stravinsky's letter to Andrej Rimskij-Korsakov from September 24/October 7, 1911: “[Ч]то может быть лучше и прекраснее развития раз созданных форм искусства? Разве только одно – создание новых форм.” English translation in Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, 2:975.

29 See excerpt from Stravinsky's letter to Andrej Rimskij-Korsakov from September 24/October 7, 1911.

30 See Fuchs, “Der Tanz,” 10–1.

31 See Brigitte Ruhwinkel, “Georg Fuchs: Theater als Völkischer Ritus,” in *Handbuch zur “Völkischen Bewegung,” 1871–1918*, ed. Uwe Puschner, Walter Schmitz, and Justus H. Ulbricht (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1999), 748.

32 See Zickgraf, *Igor' Stravinskijs Theater der Zukunft*, 116–8.

33 Fuchs, “Der Tanz,” 13: “Schaubühne modernen Stils.”

34 *Ibid.*, 40: “selbständig schöpferische.”

35 See *ibid.*, 40.

36 *Ibid.*, 11: “formaler Zeugungskraft.”

37 *Ibid.*, 10: “neuen Tanzformen.”

painting from Delacroix's. A completely new vision, never before seen, riveting, convincing, is suddenly there. [...] all form devastated, a new one suddenly rising up out of the chaos.³⁸

In view of the statements of the theater reformer Fuchs related above, the question inevitably arises: Did the artist Stravinsky intend for *The Rite* to bring to the stage the dance forms demanded by Fuchs?

If one additionally considers the extant source material, this is even quite likely to have been the case. After all, it is no secret that the first draft of *The Rite of Spring* (1910)—at the time still called *Великая Жертва* (*The Great Sacrifice*)—differs considerably from the work premiered in 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. The fact that the plans for *Великая Жертва* differ in important details from those of 1911 for *Праздник весны* (*Spring Fest*) has already been the subject of ample critical discussion.³⁹ The question of why, however, has yet to receive a satisfactory answer,⁴⁰ although Stravinsky again made significant changes to the ballet in July 1911—immediately after reading the text by Georg Fuchs. And these changes can easily be traced back to Fuchs's text.⁴¹

It has already been extensively described, for instance, that Stravinsky's plan for *The Rite* in 1910 was still to create a ballet based on archaeological research. Stravinsky had developed the ambition to realize the aesthetic ideal of the Ballets Russes for the first time: *The Great Sacrifice* was to become a

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- 38 Harry Graf Kessler, diary entry from May 29, 1913, edited in Harry Graf Kessler, *Das Tagebuch 1880-1937*, ed. Roland S. Kamzelak and Ulrich Ott, vol. 4, 1906-1914, ed. Jörg Schuster (Stuttgart: Cotta, 2005), 886: "Abends 'Sacre du printemps' Premiere. Eine ganz neue Choreographie und Musik; Nijinskis Tanzstil von Fokines so verschieden wie Gauguins Malerei von Delacroix. Eine durchaus neue Vision, etwas Niegesehenes, Packendes, Überzeugendes ist plötzlich da. [...] alle Form verwüstet, neue plötzlich aus dem Chaos auftauchend."
- 39 See, e.g., Walsh, *A Creative Spring*, 173-4; Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, 1:871.
- 40 Neither Walsh nor Taruskin provides a watertight explanation of the ballet's revival. See Walsh, *A Creative Spring*, 173-4; and Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, 1:871-81.
- 41 I describe these connections in detail. The reason why this has never been done before is perhaps because musicologists have previously devoted but little attention to Fuchs's text. Dance studies scholars, on the other hand, while discussing the text frequently in studies on modern expressionist dance, have never treated it within the context of the Ballets Russes. See Zickgraf, *Igor' Stravinskij's Theater der Zukunft*, 108-10.

veritable neonationalist *Gesamtkunstwerk*⁴²—an anti-literary music theater in which all three art forms involved were to coexist on an equal footing; the chosen subject—and this is crucial for the present example—should be based on Russian culture and on “authentic”⁴³ findings. Stravinsky therefore developed a first draft for his new ballet together with the archeologist and stage designer Nicholas Roerich, who was familiar like no one else in Saint Petersburg with what were thought to be the archaic rites and customs of prehistoric Russia.⁴⁴

On July 15, 1910 (Julian calendar), the Moscow daily newspaper *Russkoe Slovo* announced for the first time that Stravinsky was working with Fokine and Roerich on a ballet dealing with ancient Slavic rites and customs:

We have been informed by telephone from Saint Petersburg that an interesting new ballet is to be performed in the very near future. The academic N.K. Roerich, the young composer of *The Firebird*, I.F. Stravinsky, and the ballet master M.M. Fokine are working on a ballet called *The Great Sacrifice* that is devoted to ancient Slavic religiosity and its customs. Roerich is responsible for the content and the stage production of the ballet.⁴⁵

42 The expression “neonationalist *Gesamtkunstwerk*” was introduced by Richard Taruskin and has since been used to refer to the majority of the (music) historiography discourse on *The Rite* (pars pro toto, consider the following dictum by Francis Maes: “*Sacre* satisfies the neonationalist paradigm fully.” Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006], 226). On the expression used by Taruskin, its discussion in the literature, and the use of the German term *Gesamtkunstwerk* within the context of the Ballets Russes, see Zickgraf, *Igor’ Stravinskij’s Theater der Zukunft*, 51, 76–84.

43 I refer in my use of the difficult term “authentic” to Taruskin, who speaks of “archeological authenticity,” among other things also in relation to the libretto and composition of *The Rite* and the folkloristic material used in it. He identifies the pursuit of “authenticity” as a key element of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal of the Ballets Russes. See especially the subchapters “Archeological Authenticity” and “The Musical Sources” in Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, 1:881–933. In a recent study, however, Andreas Meyer once again makes it very clear that *The Rite* lacks an “authentic” model for the human sacrifice in particular. See Andreas Meyer, “Disrupted Structures. Rhythm, Melody, Harmony,” in *Avatar of Modernity*, ed. Danuser and Zimmermann, 118.

44 See Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, 1:860–966, and the recapitulation of the state of research on this issue in Zickgraf, *Igor’ Stravinskij’s Theater der Zukunft*, 43–77.

45 Excerpt from an announcement of the ballet (without indication of an author) in the Moscow daily newspaper *Russkoe Slovo*, July 15, 1910, 4 (my translation): “Нашь сообщают по телефону изъ Петербурга: Въ ближайшемъ будущемъ должна появиться интересная балетная новинка. Академикъ Н.К. Рерихъ, молодой композоторъ ‘Жарь-Птици’ И.Ф. Стравинский и балетмейстеръ

Around a month later, the Saint Petersburg daily newspaper *Peterburgskaja Gazeta* printed a very similar announcement. It included the additional information that the choreographic action of the ballet was set on a summer night, consisted of ritual dances, and was also the first work to offer a portrayal of the past without a dramatic plot:

The new ballet shows us a series of images of the holy night and the early Slavs [...] The action begins on a summer night and ends before dawn, when the first rays of [sun] appear. As expected, the choreographic part consists of ritual dances. This will be the first attempt to produce a rendition of ancient Slavic times without a fixed dramatic subject.⁴⁶

In an interview printed a month later, on September 30, 1910, in the Saint Petersburg theater program magazine *Obozrenie Teatrov*, Roerich then reiterates the plan, emphasizing the following: "I aim [in the ballet] to portray how, on a bright summer night on the peaks of the sacred hill [...], a succession of ancient ritual Slavic dances take place, concluding with a sacrificial offering."⁴⁷

To portray these ancient ritual Slavic dances, Stravinsky and Roerich had then looked for and used folkloristic models for the scenario and the composition, and Nijinsky too was inspired by this material for the choreography.⁴⁸

However, in *The Rite of 1913*—and herein lies the most telling difference from the original plan for the present example—these models were no longer

М.М. Фокинъ работаютъ надъ балетомъ подъ названіемъ 'Великая Жертва', посвященнымъ древнеславянскимъ религиознымъ обычаямъ. Содержаніе и постановка балета сочинены г. Рерихомъ."

- 46 Excerpt from an announcement of the ballet (without indication of an author) in the Saint Petersburg daily newspaper *Peterburgskaja Gazeta*, August 1910, 4 (my translation): "Новый балет даст ряд картин священной ночи и древних славян [...] Начинается действие летней ночью и оканчивается перед восходом солнца, когда показываются первые лучи. Собственно хореографическая часть заключается в ритуальных плясках. Эта вещь будет первой попыткой, без определенного драматического сюжета, дать воспроизведение старины."
- 47 "Naši Besedy: U N.K. Rericha," in *Obozrenie Teatrov* 1187, September 30, 1910, 14 (my translation): "Я хочу изобразить, как светлой летней ночью на вершине священного холма [...] происходит ряд ритуальных древнеславянских танцев – оканчивающихся жертвоприношением."
- 48 Taruskin describes in detail how Stravinsky and Roerich used meticulously selected folkloristic models for the libretto and music, and Garafola, among others, remarks that Nijinsky too was influenced by these models in working out his choreography. See, e.g., Richard Taruskin, "Russian Folk Melodies in 'The Rite of Spring,'" in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 33/3 (1980): 501–43; Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, 68.

recognizable at all: Stravinsky had transformed the selected folk melodies in such a way that they were no longer identifiable by ear alone.⁴⁹ And according to the Ballets Russes expert Claudia Jeschke, it is not possible to ascertain any references to previously existing material with regard to the choreography either.⁵⁰ Hence, a comparison of the original plan of 1910 with *The Rite* as it was ultimately realized in 1913—and this has also been frequently described—reveals a significant qualitative leap.

And so the question arises: Was the archeologically “authentic” aspect intended at the outset (1910) for *The Great Sacrifice* manipulated deliberately in the realization of *The Rite* (1913)? And if so, for what reason?

Interestingly, Georg Fuchs provides a very clear answer to this question. In his reform text “Der Tanz,” which, as we have seen, Stravinsky read shortly before changing his plans for *The Rite* in summer 1911, Fuchs discusses at length whether folk dance forms handed down from a primitive agrarian culture were suitable for the new dance forms he demanded. He reaches the following conclusion:

Only a madman could come up with the idea of creating a new dance culture through an “aesthetic influence” of the “social dances.” They are, like the “ballet,” merely a subject for the satirist. Nor is our own daily increasing knowledge of the art of dancing practiced by our ancestors and the great civilizations up to antiquity of use to us, for living dance form can spring up only from the living rhythm of life itself, of the social life of our time, and the archaistic, didactic setting in motion of old reliefs, plates, and clay figurines is far more liable to stifle and mislead the creative power of dance of the modern races than to inspire it.⁵¹

49 See Peter Hill, *Stravinsky: “The Rite of Spring”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 114. See also Meyer, “Disrupted Structures,” 109–15.

50 See Claudia Jeschke, “Russische Bildwelten in Bewegung: Bewegungstexte,” in *Schwäne und Feuervögel: Die Ballets Russes 1909–1929: Russische Bildwelten in Bewegung*, ed. Claudia Jeschke and Nicole Haitzinger (Leipzig: Henschel, 2009), 77.

51 Fuchs, “Der Tanz,” 8–9: “Nur ein Wahnsinniger könnte auf den Gedanken kommen, durch eine ‘ästhetische Beeinflussung’ der ‘Gesellschaftstänze’ eine neue Tanzkultur erzeugen zu wollen. Sie sind, wie auch das ‘Ballett,’ lediglich ein Stoffgebiet für den Satiriker. Auch unser, sich von Tag zu Tag mehrendes Wissen um die Tanzkunst unserer Altvorderen und der großen Kulturen bis zur Antike hinauf nützt uns zu gar nichts, denn nur aus der lebendigen Rhythmik des Lebens selbst, des geselligen Lebens unserer Zeit kann auch lebendige Tanzform aufspringen, und archaisierendes lehrhaftes Inbewegungsetzen alter Reliefs, Bildtafeln und Tonfigürchen ist weit eher geeignet, die tanzschöpferische Kraft der modernen Rassen zu betäuben und in die Irre zu führen, als sie anzufeuern.” Fuchs uses the term “Gesellschaftstanz”

Hence, Fuchs held a revival of old dance forms of the kind Stravinsky and Roerich had still intended at least in 1910 for *The Rite* to be completely unsuitable for the cultural renewal he aspired to initiate. He envisaged something entirely different for the new dance forms. What Fuchs regarded as a perfect example was namely the sleep dance of the hypnotized Madeleine (Guipet):⁵² This co-called "dream dancer Madeleine" was always placed under hypnosis before her performances by her magnetopath Emile Magnin. And then, as soon as the latter played music, Madeleine started dancing in her hypnotic state.

Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, a German physician and early admirer of Madeleine, therefore once described the dancer as a "somnambulant reflex automaton."⁵³ In his psychological study on the dream dancer, published in 1904 in Stuttgart, he relates the following:

[Madeleine] picks up the subtlest nuances of the music and reproduces them by means of gestures and facial expressions. [...] One of the most interesting points is the dream dancer's behavior in relation to improvisation on the piano or on the organ. [...] She exhibits [...] a lightning-fast grasp of every tone color, every harmonic and melodic modulation; [...] She can be [...] controlled so completely by the piano that one needs only to indicate the expression to the pianist trained in working with her in order for him to compel her to act it out through the note.⁵⁴

(social dance) largely synonymously with "Volkstanz" (folk dance), or rather he understands the folk dance as a kind of subcategory of the social dance. On the use of the terms today, see, e.g., Zickgraf, *Igor' Stravinskij's Theater der Zukunft*, 118.

- 52 See Fuchs, "Der Tanz," 21. On the dream dancer Madeleine, see, e.g., Gabriele Brandstetter, "Psychologie des Ausdrucks und Ausdruckstanz: Aspekte der Wechselwirkung am Beispiel der 'Traumtänzerin' Madeleine G.," in *Ausdruckstanz: Eine mitteleuropäische Bewegung der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller (Wilhelmshafen: Florian Noetzel, 1992), 199–211. The meeting with the dream dancer Madeleine is often described in the literature the initial motive for Fuchs's reform texts.
- 53 Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, *Die Traumtänzerin Magdeleine G.: Eine psychologische Studie über Hypnose und dramatische Kunst* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1904), 107. In the contemporary reception of *The Rite*, the dancers' movements are in some cases described as reflexive and the dancers themselves as automatons. See Zickgraf, *Igor' Stravinskij's Theater der Zukunft*, 181–207.
- 54 Schrenck-Notzing, *Die Traumtänzerin Magdeleine G.*, 107–13: "[Die Madeleine] fasst die feinsten Nuancen der Musik auf und gibt sie mimisch wieder. [...] Einer der interessantesten Punkte ist das Verhalten der Traumtänzerin gegenüber dem Improvisieren auf dem Klavier oder auf der Orgel. [...] [Es] erfolgt [...] ein blitzschnelles Erfassen jeder Tonfarbe, jeder harmonischen und melodischen Wendung; [...] Man kann sie [...] so vollständig mit dem Klavier beherrschen, dass

Fuchs had seen the dream dancer for the first time in 1904 in Munich.⁵⁵ He notes the following in “Der Tanz”:

Every artistic act is done sleepwalking. Every form is born in the soul of the creator, far away from all consciousness. Yet everywhere else, conscious action is necessary to bring it out, to cause it to emerge as a work. [...] A magical command releases Madeleine’s body from earthly laws and from the force of gravity.⁵⁶

Unlike Schrenck-Notzing, who was fascinated above all by the aspect of control in the dance of the hypnotized dancer, Fuchs believed to find in it an art that arose from the unconscious inner being:⁵⁷ hypnosis helped Madeleine to “rid herself of her inhibitions,”⁵⁸ he opined, enabling her to “reveal her innermost being and relinquish her own body.”⁵⁹ The hypnosis revealed secrets “that otherwise hide all instincts, feelings, and habits.”⁶⁰ He was therefore certain that new (dance) forms were to be found “far away from all consciousness in the soul of the creator.”⁶¹ They were to be completely free of models, and their

man nur dem auf sie eingeübten Pianisten den Ausdruck anzugeben braucht, damit er sie durch die Töne dazu nötigt.”

- 55 His enthusiasm for the dream dancer is evident in an article Fuchs published following Madeleine’s performances in Munich. See Lenz Prütting, *Die Revolution des Theaters: Studien über Georg Fuchs* (Munich: Kitzinger, 1971), 134–5. The article appeared in the *Münchener Neuesten Nachrichten*, no. 89, 1904, and was cited in full in his essay “Der Tanz.” See Prütting, *Die Revolution des Theaters*, 421, note 123.
- 56 Fuchs, “Der Tanz,” 25: “Schlafwandelnd wird jede künstlerische Tat getan. Weit entfernt von allem Bewußten gebiert sich jede Form in der Seele der Schaffenden. Doch sie hervorzubringen, sie als Werk herauszustellen, bedarf sonst überall bewußten Handelns. [...] Ein zauberischer Befehl erlöst den Leib der Madeleine von den Gesetzen des Irdischen und von ihrer Schwerkraft.”
- 57 Fuchs’s opinion was not shared by all observers. In fact, there was a lengthy discussion among writers and artists on whether a dance performed under hypnosis could actually be described as art. See Priska Pytlík, *Okkultismus und Moderne: Ein kulturhistorisches Phänomen und seine Bedeutung für die Literatur um 1900* (Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 2005), 66.
- 58 Fuchs, “Der Tanz,” 21: “Hemmungsvorstellungen zu beseitigen.”
- 59 *Ibid.*, 21–2: “Innerstes enthüllen und [ihren] [...] eigenen Leib preisgeben.”
- 60 *Ibid.*: “die sonst alle Instinkte, Empfindungen und Gewohnheiten [...] verschleiern.”
- 61 *Ibid.*, 25: “[w]eit entfernt von allem Bewußten [...] in der Seele der Schaffenden.” See Gabriele Brandstetter’s discussion of various concepts of dance at the beginning of the twentieth century in this context, especially “Bewegungsrausch. Trance-Tanz und Bacchanal,” in Gabriele Brandstetter, *Tanz-Lektüren. Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde (Scenae)*, 2nd expanded edition

movements were to develop from their unconscious inner being, while at the same time reflecting the rhythms of the music. The (state of) intoxication he saw manifested in the (woman's) new dance on the newly designed stage was then to be transferred to the audience, culminating in a communal intoxication encompassing everyone present.⁶²

So if Stravinsky really did intend with *The Rite* to realize the new dance forms demanded by Fuchs and to put both the dancers and the audience into a physically experienceable state of communal intoxication, the dancers' movements would need to have originated in an unconscious state on the one hand, and to reflect the rhythms of the music on the other.

In contrast to the extensive documentation of Stravinsky's compositional work, only few sources report on Nijinsky's choreography, making it impossible today to reconstruct precisely what movements the dancers performed in 1913.⁶³ Neither is it possible in most cases to unambiguously assign movements executed by the dancers to a place in the score.⁶⁴ However, Nijinsky's sister Bronislava Nijinska was present during the entire rehearsal process from the start. And she claims, for example, that in his choreography for *The Rite* Nijinsky attempted to translate every note value of Stravinsky's music into movement

(Freiburg: Rombach, 2013), 251–326. On Fuchs's ideas on "orgiasm" and hypnotic dance in particular, see *ibid.*, 255–9.

- 62 For a detailed description of Fuchs's demands for reform and his conception of the "new dance forms," as well as what led him to develop this conception, see Zickgraf, *Igor' Stravinskij's Theater der Zukunft*, 112–51.
- 63 With regard to Stravinsky's compositional work, in addition to the musical text, there are Stravinsky's sketches as well as the autograph of the score and the composer's own comments on them. For an overview of Stravinsky's sketches on *The Rite*, which are held in the Stravinsky collection at the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel, see Tatiana Baranova Monighetti, "Working on 'The Rite of Spring': Stravinsky's Sketches for the Ballet at the Paul Sacher Stiftung," in *Igor Stravinsky. Sounds and Gestures of Modernism*, ed. Massimiliano Locanto (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 101–36. With regard to the choreography, no details from Nijinsky himself but rather only second-hand sources have survived, for instance notational sketches, drawings of movements (by Valentine Gross), pictures of costumes and the stage set, and oral testimony. See Gabriele Brandstetter, "'Le Sacre du printemps' 1913/2013," in *Sacré 101: An Anthology on 'The Rite of Spring'*, ed. Raphael Gygas (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2014), 151. On the relevant sources as well as their discussion in the literature, see also Zickgraf, *Igor' Stravinskij's Theater der Zukunft*, 152–4.
- 64 In professional circles, the claim to authenticity of Millicent Hodson's attempt in 1989 to reconstruct Nijinsky's choreography of *The Rite* is therefore viewed with a critical eye. Hodson herself even stated that the choreography only includes eighty-five percent of the original. See Jordan, *Stravinsky Dances*, 443.

and then took great care to ensure that the dancers carried out the movements he had given them with great precision. She recounts the following in her memoirs:

Nijinsky's creation of a novel structure in the choreography and his innovative movements and poses demanded an exactness of execution to the minutest detail. All this was strange and unfamiliar to the artists brought up in the tradition of the old classical ballet [...]. Sometimes when they were so tired and exhausted by the long rehearsals they refused altogether work with Nijinsky. [...] Often Diaghilev had to intervene, mostly to calm Nijinsky, who did not understand that certain of his created "pas-movements," which he demonstrated with such ease in a huge jump, were not possible for the average dancer. Nijinsky was indignantly angry, believing that this inability of an artist to repeat the "pas-movement" after him was a deliberate act of obstruction, and he accused the artists of wanting to sabotage his ballet. I remember one particular incident during the early rehearsals in Monte Carlo. Nijinsky demonstrated a "pas-movement" in the choreography to the musical count of $5/4$. During his huge leap he counted 5 (3 + 2). On count 1, high in the air, he bent one leg at the knee and stretched his right arm above his head, on count 2 he bent his body towards the left, on count 3 he bent his body towards the right, then on count 1, still high in the air, he stretched his body upwards again and then finally came down lowering his arm on count 2, graphically rendering each note of the uneven measure. Nijinsky worked in this manner on each measure, accenting the beats for the artists, and would not proceed in his composition until he obtained from each artist the exact execution.⁶⁵

There are no records attesting to Nijinsky having also read Georg Fuchs's "Der Tanz." However, his approach to the choreography, as described here by his

65 Bronislava Nijinska, *Early Memoirs*, ed. and trans. Irina Nijinska and Jean Rawlinson (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1992), 460. Claudia Jeschke, who has studied Nijinsky and his movement language and notation in detail, notes the following in particular on the notation: "Read as choreographic philosophy, Nijinsky's notation concentrates on the body's capability for rhythmic and motoric coordination. His physiological manner of dealing with time and energy approaches the understanding of rhythm found in Stravinsky's ballets scores [...]. Nijinsky's interest in dance notation can be generally subsumed among the conditions of control and vitality, as it combines an analytical, systemic, and thus controlled view of corporeality and action with newly invented movements generated through the perception of physical and cultural energy. [...] He manipulated the body in time (music) and space with his dance notation, treating it as a movement machine and thereby opening up the dancing body to distinctively different and individual kinetic utterances that resist aesthetic codification." Claudia Jeschke, "'... retrouver la source de variété ...': Nijinsky's Choreographic Textures," in *Avatar of Modernity*, ed. Danuser and Zimmermann, 142–51.

sister, indicates that he was informed about the content of the text as well as about Fuchs's demands for the new dance forms. By translating every note value into a movement, he satisfied at least the second of Fuchs's demands regarding the new dance forms, namely to develop the movements from the rhythms of the music.

Nijinsky's examination of the ideas and theories of the other reformer discussed above, Gordon Craig, provides a clear indication that the choreographer also attempted to satisfy the first demand in developing the choreography for *The Rite*—in other words, to have the movements arise from the unconscious inner being.

Nijinsky and Craig

The aforementioned influential patron of the arts Harry Graf Kessler reports in his diary on several meetings between Nijinsky and Craig in Paris and London—here too with increased frequency in the time between 1911 and 1913. Both Diaghilev and Nijinsky repeatedly discussed the idea of using marionettes in theater with Craig.⁶⁶ Kessler recounts the following in his diary about the meeting on 23 February 1913—only a good three months before the premiere of *The Rite*:

Craig thought two extreme points of view were tenable: One could use living actors and respect them, build up the entire direction on their given individuality, or on the contrary [...] use dead material, marionettes, and then dictate everything. [...] Nijinsky replied that he wanted living actors, but that he wanted to work on them until they obeyed like dead material. It was not possible to reach an agreement; apparently the English and the Slavic temperament are at odds here.⁶⁷

It was mentioned already at the outset that all of the reformers sought a new form of drama and therefore also discussed the role of the actor: Whereas

66 For a detailed account of the connections between Nijinsky, Diaghilev, Fuchs, and Craig, see Zickgraf, *Igor' Stravinskij's Theater der Zukunft*, 151–60.

67 Harry Graf Kessler, diary entry from February 23, 1913, edited in Kessler, *Das Tagebuch*, vol. 4, 869: "Craig meinte zwei extreme Standpunkte seien haltbar: man könne lebendige Schauspieler verwenden dann sie respektieren, die ganze Regie auf ihrer gegebenen Individualität aufbauen, oder im Gegenteil [...] totes Material, Marionetten benutzen und dann alles vorschreiben. [...] Nijinsky erwiderte, er wolle lebendige Schauspieler, aber sie so lange bearbeiten, bis sie wie totes Material gehorchten. Eine Einigung war nicht zu erzielen, offenbar streiten sich hier das englische und das slawische Temperament."

Fuchs only argued that the new actor should follow the model of the dancer, Gordon Craig wanted to do away with actors entirely and replace them with marionettes, because only then could he—as the director—receive absolute power and control over what happened on stage.

In the debate between Craig and Nijinsky documented by Kessler, it becomes clear that Nijinsky did not merely adapt or criticize Craig's (complex) theories and ideas. Rather, the conflict between the two was a result of the fact that Nijinsky countered Craig's concept by advancing his own (extended) concept: according to Kessler, the former wanted to work on living actors until they obeyed him completely. Hence, Nijinsky rather intended to put the actors into a state of unconsciousness or will-less obedience through his choreographic instructions. Through this state, he could then do what he wanted with the living actors or dancers—much like Craig with the (lifeless) marionettes. The only question at this point is what was behind this intention.

Against the background of Fuchs's demands for new forms and the assumption that Stravinsky planned with *The Rite* to realize them for the first time, however, the answer is clear: With will-less, living dancers, Nijinsky could not only control how the rhythms emanating from the music were reflected in the movements he designed; he could also ensure that the dancers' movements arose from their unconscious inner being. These were his dual intentions for the new dance forms he had devised. And they were both necessary with regard to achieving the communal intoxication of the dancers and the audience.

Conclusion

If one regards the extant sources on *The Rite* in relation to both music and dance and additionally considers the closely knit network of people, ideas, places, and the connections between them within which *The Rite* originated, it quickly becomes evident that Stravinsky aimed to realize new dance forms with *The Rite*. The intention of these new dance forms was for the dancers' movements to arise out of their unconscious inner being and to reflect the rhythms emanating from the music. The state of intoxication manifested in this way in the dancers was then also to be transferred to the audience, culminating in a communal intoxication encompassing everyone present. It may be concluded from this intention that with *The Rite*, Stravinsky aimed to create his very own “theater of the future,” in line with an idea under discussion all across Europe as well as Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is therefore possible

that "perhaps the greatest theater scandal of the twentieth century"⁶⁸ can be explained by the fact that Stravinsky came into contact around 1911 with important proponents of the "theater reform around 1900." On the night of *The Rite's* premiere, at any rate, key demands of this movement found their way from Germany via Russia to Paris—to the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.

68 Brandstetter, "Grenzgänge II," 17: "vielleicht größte Theaterskandal des 20. Jahrhunderts."

