

# THE LIFE AND BALLETS OF LEV IVANOV

Choreographer of *The Nutcracker*  
and *Swan Lake*



ROLAND JOHN WILEY

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FOR  
MARY CLARKE

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# Preface

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In life and art, Lev Ivanovich Ivanov was an enigma. No artist ever made a stronger claim to posterity's respect for creating half a masterpiece: *Swan Lake*, with Ivanov's memorable images of the swan queen Odette and her companions, stands at the centre of any canon of classical ballet. Perhaps only *The Nutcracker*, another work which Ivanov created half of, outstrips it in popularity, having become a seasonal ritual in England and America.

Yet few artists of such capacity have remained so obscure, an obscurity which deepens the enigma. No egotist, he, in contrast to the stereotype of the great choreographer. Beloved of colleagues and esteemed in balletic St Petersburg for his modesty, Ivanov was a constant and reassuring presence in the Petersburg ballet during turbulent times, without becoming a celebrity. Rarely during his lifetime did the press refer to him with more than a passing compliment. Nowhere in over 5,000 surviving letters did Tchaikovsky, his collaborator on *The Nutcracker*, mention his name. Nor did master choreographer Marius Petipa, who worked with Ivanov for more than fifty years, pay him the least heed in written accounts. Important dancers referred to him but occasionally in reminiscences, while Ivanov's own memoirs are laconic and naïve. He wrote mostly of his early years and virtually nothing of his compositions; *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker* are not even mentioned. As for Ivanov's choreography, which appears to have been improvised, no cache of technical documents, such as Petipa left, has been publicly identified. That one ever existed is in doubt.

Ivanov's obscurity would be difficult to illumine were modesty its only cause. He was prey to circumstance, spending most of his near-anonymous dancing career in an age of star choreographers and ballerinas. As that career waned Ivanov, long eligible for a pension, might well have dropped from view had circumstance, now defined by Petipa's illness, not charted a new course for him as 'second balletmaster', his official title. Still subordinate to ballerinas and other choreographers, Ivanov now was more a public

figure than before, and we can glimpse him through his public record. That is what the present study seeks to do: to review his life, describe his works, and sample their reception. I will include, fully aware of their incompleteness, lists of works which Ivanov composed and performed. In sum, this is an appreciation, a first book about Ivanov.

Politics were also a circumstance to which Ivanov was prey. In his life he suffered for being Russian in an art dominated by foreigners. For most of the time since his death in 1901, the documents of Ivanov's life have been available principally to Soviet scholars. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, time may have rendered moot any judgements and polemics about its scholarship, and yet some reprise of Soviet doctrine helps explain the problems of writing about Ivanov.

That reprise must begin with the observation that imperial-period specialists, apart from passing reference, did not write about Ivanov. Their neglect is subject to a range of explanations, which Soviet writers reduced to a single cause: Ivanov was a victim of rank, calculated prejudice from his administrative seniors. The late Yury Iosifovich Slonimsky, dean of Soviet ballet historians before his death in 1978, took this stance in his book, *Masters of the Ballet*.<sup>1</sup> One needs read no further than the first line of his essay about Ivanov to sense the problem: 'Lev Ivanov—second balletmaster, rehearsing old ballets with the artists, Petipa's soundless shadow . . .'. Slonimsky's inference is that Ivanov was the Russian serf to Petipa's grasping, foreign overseer. The distortion here is passive: Slonimsky makes nothing of Ivanov's contractual responsibility to be Petipa's deputy, which is precisely what the Director of Imperial Theatres, Ivan Alexandrovich Vsevolozhsky, specified in 1885 when recommending Ivanov for this lucrative, career-extending job. Vsevolozhsky made his point without the least condescension: Petipa was 67 years old, overworked, frequently ill, and needed help. By then the elder man had forty-five ballets on the imperial stage to his credit, including the iconic *The Pharaoh's Daughter* and *Le Roi Candaule*, and the still-performed *La Bayadère*, whereas Ivanov, at 51, had none. How could there not have been a difference in stature between them, and how could we not expect their contemporaries to notice? Slonimsky's disparaging critique of Petipa forms a dissonant counterpoint to the recollections of Ivanov's and Petipa's acquaintances.

Active distortions are no less troubling. Slonimsky's remark that 'Even a few years ago Ivanov was not recognized as the producer of *Swan Lake*' (p. 188) is unruffled mendacity at its most transparent, refuted by abundant documentary evidence. In fairness we must acknowledge that *Masters of the*

<sup>1</sup> Yu[r]ii Iosifovich Slonimskii, 'Lev Ivanov', in *Masters of the Ballet* [Leningrad: 'Iskusstvo', 1987] [hereafter: *SlonMasters*], 171–99; trans. Anatole Chujoy in *Dance Perspectives*, 2 (Spring 1959), 8–41.

*Ballet* was published in 1937 when a harsh political climate prevailed in the Soviet Union, and that in later essays Slonimsky revised some of his immoderate statements. All the same, his remains the only substantial study of Ivanov available before now in English.

Vera Mikhailovna Krasovskaya's account of Ivanov in *Russian Ballet Theatre of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century* is more comprehensive than Slonimsky's,<sup>2</sup> but she too advances an undifferentiated stereotype of Ivanov the downtrodden. A disparity in salary between Petipa and Ivanov as teachers in the theatre school in 1858 cannot stand as evidence of discrimination at a time when Petipa's accomplishment far outweighed Ivanov's, and no account is taken of teaching effectiveness.

Ivanov's symbiotic relationship with Petipa was the central dilemma of his professional life, and for historians a source of vexation and mischief. It makes Ivanov difficult to assess outside Petipa's shadow, yet if assessed within it, his virtues are subject to challenge for their autonomy, his defects subject to dismissal on the basis of Petipa's selfish motives. The inextricability of the two men's contributions to the same ballet, given the lustre of Petipa's reputation and the obscurity of Ivanov's, deepens the enigma surrounding Ivanov still more.

Soviet historians have played upon this distinction to Petipa's disadvantage. Is it a valid approach? Ivanov was hardly petulant, nor inevitably meek. He was assertive in his correspondence with administrative superiors, never overlooking an opportunity to remind them of his worth. For reasons not altogether clear, he was in debt for long periods of time, yet his pleas for money are no less demeaning than the ones Petipa made, and the possibility is never broached that petition of this kind, in a broader perspective, was routine in an age before artists' management.

As Petipa's assistant, Ivanov did work on projects which Petipa had begun, subject to Petipa's final approval. This is comparable to Joachim Raff's drafting or orchestrating the compositions of Franz Liszt, and yet music history does not make of Raff the martyr that ballet history makes of Ivanov. The celebrated ballerina Mathilde Kshesinskaya wrote that Petipa reigned with almost limitless power from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, and 'subordinated to himself even such a remarkable balletmaster as Lev Ivanov', reiterating a few pages later that 'the ballets of even such a remarkable balletmaster as Lev Ivanov had to receive Petipa's approval'.<sup>3</sup> But is this even a criticism, and if so, is it just? If Petipa invari-

<sup>2</sup> 'Lev Ivanov's Creative Journey', *Russkii baletnyi teatr vtoroi poloviny XIX veka* [Russian Ballet Theatre of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century] (Moscow and Leningrad: 'Iskusstvo', 1963) [hereafter: *Krasovskaya*], 337-401.

<sup>3</sup> Matil'da Kshesinskaya [Mathilde Felixovna Kshesinskaya], *Vospominaniya* [Recollections] (Moscow: 'Artist, Régisseur, Theatre', 1992) [hereafter: *Kshesinskaya*], 107, 122.

ably 'corrected' Ivanov's work (Slonimsky's term), the nocturnal scenes of *Swan Lake* might never have survived. Petipa acknowledged the perfection of the first lakeside scene as it stood (implying thereby the damage which his intervention would have caused it) when he embarked on the celebratory scenes of that ballet. We know this from an artless note he made in his sketches: 'The second act is already composed.'

In his later years Ivanov did in fact suffer financial and personal problems. Yet no quarter is given in the literature to the theatre direction, which by any rational standard would have been justified in questioning Ivanov's work performance, but which rarely turned him away when he requested money, continued to support him after it was clear that he would never repay his debts, and gave money to his family for years after his death as they repeatedly based claims for additional remuneration on the strength of his legacy. Such generosity is unthinkable in today's artistic world.

Seeking a well-rounded picture of Ivanov is complicated by the present state of his official service record.<sup>4</sup> This fundamental source, located at the State Central Historical Archive in St Petersburg, is now sequentially foliated but curiously inconsistent in the type and amount of information it contains. There is no indication of Ivanov's matriculation into the theatre school, and no entry of any kind between March 1852 and February 1858, between June 1863 and October 1864, or between November 1893 and 18 September 1895. It strains credibility to believe that a highly paperwork-oriented bureaucracy found nothing to report about Ivanov in these periods, in particular that his staging of the second act of *Swan Lake* in 1894 for a concert in memory of Tchaikovsky, a deed of historical importance accomplished under trying circumstances, was too insignificant to warrant mention. It contains nothing, moreover, about Ivanov's reputed alcohol addiction (except by inference from doctors' reports late in his life), or about trips away from St Petersburg which we know from other sources that he took. Myriad routine documents—residence permits, reports of departure and return from official travel, which one would expect to clutter such a record—are also in short supply. Is this to be explained by sloppy administration, the legacy of a revolution and two world wars, or wilful tampering?

From the unilateral Soviet and understated imperial approaches to Ivanov a reasonable conclusion emerges: there were dimension and texture in Ivanov's life. It was not marked by absolutes. A reassessment of Ivanov is thus in order, which tempers outsized Soviet claims and supplements the major imperial-period histories. Among other tasks, his professional ac-

<sup>4</sup> St Petersburg, Historical Archive, 497.5.2106, 'On the Service of the Chief Régisseur of the Ballet Troupe Lev Ivanov, 10/II/50 to 11/XII/01' [hereafter: Ivanov Service Record].

accomplishment must be clarified. Slonimsky's attribution of twelve productions to Ivanov in *Masters of the Ballet* is inaccurate; a tally based on imperial-period sources increases that number to fifteen, accepting Slonimsky's questionable attributions and not counting two extensive opera ballets, for Alexandre Borodin's *Prince Igor* and Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mlada*. Two of Ivanov's new ballets were produced for the imperial summer theatre in the village of Krasnoe Selo (of which Slonimsky says nothing), where he worked from 1885 to 1900, and where his revivals of earlier repertoire—partial or complete stagings of Petipa, Saint-Léon, and Perrot—defy accurate count.

Implicit in his accomplishment is a fresh view of Ivanov's relationship to the theatre direction. Why would a 'second balletmaster', hired as an assistant, be entrusted with such responsibilities as those just described, including sole authorship of two expensive grand ballets, if the direction considered him inferior or untrustworthy?

Ivanov the person also invites closer scrutiny. He commands interest as a creator and a member of the community of Russian artists, though little apart from his memoirs illuminates his personality. Should he have become a composer, as some of his contemporaries maintained in light of his prodigious musical talent? Was the inflexible classification of students in the theatre school responsible for misdirecting his vocation? Why did not Ivanov press, even as a student, to become musically literate? What of his family life, of being married to a talented artist whose star was rising faster than his was? Reducing myth to man may demote veneration to respect, and make us acknowledge that Ivanov, no less than his situation, was responsible for both good and bad that he encountered in professional life.

Some notes on procedure: dates are Old Style, twelve days behind the Western calendar in the nineteenth century, thirteen in the twentieth. Frequently cited sources are identified with an abbreviation after the first reference; these are listed at the beginning of the book. Russian names in the text have been spelled without English counterparts of the Russian soft sign, except where this is considered standard (i.e. Prokofiev, not Prokof'ev). Christian names have been changed to their English or French counterparts, whichever seemed better suited to English prose (e.g. Claudia for Klavdia, Alexandre for Aleksandr); occasionally a Russian name has been kept (Pyotr instead of Peter, Fyodor instead of Theodore). Forenames not present in a quoted text have been supplied within square brackets, when known, on first occurrence of a name, and thereafter included as appropriate to the context.

Many individuals and institutions have contributed to the efforts of data collection, translation, and the editing of the present volume. Research for this book was supported in part by grants from the International Research

and Exchanges Board (IREX), with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the United States Information Agency, and the US Department of State, which administers the Soviet and East European Training Act of 1983 (Title VIII). In the United States grateful thanks are also extended to the Library of Congress; the Harvard University Libraries, especially to the Harvard Theatre Collection and Dr Jeanne T. Newlin; and to the late George Verdak of the Indianapolis Ballet.

In Russia I am indebted in St Petersburg to Mr Igor Stupnikov and to the patient and helpful staff of the Library of the Academy of Sciences, the State Historical Archive, the St Petersburg Museum of Theatrical and Musical Art, the St Petersburg Theatrical Library, the Central Music Library, the Library of the All-Russian Theatre Society, and the Public Library named after Saltykov-Shehedrin; in Moscow to the Russian National Library and the most accommodating staff of its Newspaper Division at Khimki, to the Central State Archive of Literature and Art, and to the Library of the Bolshoy Theatre.

With special thanks I acknowledge Mrs Natalia Challis of Ann Arbor and Mr Clement Crisp of London for reading the manuscript and, as ever, making helpful suggestions, Professor William P. Malm, Mrs Elizaveta Yakovlevna Surits of Moscow for lively discussion and much archival assistance, Mr Valery Vladimirovich Gubin and Mrs Inessa Sergeevna Preobrazhenskaya, the Director and Chief Manuscript Archivist respectively of the State Theatre Museum named after A. A. Bakhrushin in Moscow, for placing the truly extraordinary resources and thoughtful staff of that institution at my disposal, for their unfailing collegiality, and for innumerable other kindnesses.

Closer to home, I wish to thank my wife Jitka for enduring the strains and privations of bookwriting yet again.

Questions about Ivanov will doubtless remain after this essay is finished. Meanwhile, there is much to tell.

ROLAND JOHN WILEY

*Ann Arbor, Michigan*

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# Abbreviations

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- Borisoglebsky* M. Borisoglebskii, *Proshloe baletnogo otdeleniya Peterburgskogo teatral'nogo uchilishcha, nyne Leningradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Khoregraficheskogo uchilishcha. Materialy po istorii russkogo baleta* [The Past of the Ballet Division of the Petersburg Theatre, now the Leningrad State Choreographic School. Materials Relating to the History of Russian Ballet], 2 vols. (Leningrad: Leningrad State Choreographic School, 1938–9).
- Demidov* A[leksandr Pavlovich] Demidov, *Lebedinoe ozero* [Swan Lake]. *Masterpieces of the Ballet* (Moscow: 'Iskusstvo', 1985).
- Fille* *La Fille mal gardée*, Famous Ballets, no. 1, ed. Ivor Guest (London: The Dancing Times, 1960).
- Gaevsky* Vadim Moiseevich Gaevskii, *Divertissement* [Divertissement] (Moscow: 'Iskusstvo', 1981).
- Ivanov Service Record* St Petersburg, Historical Archive, 497.5.2106, 'On the Service of the Chief Régisseur of the Ballet Troupe Lev Ivanov, 10/II/50 to 11/XII/01'.
- Khudekov* S[ergei] N[ikolaevich] Khudekov, *Istoriya tantsev* [The History of Dances], vol. iv (Petrograd, 1918).
- Krasovskaya* Vera Mikhailovna Krasovskaya, *Russkii baletnyi teatr vtoroi poloviny XIX veka* [Russian Ballet Theatre of the Second Half of the XIX Century] (Moscow and Leningrad: 'Iskusstvo', 1963).
- Kshesinskaya* Matil'da [Feliksovna] Kshesinskaya, *Vospominaniya* [Recollections] (Moscow: 'Artist, Régisseur, Theatre', 1992).
- Kshesinsky* Ios[if] Fel[iksovich] Kshesinskii, 'Several Extracts from my Memoirs Touching on Reminiscences of Marius Iv[anovich] Petipa', 2 vols., Moscow, Theatre Museum named after A. A. Bakhrushin, *fond* 134, no. 2.

- MarPet* *Marius Petipa. Materialy, vospominaniya, stat'i* [Marius Petipa: Materials, Recollections, Articles], ed. Yu[rrii Iosifovich] Slonimskii *et al.* (Leningrad: 'Iskusstvo', 1971).
- Pleshcheyev* Aleksandr [Alekseevich] Pleshcheyev, *Nash balet* [Our Ballet], 2nd, supplemented edn. with foreword by K. A. Skal'kovskii (St Petersburg: Th. A. Pereyaslavtsev and A. A. Pleshcheyev, 1899).
- Shiryayev* A[leksandr] V[iktorovich] Shiryayev, *Peterburgskii Balet. Iz vospominanii artista Mariinskogo teatra* [The Petersburg Ballet: From the Recollections of an Artist of the Maryinsky Theatre], ed. Yu. O. Slonimskii (Leningrad: All-Russian Theatre Society, 1941). NB: this volume was typeset, but the only surviving copy in this form seems to be a photocopy preserved in the St Petersburg Public Library Is70 G-3/21.
- Skalkovsky* K[onstantin] A[pollonovich] Skal'kovskii, *V teatral'nom mire; nablyudeniya, vospominaniya i rassuzhdeniya* [In the Theatre World: Observations, Recollections, Discourses] (St Petersburg: A. S. Suvorin, 1899).
- SlonChai* Yu[rrii Iosifovich] Slonimskii, *P. I. Chaikovskii i baletnyi teatr ego vremeni* [P. I. Tchaikovsky and the Ballet Theatre of his Time] (Moscow: State Music Publishers, 1956).
- SlonMasters* Yu[rrii Iosifovich] Slonimskii, *Mastera baleta* [Masters of the Ballet] (Leningrad: 'Iskusstvo', 1937).
- Solyannikov* N[ikolai] A[leksandrovich] Solyannikov, 'Recollections', ed. N. A. Shuvalov; literary working-out by Nonna Solyannikova (typescript). St Petersburg, Library of the St Petersburg Branch of the All-Russian Theatrical Society, Inv. no. 35-R2.
- Tchaikovskiy-Jurgenson* [Petr Il'ich Chaikovskii and Petr Ivanovich Yurgenson], *P. I. Chaikovskii. Peregiska s P. I. Yurgensonom* [P. I. Tchaikovsky: Correspondence with P. I. Jurgenson], 2 vols. (Moscow and Leningrad: State Music Publishers, 1938, 1951).
- Tchaikovskiy's Ballets* Roland John Wiley, *Tchaikovskiy's Ballets* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).
- TMB 205* Moscow, Theatre Museum named after A. A. Bakhrushin, *fond* 205, archive of documents pertaining to the work of Marius Petipa.
- Vaganova* [Agrippina Yakovlevna Vaganova], *Agrippina Yakovlevna Vaganova. Stat'i, vospominaniya, materialy* [Agrippina Yakovlevna Vaganova: Articles, Recollections, Materials] (Leningrad and Moscow: 'Iskusstvo', 1958).

*Vazem*

Ekaterina Ottovna Vazem, *Zapiski baleriny Sankt-Peterburgskogo Bol'shogo teatra, 1867–1884* [Memoirs of a Ballerina of the St Petersburg Bolshoy Theatre, 1867–1884] (Moscow and Leningrad: 'Iskusstvo', 1937).

*Wiley*

Roland John Wiley, trans., *A Century of Russian Ballet: Documents and Eyewitness Accounts 1810–1910* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

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I

The Life of  
Lev Ivanovich  
Ivanov

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# 1

## Ivanov's Memoirs

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To all appearances, Lev Ivanovich Ivanov was a quiet, introspective man. Unlike his elder colleague Petipa, or any number of famous dancers, he never granted an interview with the press. An obligation to speechmaking came with his promotion to second balletmaster, when he would salute the artist of the hour at benefit performances. Even here emotion or shyness could render him mute. Thus, at the farewell performance of ballerina Evgenia Sokolova,

When *Trilby* was over the curtain swept up and the moment came to honour Evgenia Pavlovna Sokolova by her colleagues, artists, and deputations from the companies of the other Imperial theatres.

On behalf of the ballet troupe balletmaster M. I. Petipa turned to the celebration's recipient with a brief, sincere, and touching greeting.

Then the balletmaster L. I. Ivanov began to speak, but broke off his address from emotion, begging E. P. Sokolova's pardon, and presented her a wreath from the ballet company.<sup>1</sup>

If Ivanov was not given to public speaking, neither did he write much about himself. The regulation whereby artists whose contracts were expiring had to request a renewal from the Director of Imperial Theatres produced a number of letters by Ivanov in which he emphasized his value to the company. He did not shrink from this task, but apart from communications to administrative superiors, the only significant writing by Ivanov about himself came in his memoirs.

In *Masters of the Ballet* Slonimsky persistently refers to Ivanov's memoirs as a 'diary' [*dnevnik*], which suggests that they were written systematically, day by day over a long period. Nothing about their organization and content supports the use of this term. Ivanov's manuscript appears to have been improvised (his widow referred to it as a 'draft'). The date on the title-

<sup>1</sup> *Peterburgskii listok*, 26 Nov. 1886, p. 3.

page, 2 February 1899, suggests a connection with his half-century anniversary of service to the theatre, publicly celebrated later that year. Moreover, Ivanov may have written it at the behest of historian Alexandre Pleshcheyev, for when Pleshcheyev published part of the text two days after Ivanov's death, an editor mentioned it being written in Ivanov's own hand, 'and before the last benefit performance given by him to A. A. Pleshcheyev, who gave it to us'.<sup>2</sup> The manuscript passed to the St Petersburg Museum of Theatrical and Musical Art in 1940 as part of the collection of theatre historian Lyubov Dmitrievna Blok.

In the absence of this source we would know virtually nothing about Lev Ivanov's life up to the age of 26. His service record contains but one document pertaining to the period before his career officially began in 1850. A certification from the Imperial Foundling Home in St Petersburg indicates that Ivanov's birthdate was 18 February 1834, that he was taken into the home on 22 January 1835, and was returned to his mother, Tio Adamova, on 25 November 1837.<sup>3</sup> Yet even this unexceptional bureaucratic report offers a hint of Ivanov's ancestry. In imperial times Russian children were named after saints in the Orthodox calendar, where a Georgian saint bears the name 'Shio' (or possibly 'Tio'—from an alternative reading of the Russian letters). Ivanov's mother was probably not Russian. Hers is a Georgian name, possibly a variant of 'Theodora', a saint much venerated in Georgia. This would make Ivanov, on his mother's side, a forebear of Balanchine in nationality as well as art.

Ivanov's memoirs speak of his devotion to the artistic community he is addressing. He dedicates them to his comrades and co-workers, his unstated purpose to confirm the continuity between his and later generations. So strong is this sense of community—of artists linked by training and tradition—that we need not puzzle over why he makes so little reference to foreign celebrities. Implicit is the solidarity of Russian dancers

<sup>2</sup> 'The Autobiography of L. I. Ivanov (My Little Reminiscences)', *Peterburgskaya gazeta*, 13 Dec. 1901, p. 5. They were published again, still incomplete, in the journal *Sovetskii balet*, 32 (Jan.–Feb. 1987): 37–48.

<sup>3</sup> Ivanov Service Record, fo. 16. Without citing a source, the compiler of a history of the St Petersburg/Leningrad Theatre School writes: 'There is information that Ivanov up to the age of 8 was brought up in a merchant family. Then he was put in a private boarding-school, where he spent two years, in the course of which he was matriculated into the Petersburg Theatre School' (see M. Borisoglebskii, *Proshloe baletnogo otdeleniya Peterburgskogo teatral'nogo uchilishcha, nyme Leningradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Khoregraficheskogo uchilishcha. Materialy po istorii russkogo baleta* [The Past of the Ballet Division of the Petersburg Theatre School, now the Leningrad State Choreographic School. Materials Relating to the History of Russian Ballet], 2 vols. (Leningrad: Leningrad State Choreographic School, 1938–9) [hereafter: *Borisoglebsky*], i. 191). The source not cited is, of course, Ivanov's memoirs; by omitting to mention this Borisoglebsky implies that Ivanov was not brought up in his own family.

trained in the theatre school, a corporate identity which is shared by other memoirists of the same estate.<sup>4</sup>

Ivanov also reveals to us much of his inner self. On the surface we are reading the words of an old man recalling his youth. The voice is childlike. Is the man behind it likewise, or are Ivanov's simplicity of expression, his delight in remembrance, the naïveté of his approach—informal, unsystematic, digressive, anecdotal—the attributes of someone who has endured much while charting the 'sea of life'—the *zhiteiskoe more* hymned in the Orthodox funeral service? Does a *fin de siècle* nostalgia seek a utopia in the past, or indeed, might Ivanov's lack of concern for recognition reflect his putting aside the tribulations of this world in favour of contemplating the next?

Throughout the text the reader senses Ivanov's underlying modesty. His exhortations to young artists to revere their art are the province of a senior artist, the advice of an uncle or brother. A staunch anti-chauvinist, he makes no mention of his lasting accomplishments, but only of application and diligence. If Ivanov ever amounted to anything, he claimed, these virtues were responsible.

In sum, the memoirs project a complex personality—capable of subservience and authority, affection and reproach, practicality and daydream, all wrapped in a beguiling artlessness. They constitute a first look at Ivanov's life. A second, drawn from diverse sources, will deal in Chapter 2 with the central issues in that life, many of which Ivanov does not even mention here.

The following is a translation of the complete text of Ivanov's memoirs, based on his manuscript and a typewritten transcription in the St Petersburg Museum of Theatrical and Musical Art, filed under shelf number KP 7154/76. Additional data, including words Ivanov omitted, which are necessary to the sense of a passage, have been added within square brackets.

### MY RECOLLECTIONS

Dedicated to my comrades and co-workers

Foregone years flashed by in an instant,  
And shades of the past fly before me,  
Comrades of childhood, artists of the ballet,  
Long since departed this earthly life.

(L. Ivanov 2 February 1899)

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. 'Recollections of T. A. Stukolkin, Artist of the Imperial Theatres. Copied from his account by A. Valberg', *Artist* [The Artist], no. 45 (Jan. 1895), 126–33; no. 46 (Feb. 1895), 117–25;

As much as I remember of myself in childhood is from the age of 6 or 7. I was born in 1834, in February. My father was quite a strict and serious man, my mother the kindest and most tranquil soul. Our family consisted of me, two brothers, and a sister; true, my parents had other children but I don't remember them, as they died in childhood. My father was a merchant of the first guild; he was involved in contracting—he built houses, roads, and the like. He was not, like most contractors, of simple stock, but rather was intelligent and educated. I recall that first we lived in a rather modest flat. Then, probably with an improvement in our situation, we moved into a large and expensive flat, and, finally, two or three years later, my father acquired his own stone house and carriages. At about the age of 8 I was sent to boarding-school, and after passing two or three years there entered the theatre school, and this is how it happened. My father loved the theatre very much, especially the Alexandrinsky, where he once took all of us to watch a performance from box seats. On that occasion the programme consisted of several one-act plays and *Don Juan*, a short, one-act ballet [by Blache, to music of Sonné, first performed in Russia in 1832, revised in 1840]. This ballet made a great impression on me, and especially the play *The Schoolteacher* [a vaudeville translated from the French by Pyotr Andreyevich Karatygin], in which, as we all know, young actors participate, students of the theatre school. On the way home, my father asked me what I had liked about the theatre—and I began to praise the ballet and especially *The Schoolteacher* with such enthusiasm, and said that I would like to be a young actor like those who took part in it. I was made gentle fun of, and my dear mother commented that it was a very difficult art, one had to study it a great deal. But my father took it differently and said: 'And why would we not send him to the theatre school? Perhaps this is his destiny and career.' And so I was put into the theatre school, and my father's words were vindicated, as I turned out not the worst of artists.

After entering the school, I went first of all to dance class, to Frédéric [Valette Malavergne]'s assistant instructor, [Alexandre Ivanovich] Pimenov. It must be said that then, according to school regulations, every person entering was required to study dance. After that, depending on one's capabilities, one stayed in this class or was transferred to classes in drama or music, or even the decorative arts. Metamorphoses would happen, such as the well-known, celebrated, brilliant [actor Alexandre Evstafievich] Martynov, who was trained as a decorator and became an artist of genius.

'From the Recollections of the Artiste A. P. Natarova', *Istoricheskii vestnik* [The Historical Messenger], 94 (1903), 25–44, 420–42, 778–803; these are translated in Roland John Wiley, *A Century of Russian Ballet: Documents and Eyewitness Accounts 1810–1910* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) [hereafter: *Wiley*], 107–69.

[Ivan Ivanovich] Sosnitsky, who was trained for the ballet, turned out to be a wonderful dramatic actor.

I began to show great capability for ballet, and for that reason after a year was taken from the ranks of external students and placed among the state-supported students. For the whole time of my stay in school my teachers were: Pimenov, Frédéric, [Émile] Gredlu, and finally [Jean Antoine] Petipa, not the present balletmaster but his father.

My life in school was very merry; everyone was an excellent and good comrade; true, some were scoundrels, but any family can have its black sheep.

These dear comrades come to mind spontaneously: [Vasily Romanovich] Shemaev, Malyshev, [Ivan Egorovich] Chernyshyov, [Alexandre Dmitrievich] Dmitriev, [Gavriil Nikolaevich] Zhulev, [Alexandre Alexandrovich] Nilsky, and finally [Nikolay Timofeyevich] Ilyin, who was especially friendly with me; he was a distinctive original. We very much loved to read novels translated from French, especially the works of Dumas: *Monte Cristo*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Queen Margot*, and others. He was a frightfully pensive character, and especially liked to dream about being in love.

We would return from the theatre at one o'clock in the morning, and he often invited me after dinner into the dark auditorium to indulge in a bit in reverie. As he had a speech defect, he pronounced 'p' instead of 'b', and 'f' instead of 'v', and 'k' instead of 'r'. It came out like this: 'Lyofa, let's go build castles in the sky.' We often mocked him gently, but he was nevertheless a fine and good chap, a man with soul; I was very fond of him.

In earlier times we had leave to stay with our parents on Sundays only until 9.00 p.m., or only until 6.00 p.m. for those who were needed at the theatre; and even during summer holidays, although academic classes had ceased, we stayed in the school in order to take art classes.

When refurbishing was under way and they were painting our immense dormitory, they put us on mattresses on the floor of the dance rehearsal hall to sleep, an experience which was a great pleasure for us since we engaged in various pranks and foolishness there. It would happen, for example, that after dinner our duty supervisor put us to bed in the hall and would stay until we calmed down, then go to have tea or his own dinner. (Almost every supervisor had an apartment in the school.) No sooner had the supervisor left than all manner of pranks and foolishness would begin. For example: several people would represent an orchestra, others horses, horsemen, clowns; we'd begin playing horses jumping over barriers with various leaps and somersaults; the orchestra of course would play on its lips, window frames would serve as drums. Such noise and uproar could, I think, have wakened the dead.

Since the supervisors mostly lived in our part of the building, directly above the hall, this unimaginable din would reach them. The duty supervisor would run in, just to find everyone sleeping quietly on his mattress; this of course was quite astonishing to him. We managed this as follows: we posted one of the young students to guard the stairs, and just as the door above opened he would tell us, and we would instantly jump into bed. This would happen several times: but once we were caught and punished by being denied permission to go home for a whole month. For this we got revenge on the supervisor who caught us in our minor pranks. Our supervisors were each funnier than the last; there were five of them, some we loved and others not, and we played various jokes on them. For example there was a certain Knapiche, a Greek by birth, who besides being a supervisor was an arithmetic teacher in the junior class.<sup>5</sup> What a joke we played on him! He always wore galoshes with cleats; we once took it into our heads to nail these galoshes to the floor, and again were punished. We played many such pranks, and I cannot remember them all now.

In earlier times our school was very rarely visited by any highly placed person, let alone a minister, for example, and almost never by the Sovereign Emperor. But once it happened that the Sovereign Emperor Nikolay Pavlovich thought to visit our school unexpectedly, without warning our supervisors. His Imperial Majesty, having caught the school unawares, found various deficiencies in it, especially as regards cleanliness; he was extremely displeased and angry, as a result of which many supervisors left.

In place of the ousted supervisor of the school, F[yodor] N[ikolaevich] Auber, there came P[avel] S[tepanovich] Fyodorov, who was also appointed manager of the repertoire division. Although he was strict he was fair. Subsequently many reproved and blamed him, but these were all his enemies, unhappy with his strictness.

Then also I spontaneously recall my older brother, N.I., who took it into his head to request P. S. Fyodorov to enlist him in the service of the theatre.

At that time he told of an incredibly funny quid pro quo. It went like this: when he appeared before P[avel] S[tepanovich] with his request, the latter received him very cordially and announced that he personally could not accept him without [the approval of] the Director, Alexandre Mikhailovich Gedeonov. He advised him, in addition, to write his request, addressed to the Director, and to appear before him in his office, having discussed the matter in advance with his secretary, E. M. Simonov, and during this discussion to give him his calling-card. On the next day my brother went to see the Director and gave the request and his calling-card to P[avel] S[tepanovich's] secretary. No sooner had [my brother] begun to speak with

<sup>5</sup> Citing additional sources, Borisoglebsky indicates that Knapiche was a Bulgarian, and that he taught Russian grammar (*Borisoglebsky*, i. 139, 175).

him than the Director's loud and angry voice issued from his office; he was reproaching someone vehemently. Suddenly a small, dark-complexioned gentleman flew out the door of his office, ejected by the Director himself, who stayed in the doorway and continued to yell and swear. Seeing my brother caught unawares, he turned to him angrily and asked, 'What do you want?' My brother had no choice but to explain his purpose, whereupon A[lexandre] M[ikhailovich] began to yell at him and call him a drunk and a scoundrel. Listening to this abuse, my brother answered him modestly: 'Your Excellency, I am not as yet in service, and you already deign to swear at me . . .' At that point Gedeonov clearly thought better of it, ordered my brother to leave his request with the secretary and return for an answer the next day. The next day, upon receiving a satisfactory answer from the secretary, my brother made his way to P. S. Fyodorov to thank him for the petition, and when he was exchanging bows upon departure they butted foreheads, since they were both tall. Laughing, P[avel] S[tepanovich] noted that this was a sign they would be friends. In less than a year P[avel] S[tepanovich] took my brother as his secretary, since he had beautiful handwriting and was able to put together service papers well, and P[avel] S[tepanovich] was very fond of him.

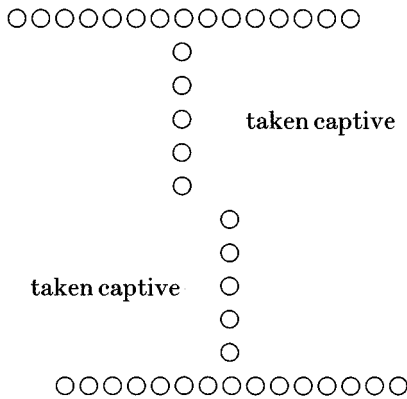
In Lent, beginning the second week, they staged student performances twice a month in the school theatre, for drama as well as ballet and music students. The Director was present at them, together with the entire management, and students' parents were also admitted. During his reign Alexandre II graced these performances with his presence, and since then we have had the high attention of other emperors.

Drama students performed mainly classical plays, and sometimes comedies and vaudevilles, ballet students small ballets and divertissements, music students played concertos on various instruments in the intervals, and even an orchestra of students was assembled, led at that time by old Mauer, whom everyone knew, the supervisor of all theatre orchestras. Professors of the drama class were famous artists of different eras: I. I. Sosnitsky, P. A. Karatygin, P[yotr] I[vanovich] Grigoriev, and V[asily] V[asilievich] Samoilov II. Subsequently this class passed to the *littérateur* Vasilko-Petrov, and still later to the teacher of dramatic reading N. I. Svedontsov. Vasilko-Petrov often enticed and tried to persuade me to transfer from ballet to drama, observing my good appearance and excellent readings of dramatic works (at that time all students had to take a course in dramatic reading), but I could not in the least agree, loving the balletic art too much.

How simple and excellent was everything for us then! If, for example, we wanted to put on a ballet rehearsal in the evening after classes, we announced this forthwith to the supervisor of the day, who sent a messenger to

the girls' dormitory, and sometimes went himself and brought the ones we needed. We would begin the rehearsal, everything would go well and decorously (not without flirting with the girl students of course), since the supervisor, seeing us seriously occupied with our business, went back to his duties. But all this was so proper and moral: one but kissed the girl students' hands. In our time they courted in a somewhat knightly fashion, profoundly respecting the lady of one's heart, without allowing oneself the least liberty.

In the summer holiday we spent nearly the whole day in the open air. In our large courtyard there were grounds where we played ball, *lapta* [a type of baseball], and most of all *bory* [a game of tag]. This was a most entertaining game, full of motion, which develops the lungs, because the whole time is taken up in running about; twenty or thirty people play, divided evenly, half standing on one side of the grounds, half on the other. The set-up looked like this:



Play begins as follows: one person runs out from one side and one from the other, they must catch each other and tag each other, that is, one hits the other on the shoulder, and whoever manages to do this first takes the other captive on his side, and so forth, continuing to run out by twos. But those running out from the side where there are captives must try not only to avoid being tagged, but also must come to the aid of his man who is a captive, running up to tag him. And thus the game sometimes continues for two hours and more, until one side or the other has taken all the other team prisoner. We had such good runners it was simply amazing. There was one student, Timofeyev, who almost never allowed himself to be tagged; but whomever *he* tagged fell down for sure! The girl students always watched this game from their windows, and we, like knights at a tourney, tried not to fail in the eyes of our beloved ladies.

In the wintertime there were always skating and slides on these grounds. We were all excellent ice-skaters.

How pleasant to me are these reminiscences of childhood and youth; they somehow put one into a poetical mood, which make the words from [Glinka's] opera *Ruslan and Lyudmila* come to mind: 'O lovely shades, fly not away, fly not away!' The time and years passed unnoticed; so it was that 1852 came—the year of my graduation from the school. I graduated as a first dancer with a salary of 360 roubles a year, which for that time was considered the best of salaries.

Upon entering the service [of the theatre] I did not reside with my parents in their home because it was quite distant from the school, where I had to be every day for practice in my art. Rather I lived in my brother's flat, which was located very near the school. At that time my brother lived with the two Maximov actors, brothers of the famous artist Alexey Mikhailovich Maximov. The flat was pleasant enough and spacious. A footman served us, one Chrysanth; he was our cook and valet and laundryman—in a word, a jack of all trades. He was Siberian by origin and a seminarian, but expelled from a religious seminary after a prank on the rector, whom the seminarians wanted to drown. After that he came to Petersburg on foot, hungry, cold, and sick. One of the Maximov brothers, seeing him on the street in such a state, out of mercy brought him home to warm and feed, and from then on Chrysanth stayed with us, working as a valet. Although he was quite a clever fellow, he was a serious drunk.

Finally my service began, and I was set free. How pleasant the words 'set free' were to someone who had spent eight years in a closed institution. My service, however, had begun before graduation; I had danced from the age of 16 when still in school in the ballets *Caterina*, *Esmeralda*, and *La Filleule des Fées*, staged by the balletmaster [Jules] Perrot with the celebrated Fanny Elssler.

My participation in them was in the corps de ballet of course, because I was still very young and a student; this, however, continued for several years after my graduation. I explain it by the fact that our balletmaster Perrot was not too fond of us Russian artists, and all [important] roles and leading parts were assigned to foreigners. I set out on my real path [partly] by my own efforts and partly by accident, and this is how it happened. In daily exercises in the class of Petipa-*père* the Russian first dancer Tatyana Petrovna Smirnova, subsequently Nevakhovich by marriage, always took part with us.

Seeing me in class, always so able and well prepared in dances, she once asked me why I never danced separate *pas* on stage, but always in the corps de ballet. To this of course I could only answer that such roles were not given to me. She then proposed that I dance a *grand pas de deux* with her in her

forthcoming benefit performance in the ballet *La Fille mal gardée*, which would take place in three months.

Being a modest, shy, and reticent young man I at first declined, but she persuaded me and I agreed. Soon after that we began to rehearse together and to prepare this *pas de deux* under the observation of Petipa-père. Having studied the *pas de deux* for fully three months, I made my début as a first dancer with great boldness and assurance at her benefit performance [on 3 November 1853], and my début was quite successful, as the public received me warmly. From that time our balletmaster Perrot began to give me small solo parts and various *pas*.

Also by accident I became a first mime and *jeune premier*, and a substitute for [Marius] Petipa, our present balletmaster. I attended every rehearsal and performance, even those in which I was not taking part, and by observation studied the mimed scenes and dances in all the ballets; my memory was excellent. The mime and acting of Mr [Nikolay Osipovich] Golts and Mr Perrot made a great impression on me. These were such immense talents in mime, from which one could gain much.

Here I shall make a small digression.

In my time at the school we were permitted into almost every rehearsal, even though we were not involved, thus taking advantage of [the opportunity of] constantly following the acting and dances of our best artists, and also the productions of that most talented balletmaster Perrot. All of this, I am sure, brought immense benefit to my service. Now we are not permitted this, which is most unfortunate because [withholding] it is a great loss to young people who are learning. They could gain much from direct observation.

Once, on the day of a performance when *La Vivandière* was scheduled, Mr Petipa sent word that he was ill. Someone had to replace him or the performance had to be cancelled, and the theatre was sold out. Our régisseur [Ivan Frantsevich] Marcel, knowing me well, proposed that I stand in for my ill colleague, to which I immediately agreed. Although Perrot winced somewhat, he nevertheless gave his consent. They immediately sent for Miss [Anna Ivanovna] Prikhunova, who was performing the ballerina's role, and I went through our roles and dances with her. Thus I performed my role that evening without mistakes, for which, by command of Director Gedeonov, I received 100 roubles as a reward. On another occasion, but without any rehearsal, I played the role of Phoebus in the ballet *Esmeralda*, since Petipa let his illness be known in the evening just before the performance.

Subsequently, and also impromptu, I played through several roles, namely: Claude Frollo in *Esmeralda*, for [Felix Ivanovich] Kshesinsky; Valentine in *Faust*, for [Christian Petrovich] Johanson; Coppélius in *Coppélia*,

for [Timofey Alexeyevich] Stukolkin, and many other small roles which I cannot even remember. From that time I established a reputation as an excellent *jeune premier*. When Mr Petipa took the post of balletmaster, I replaced him completely in the roles of first mime and dancer.

In February 1855 the Sovereign Emperor Nikolay Pavlovich died, and the next year in August the coronation of the Sovereign Emperor Alexandre Nikolaevich took place in Moscow. A part of our ballet troupe was sent to the celebration, another part remained in Petersburg, where during the celebration there would be several performances of opera and ballet. According to the management's decision I was to remain here in the capacity of régisseur and balletmaster. This assignment was frightfully unpleasant for me, first because it was not at all in keeping with my character, and second because I very much wanted to visit Moscow. Thus I asked my colleague [Alexey Nikolaevich] Bogdanov if he would replace me here, to which he joyfully agreed; it was in keeping with his character, since he always strove to supervise and command. My brother organized it with P. S. Fyodorov, and I was delighted. Only one thing was unpleasant for me, that my passion and love remained here, the student beauty S——; it was sad for me that I was not to see her for a long time, yes and besides, my rival, the young actor M——, also remained here. This of course was a schoolboy's passion, not a genuine one.

They brought us to Moscow, gave us ample travelling expenses, hired Raevsky's entire house on the Dmitrovka for our lodgings, assigned us the whole first floor, while the women were put on the second, and began to feed us magnificently. Living there was marvellous, friendly, and merry. In the house where they put us, although they offered me, as befits a first dancer, a special room to share with someone else, I refused and was put in the huge communal hall; my colleagues were all young, happy, and wonderful people, playing pranks and causing the same mischief as the schoolchildren had. It would happen that most would leave for rehearsal, while those staying at home would get up a surprise for those who had left. We would remove the boards from beneath the mattresses on the beds, and those returning from rehearsal would immediately want to lie down and rest, and would throw themselves on their beds just to have the beds immediately collapse. Uproarious laughter would ensue, and no one would take offence at the surprise. And there was another prank: among our comrades was one Efimov, whom for some reason they called 'Itzak the Jew'; he was pure Russian, [but] they got it into their heads to baptize him, acquired from somewhere a huge tub with water, stocked up on syringes, and when he returned from rehearsal they refreshed him [with towels], undressed him, put him in the tub and began to spray him from all sides with the syringes. And he took no offence whatever, but said, laughing: 'Thank you, gentlemen, I

wanted to have a bath, but now I needn't go because you have refreshed me excellently well.' There were many other similar japes, all lost to memory.

In our free time we went to the Sparrow Hills to admire the views of Moscow. In several carriages we went to the Monastery of St Sergius [Zagorsk], which was located about 60 versts [about 39 miles] from the city, and spent a whole wonderful day there. This trip to Moscow left a most gratifying and pleasant impression on me. We had several performances before the sacred coronation; there was a gala performance three days after the sacred coronation at which I danced a *pas de deux* with the beautiful dancer Zinaida Richard, who subsequently went to Paris, married the first dancer Mérante, and became a wonderful teacher of dances.

I was corresponding, of course, with my brother and with my parents. In one letter from my brother I found out that my passion and love was frightfully attracted to my rival, and that they were getting along very well. This very much angered me and saddened me such that I wanted to cry, but I contained myself and resolved to take vengeance on her by flirting here with somebody else. They also brought several girl students from Petersburg, among whom was Verochka Lyadova, a very nice-looking blonde whom I began to court and subsequently married. It began with foolishness and ended seriously. Thus it pleased the fates. Finally at the beginning of September we returned to Petersburg. There our rehearsals and performances began, and I undertook to court Verochka Lyadova in earnest, who graduated from the school in 1858. I immediately got acquainted with her family, and married her in 1859.

My wife's father, Alexandre Nikolaevich Lyadov, was a ballet conductor here. He was an exceptional person in all respects—good, honourable, big-spirited, and a magnificent artist. At rehearsal he played the violin with such spirit and expression that everyone would be delighted. During the reign of Emperor Nikolay Pavlovich, Lyadov was much favoured by Empress Maria Feodorovna, spouse of the Sovereign Emperor: he and his orchestra were always playing at court balls. Once it happened that Lyadov, because of illness, could not appear at a ball, whereupon the Sovereign Empress commanded that it be put off until his health was restored.

I do not remember on what occasion, at the command of the Sovereign Emperor N[ikolay] P[avlovich] three celebrations were scheduled at Peterhof: a ball, a performance, and a masquerade. The performance included a ballet. The first day the ball took place, on the second the performance was scheduled, during the morning of which we had a rehearsal with orchestra; almost half-way through the rehearsal a messenger came for Lyadov, whom the Sovereign Emperor commanded come to him at his palace. When he got there he was led directly to the Emperor's apartments. On seeing Lyadov the Emperor asked him a question: did he not have with him