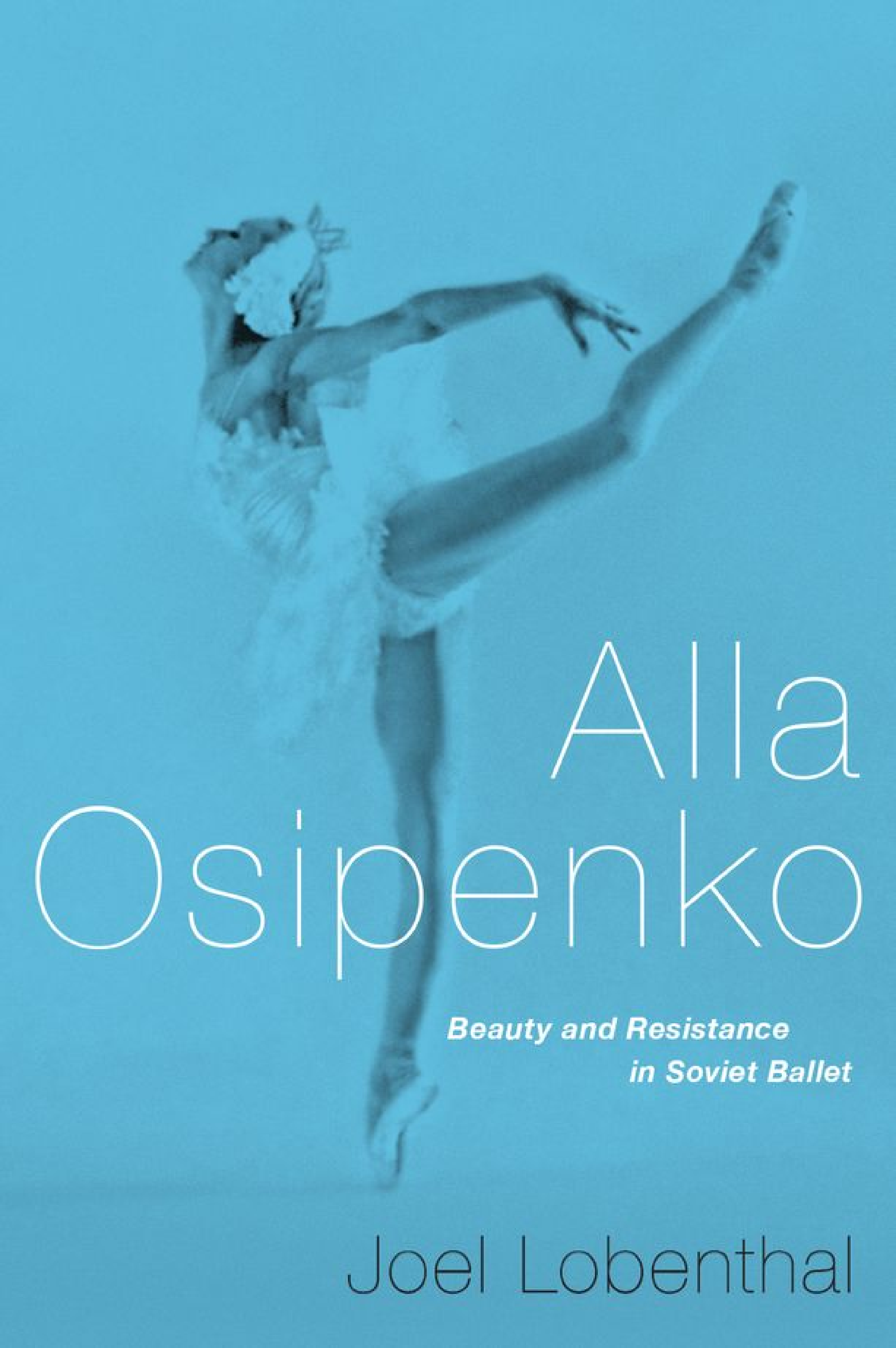
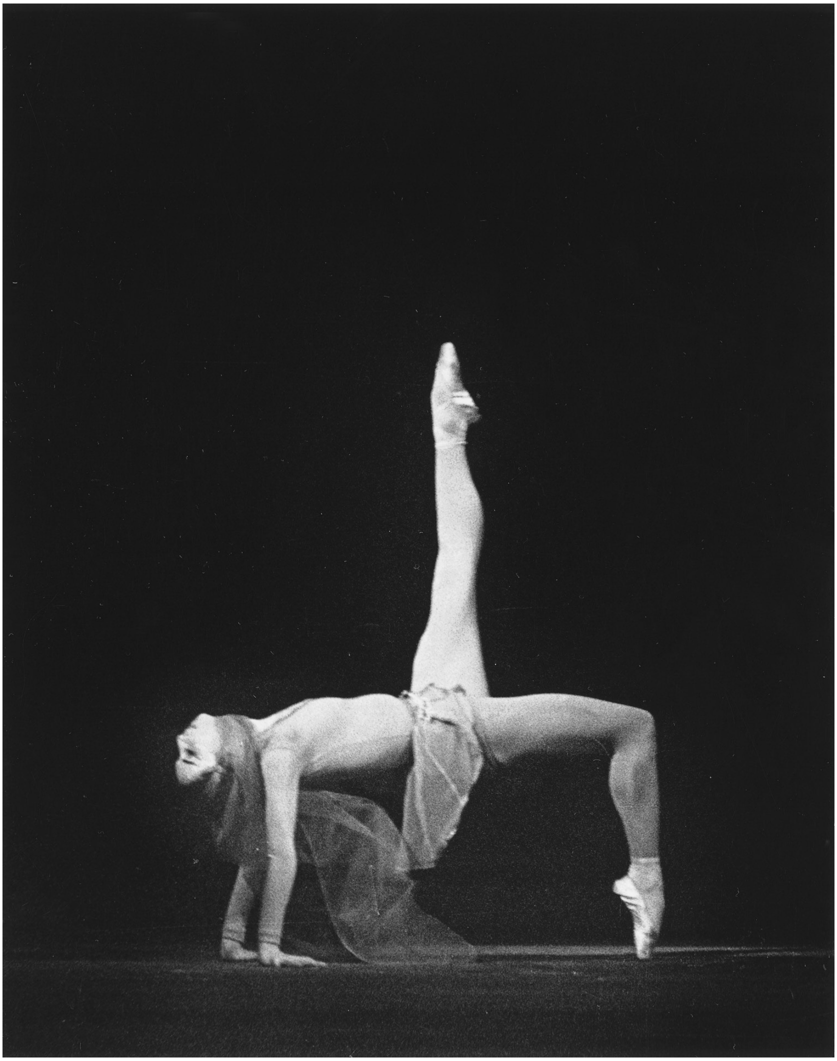


# Alla Osipenko

## Beauty and Resistance in Soviet Ballet

Joel Lobenthal

Alla Osipenko



*The Legend of Love.*
Photo by Nina Alovert.

# Alla Osipenko

## Beauty and Resistance
## in Soviet Ballet

JOEL LOBENTHAL

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*To my aunt Dr. Lila Gordon (1932–2010), born in New York City five months before Osipenko was born in Leningrad. After my first interview with Osipenko in Hartford in January 1998, I drove down to Lila's home in Westchester. An accomplished pianist, from childhood she had nevertheless adored ballet above all other art forms. Together we watched the cassette tape Osipenko had given me. "This is the most gorgeous dancer I've ever seen in my life," was Lila's response.*

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excesses, for decades now. Family and friends too numerous to mention have also been willing to learn.

And I am always grateful to the members of the Soka Gakkai International for their amazing perspective on life.

## Alla Osipenko

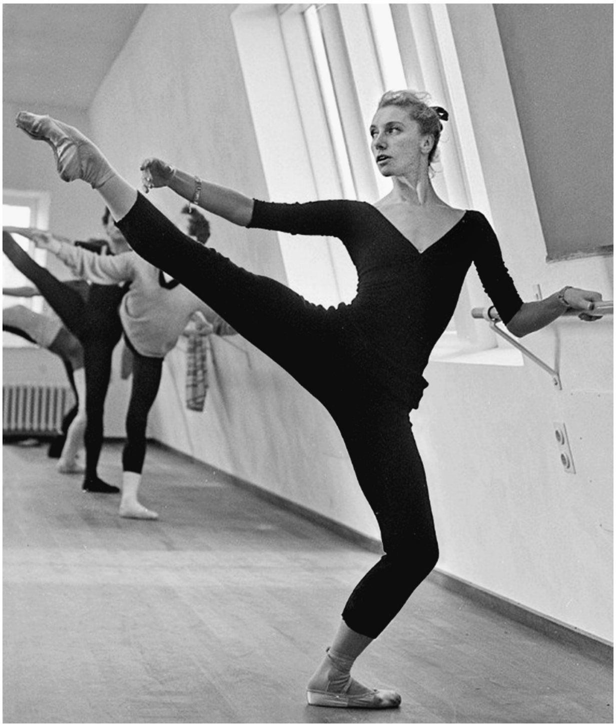
# Introduction

FIFTEEN YEARS BEFORE I met her in 1998, Alla Osipenko's name was already veiled in mystery, spoken with reverence by Soviet émigrés in New York. A prima ballerina of Leningrad's Kirov ballet during the 1950s and '60s, she was an outlaw, a dissident—politically, personally, and aesthetically.

In Soviet society, the operative word in artistic doctrine was "content," defined to mean dramatic, thematic, ideological appropriateness. After the Revolution, ballet was pressured to conform to programmatic utility. But Osipenko's movement often seemed to function abstractly, existing for its own mandate of beauty and eloquence. Ideal balletic proportions made her superlatively equipped to proclaim the beauty of ballet for ballet's sake. Her movement heeded a kinetic utility that was highly personal. "The more abstract the choreography," Gennady Smakov writes in *The Great Russian Dancers*, "the more the various facets of her personality broke through it." Choreographers had sought her out: she had been at the vanguard of ballet in her time and place.

She had been equally iconoclastic personally. Osipenko's sharp tongue and candid independence elicited frequent friction with Soviet and Kirov authorities. Osipenko was a key figure in the Soviet cultural diplomacy of the 1950s and '60s, and as well, a victim of it. She was the first generation of Kirov ballet stars to enchant Europe, winning Paris's prestigious Pavlova Prize on her initial visit there in 1956. But flouting Soviet rules for personal and political conduct soon found her all but quarantined in Russia.

From my perspective, Osipenko's mystery was deepened by the political and cultural divide existing at that time. Despite her success in Europe, in the West there was very little material available about her. But the void in the historical record where Osipenko's presence should have been was a crucial testament as well to the willed obscurity to which she had been consigned by



On tour in Holland, February 1968.
Anefo photo collection, National Archive of the Netherlands. Jac. de Nijs / Anefo.

Soviet officialdom. Smakov's book was almost as far as we could go toward bridging the balletic divide of those years.

Thirty years ago, her émigré friends and admirers had no idea that the Soviet Union was on the verge of dissolution. But when perestroika remade the political map once again, it meant that for Osipenko, now in her mid-fifties, the gates were finally springing open. In 1988 she went to London to assist her old friend, colleague, and 1970 defector Natalia Makarova stage *La Bayadère* for the Royal Ballet. In 1989, Rudolf Nureyev, who was then artistic director of the Paris Opera Ballet, invited her to teach there where they had danced together triumphantly during the Kirov's 1961 visit, immediately before his own defection. In 1989, Osipenko moved to Italy. In 1995 she was invited to join the faculty of the Hartford Ballet school in Connecticut.

She finally had the opportunity to see the United States, and I had the chance to meet her. I was very excited at the prospect of profiling her for *Ballet Review*. Not only was I finally going to meet the legend, but I would be scoring a journalistic scoop of sorts: I would be the first American to write about her.

The legend was, of course, a woman of flesh and blood. Sixty-five when I first met her in January 1998, Osipenko remained thin as a ballerina. Her patrician features bore the weight of years and many sorrows; her blue eyes were sparkling, ironic, vulnerable. I had wondered if she would be difficult to thaw, but she had a lot on her mind and a lot she wanted to say. She let me borrow a number of her own photos during our first meeting. I was impressed above all by two pictures of her rehearsing *Swan Lake* with the Kirov in London in 1970. Here was confirmation of all that had been written about the unsurpassed beauty of Osipenko's line. She also gave me a video of herself performing various pas de deux. Her performance of the *Swan Lake* adagio alone would have been enough to establish her as one of the century's great ballerinas.

And yet, Smakov had been right: liberated from characterization, the full palette of Osipenko's movement became even more starkly displayed. On the same tape was footage of her in practice clothes, performing a stylized sequence of classroom exercises. She never moved away from the barre, never danced in the round, but watching her body stretch I felt that I was seeing the whole range of ballet's expressive possibilities demonstrated.

After five interviews with Osipenko, my *Ballet Review* article on her appeared in the Spring 1998 issue. I decided to continue interviewing her. I hoped that someday I would be able to produce a book such as this one.

I visited her successively in two modest apartments in West Hartford. The furniture was modern and impersonal: there was none of the warm patina of Russian antiques with which she had been surrounded in St. Petersburg. But her apartments were personalized with many books and many photos. She was a gracious hostess. Her little dining room table always held plentiful nibbles, and sometimes she made lunch. "I'm learning how to cook," she told me, "because I cook when you are here. I never have." There was a sizable Russian émigré community in West Hartford, and Osipenko regularly frequented the two Russian food stores there. For my part, I enjoyed introducing her to culinary novelties from a Middle Eastern specialty store on Farmington Avenue.

She taught daily at the Hartford Ballet's school and sometimes coached the company, which performed regular but infrequent seasons. She did not find most of her work especially stimulating. There were some talented dancers in the Hartford Ballet, but at the school the students were not up to the level of those with whom she'd worked in Russia. She was working for money, but when I asked her what she would be doing if she had limitless funds, she admitted, “I would work. I would teach ballet.” For her, ballet is, was, and would always be a passion.

As she spoke, anger about injustices and indignities of the past would sometimes flare, and on occasion some bitterness. But never out of reach was her sense of humor. This could be wry and acerbic but was often simply droll. I was astonished when she said she had never dreamed that ballet competitions here in America were just as corrupt as anywhere else. She had arrived with the same idealized view of the United States shared by so many of the Soviet artistic elite of her generation. It seemed as if their vision of us had indeed become more romanticized in inverse proportion to the amount of anti-America disinformation disseminated by their government.

Now she was forced to grapple with the paradoxes of our own country and system. America was not simply the land of the free and the home of the brave. We began our meetings just as a national tragedy was unfolding: the persecution and eventual impeachment of President Clinton over the fact that he had lied about his affair with Monica Lewinsky. “If I spoke English I’d be defending Clinton right now,” she told me. “It’s nobody’s damn business,” she said about Clinton’s indiscretions. “God forbid they would kick him out because of the scandal.”

Month after month we continued our conversations in the presence of different translators. First there was Elena, a former student of hers. But the bulk was done by a professional we had somehow located named Roman. By the time Osipenko left Hartford in June 2000 we had conducted nearly forty interviews.

She was perfectly capable of criticizing with detachment the actions of her younger self. “Your tongue is your enemy,” she had been told since childhood. She had certainly been her own worst enemy on more than one occasion. Rival ballerinas in the company, as well as administrators of both the Party and the Kirov, had known which buttons to push, how to provoke her so that she spoke caustic truth to power and thus reaped the whirlwind. But she made it clear that she had been at odds not only with the Soviet system but with all restrictions, beginning with familial authority.

It was Nikita Khrushchev’s “thaw” of the late 1950s and early 1960s that had enabled Osipenko and her artistry to reach Western audiences. In 1998, when I first interviewed her, perestroika was allowing Russia another period of relative relaxation in state censorship—and its consequent indoctrination of the population in self-censorship. That thaw has since hardened ominously, but even then it was clear that her account of events was often the only one that could be consulted. She spoke about things that others would prefer not be talked about at all. In years to come I observed firsthand many of her colleagues and interviewed some of them. Few talked as bluntly as she. She was sardonic and often rueful about her transgressions. For me there was no doubt that she was a great woman as much as a great artist, nonetheless so for being by her own admission stubborn, opinionated, and often intractable. And for me she was all the more admirable for being able to make those admissions.

Osipenko had indulged herself; she had not always been discreet. She looked back at her sometimes outlandish indiscretions with awe at her boldness and an unclouded awareness of the price she had paid. And yet, when considering whether she would have done it all over again, she conceded that indeed she probably would have.

# PART ONE

## 1

## A Storied Family

DURING THE SOVIET era, Osipenko had been careful to divulge as little information as possible about her family, for the rarified manners of ballet had been to her an extension of a world she already knew. By contrast, many of her colleagues were children of peasant or working-class families, who had benefited from the class-leveling recruitment demanded by the Soviet government. But Osipenko was born on June 16, 1932, to a family that belonged to the pre-Revolutionary elite. Not only was her parents' lineage aristocratic, but many in her family had spent time living in Europe, grounds for suspicion as the grip of super-nationalism and xenophobia gained hold in the Soviet Union.

Only as perestroika began did Osipenko feel relaxed about discussing her ancestors. She was proud of them and they had remained an active context for her life. Her mother, grandmother, and great-aunt had lived with her until they died; Osipenko's four husbands had never been able to dislodge them.

But over the years there had been much conflict between her and her family, above all between Osipenko and her mother, Nina Borovikovskaya. Nina was descended from a noted eighteenth-century artist, Vladimir Borovikovsky, who painted portraits of fashionable Petersburg and court society. Nina's paternal grandfather was Alexander Borovikovsky, a senator in the Russian Duma established in 1905. He had been an advisor to Czars Alexander III and Nicholas II.

Osipenko understood the senator to have been a man of honor and progressive beliefs, who helped many, and apparently he looked for similar high standards in his colleagues. His contemporary, poet Nikolai Nekrasov, incurred his disfavor, accused by the senator of hypocrisy; Borovikovsky

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Osipenko's grandfather, Alexander Borovikorsky.
Photo courtesy Alla Osipenko.

claimed that the poet's actions fell short of the noble sentiments expressed in his poetry.

Alexander himself also wrote poetry that often concerned religion. He had four children, Vera, Olga, Alexander, and Sergei. A woman named Maria Zhigacheva had been brought into the family at age sixteen as a companion and chaperone for his daughters. The younger Alexander fell in love with Maria. Osipenko never knew anything about Maria's family, only that she had been raised in a remote area.

Senator Borovikovsky bought the premises of a French photographer at 63 Nevsky Prospect so that his son Alexander could establish a business as a portraitist. He also bought a large apartment on the same floor to house the entire family. Alexander and Maria had two children: Osipenko's mother Nina was born in 1903, her brother Valentin in 1906. But Maria and Alexander remained unmarried. He was a womanizer. As an adult, Osipenko had once been given a video entitled "Athens Nights." Why did that title ring a bell, she wondered—until recalling that decades earlier she had been told of a club by that name in pre-Revolutionary Petersburg. "Athens Nights" was proverbial then for "orgies," and her grandfather had gone to the eponymous club for "a little poetry, a little kissing." Needless to say, Maria "did not like it at all."

Maria Borovikorskaya with Nina and Valentin.
Photo courtesy Alla Osipenko.

Years later, Nina told Osipenko that in 1909, when Nina was six and Valentin three, the senator called his son in and insisted that he now legitimize his union and his offspring. But Maria was angry that the idea of the marriage had come only at her father-in-law's insistence and seemingly for the benefit of her children, although she was genuinely loved by her husband's family. And so, ironically, it was the marriage that led to an irrevocable breach between Alexander and Maria. "She became just ice," said Osipenko. Photographed with her two young children, she looks stern indeed whereas her husband Alexander is hot-eyed and sybaritic.

When the Revolution came, the Borovikovskys put their jewelry and other valuables into a bank vault in roiling St. Petersburg and fled to their country estate in Ukraine, which they now shared with the local peasantry. The family remained there for six years. Army after army overran the countryside. The village was forced at intervals to barricade itself, hiding livestock, nubile women, Jews—whichever sector was to be marauded by the expected arrivals. One time a rampant battalion of Bolsheviks seized the senior Alexander and were leading him off to be executed when a delegation of peasants raced after them and saved his life by attesting that he was their friend and comrade.

Around 1924, after the civil war that followed the Revolution had finally been won by the Reds, the Borovikovskys returned to Leningrad. They found that the new regime had all but stripped them naked. The contents of their safety deposit box had been nationalized. They retained their apartment, but the government had seized the photo studio. They had no money, no jewelry. Osipenko's grandfather had no job. Initiated in 1921, the New Economic Policy now allowed a wide scale of private commercial activity. He was able to open a small photo shop in the former premises of his own photo studio, catering to the demand for passport photos.

Alexander despised the Soviets. A colleague of his had prospered by making photographic portraits of the czar's family, but after the Revolution he kept his business thriving by photographing Lenin and other Bolshevik bigwigs. "My grandfather wanted to go and kill him." He would not let his son Valentin participate in Soviet society. Instead he took over his education himself; Valentin's profession became painting Christmas decorations and puppets. Valentin was handsome in face and figure.

In Ukraine, Nina had been wooed by the sons of noble families. But Osipenko believed that her mother, snub-nosed and pretty, who continued to speak French and play the piano, suffered in the alien environment of Soviet Leningrad no less than did Alexander. Perhaps it was in the spirit of rebellion that Nina became engaged to Evgeni Osipenko, who also lived with his family in the same building. They met through mutual friends who were neighbors. Evgeni's family was descended from the upper echelons of Ukrainian society but he was an employee of the Soviet state, a police detective, although privately his views were not doctrinaire. He had a striking and dramatic appearance, with high flat cheekbones and a brooding look. Certainly, however, Alexander's disapproval of the marriage could not have come as a surprise to Nina. She and Evgeni moved out of 63 Nevsky into their own apartment, until her father forgave them and Nina returned to the Borovikovsky ménage with her husband.

Evgeni's brother Georgi was a professional actor, but Evgeni by temperament was equally a performer. The role of Sherlock Holmes suited him to perfection. When off on an investigation, Evgeni might not show up at home for two or three weeks at a time. If Nina knew where he was, she would slip away to him with a care package of food. Sometimes when a fugitive was apprehended, Evgeni and his colleagues would be given a cash bonus, which they would spend instantly in disorderly carousing, thus finding themselves locked up temporarily in a police brig, a *gauptvacht*.

The birth of his daughter Alla sent Evgeni on another celebratory bender, and so it was her grandfather Alexander who brought Osipenko home from the hospital. A relative who had emigrated had left a chaise from which the family fashioned a bed, surmounted by a canopy, for their newest arrival. But while Alexander took regular portraits of Osipenko until she was two, he could not cajole a real smile out of her. The most he could elicit was just the barest hint of one.

By this time, Alexander had found a way to palliate his rage at the Soviets: morphine, a refuge supplied by friends who worked in a hospital. Osipenko was only three when he died in 1935, but she recalled him bedridden with respiratory problems. Sunlight irritated him, probably because of his drug use, and Osipenko remembered that a large cupboard had been moved between his bed and the window. Sometimes she would go in to visit him.

"I would ask, 'Does this hurt here?' He would say, 'Yes.' I would say, 'I'm hurting here, too.'"

"Cats are hurting, dogs are hurting," her grandfather assured her, "but Alla's pain is going to go away."

The rest of the family were somewhat more sanguine than he about the Soviet government, seeing it as a continuation of monarchist absolutism. "We have lived through five czars," her grandmother and great-aunt told her: two Alexanders, one Nicholas—as well as Lenin and now Stalin.

They somehow were able to remain largely enclosed in their own niche. Many of their Old World customs, beliefs, and routines continued. Almost miraculously, their apartment was never subdivided into communal quarters. They retained their six rooms plus kitchen. Osipenko's grandmother Maria observed a quite literal detachment from the new society: she rarely left the apartment, running her household with the assistance of the same maid she'd had before the Revolution.

Apartments in their building continued to be heated by a wood stove. The courtyard was jammed with piles of logs waiting to be hauled by the super to the individual apartments. Well after World War II, merchants continued to deliver fresh dairy products to the apartment. A tankard of milk strapped on her back, a woman trudged up five flights of stairs to Maria's home. If for some reason she couldn't make it, she would send someone in her place, much to Maria's displeasure, since she was partial to a cow owned by her steady supplier.

Maria's sister Anna Grekova, who was divorced from her merchant husband, and childless, also came to live with them. While Maria was thrifty,

Anna Grekova.
Photo courtesy Alla Osipenko.

Anna was generous. She would visit the nearby farmers' market and sample produce to her heart's delight, then purchase more than Maria had authorized. She and Maria frequently squabbled about Anna's alleged profligacy.

In 1937, Osipenko's father Evgeni was working in a prison camp in Tashkent in Central Asia. For a time Nina and Alla were living there with him. As Osipenko eventually came to understand it, he was drunk one day and simply could not keep his mouth shut any longer. On horseback he charged into the marketplace, spraying the sky with bullets and mouthing imprecations against the Soviets. The next day he was in jail, and was later sentenced to five years in prison. Nina divorced him soon after. Stalin's purges were in full swing, and guilt by association was a fundament of the Soviet judicial process. Nina would have had every reason not to remain connected to a convict.

Osipenko's father was absent, yet his family was nevertheless a major influence on her. Evgeni's two brothers lived with their mother in the same bulding. Boris was an engineer. Georgi was an actor at the Alexandrinsky theater on Rossi Street, to which Osipenko was taken frequently. The repertory included the "small tragedies" of Pushkin: *Boris Godunov, The Stone Guest, Mozart and Salieri*, as well as much more recent works such as Bulgakov's *Days of the Turbins*, which dramatized the flight of the White Army after its defeat in the civil war. Bulgakov's play starred the great Nikolai Cherkasov, one of many noted actors of the day whose work she became acquainted with as a child.

Before the Revolution, her mother had auditioned for the Imperial ballet school. Nina told Alla that prospective students needed to visit the homes of leading ballerinas and show themselves prior to a vote. Nina needed eleven votes to be admitted and she had secured only ten, a disappointment that continued to fester. As an adult "she tried not to even think about ballet," Osipenko said. Nina did take her to see ballet occasionally, but as a child she went more frequently to the opera. When she was five, she and great-aunt Anna sat in the *bel étage* at the once–Imperial Mariinsky opera house—now under Communism renamed Kirov—to hear Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Tale of Tsar Saultan*. Hysterical tears were her reaction to the Tsar's young son being unceremoniously tossed into a barrel with his mother and set adrift on the high seas. She pleaded that he be fished out. That performance ended prematurely for Osipenko when Anna escorted her from the theater.

Osipenko asked her mother if her actual father was still working in Tashkent. But neither her mother nor her grandmother wanted to talk about him, and what little they said was not complimentary. "Oh, don't ask me!" Nina said. "He was just a drunk." But great-aunt Anna was much more charitable. "Don't listen to them," she told Alla. "He was wonderful, very wise, a nice, kind man," loved by his colleagues. "Of course he drank a little after work—he was tired—but not until he passed out."

Of all the household, Osipenko was closest to Anna, who was the family conciliator, and not only concerning Evgeni. Even as a girl, Osipenko preferred to share her adventures and problems with Anna. In photos, her face, full-lipped and rather sensuous, makes her seem much more approachable than her sister Maria.

Anna ran a dressmaking business for private customers out of the apartment, assisted by two young women, Vera and Panya. Anna told Osipenko that once during a screaming argument with Nina and Maria, her father had seized Anna's sewing machine and thrown it out the window. Later he offered Anna profuse apologies, but she'd told him not to worry, she understood exactly: "It's so difficult to deal with them when they scream."

As far as Osipenko could remember, her grandmother Maria never once kissed her. Well into Osipenko's adulthood, if she fell short of expectations, Maria would refrain from a direct rebuke but would make her disapproval crystal clear with an aloof pronouncement: "Too bad, too bad, Lalasha." The reprimand still echoed in Osipenko's ears. Maria's relationship with her daughter Nina was also reserved. "We are not tender in our family," Nina told Osipenko.

Nina worked as a typist in different offices, among them the central distributor for the city's supply of firewood. She liked her job and was good at it. "She would have learned to use the Internet in one second," Osipenko said. Nina went out to work in the morning and by the time she came home in the evening Osipenko was already asleep. Sunday was her favorite day of the week because it was the one day that she could spend time with her mother. Nina took her to a restaurant on Nevsky named Krisisana, treating her to fried potatoes with meat cutlets—her favorite meal. And yet Osipenko found it difficult all her life to tell her mother what was going on in her life and what her problems were.

Like so many bourgeois Petersburg apartments, theirs had been built with both front and kitchen entrances. Intimates were instructed to ring three times. A single ring therefore signaled the approach of a stranger, and always it was possible that he was a "Finance Inspector" come to shut down the private businesses that were prohibited after the New Economic Policy was curtailed in 1928. Anna would sound an alarm to Vera, Panya, and Alla, and they would carry the bolts of fabric up to the attic until the coast was clear. (Soviet rules and regulations changed so rapidly that Anna was apparently unaware that in 1936, as Sheila Fitzpatrick reports in *Everyday Stalinism*, a number of individually owned businesses, among them dressmaking, had been re-legalized, provided that they did not distribute to the open market but worked only at the request of private clients.)

It was Anna's business that contributed most to the family's income. She outfitted her great-niece in high style. Clients customarily brought Anna three yards of fabric from which to fashion a dress, but occasionally Anna would ask them for three and a half. "I have little Alla and she needs a new dress." One summer, Osipenko went with a girlfriend, Lala, to spend the summer with Lala's family in a rustic village. After more than fifty years of separation, Osipenko was contacted again by this same Lala. "I remember when you were in our village," she told Osipenko."You ran in your dress and I saw your underwear was made from the same fabric." Later, she would be considered the best-dressed girl in the Leningrad ballet academy.

Osipenko was close to her governess Lidia, a girl who began tending her when Osipenko was nine months old. She stayed with the family for twenty-five years, and her daughters became friends as well. But Lidia was only in her late teens when she began working for them. Told to take Osipenko out for a three-hour walk, she preferred instead to sneak her into a movie. Then they'd walk around after the film. "What a strange thing!" Maria remarked. "Lalasha walked for three hours," and in the stinging, damp city, still managed to come home pale.

The Borovikovskys did not approve when Nina's brother Valentin, now in his early thirties, fell in love with a woman older than he who had a fifteen-year-old son. Osipenko recalled Nina and Valentin storming out of a room in the Nevsky Prospect apartment. His face was bloodied. "You see what you did to me!" he screamed. But Nina was stony. For a long time he didn't live with them and was forced to fend for himself for the first time in his life. Sometimes he would appear at the service entrance of the apartment, pleading, "Lalasha, could you bring me something to eat?"

Knowledge of the purges was widespread through Soviet society, Osipenko believed, but looking back she thought that her parents' generation didn't understand or believe how one man could be responsible for so much terror. "They always were doubting, questioning themselves, 'Is he really *that* bad?' "

But like most families in the Soviet Union, the Borovikovskys were directly affected. Osipenko described Luka, Maria's half-brother, as "a professional revolutionary." He had been jailed after the February 1905 Revolution. At that time, Anna came to Senator Borovikovsky and asked for help. He bribed a prison chief who made it possible for Luka to escape. Luka was sent to Helsinki, then called Helsingfors, and given the name of someone there who would help him find refuge. He was supposed to write the information inside his cuff for easy reference, but he didn't. On the night train to Finland, officials asked for his documents and asked who he was going to see. He couldn't remember. They arrested him and, discovering that he was a fugitive, put him back in prison. Several days later, the prison chief appeared at their apartment and insisted on returning the bribe.

Luka was later freed, lived for a time in Germany, and then returned to Moscow. But Stalin had begun to cannibalize the original Bolsheviks, the true believers, veterans of the 1905 and 1917 revolutions. When several of his friends were arrested in 1937, Luka was actually upset that he had *not* been seized together with former comrades. When he was finally arrested, his daughter Valentina, Nina's cousin, told Osipenko years later that he retained his revolutionary fervor to the last. Now truth would be proven, his comrades released, slanders unmasked. It was all just a misunderstanding. But he was accused of spying for Germany and was shot. Not until years later, however, was the family able to receive confirmation of his fate.

Something of the same fervor, with perhaps a touch not just of reckless but of self-sacrificing zeal, would imprint Osipenko's later conficts with Kirov and Communist Party officials. "Alla wanted to show the truth," a classmate at the Leningrad ballet academy would declare.

Osipenko's mother worked late, and it was Maria who would put little Alla to bed—talk and read to her. Maria invented her own story, a fable about a gray shirt imbued with magical properties. Serial installments arrived nightly and concluded with "to be continued." Sometimes Maria would lie down next to Alla and sometimes drift off in the middle of her narrative. Osipenko would shake her awake and demand to know what came next. But it was her mother who woke her every morning at seven. Most of the year her room was cold and dark; she would slip into her clothes under the blankets.

Osipenko was a tomboy who bridled at any kind of restriction. She liked small children, liked playing with them, liked being in their company. Her earliest career aspiration was either to have twelve children or to be a teacher in kindergarten. Next, she wanted to be an archaeologist and conduct