

The Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes 1909–1929 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum runs from 25 September 2010 – 9 January 2011. To book tickets go to www.vam.ac.uk/diaghilev

The tour will take about two hours.

The Covent Garden area of London has a long history of theatre and it is therefore no surprise that it was the part of London in which the Ballets Russes were centred. London was one of the most important cities for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, with the dancers giving almost half of all their performances there. This walk is designed to take in the theatres in which they performed and other key landmarks on the way. Much of the area has changed since the 1920s although at times it is only the shop front rather than the full facade of the building that has altered.

The V&A's major autumn exhibition explores the world of the influential artistic director Serge Diaghilev and the most exciting dance company of the 20th century, the Ballet Russes. Diaghilev combined dance, music and art in bold ways to create 'total theatre'. A consummate collaborator, he worked with Stravinsky, Chanel, Picasso, Matisse and Nijinsky. Diaghilev's dramatic performances transformed dance, reawakening interest in ballet across Europe and America.

LONDON WALK

DIAGHILEV AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE BALLETS RUSSES 1909-1929

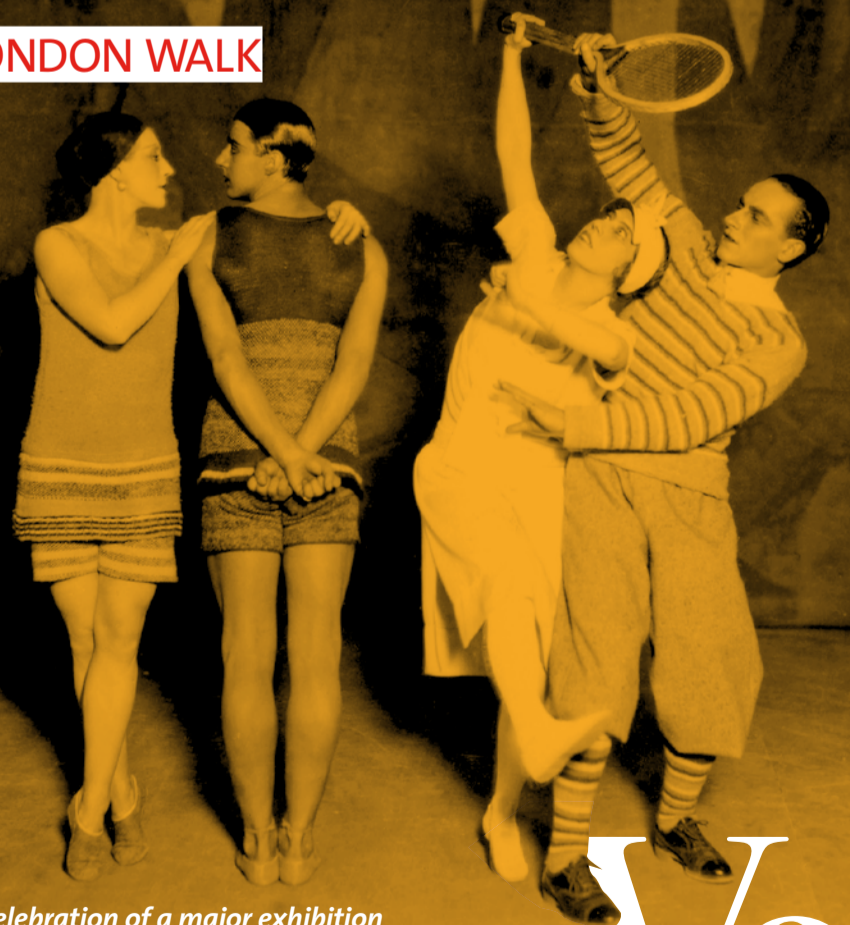


1. Covent Garden Underground Station
2. Floral Street
3. Royal Opera House
4. The Theatre Royal Drury Lane
5. Brodie & Middleton & Aldwych Theatre
6. Waldorf Hotel
7. Lyceum
8. The Savoy Hotel
9. Maiden Lane
10. Charing Cross Hospital
11. London Coliseum
12. Great Earl Street
13. Shaftesbury Hotel
14. Princes Theatre & Holborn Baths
15. Anello and Davide
16. Palace Theatre & Cyril Beaumont's Bookshop

17. Alias
18. Gamba
19. Clarkson's
20. Stagg & Mantle
21. His Majesty's Theatre
22. Carlton Hotel
23. Trafalgar Square
24. National Gallery
25. National Portrait Gallery
26. Arthur Franks
27. The Alhambra & The Empire
28. The Hippodrome
29. Eric Wollheim's Office
30. St Paul's, The Actor's Church
31. Burnet & Co. Ltd.
32. Gertrude Sims & L. Gustave

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In celebration of a major exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum 25 September 2010–9 January 2011

www.vam.ac.uk/diaghilev

Lydia Sokolova, Anton Dolin, Bronislava Nijinska, Léon Woizikovsky in costumes for *Le Train bleu* designed by Chanel. Photo: Sasha 1924

V&A

1. TOUR STARTING POINT: COVENT GARDEN UNDERGROUND STATION

2. On exiting the station TURN RIGHT and then LEFT again into **Floral Street**. After passing under the distinctive 2003 Bridge of Aspiration that links the new Royal Ballet School with the Royal Opera House, note the tall wooden doors on the right to allow sets to be delivered to the stage. Just further along Floral Street on the left is a slate plaque that reads: 'In this building Pablo Picasso painted the backdrop for Diaghilev's ballet *Le Tricorne* 1919'. This was the paint shop hired to enable Vladimir and Elizabeth Polunin to paint the sets for the Ballets Russes between 1918 and 1920. Here not only was the front cloth for *Le Tricorne*, (The Three-Cornered Hat) created but also the cloths for André Derain's *La Boutique fantasque*.

3. At the end of Floral Street TURN RIGHT into Bow Street where you see the façade of the **Royal Opera House**. Although most of the auditorium looks similar to the theatre Diaghilev knew, the front of house and backstage has improved radically. Early in the twentieth century the carriageway under the entrance portico still existed. The Royal Opera House is usually open to visitors to view front of house (10.00–15.30). Backstage tours may be booked.

It was at the Royal Opera House in June 1911 that Diaghilev's Company made its London and British debut during the celebrations for the coronation of George V. The Ballets Russes presented two seasons at the Royal Opera House in 1911 (the autumn season seeing Vaslav Nijinsky and Anna Pavlova dance together for the last time) as well as appearing there in 1912, 1913, 1920 and 1929. When Diaghilev's Ballets Russes performed at Covent Garden they were always a part of seasons including opera and dance. The only exception to this is in their final (1929) season, when after the first week there was a continuous run of ballet.

Leaving the Royal Opera House, continue down Bow Street and TURN LEFT into Russell Street. At the corner of Russell Street and Catherine Street you will see the façade of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

4. **The Theatre Royal Drury Lane** was used for seasons promoted by Joseph Beecham pre-War (with his son Thomas conducting some performances) in 1913 and 1914. These combined opera and ballet and thanks to Beecham's investment Sir Thomas acquired sets and costumes for the opera ballets *Le Coq d'or* (designed by Goncharova) and *Le Rossignol* (Benois). It was at Drury Lane that Nijinsky's production of *The Rite of Spring* received its four London performances in 1913.

5. After looking at the facade continue along Russell Street and TURN RIGHT into Drury Lane where, after the theatre, you will pass the theatrical and artists suppliers at number 68. The shop, now **Brodie & Middleton and Russell & Chapple**, is still a manufacturer and supplier of 'Theatre drapes...paints, pigments and brushes'. The Ballets Russes used Brodie & Middleton as a significant supplier. At the end of Drury Lane TURN RIGHT into the Aldwych. Because of the large cast involved, the stage of the **Aldwych Theatre** was used for rehearsals of Nijinsky's *Rite of Spring* here when the production was performed at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

6. & 7. TURNING RIGHT into the Aldwych you pass the **Waldorf Hotel** where Diaghilev and Nijinsky stayed during the busy 1911 coronation season. Continue to the end of Aldwych and TURN RIGHT into Wellington Street where you will see the **Lyceum**. The Lyceum was used by the Ballets Russes for a 'popular season' sponsored by Lord Rothermere of the *Daily Mail* in 1926. This included the very English ballet set to music by Lord Berners and inspired by 'Toy Theatre', *The Triumph of Neptune*.

8. Follow the theatre round by TURNING LEFT into Exeter Street and then TURN LEFT into Burleigh Street and RIGHT into The Strand. Across the road located between The Strand and the **Victoria Embankment Gardens** is **The Savoy Hotel** which was where Diaghilev preferred to stay in London. Diaghilev also frequently dined at the Café Parisian at the Savoy and was said to hold court overlooking the Thames. Other leading members of the company stayed here and it was in the ballroom here in 1919 that the Spanish dancer, 'Felix', performed for Tamara Karsavina into the early hours of the morning.

9. From The Strand TURN RIGHT into Southampton Street and then LEFT into Maiden Lane. It was in a now destroyed studio in the basement of Chandos House, **Maiden Lane** that Léonide Massine worked in 1920 with the dancer Lydia Sokolova (Essex-born Hilda Munnings) on the second version of *The Rite of Spring* and coached another British dancer Vera Savina (real name Vera Clarke) in *Les Sylphides*. Massine fell in love with Savina and married her, leading to his dismissal from the Company.

10. Continue along Maiden Lane which turns into Chandos Place. At the triangle on your left enclosed by Chandos, Agar and King William IV Streets stood **Charing Cross Hospital** (it is now a police station). When on 30 July 1920 Diaghilev cancelled the last night of his Covent Garden season because the theatre management had not fulfilled their financial agreement, the bouquets of flowers sent to the dancers and company were donated to Charing Cross Hospital.

11. At the end of Chandos Place passing along William IV Street TURN RIGHT into St Martin's Lane where on the right you will find **The London Coliseum**. Built as a flagship variety theatre by impresario Oswald Stoll, the Coliseum was the theatre that really 'saved' the Ballets Russes in 1918, when at the end of the War Diaghilev was finding it impossible to find work. The company gave 7 months of performances (one ballet a programme – twice daily) which provided time to build up and restore the repertoire. Diaghilev resented performing in variety but in the 1910s and 1920s the Coliseum was the main theatre for dance in London.

12. From the Coliseum walk up St Martin's Lane, Upper St Martin's Lane and into Monmouth Street reaching Seven Dials. One of the streets off on your right is Earlham Street. This was formerly **Great Earl Street** and it was in a warehouse at the far end that sets were stored during the Coliseum season, as there was little room backstage and it was impossible to keep their full repertoire there.

13. Continue north along Monmouth Street – formerly Great Andrew Street. On the right was located **The Shaftesbury Hotel** and it was in the club room on the first floor overlooking Shaftesbury Avenue that the dancers rehearsed at the end of the War, when Drill Hall in Chenies Street was occupied by the army. The Club room had inadequate changing facilities. The piano for rehearsal was played by Mrs Lucas whose son Leighton was employed as a dancer. Leighton Lucas would later become a key composer for films (and arranger of the music for Kenneth MacMillan's ballet *Manon*). He was proud that his early 'tutors' included the great composers and conductors of the Ballets Russes.

14. At the end of Monmouth Street TURN RIGHT into Shaftesbury Avenue to the Shaftesbury Theatre which in the 1920s was known as the **Princes Theatre**. This was probably the least successful London venue for the Ballets Russes and, although it presented musical theatre, there was insufficient room for all the company. The extras and some of the corps de ballet had to dress at the Holborn Baths (now the Oasis swimming pool) and had to cross the road to the theatre in their costumes. Diaghilev's season sponsored by C.B. Cochran was presented there in 1921 and the Company returned to perform there in 1927.

15. Retrace your steps along Shaftesbury Avenue having crossed the road and then TURN RIGHT up St Giles Passage to Compton Street. Here, at the rear of the Odeon (formerly the Saville Theatre) stood a 'tiny house' where an Italian boot-mender named Anello worked. Character dancer Léon Woizikovsky asked him to repair his dancing boots. He did this so well and became so interested in dancers' shoes that he was given others to mend, leading eventually, with the patronage of the Ballets Russes, to the setting up of **Anello and Davide**.

16. TURN LEFT into Stacy Street and RIGHT back into Shaftesbury Avenue to Cambridge Circus, dominated by the **Palace Theatre**. In the variety programmes at the Palace Anna Pavlova presented her early London seasons, and Nicolas Legat first danced in London. Most notably Vaslav Nijinsky premiered his short-lived company at the Palace in 1914.

From the Palace Theatre you can see left along Charing Cross Road where several of the bookshops that occupied the area in the twentieth century remain, hinting at the atmosphere of the street in the past. It was on the right hand side, now a modern arcade, that **Cyril Beaumont's Bookshop** stood at 75 Charing Cross Road. This was where dancers/choreographers visited to catch up with the news, and fans purchased souvenirs (books, prints, figures etc).

17. Turn LEFT into Moor Street, LEFT into Old Compton Street and then RIGHT into Greek Street. These streets were full of suppliers of shoes, fabrics, trimmings and other necessities for a ballet company. Continue to Soho Square where number 36 was the home of the well established firm of theatrical costumiers, **Alias** who made costumes for many of the ballets premiered in London including *Le Tricorne* and *Barabau* and made new costumes for others such as *Schéhérazade*.

18. Leave Soho Square by Carlisle Street and then TURN LEFT into Dean Street. This area was full of shops that supplied the company and at number 46 (roughly where the Groucho Club is today) was another firm of dance shoe makers, **Gamba**.

19. Continue down Dean Street and cross over Shaftesbury Avenue into 'Chinatown' and Macclesfield Street. TURN RIGHT into Gerrard Street and continue to Wardour Street. Diagonally at the end to your right was **Clarkson's** who supplied wigs and props and make up for the Ballets Russes. The building is easily distinguishable by its clock with the words 'Costumier' and 'Perruquier' on its face and a blue plaque stating 'Willy Clarkson 1861–1934 Theatrical Wigmaker lived and died here'. If you go to the doorway (of what is now a Chinese restaurant) you will see on the left the words 'Sarah Bernhardt laid the foundation stone of this building 1904' and the right 'Sir Henry Irving laid the coping stone of this building 1905'.

20. TURN LEFT down Wardour Street passing on the left the old site of **Stagg & Mantle**, which occupied the block bound by Leicester Square, Leicester Street and Sidney Place. Stagg & Mantle supplied many of the fabrics for the Company.

21. You will have crossed Coventry Street into Whitcomb Street and TURN RIGHT into Pantom Street and at the end TURN LEFT into The Haymarket where you may wish to cross the road to reach (Haymarket, now **His Majesty's Theatre**) which was used for two seasons – in the summers of 1926 and 1928 – the latter included a week of ballets performed to vocal scores.

22. Next to His Majesty's stood the **Carlton Hotel** where in July 1913 a party was held for the Ballets Russes. Note the blue plaque on New Zealand House which now occupies the site.

23. At the bottom of The Haymarket cross back over the road and TURN LEFT into Pall Mall East and continue to **Trafalgar Square**. On Armistice night the ballet had been appearing at the Coliseum. Joining the celebrating crowd after the performances were not only the dancers but Diaghilev and Massine who had been dining with Osbert Sitwell and were heading for a party off The Strand.

24. If you have time enter the **National Gallery** by the main entrance from Trafalgar Square. Go up the steps to the half-way landing where you will see Boris Anrep's mosaic of *The Awakening of the Muses* (1933). The Diaghilev ballerina Lydia Lopokova represents Terpsichore, the Muse of Dancing.

25. TURN LEFT into St. Martin's Place where the **National Portrait Gallery** includes a range of portraits of Ballets Russes dancers. These include busts of Lydia Lopokova, Alicia Markova and Marie Rambert, and a rich collection of photographs including those by Bassano.

26. Bear LEFT into Irving Place (previously Green Street) passing the site at number 14 of a supplier of ballet shoes, **Arthur Franks**.

27. And TURN RIGHT into Leicester Square. Here you come to the Odeon on the site of the **Alhambra** (the building behind on Charing Cross Road is known as Alhambra House). The Alhambra was decorated in a Moorish style and presented the Ballets Russes for two very important seasons. In the summer of 1919 it was a scene of great triumph with the three-month season during which *La Boutique fantasque* and *Le Tricorne* were premiered. The company returned in 1921 with *The Sleeping Princess*, the 5-act ballet (*The Sleeping Beauty*) with which Diaghilev hoped to rebuild his fortunes with a long run. Although this remains the 3rd longest run of a ballet in London, Diaghilev had vastly overspent and ended up bankrupt.

On the north side of Leicester Square is **The Empire**, now a cinema and casino but built in 1884 as a theatre. Like the Alhambra, the Empire had a long history of dance and was the scene of the follow-on autumn 1919 season. For most of its existence the Empire was a variety theatre and it was here in October 1924 that a quartet of dancers from the 'Russian State Ballet' appeared, including George Balanchine and Alexandra Danilova, who were shortly to become leading figures in the Ballets Russes.

28. From Leicester Square TURN RIGHT along Cranbourne Street to Charing Cross Road. On the left corner was the **Hippodrome** (another variety theatre at which Russian dancers performed in 1910 and 1911 rivalling Diaghilev's Ballets Russes).

29. TURN RIGHT into Charing Cross Road where **Eric Wollheim**, Diaghilev's post-War London agent, had his offices at number 18.

30. TURN LEFT along Cecil Court, cross St Martin's Lane diagonally to the LEFT and almost immediately turn into Goodwin Court, a charming old lane with many theatrical associations. At the end TURN RIGHT into Bedfordbury and LEFT at Bedford Court and TURN LEFT at Bedford Street to **St Paul's, The Actor's Church** which contains memorial plaques to many performers, including the Ballets Russes dancers Stanislas Idzikovsky, Tamara Karsavina, Marie Rambert and Anton Dolin, composer Constant Lambert and bookseller and historian Cyril Beaumont.

31. Leaving the church yard, go back to Bedford Street and then continue along Garrick Street. At the far end (on the opposite side from the Garrick Club) at No. 22 stood **B. Burnet & Co. Ltd.** Here, amongst other things, the decoration of lozenges was painted onto the tights Idzikovsky wore for the role of Harlequin in *Le Carnaval*.

32. At the corner TURN RIGHT into Long Acre. Over the road at 142 stood the workshop of **Gertrude Sims**, a costumier who was used by the Ballets Russes in the 1920s largely to remake costumes for dancers new to roles. Almost opposite at 10 was the wig-maker **Madame Gustave** who supplied the wigs for *Le Tricorne* and *La Boutique fantasque*.

Continue along Long Acre to return to Covent Garden Station where the tour ends.