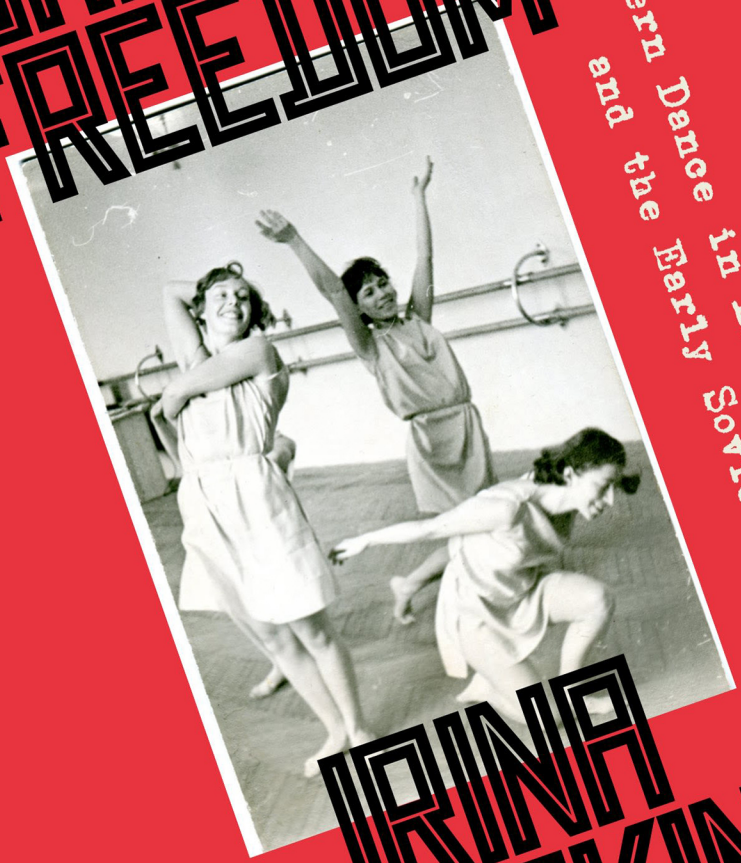
DANCING FREEDOM



Modern Dance in Late Imperial Russia and the Early Soviet Union

IRINA SIROTKINA

BLOOMSBURY

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To my teachers

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Abbreviations

Bakhrushin	A. A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatre Museum, Manuscript Department
Choreolab	The Choreological Laboratory of the State Academy of Art Sciences
GABT	State Academic Bolshoi Theatre
GAKhN	State Academy of Art Sciences
GITIS	State Institute of Theatre Art
IMLI	Institute of World Literature, of the Russian Academy of Sciences
MAR	Moscow Association of Rhythmists
Narkompros	Early Soviet Ministry of Education
NEP	New Economic Policy
NOT	*Nauchnaia organitsaziia truda*, Scientific Organization of Labour
Proletkult	Organization for 'proletarian culture'
RSALA	Russian State Archive of Literature and Art
RSL	Russian State Library, Manuscript Department
SARF	State Archive of Russian Federation
SAYR	State Archive of the Yaroslavl' Region
Tefizkult	*Teatralizatsia fizkul'tury*, organization for theatralizing physical culture
TEO	Theatre department of the Soviet ministry of education, Narkompros

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Introduction

In one of her short stories, the fiction writer Ludmila Petrushevskaia gives a symbolic picture of the catastrophe that overwhelmed her country's intelligentsia after 1917, when the tsarist regime abrubtly ended and a new, Soviet, state took shape. Those who did not perish or emigrate were often labelled 'the former people' (*byvshie*) or 'alien elements', with no place in the society of the victorious proletariat. To be accepted into the new society, upper- and middle-class families had to conceal their origins, including from their own children. The young generation was under pressure to forget its roots and to step into the bright new world, leaving the past behind. Something along these lines happened to my father's family, which before the Revolution belonged to the minor nobility. My grandfather Georgii Petrovich Sirotkin (1906–1973) had to hide the family's class background even from his two sons born during Stalinist decades. My father Evgenii Sirotkin (1934–2000) learned about his family roots only as an adult, when, after Stalin's death, the country enjoyed a political Thaw. By contrast, my mother, Tatiana Shadskaia (1938–2022), from a working-class background, being the first in the family to receive higher education, benefited from the Soviet policies.

Petrushevskaia was born in the same year as my mother, in 1938. One of her short stories, with the awkward-to-pronounce title, 'Wolfgangovna and Sergei Ivanovich' (the main characters' names), describes a family of 'the former people'. After the revolution, some family members managed to emigrate, but those staying in Russia, including the heroine's grandfather, were repressed and perished in the GULAG.[1] The grandfather and his wife, a former German baroness, named their son Wolfgang, after Goethe; his daughter therefore inherited the patronymic Wolfgangovna, the name signalling class and education. The events of the story take place later, in mid-1960s. We meet Tatiana Wolfgangovna when she is thirty years old. She looks like an ordinary young woman with an ordinary job at the toy factory. Tatiana shares accommodation with her grandmother, her own

belongings limited to a bed, a desk and bookshelves. The past is deeply buried; only a pair of earrings remains of the baroness's pre-Revolutionary fortune, locked safely in a jewellery box. Gradually it becomes clear that the baroness passed on something much more valuable, a special kind of dance, to Tatiana. This dance, after Isadora Duncan, is known as *svobodnyi* (free) or *plasticheskii* (for the lack of an adequate English term, we will use the French *plastique*). Tatiana learned it through her grandmother: 'As a young girl, Grandma Vava attended a dance studio *Mayak*, as a result of which she inherited the principles of Isadora Duncan and kept her style, methodology and notes; she taught it for a long time until her health gave way. Tania [diminutive for Tatiana] inherited the dance' (see Figure 1).[2]

The name of the studio, *Mayak* – meaning 'beacon' in Russian and synonymous with the name of the popular poet Mayakovsky – is not accidental. In the early 1920s, a young couple, Vera Bogoliubova and Leonid Seravkin, opened a dance studio in their large, but only, room in the Nirensee House, the first high-rise building in central Moscow. Both were musicians, and Vera studied Duncan dance. Leonid adopted the pseudonym, Mayak, and Vera chose Maya as her last name. In a few years, the studio became known to Muscovites as the Vera

Figure 1 Lidia Generalova, late 1920s. By courtesy of Tatiana Trifonova's private archive.

Maya Dance Theatre. Maya worked on a dance technique different from classical ballet exercise and did choreography. She taught dance and choreography at the Soviet theatre school (by chance, today its stage occupies the ground floor of the Nirensee House). Their daughter, Iia Mayak, also studied dance, *plastique*, and acrobatics at Valeria Tsvetaeva's Art of Movement School. Well into her eighties, Iia (whom I had the pleasure to interview in the early 2010s) used to start every morning with her gymnastic exercises including backbend.

Let us return to our story, where the reader is introduced to the second main character, Sergei Ivanovich, an artist and a Second World War veteran. He is employed by the House of Culture where Tatiana teaches dance to children. The two meet when Sergei Ivanovich is commissioned to do a stage design for the dance studio's performance. Going into the auditorium where the studio is rehearsing: 'Barefoot and clad in white tunics, the girls were doing some kind of Dionysian dance, and Tatiana ran with them, her flexible arms high up towards the ceiling.'[3] With the artist's eye, Sergei Ivanovich notices her perfectly shaped legs, wavy blond curls and the ecstatic expression on her face. Although, on the surface, Sergei Ivanovich adopted socialist-realist style when doing his job, deep inside he is nostalgic about pre-Revolutionary symbolist painting. Free dance, which Tatiana learned from her grandmother, also dates from the same period and belongs to the same art style. The stage background Sergei Ivanovich produces for Tatiana's studio performance pictures an old manor house, lilacs in a large garden and a lily pond. She loves it, and the two kindred souls longing for the past beauty immediately recognize each other. A week after the concert Sergei Ivanovich proposes to her and receives consent. The story comes to a happy end, not unexpected. The baroness gave her granddaughter a wedding gift of her earrings, which at first glance appear of no value. There is, however, a secret: the oil paint on the surface covers diamonds. Selling them, the young couple afford their own apartment, a real luxury in a world of communal accommodation. There Tatiana and Sergei live happily; their children grow, marry and have children of their own. When, at last, the Soviet Union collapses, the family reunites with their relatives in France, symbolic of reconnecting with the past.

Petrushevskaia's story is about overcoming the trauma of the Revolution and Stalinism, of surviving catastrophes and disruptions. In the story, free dance stands both for itself, as a dance idiom which survives across the divide, and symbolically, for the nostalgia of the old culture. This culture quietly survives under the ice of the official Soviet ways and comes back when the time is ripe, on the ruins of the dictatorship. In this way, free dance is as precious and well-hidden as diamonds.

The terms 'free dance' and 'early modern dance' will be used as synonyms throughout the book. *Frei Tanz* is more habitual in the German context, while modern dance is more an American invention. Isadora Duncan also used the French term, *danse plastique*, at least for the school she opened in France in 1913. In a variety of languages, the dance idiom is called *danse libre*, *svobodnyi tanetz*, *sodobni ples* and so on. 'Freedom' is the key word, as freedom was by far the most overwhelming impression audiences had watching Duncan. As we will see later, her spectators often emphasized that the dancer was absolutely free and had a power to inspire and to transform.

Free dance attracted those who, for various reasons, either did not attend ballet school or did not like the classical idiom. It appealed, above all, to the young people from educated, well-to-do families who would never have thought of becoming professional dancers, partly because it was considered inappropriate for their social standing. Still, they wanted to move and to be creative, to perform for audiences and sought authentic and unconventional ways to live. Free dance appeared to open up new horizons, and it was more inclusive than ballet, allowing different bodies, emotional expressiveness, a wider range of movements and an individual choreographic style.

Isadora Duncan came to Russia for the first time at the end of 1904 and gave last performances in the fall of 1924. She kept returning to the country, where she acquired a crowd of followers among its artists and intellectuals. Even ballet aficionados seemed to welcome the dancer, her opposition to ballet notwithstanding. One of them, Akim Volynsky, praised her in 1913 for 'an outstanding level of culture, a culture that has become flesh'.[4] The poet Maximilan Voloshin titled his essay 'The culture of dance', inscribing the dancer into the Hellenistic tradition.[5] There was no better way to introduce free dance to educated audiences than to call it 'cultured'. It transformed dance from light entertainment, an 'exhibition of pretty legs' and 'after-dinner digestive', to the lofty 'step of God'.[6] To attend Duncan performances became a sign of civilized upbringing and good taste. Affluent parents presented their teenage children with tickets for Duncan recitals, along with books and educational trips to European centres of culture. To the painter Matvei Dobrov she looked 'as if she had escaped from a Greek vase'.[7] These privileged children went to gymnasiums, high schools and universities, where they could learn Latin and Greek and study classical art and literature. Educated audiences had no trouble in recognizing Isadora as a Bacchante, a nymph, an Amazon or a Hellenic statue brought to live.[8] Marked as high art, free dance found its way to high-status venues, from artists' studios and aristocratic salons to major concert halls and opera theatres.

At the writer Fedor Sologub's private soirées in Saint Petersburg, the young Nikolai Pozniakov danced 'à la Duncan, his handsome body covered only by a muslin loin cloth'.[9]

Duncan made her dance look so easy and effortless that some spectators and even followers fell under illusion of its purely improvisational character. Isadora apparently encouraged the illusion by loudly despising ballet's artificial positions, criticizing exhausting physical work and downplaying technique. She famously said that she learned dance as pleasure, from the muse Terpsichore. The apparent absence of schooling, especially by contrast with ballet, added to the impression of spontaneity, improvisatory character and individual expressiveness – the qualities for which her dance was termed 'free'. Those who saw her apparently effortless dance, were tempted to imitate it. As a little boy, Aleksandr Rumnev did not even see Isadora and only overhead his parents coming from her recital and talking about the dance. Nevertheless, he was so impressed that he wrapped himself into a bed sheet and danced in front of the mirror.

A student of the Higher Women's (Bestuzhev) Courses, Stefanida Rudneva (1890–1989) saw Duncan perform in Saint Petersburg in 1908; sixty years later, she confessed that the evening had completely transformed her life. Rudneva entered into the spirit of her dance and wished to be as free and expressive of music as Isadora. Rudneva and her friends from the Higher Women's Courses found a dancing space, dressed themselves in white chitons and took their shoes off. One of them accompanied on the piano, while others improvised; at times they sang or moved to their 'inner music'.[10] In the same year of 1908, in Moscow, a student of the Duncan School, Ella Rabenek opened classes in *plastique*. Before she emigrated following the 1917 Revolution, Rabenek trained a number of successful students, actresses and dancers. One of them, Ludmila Alekseeva, founded her own studio in 1913. And so the ball kept rolling. In the next few years a dozen schools and studios of free dance and *plastique* emerged both in the capitals of the Russian Empire and in the provinces. Even the Revolution and Civil War did not stop the growth. 'No one knows what to do with the [theatre studios], they proliferate like infusoria; neither the absence of heating, nor famine, nor the Entente can stop them', observed the writer Viktor Shklovsky in March 1921.[11] A few months later, Duncan came to Soviet Russia to open a school which continued well after her departure in the autumn of 1924 and even after her death closing only in 1949.

In the post-Revolutionary years, with shortages of space, fuel, food and basic goods, studios had to compete with each other for resources. However, there was a division of labour among them. Some studio leaders, including Alekseeva

and Tsvetaeva, preferred training dancers and teaching technique. Others, including Vera Maya, Klavdia Isachenko and Lev Lukin, created their own performing companies, while Rumnev and Natalia Glan worked as independent choreographers in drama and musical theatres. In the 1910 and early 1920s, free dance evolved in Russia in parallel and in connection with European countries. While European students of Isadora Duncan, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze and Rudolph Laban, including Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss, Sigurd Leeder, Gret Palucca and many others, created a new variety of dance technique and choreography, their counterparts in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union also experimented with new dance idioms, founded studios and changed the country's dance theatre.[12] With the hardening of political climate in the late 1920s, free dance came under attack: Soviet critics labelled it 'bourgeois', 'decadent' and 'over-erotic'. This made it easy for the authorities to start shutting down private schools and studios of the dance idiom that became politically incorrect and unwanted.

The issue of freedom in dance is a pertinent one. The article on 'Liberalism' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states that 'one is free merely to the degree that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life'.[13] The dance scholar Ana Isabel Keilson claims that modern dance embodied the 'autonomy based conception' of freedom, in which a person is free only if she is self-directed or autonomous.[14] Teaching in Soviet Russia, Isadora's student Irma Duncan wanted to convey these values to the pupils: 'My main concern for these citizens of an autocratic dictatorship was for them to grow up and develop in a congenial, friendly atmosphere, free of too much restraint. The first Russian word I used when teaching them to dance was *svoboda* – freedom. Freedom in movement and in expression and – most important – freedom of thought.'[15]

While declaring political freedom, the Soviet party-state exercised heavy control over the arts. In August 1924, the Moscow City government closed down all private dance classes on the pretext of their anti-sanitary conditions. A major blow to choreographers who relied on teaching to survive financially, it brought many dance companies and individual careers to an end. While, in the interwar decades, modern dance firmly established itself in the West, in the Soviet Union it ceased to exist on the official theatre stage, being replaced by ballet and stylized folk dance. Those dancers, who did not emigrate, were forced to stop performing and to find a niche for themselves under the guise of gymnastics, physical culture and music education, teaching children or amateur dancers. Grandma Vava from Petrushevskaia's story was one of them. Free dance, which the baroness practised as a young girl, found a shelter in the children's studio where her granddaughter Tatiana taught. Like the diamonds of grandma's

earrings, free dance was buried under a layer of official culture. During Stalin's decades it nearly sank into oblivion but reappeared during the Thaw – the liberation of political regime following the dictator's death. In the early 1960s, when Petrushevskaia's story takes place, Rumnev, who had suffered repression under Stalin, was able to open his Experimental Theatre of Pantomime. The Musical Movement dancer Emma Fish (née Tsilderman, 1900–1976), founded her studio *Smotrite: Muzyka!* (Look: Music!). And Ludmila Alekseeva's artistic gymnastics became even more popular among women of all age groups.

In the 1970s, the librarian of the Moscow University Library Viktor Duvakin (1909–1982) started interviewing old intelligentsia born and brought up before the Revolution. Among others, he recorded an interview with Stefanida Rudneva, then in her eighties. The interview stimulated Rudneva to write her memoirs, which she titled 'Memories of a happy person'.[16] The title reflected her love of free dance, which inspired and kept her going through the long period of various hardships. As well as some of her fellow dancers, Rudneva could be Tatiana Wolfgangovna's prototype. Her father came from the Russian nobility, and her mother, born von Derviz, from a wealthy family linked to German aristocracy. This gave Stefanida a happy childhood and excellent education before the Revolution, but it made her a potential victim of the Soviet regime. A part of the maternal family emigrated to France, and Rudneva's brother Andrei fled to Finland. This, again, was a hazard for the relatives who stayed behind in the Soviet Union (unlike the baroness's family in Petrushevskaia's story, the Rudnev–von Derviz family never reunited). In 1934, the murder of the high official Sergei Kirov in Leningrad spurred repression among the city intelligentsia. Rudneva, her then partner Vladimir 'Wolf' Bulvanker, and her students Emma Fish and Lidia Generalova had to flee their home town. Until the end of her long life, Rudneva would not have a place she could call home. Yet, her practice, derived from Duncan dance and called Musical Movement, gave her unbendable strength. By teaching children and educators, she and her fellow colleagues preserved their life philosophy as well as dance technique and passed their dance idiom down to new generations, to their daughters- and granddaughters-in-dance. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, modern dance could at last make a revival. In part, it was brought by the touring artists, companies and teachers from the West. Yet, reaching to pre-Revolutionary past, local dancers attempted to cross the Soviet time gap, to recover native roots and to heal the generational trauma.

My own acquaintance with free dance dates from the beginning of this century, when I joined the Musical Movement studio 'Geptakhor' of Aida

Ailamazian and, later, the Musical Movement studio 'Terpsichore' of Tatiana Trifonova. Both dancers founded their respective studios after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the late 1990s. I met and interviewed Rudneva's students Larisa Amirova, Lidia Osipova, Olga Popova, Valentina Riazanova and others. I also studied Duncan dance with Barbara Kane and Meg Brooker. My deep gratitude goes to those who helped me discover the richness and pleasures of the dance idiom thought to be lost in the past. It felt indeed like finding a gem hidden under a layer of paint. It was equally important to discover that my own body, previously untrained in dance, was able to move freely. Through dance, the loosely defined concept of freedom had gained flesh and blood. The newly found experience of embodied freedom stimulated my research.

During Soviet times dance history was limited to ballet and even termed *baletovedenie* (ballet studies). Considered outside professional art, other dance idioms had almost no place in academia. In 1933 an influential music critic Ivan Sollertinsky dismissed free dance as of no value to the mainstream dance theatre which he thought was unambiguously ballet.[17] Until fairly recently, almost nothing was published on free dance. The first papers came from ballet historians Elizaveta Surits (also Elisabeth Souritz, 1923–2021) and Natalia Chernova (1937–1997) and from the art scholar Nicoletta Misler.[18] At the beginning of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, a colleague from the West asked Surits to contribute an article to a collection on modern dance. Her first reaction was to say that Russia had never had modern dance. When she researched the issue, however, she discovered a wealth of material and wrote several articles on the topic. I am grateful to Elizaveta Surits for the discussion and for recommending my Russian history on free dance to the press. In 1996 historians of the Russian avant-garde Nicoletta Misler and John Bowlt edited a special issue of the journal, *Experiment*, a highly valuable contribution to the history of modern dance. In 1999 and 2000, Misler curated exhibitions in Rome and Moscow opening up the variety and richness of dance in late Imperial Russia and the early Soviet Union.[19] In 2011 my first monograph on the issue, *Free Movement and* Danse Plastique *in Russia*, came out; the second edition followed, and the third, enlarged one was published ten years later, under the title *Free Dance in Russia: History and Philosophy*.[20] I am very happy and honoured that the book has stimulated research in the history of modern dance in that part of the world.[21] The English version, however, is different in both content and structure. It has new sections on Isadora Duncan and Konstantin Stanislavsky, on Duncan and Michel Fokine, and on her Moscow School. New archival material became available on Moscow studios of *plastique* and on the Leningrad Theatre of Physical Culture.

Borrowing from the new biography of Bronislava Nijinska by Lynn Garafola, I added a section on Nijinska's School of Movement. The account of Kasian Goleizovsky's choreography for the music-hall complements the story of his engagement with modern dance. My optics has also changed: the disappearance of modern dance in the Soviet Union is seen through the lenses of generational rupture, a trauma which post-Soviet dancers continued to experience. Finally, the book engages with the dance scholarship of recent decades. Nevertheless, it is not a comprehensive review of everything that happened in free dance in the vast part of the world which comprised late Imperial Russia and the early Soviet Union. My account focuses on the social history of modern dance, sometimes at the expense of describing individual artistic work, which would require another book. I concentrate on the social and anthropological dimensions of free dance as a system of practices and values.

Chapter 1 'Techniques of freedom' starts with the puzzling question why Isadora Duncan conveyed a profound impression of freedom to her audiences. Several answers are possible, one of them is that she was one of the first to demonstrate a tranquil and relaxed body on dance stage. Liberated from the corset, tricot and shoes, her body exemplified 'nature' as opposite to the 'artifice' of ballet. Her flexible torso, neck and arms, and her swift legs made salient every movement from intimate breathing to the display of ecstasy and self-abandonment. By choosing romantic music and interpreting it in a personal way, she created dance awash with intimate feelings yet pertaining to universal ideas. The opening section 'Hypnotic dancer *versus* the dancing self' shows Duncan pioneering on stage what women before her did in private, at home or in the doctor's room. The section 'Liberated body, class body' refers to the more relaxed bodily culture favoured by the middle classes at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The section on 'New kinaesthetic regime' examines values and principles of early modern dance as they were embodied by Duncan and her followers, including those in late Imperial and early Soviet Russia. Over the years, Duncan and fellow dancers built training systems that encouraged improvisation and emotional experience of music; deep breathing; voluminous and swaying movements of the arms, legs and the torso; special ways to walk, to run and to leap, which appeared 'natural'; and other kinaesthetic equivalents of felt freedom.

Chapter 2 'Free dance travels east' traces Duncan's visits to the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union between 1904 and 1924. There she met the theatre director Konstantin Stanislavsky, with whom she shared her search for sincerity in art. The two had a romantic involvement with each other and, later, maintained a

friendly and cooperative relationship. The account is based on the previously unpublished correspondence between Duncan and Stanislavsky kept in the Moscow Artistic Theatre archive. A section of the chapter examines Duncan's long-lasting influence on Russian ballet, particularly on Michel Fokine, an innovative ballet dancer and choreographer. The final section of the chapter describes her Moscow School and the resonance that her philosophy of the woman of the future had in the country that set out to create a new Soviet person.

Chapter 3 'The music issue' examines relationships between early modern dance and music. As a technique for cultivating the feelings, music was the subject of a cult among the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century intelligentsia. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze's eurhythmy (or rhythmic gymnastics, or, in Russian, *ritmika*) found numerous followers in late Imperial Russia, and the first Soviet government planned to include it in the national school curriculum. Compared with Dalcroze's formal approach to music, Duncan's approach to music was more intuitive and embodied. Dancers, choreographers and theatre directors explored various ways to fuse movements with music and rhythm. Due to the popularity of the physiologist Ivan Pavlov's theory of the conditional reflex in post-Revolutionary Russia, 'the music reflex' was proposed as a way to reveal the mechanisms of musicality in dance. Following the Revolution and Civil War, there was a period of utmost hardship, during which some studios survived only as communes. United by their commitment to the dance cause and the harsh living conditions, studio members supported each other psychologically and materially; the Petrograd Studio of Musical Movement (1914–34) set an example.

Chapter 4 'Studios of free dance', the longest in the book, provides an overview of independent choreographers and dance companies of the 1920s. Dance studios ranged from classical ballet to *plastique*, the art of movement and to avant-garde dance theatre. Known from pantomime and the Delsarte system, *plastique* poses and gestures connected free dance both to visual arts and theatre. 'The art of movement' was a general and inclusive term which brought dance together with gymnastics and other kinds of adroit, efficient and gracious movement. The last section of the chapter describes the closure of Moscow studios in 1924. In order to survive in the country of the victorious proletariat, early modern dance had, from now on, to seek an alliance with physical culture, gymnastics, sport and work training.

Chapter 5 'Rationalizing movement' examines the emergence of a science of dance, for which Rudolf Laban in Central Europe and Aleksei Sidorov in Russia, independently of each other, coined the term 'choreology'. In the early 1920s, the

Choreological Laboratory of the State Academy of Artistic Sciences in Moscow developed a programme of research on dance and movement, which included collecting, observing, recording movement and conducting experiments. Sidorov suggested the term 'kinemology', for a discipline that would encompass the study of a wide range of movements, including sport, work, dance and film.

Chapter 6 'Ecstasy and the machine' describes the changes in choreography in the early 1920s based on privileging linear and broken machine-like movement over Duncan's flowing movements and curvy shapes. The avant-garde theatre directors Nikolai Foregger and Vsevolod Meyerhold introduced, respectively, machine dances and theatre biomechanics. With an ambition to express collectivist ideas, the Bolshoi Theatre choreographer Kasian Goleizovsky created his own Girls show for the Soviet music-hall.

Chapter 7 'Dance as physical culture' traces the evolution of free dance further in the 1930s, when, under political pressures, it turned into gymnastics and sport. In the time of Military Communism, the Soviet institution *Tefizkult* (short for 'theatricalizing physical culture') attempted to cross-pollinate theatre, artistic movement and army parades. This was continued by the Theatre of Physical Culture, which a former dancer of *plastique* founded in Leningrad in the 1930s, as well as by the emergence of a new female sport, artistic gymnastics, and the choreography of sport parades.

Chapter 8 'Taming dance' examines the control over traditional and social dancing in the 1920s and 1930s, when official ballet choreographers cleaned up traditional peasant dance transforming it into a hybrid 'stage folk dance'. Salon dances, including foxtrot and tango, were attacked as erotic, bourgeois and decadent, and they became forbidden in public spaces. Soviet choreographers tried to replace the practice of dancing in couples with 'mass dances', specially designed for groups of people as opposite to couples. Early modern dancers had to leave the stage, both literally and metaphorically, and to find a niche in teaching children and amateur dancers. Some found employment as 'entertainers to the masses', a new occupation funded by the party-state. Free dance survived in the niches until the end of the Soviet Union. At present, the book concentrates mainly on the Russian Federation, especially its major cultural centers in Moscow and Leningrad; to encompass other former Soviet republics, further research is needed.

The concluding chapter turns to recent and contemporary re-performances of early modern dance. Those, who revived free dance in the 1990s, looked to reconnect with the founders and to recover lost feeling of freedom. Created by the founding mothers and preserved by generations of their 'daughters'

and 'granddaughters', early-twentieth-century choreography, technique and philosophy of free dance re-emerged after the end of communist regimes both in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Today, often performed to commemorate the founders, free dance continues to attract new adepts, the author of the book included. By practising free dance, our contemporaries can reconnect with the past and rediscover the embodied freedom of the founders.

Notes

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7. Mikhail Dobrov quoted in *Antichnyi profil' tantsa* (The antique profile of dance), ed. E. Gribonosova-Grebneva and E. Osotina (Moscow: Galereia G.O.S.T., 2006), 9.
8. Aleksandr Pasternak, 'Metamorfozy Aisedory Dunkan' (Metamorphosis of Isadora Duncan), in *Aisedora. Gastroli v Rossii* (Isadora: The Russian tour), ed. Tatiana Kasatkina (Moscow: Artist. Regisseur. Teatr, 1992), 328.
9. Natalia Chernova, 'Kasian Goleizovsky: shkola miniatiur' (Kasian Goleizovsky: The school of miniatures), in *Mnemozina* (Mnemosyne), vol. 2 (Moscow: URSS, 2006), 340.
10. Viktor Duvakin, Interview with Stefanida Rudneva, 28 April 1971. Manuscript Department, Moscow State University Library, file 186-8. Available online: https://oralhistory.ru/talks/orh-186-188 (accessed 9 February 2025).
11. Viktor Shklovsky quoted in: V. N. Dmitrievsky, *Formirovanie otnosheniy stseny i zala v otechestvennom teatre 1917–1930 godov* (Shaping relationships of the stage and the audience in the national theatre between 1917 and 1930) (Moscow: GITIS, 2010), 101. The Triple Entente was the informal agreement between the Russian Empire, France and Great Britain, which turned against the Bolsheviks after 1917.

12. Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
13. Gerald Gaus, Shane D. Courtland and David Schmidtz, 'Liberalism', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2018), Sections 1, 3. Available online: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/liberalism/ (accessed 1 February 2025).
14. Ana Isabel Keilson, 'The Embodied Conservatism of Rudolf Laban, 1919–1926', *Dance Research Journal* 51, no. 2 (2019): 18.
15. Irma Duncan, *Duncan Dancer: An Autobiography* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1980), 235–6. She was born Irma Erich-Grimme (1897–1977).
16. Rudneva worked on her memoirs in the late 1970s and early 1980s; the manuscript was published in: *Vospominaniia schastlivogo cheloveka. Stefanida Rudneva i studiia muzykal'nogo dvizheniia 'Geptakhor' v dokumentakh Tsentral'nogo moskovskogo arkhiva-muzeia lichnykh sobranii* (Memories of a happy person. Stefanida Rundeva and the studio of Musical Movement 'Geptakhor' in the documents of the Central Moscow archive-museum of personal collections), ed. Andrei Kats (Moscow: Glavarkhiv, 2007).
17. Ivan Sollertinsky, 'Muzykal'nyi teatr na poroge Oktiabra' (Musical theatre on the threshold of the October), in *Istoriia sovetskogo teatra* (History of the Soviet theatre), vol. 1, ed. Aleksei Gvozdev (Leningrad: Khudozhestennaia literatura, 1933), 344.
18. Elisaveta Surits, 'Plasticheskii i ritmoplasticheskii tanets' (Danse plastique and rhythmoplastic), *Sovetskii balet* (Soviet ballet) 6 (1988), 47–9; Elisaveta Surits, 'Studios of plastic dance', *Experiment/Эксперимент: A Journal of Russian Culture* 2 (1996): 143–67; 'MOTO-BIO: The Russian Art of Movement: Dance, Gesture and Gymnastics, 1910–1920', Special Issue of *Experiment/Эксперимент: A Journal of Russian Culture* 2 (1996), Guest Editor Natalia Chernova.
19. *In principio era il corpo… L'Arte del Movemento a Mosca negli anni '20* (At the beginning was the body. The art of movement in Moscow in the 1920s), ed. Nicoletta Misler (Milan: Electa, 1999); Nicoletta Misler, *Vnachale bylo telo: Ritmoplasticheskie eksperimenty nachala XX veka* (At the beginning was the body: rhythm-and-plastic experiments of the early twentieth century) (Moscow: Klassika-XXI vek, 2011).
20. Irina Sirotkina, *Svobodnoe dvizhenie i plasticheskii tanets v Rossii* (Free movement and plastic dance in Russia) (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2011); rev edn. 2012; *Svobodnyi tanets v Rossii: istoria i filosofia* (Free dance in Russia: history and philosophy), rev edn, 2021.
21. Anna Kozonina, *Strannye tantsy. Teorii i istorii vokrug tantseval'nogo performansa v Rossii* (Strange dances. Theories and histories around dance performance in Russia) (Moscow: Garazh, 2021); Anastasia Nabokina, *Pragnienie tańca. Sztuka*