

## CHOREOGRAPHING KANDINSKY'S 'SPIRITUAL' IN SERGEI DIAGHILEV'S BALLETS RUSSES

*Motto: „Pour L' Oiseau de feu et pour Kandinsky”  
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**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that Wassily Kandinsky's geometrical paintings were inspired by the ballet world, and by the body movements of the ballerina. Moreover, painting and ballet communicate with each other. And geometry has helped that. Then, the idea of this article starts with the necessity in relating Kandinsky's Spiritual theory on non-materiality exposed in *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* with Sergei Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* brought on Parisian scene between 1909s and 1929s. *Ballets Russes* is the term which names all the ballet representations thought and designed by Sergei Diaghilev after his musical-cultural conflict with Nikolai Rimski Korsakov. Starting with 1907s, Kandinsky had initiated *Der Blaue Reiter* group and he starts with various drawing techniques. Were favourable years in which Kandinsky's evolution from simple drawings to sophisticated *Compositions* got up. We are witnessing a cultural increase. So, the ballet, the music, the theatre and the painting can not be separated any more or, at least, or, at least, cannot be thought of separately as systems of aesthetic theory. The aesthetic evolution from ballet and theatre had influenced the evolution in painting. What we will try to show as novelty in our investigation, is the kinetic and spiritual relation between Kandinsky's *Compositions* and some representations from *Ballets Russes* by Sergei Diaghilev, especially with the «L'Oiseau de feu». In conclusion, we want to show how the lines designed by Wassily Kandinsky are describing ballet's movements. The methods used in our research have consisted in the inter-artistic comparison between Wassily Kandinsky's theory of painting and the ballets designed by Sergei Diaghilev. We also brought a philosophical and personal perspective on both worlds.

**Keywords:** «*Ballets Russes*»; '*Spiritual*'; *Kandinsky*; *Sergei Diaghilev*; *Fokine*; *kinetic-art*; *body*, *Russian Spiritualism*; *ballet*; *Classicism*, *Avant-Garde*;

### **Introduction**

The history of dance and the philosophy of the dance are two fundamental cultural horizons for our past. The past inspires us. Is necessary to investigate more the aspects of the ballet to understand the beginnings of the abstract paintings. In this sense, Wassily Kandinsky is a very important painter for the history of the art, but separately a very important hermeneut for the abstract painting due to his

treatise *Über das Geistige in der Kunst: Insbesondere in der Malerei*. In parallel, after *Der Blaue Reiter* movement, in the cultural history of Europe appear new writings in the aesthetic of the Classicism, especially ballet's field, as *Balletomania* written by Lione Arnold Haskell. But this, is just one example.

Then, we should observe the huge contribution of the music composed in those years by musicians as Igor Stravinsky, Alexander Scriabin, or Dmitri Šostakovič.

The Russian *Spiritualism* was a connection between ballet and painting-two Russian 'Spiritual'-worlds: Diaghilev and Kandinsky. We are at the beginnings of twentieth century, when great aesthetic changes happen at the artistic level. There are reconfigurations of all arts - ballet, music, theatre and, especially painting. Because the literature and philosophy opened a question about the spirituality of the humanity, the performing arts borrowed the 'Spiritual'-idea which investigates the relationship between Being and the life. Kandinsky shared this spectre of life in two parts: the "non-material" life<sup>1</sup>, which is a Spiritual one, and the material life, which happens in exterior. More than that, he proposed a pyramidal system in understanding the art formed by "innerer Natur" (inner nature), "Vergleichen" (comparison), "inneren Streben"<sup>2</sup> (or internal aspiration). It usually starts with the premise that there are two separated worlds-the outer world and the inner world. If Impressionism could render expression of nature from the outside world, Expressionist and Cubist groups, as well as Suprematist-Constructivist groups show us one thing: the outer world and the inner world must communicate with each other. How can it be possible this synthesis? The theory of 'Spiritual' in art tells us that this synthesis can be possible through subjectivity, through the abandon of the Being in a non-material world, through our looking to ourselves, through reflection, but more through auto-reflexivity. As we start from inside to build the outer world, the outside world must reflect what we have inside.

And what it is this 'inside'? This makes me think of a certain subjectivity of the Being when she is painting, dancing or writing poetry. This subjectivity had become a central theme in most of the artistic 20th century's Manifests. Subjectivity has always been attacked either by rationalization or by an exaggerated objectivity. If subjectivity is a full state of the Being when and is involved in creation processes, then objectivity would imply everything what happens outside of this area. But beyond this area, there is the world itself and the objects from which the world is constituted. As an example, Maurice Merleau-Ponty had mentioned that the objectivity starts with the representation of the surrounding objects which are in direct relation with 'subjectivité finie'<sup>3</sup>. From here, starts another natural question. Is this subjectivity a 'finite' one? Because if it is 'finite', it would mean that it is also limited. If it is limited, the infinity pointed by the Spiritual dimension opens the subjectivity itself, and this would mean that it can be questioned. Far from me to doubt about what Kandinsky tells us in *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, or what

<sup>1</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst: Insbesondere in der Malerei*, Hard Press Publishing, 2016, (after the edition of Benteli Verlag from 1963), pp. 41-40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-54.

<sup>3</sup> Original syntagma in French, in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, French Edition, Gallimard, Paris, 1945, p. 278.

Ponty pointed, I will try to connect the painting's 'Spiritual' theory with ballet. As we have become accustomed to certain aesthetic trends, we can talk about 'Spiritual' not only in painting, but in ballet too.

So, what happened with the art of dance, before and after the First World War? We have an active and dynamic artistic society, fractured in two parts – 1900-1914 and after 1918. A society which leads the 19th-century trauma (due to certain events) and a post-1918 society, which is for the new artistic Spirit, or new artistic change, but with strong roots in the first society. As such, I allow myself to say that between 1900-1930s we are dealing with a continuity, but also with a discontinuity phenomenon in arts. Discontinuity is reflected in those major changes which happened in art since 1918s, but with effects of continuity after 1918s. As a concrete example, if we read the Manifests of the Expressionism, Cubism, Suprematism, Constructivism etc., we will find that most of them have common points from which they start: how to express pain, how to express anxiety, how to express reason, in other words, how to manifest our inner being in the world. What had begun in Wedekind through *Erdegeist* had continued to the level of avant-garde Spiritualism through Wassily Kandinsky, Guillaume Apollinaire, Robert Delaunay, Kazimir Malevitch. The character Doctor Goll says the following to Lulu: "Art, you know, must reproduce nature that one find at least some spiritual enjoyment in it."<sup>4</sup> Even if we are facing the ludic spirit in art remarked as well by Frank Wedekind, we should focus in finding the Spiritual dimension in art. The Spiritual dimension provokes as to find a dynamic between the line designed on canvas and the Being. With this observation of Wedekind, we can mention the painting "Transverse Line"<sup>5</sup> painted in 1923, in order to support the dialogue between the representation and exterior world. In this painting we see different lines which meet themselves. But if we imagine that there is a body in the interior of the painting, we must admit that behind the ludic spirit exists the spirit of the sophisticated mathematics. The geometry contributes in shaping the lines of the body. The body is captured between the limit of the material world (the body itself) and the limit of the 'I'. So, we see straight black lines tangential with geometric figures such as triangle, rectangle or circle. The non-colour black is borrowed by Kandinsky in order to bring reflection into the interior of the painting. Sergei Diaghilev borrowed paintings techniques to introduce the reflection into the ballet. In this case, we should start to see a similarity between the Kandinsky's and Diaghilev's techniques. The curve lines are black too because there is a clear delimitation between the mathematical imagination and the transcendental imagination. We introduce this argument in order to understand the unity between the lines and figures illustrated by Wassily Kandinsky and because he works rather with a mathematical imagination than a ludic imagination. Kandinsky practices a necessary synthesis:

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<sup>4</sup> Frank Wedekind, *Erdegeist(Earth-Spirit). A Tragedy in four Acts*, trans., by Samuel A. Eliot, Albert and Charles Boni, New York, 1914, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Kandinsky, painting "Transverse Line", 140,0 x 200,0 cm, Kunstsammlung, Düsseldorf, 1923. Online: <https://www.wassilykandinsky.net/work-256.php>, accessed on 20th November, 2018.

[...]the realm of contrasts, the antithesis of duplication, as well as the series of possibilities that lie between contrast and duplication, becomes the essential basis of the synthesis<sup>6</sup>.

If we think to the structure of the human body, we see that it is a synthesis of symmetries and asymmetries, of different lengths or of different colours. This idea is illustrated by the painted costumes by Léon Bakst.

In the cultural-scenario of the century, a beautiful role plays Sergei Diaghilev. He had constructed a new way in imagining the ballet on the scene, but behind this, I can see in him a Gadamerian philosopher for the ballet. Why did we choose Diaghilev among so many representatives of ballet? Because, like Kandinsky, they have the same place of origin: the spiritual universe of Russia (USSR). It is a varied spiritual universe, through which Europe comes in contact with cultural products such as theatre, ballet, literature, painting and music. From Romanian Lovinescu's synchronous theory perspective<sup>7</sup>, Kandinsky and Diaghilev succeeded in synchronizing the cultural-Russian form with the Western and Central - European cultural background. The continuity between cultural German background and cultural-Russian forms are very well-designed by Kandinsky and Diaghilev, this supposing a cultural continuity between Eastern-Europe and Central-West Europe. Accordingly, to Pavel Klein, the *Ballets Russes* were a historical turn, and they were a top age for the ballet aesthetic. Diaghilev developed a new way of thinking the scenography<sup>8</sup>. He brings a novelty, as Kandinsky have done in *Compositions*.

On the other side, we have some recent perspectives in book *Behind the Scenes of the Ballets Russes. Stories from a Silver Age* which indicates that "the history of *Ballets Russes*' explosive arrival in Europe in the early twentieth century is one of the most powerful narratives of Modern Western Culture"<sup>9</sup>. Looking to this argument, we would complete with the idea of a Being's metaphorization through a narrative path- the whole story becomes a part of spectator and choreographer, or performer, as well.

### **The Evolution of the Ballet in Parallel with Kandinsky's Non-Objectual Theory**

Joan Rose Acocella mentioned that origins of the *Ballets Russes* were just these cultural evolutions, mentioned in our first part of this article. Some new facets of *Ballets* were brought from the trips enterprised by Diaghilev, both in Europe and Asia:

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Short, "Towards the Unity of the Arts", in Short (ed.) *The Art Theory of Wassily Kandinsky, 1909-1928: The Quest for Synthesis*, Peter Lang, Oxford, Bruxelles, Bern, Frankfurt am Mein, New York, Wien, 1962, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> For details, see Lovinescu Eugen, *Istoria civilizației române moderne 1923-1926*, Romanian Edition, Minerva, Bucharest, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Pavel Klein, *Scénografové ve službách Les Ballets Russes (1909-1912)*, Výběrová řada doktorských prací, Brno, 2007, p. 128.

<sup>9</sup> Ismene Brown, "Foreward", in Michael Meylac (ed.), *Behind the Scenes of the Ballets Russes. Stories from a Silver Age*, trans., by Rosanna Kelly, I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd., London, and New York, 2018, pp. 4-6.

[...] it would be also fitting characterization of Diaghilev himself: he was Russian to the core, yet much of his life was spent in Europe in a kind of self-imposed exile<sup>10</sup>.

From this side, he is similar to Kandinsky and their Spiritual dimension of the artistic culture is in convergence. We have in Diaghilev, “a spiritual world detached by the Classical Europe tradition”<sup>11</sup>. From their beginnings, the *Ballets Russes* had opened the enthusiasm for the public, the proof is that *Cahiers Belgique*<sup>12</sup> mentioned them. Tim Scholl, in collective volume *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet* investigated the first show made by Diaghilev saying “the first ballet shown by Diaghilev ballet in Paris, *Pavillon* could serve as the template for the *Ballets Russes* and the works Diaghilev would produce”<sup>13</sup>. He describes this first ballet as consisting in “opulent” images and a “rococo” stylization.<sup>14</sup> More than that, the Michel Fokine’s contribution has developed the evolution of decorations, costumes and drawings through two basic plays- “Schéhérazade”<sup>15</sup> and “L’Oiseau de feu”<sup>16</sup>.

From a personal point of view, I saw in “L’Oiseau de feu” oriental elements mixed with a Wagnerian-romantic theme, but also with insertions of some dissonances in composition. In this sense, I will remember the painting “Blue Segment”<sup>17</sup>. The colour blue remember us of the oriental world through the colour of the ultramarine lapis-lazuli. The segmentation of the blue shows us the unity between parts. This Orientalism synchronized with European music, makes the composition to be so unique. But, on the other side, from a historical-theatrical view, we feel a rococo scenographic style combined very well with Neoclassicism and Art Nouveau elements in the developing the “L’Oiseau de

<sup>10</sup> Joan Ross Acocella, “The Origins of Ballets Russes” in *The Art of Enchantment: Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, 1909-1929*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Fine Arts Museum, San Francisco, 1988, pp. 26-38.

<sup>11</sup> John E. Bowl; Zelfira Tregulova; Natalie Rostischer, *A feast of Wonders: Sergei Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes*, Skira, Genève, 2009, p. 75.

<sup>12</sup> \*\*\*“Ballets Russes”, in *Cahiers de Belgique*, vol.I, Programme officiel, Archives Internationales de la Danse, Paris, 1928.

<sup>13</sup> Tim Scholl, “The ballet avant-garde II: the ‘new’ Russian and Soviet dance in the twentieth century”, in Marion Kant (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Madrid, Melbourne, São Paulo, 2007, p.212.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>15</sup> Sergei Diaghilev, (1) “Schéhérazade”, in *Ballets Russes*, music by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov; libretto / scenery by Léon Bakst, Alexandre Benois and Michel Fokine; sets, costumes by Léon Bakst; choreography by Michel Fokine; Théâtre National de l’Opéra, Paris, 1910. For a recent version see (2) “Schéhérazade”. *Ballets Russes*, Directed by Karla Fracci, Teatro dell’Opera di Roma, Roma, 2009. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7-RGjT8X6s>, 39:12 length, accessed on 22th October 2018.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*, (1) “L’Oiseau de feu”. *Ballets Russes*, music by Igor Stravinsky; libretto by Michel Fokine; sets by Aleksandr Golovin, with additional costumes by Léon Bakst, first premiere on 25 June 1910, Théâtre National de l’Opéra, Paris, 1910. For a recent version, see (2) David Grimal et Les Dissonances, “L’Oiseau de feu”, en Sergei Diaghilev *Ballets Russes*, coord. David Grimal et Les Dissonances, Grande Salle de Pierre Boulez, en Philharmonie de Paris, 14 janvier, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, painting *Blue Segment*, Solomon Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1921.

feu”. The dynamic rhythm and apocatastatic vision imposed by Stravinsky in this play makes us feel how the ‘Spiritual’ can manifest through sounds. From this side, it is an Expressionistic play, too which makes from Stravinsky an Expressionistic-Wagnerian musician.

These aspects, on how Fokine and Diaghilev had thought their art entered into the ‘Spiritual’ non-objective dimension of the artist conscience. Not only Kandinsky was the seeker of the new meaning for the art, but also the choreographers, the dancers, the scenographers. “Loiseau de feu” enchanted the 1910s public, in parallel with the evolution of the Expressionistic theatre. I think, behind of these aspects, ballet and dance were seen as factors in producing a ‘Spiritual’ revolution for the Being. Isadora Duncan, Georges Balanchine, Michel Fokine, or later, Maia Plisețkaia are only some sonorous names from the history of ballet. But we have a surprise- cause when we read writings as *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* or the *Letters* written by Sergei Diaghilev to other famous artist of the age, we see that culture was a dynamic factor, even if the War started; we discover in all these artists talented interprets of their own art, or philosophers, or theoreticians of their own art. To interpret my own art, forces me to be objective and subjective in a synchronous way, forces me as an artist to assume the consequences of ‘myself’, because in this mood I can validate the consequences which the work of art produces through years. So, why is so important after creating your own art, to begin writing about your creation? Or why is important to write thoughts about your own art in parallel with its evolution? Because starting with the Manifests, we see that subjective dimension plays an important role. To be subjective with your art means to have the conscience of the effects of your art to public. I think Kandinsky and Diaghilev did not want to write only a simple theory about ‘Spiritual’, but they wanted to make us think more deeply on what we see, perceive and feel. They wanted to awake in us a conscience- the conscience of the spectator. If the conscience of the spectator is awakened, then the message of the art could be understood to its true value. Kandinsky’s option oscillated between dramatic theatre and painting and “he took the dramatic risk of denying representation altogether and experimented with abstract paintings”<sup>18</sup>. For example, the Spiritual opens the way for abstract things, and we think Diaghilev is representative for the abstract ballet. Van Liere remarks some piano influences in the arts- observation which validates the theory of the inter-dialogue between arts. The tension between objective arts and non-objective arts in synchronization, brought a new dilemma:

Which object is the symphony or the ballet? The score? choreography? production? performance?... Even in the case of painting, where there is clearly an object, artistic import it is not limited to its boundaries. While the painting may indeed be auctioned, packed, shipped or destroyed, aesthetic interest is not

<sup>18</sup> Eldon van Liere, “A Look at Modernism from the Keyboard: the Piano in the Parlor and Abstract Art”, in Marlies Kronegger (ed.), *The Orchestration of the Arts- A Creative Symbiosis of Existential Powers. The Vibrating Interplay of Sound, Color, Image, Gesture, Movement, Rhythm, Fragrance, Word, Touch*, *Annalecta Husserliana*, vol. LXVII. Springer-Science+Business Media, B. V. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 2000, p. 376.

exhausted by limiting concerns of the auditor or insurance carrier. As a work of art, the object is only an occasion in which we are drawn into the interior lie of the painting. A painting is very much a letter from a beloved. I may come to hold the paper on which it is written as valuable, but in fact it is the heart and mind, the expression and care which created the thing, which is precious<sup>19</sup>.

We are identifying a dilemma between the creativity and the result of the creativity- all the works of art are precious, because they metamorphosed in expressions for the soul. In this way, we validate the Kandinskian Spiritual which actions in ballet's thought and shaping by Diaghilev. Furthermore, Kazimir Malevich developed as well a theory on non-objective things. He mentioned that art starts with the subjectivity- "Every work of art-every picture-is the reproduction, as to say, of a subjective state of mind"<sup>20</sup>. We should remember also the two cultural-painting dilemmas between Kandinsky painting in white and the painting made by Malevich, "White on White" in 1918's. We see that 'Spiritual' is a manifestation of the non-colour white. So, the non-material world has a logical connection with the non-colours. We see white as actioning in Diaghilev's *Ballets*. Starting with this Malevich's observation, Diaghilev had reproduced a subjective form of theatre exposed in ballet.

We introduce in our analysis the Kandinskian idea of non-objects actioning in "Les Sylphides"<sup>21</sup>. Connecting with the feeling of the dance, the dancers also become non-material Beings, they become more 'Spiritual', or they try hardly to show us on how non-material parts of the Being are in continuous movement. The dancer changes itself due to the movements, as if he had many lives, the straight line representing the body or the arms, becomes in Kandinsky's case a curve line, which is in motion too. The dialectical forces- straight line and curve line- are meant to produce movement. Accordingly, to Malevich's idea, a non-objective painting is that one in which we have triangles, spheres, rectangles, meaning that straight and curve are in convergence. Now, the ballet movements are combinations between these geometrical ideals. Reading *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, we observe Kandinsky has not made a declaration regarding this aspect. For Kandinsky, non-objective means 'Spiritual' and subjectivity. For Malevich, non-objective means geometry. We try now to see 'Spiritual'-non-objective elements in Diaghilev's techniques and some cultural aspects for 1909-1910s, period in which Kandinsky painted *Composition II* and *Composition III*. The aim is to maintain a similarity between Kandinsky's and Diaghilev's evolution.

We are starting with the 1909s representation named "Les Sylphides" with music by Frederic Chopin, with orchestration made by two composers, Igor Stravinsky and Alexander Taneyev. I will start to point that sounds, movements are

<sup>19</sup> Sieglid Bruhn, "Aesthetic Symbiosis and Spiritual Quest", in Marlies Kronegger (*ed.cit.*), *The Orchestration of the Arts...*, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Kasimir Malevich, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism*, trans. by Howard Dearstyne, (after the original ed. 1959, Chicago), Dover Publications, New York, 2003, p. 40.

<sup>21</sup> For details, see Chopin-Stravinsky, "Les Sylphides", in *Ballets Russes*, 1909. Orchestra conducted by Oliver Knussen, June 22, 2013. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHn1bv8zZUI>, 12:28 length, accessed on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

part of non-objectual world. The movements should be something natural in their execution. The non-object world is a world full of lightness, of fluidity between every element trapped in this universe - image, sound, motion, colour. She vibrates in unison just as the dancer should vibrate with everything surrounding the scene. Secondly, in "Schéhérazade"<sup>22</sup> with music by Nikolai Rimski-Korsakov we have a Spiritual and *non-objective*/ non-material world exposed for our senses. Léon Bakst is the creator of the costumes, but he is a painter too. Kandinsky is well-known for oriental predilection with *Composition VI*.<sup>23</sup> In the 1910s, Diaghilev experimented the oriental-phase too, as an introduction of the Spiritual in oriental dimension of the culture. As example, we have the "Les Orientales"<sup>24</sup> exposed on Christian Sinding music orchestrated by Igor Stravinsky and on a piano tale by Edvard Grieg. "L'oiseau du feu" is a revelation for European-Parisian society.

We meet in "L'oiseau du feu" a sublime fictionality of the Spiritual manifested in a Tchaikovskyan style. He starts the play ex abrupto, with emphasis But, on the other hand, something fascinates us in "Soleil du Nuits"<sup>25</sup> exposed in 1915. I think the tchaikovskyan influence and the philosophy of the light. Is well-known the influences of Alexander Scriabin. The painter Mikhail Larionov is the designer of the costumes. We should remember Larionov as founder of Rayonism movement in Russia. Rayonism starts with introducing lightness in the art.<sup>26</sup> Conform to Larionov perspective, the light is which produces an effect in the soul and makes the painting to be purified- as example, painting *Red Rayonism*, from 1913. But we see, that technique from Rayonism were integrated by Diaghilev in his Ballets as well. With "Soleil de Nuits", Diaghilev validated the idea that painters could be designers for choreographers, as in Chagall's case happened when he was asked for designing the scene for the "L'oiseau de feu" by Igor Stravinsky. In all this cultural-coctail we should remember the *Poetics of the Music*, a written essay by Igor Stravinsky where he mentioned "the spiritual realm and the dignity of the human person"<sup>27</sup>. The body of the artist must become part from the body of the art

<sup>22</sup> Diaghilev, "Schéhérazade". For details, see [15] in the footnotes section.

<sup>23</sup> Dema Katinaitė, "Kandinsky in the Bauhaus- Oriental and non-classical aspects of his colour theory", in *Logos*, 90(90), 2017, Vilnius, p. 210. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24101/logos.2017.20>, accessed October 27, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Sergei Diaghilev, (1) "Les Orientales", in *Ballets Russes*, music by Anton Arensky, Aleksandr Borodin, Aleksandr Glazunov, Christian Sinding, and Edvard Grieg, with orchestration by Igor Stravinsky; sets by Konstantin Korovin; costumes by Konstantin Korovin and Léon Bakst; choreography by Michel Fokine; premiere on 25 June 1910, Théâtre National de l'Opéra, Paris, 1910. For other details see, (2) Arturo Toscanini "Les Orientales", in Sergei Diaghilev *Ballets...*, with NBC Symphony Orchestra by Arturo Toscanini, vol.4, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1w6cg5I10c>, 11:48 length, accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, "Soleil du Nuits" (rentitled "Midnight Sun" in 1918), in *Ballets Russes*, music by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov; sets and costumes by Mikhail Larionov; choreography by Léonide Massine; premiere on 20 December 1915, Grand Théâtre, Genève, 1915.

<sup>26</sup> Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal; Martha Bohachevsky Chomiak; *A Revolution of the Spirit. Crisis of Value in Russia, 1890-1924*, the 2nd ed., by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal and Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, trans., by Marian Schwartz, Fordham University Press, New York, 1990, p. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of six Lessons*, trans., by Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1970, p. 75.

which is “body of moral principles”<sup>28</sup>. Now we are seeing a referential dynamic into the word “body”. It is a very active dimension of the culture. When culture stagnates by various reasons, such poverty or war, some spiritual dimension are lost. But we see that despite of poverty, financial crisis or politics crisis we do have a ‘Spiritual’ dimension very strong shaped. And this is why these works of art have influence in our present too. Even if we are citizens of a postmodern era, is sufficient to pass threshold of a conservatory or ballet classes, to realize how important for the humanity art is. It is important because it is part of our present, because some shaped-cultural-forms from the beginnings of 20th are alive through the teachers and students who continue the tradition in universities.

### **Body, Lines and Movements Shaping the ,Spiritual’ in the Enchantment of the Air: Michel Fokine Tamara Karsevina’s Case**

We assist on a suprematization of the body. Representing the body became a revolution for the painters and for scenographers. In the work, *Point and Line to Plane*, Kandinsky defined very meticulously the concept of the line. The line is seen as something which can separate the material from the non-material world, but also as something which can unify them in transcendental vision or can unify “the spiritual fields”<sup>29</sup>. The spiritual must give “the exact line of direction”<sup>30</sup>, which means that the dancer already executes these lines and that is why h can unify different spiritual fields on the stage.

The line was not defined from a geometrical common view, it is defined in its relation with the movement. The line produces movement, where there is an openness. But secondly, the line can limit a plane in painting, or can open it, or it can limit the body. We have a similar case in Oskar Schlemmer’s representation, “Triadische Ballet”. He designed the draw *The Dancer*<sup>31</sup> in 1922, after Diaghilev. Nor Schlemmer was stranger to “spiritual dimension” – he sees the Spiritual as something universal, actioning in a piano playing.<sup>32</sup> and he declares that “I am interested in the nature of space, not in interiors”<sup>33</sup>. This is a different conception from Kandinsky, which think we find in *Ballets’* scenography.

On the other side, Warren Shibles in chapter “Emotion, Metaphor, Music and Humour” from the edition *The Orchestration of the Arts*, edited by Marlies Kronegger<sup>34</sup>, the function of metaphor is very important in the inter-play between arts. It makes different forms of art to speak the same language- the language of a metaphor which opens infinite meanings for the art.

<sup>28</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Kandinsky, Wassily *Point and Line to Plane. Contribution to the Analysis of the Pictorial Elements*, trans., by Horward Dearstyne, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1947, p. 121.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>31</sup> Oskar Schlemmer, Tut Schlemmer, *The Letters and Diaries of Oskar Schlemmer*, Northwestern University Press, Illinois, 1993, p. 83.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.

<sup>34</sup> Warren Shibles, “Emotion, Metaphor, Music and Humour”, in Marlies Kronegger (ed.), *ed. cit.* at footnote [18], 2000, pp. 432-433.

The movement is the origin of the creation. Michel Fokine, as coreographer of the “L’oiseu de feu”, had created the choreography starting with the coordination between body and the natural-lines of body in movement for Tamara Karsavina.<sup>35</sup> For the ballerina, the movement is an artistic engagement with the scene. We try to show the connection between Kandinsky’s lines and the imaginary lines in ballet movements. In *Ballets Russes*, Diaghilev had tried to show a revolution of the movement, a counterfeit between classicism and modernism, as Stravinsky did in his compositions. From a personal perspective, the ballet is transcending the idea of flying. The impossibilities become now possibilities. If we think to Chagall’s paintings, where everyone flies and is happy, we should see in Diaghilev’s flights the possibility of touching the happiness. An imaginary line appears between the upper-world and down-world between which dancers transit.

The Kandinsky’s lines which illustrates the movements and the dancers-bodies of Diaghilev show us three aspects: (i) the idea that we can reproduce geometry through movement and body, because the body has a relation with the Golden-Number during the ages; (ii) the idea that artists can represent the *immortality* through many innovative techniques – the flight is a double kinetic metaphor, because first, we see the ballerina in the air and we think is only the body which produces the movement; and twice, we can affirm that flight is reproduced due to the substantiality of the Kandinskian Spiritualism, related to Kantian idea that anima moves the body.<sup>36</sup> [36]. The Kantian edition of James O’Shea indicates us that immortality is understood as simplicity.<sup>37</sup> [37] (iii) The *Compositions* and the *Ballets* are the result of the double manifestation of the Spiritual in art.

The passage between *Composition II* and *III*, illustrates the evolution from a landscape- painting to a geometric-abstract one, the passage between diffuse colours to organised colour with harmonic principles applied. We do not know for sure if non-objective should mean ‘mind’ or ‘heart’ as Patricia Kitcher mentioned.<sup>38</sup> From a phenomenological perspective, we should not confuse the *sentimental* side of things with Spiritual. Kandinsky talks about Spiritual, talks about the arrangement of the colours and their unity with the sounds. But the Spiritual, should not be only manifested in painting or ballet, it should be understood as a totality which coordinates the invisible paths of the Being. I think Kandinsky and Diaghilev proposed us the principle of art as Being; if art is totality, if Spiritual is a totality, then Being is the bridge between them.

<sup>35</sup> Terence Pepper, “Tamara Karsavina as the Firebird in ‘L’Oiseau de feu’ (The Firebird)”, photographer Emil Otto Hoppé, photogravure from 1911, archived in National Portrait Gallery, 2010: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw200068/Tamara-Karsavina-as-the-Firebird-in-LOiseau-de-Feu-The-Firebird>, accessed on 30th October 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Pure Reason*, trans. and ed., by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, line A345/B403, 1998, p. 414.

<sup>37</sup> Patricia Kitcher, “The Critical and “Empty” Representation “I think””, in James R. O’Shea (Ed.). *Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. A Critical Guide*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2017, p. 143.

<sup>38</sup> *Loc. cit.*

In contrast, with Schlemmer's or Massine's ballet, Diaghilev succeeded to maintain a classical line- "Diaghilev rediscovered the beauty of the classicism"<sup>39</sup>. More than that, Carol Lee mentioned a "neoclassicism"<sup>40</sup> surviving in the *Ballets Russes*. But more than that, we see in Diaghilev's representation a Debussyan-impressionistic line, a Wagnerian one, an Expressionistic and an dissonantic one.

An important role had played the dancer Michel Fokine, which plays in most of the parts of the *Ballets*. To understand how the body, Kandinskian imaginary lines applied to body function with the Spiritual side, we will focus on the body of the ballerina. The ballerina represents an "the never ending physiognomy of the world"<sup>41</sup> manifested through his body. We see in Diaghilev's and Fokine's techniques a sublime choreography, very different from the Constructivist choreography. In dancing, all the ballerina's turmoil and all its restlessness are connected by the rendering of always moving shapes. And the movements are always on repeat, because they are the flow of life disconnected from the world of materiality. Every movement, every indication of the line, is a representation of the Spiritual. The ballerina can touch the passive air-forms of the non-materiality acclaimed by Kandinsky in his works, and the active forms of expression- the jumps into the air. These jumps into the air are not only analogies with the flight, or with the Being's desire to fly, to free itself, but are a metaphor of how Being can survive to Life. The unity between Karsavina and the interpreted-character, *The Firebird*, is possible due to a substantiality between talent and interpretation. And we are talking about a second grade interpretation- one which is gave by Fokine in a technical way, and the second one which is gave by Karsavina in an artistic way which exceeds the first one. There will be still a third degree in interpretation, given by Stravinsky.

All these forces form a triad. That is why interpretation of a ballet performance is much more difficult. The air prepares the conditions for the body to be in relation with the freedom. Painting, as ballet should be born thorough a sublime thought of freedom connected to harmonic principles of art. Michel Fokine has a double artistic spiritual identity as choreographer, and as dancer too: "Fokine believed that ballet should abandoned *divertissement* as a diversion from the action of the dance, and that dance and pantomime must be combined to express the idea of the ballet as a whole"<sup>42</sup>. The fourth interpretation would be the one given by the spectator. As we can see, the world of ballet has many meanings, all derived from Spiritual dimension understood as totality: in this sense, the creator of the work of art, the painter, the musician, the being, the ballerina, the spectator must be placed in the same place. And I think this is the way in unifying so different Spiritualities from different spiritual-fields which all belong to a single entity- the Being itself.

<sup>39</sup> Carol Lee, chapter "12.The Ballets Russes from the Pursuit of the Avant-Garde to Neoclassicism", *Ballet in Western Culture. A History of its Origins and Evolution*, Routledge, New York, London, University of South Florida, 2002, pp. 255–256.

<sup>40</sup> *Supra*.

<sup>41</sup> Rudolf Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers, fünf gedankenreigen*, W. Seifert, Stuttgart, 1920, p. 13.

<sup>42</sup> Scholl, *ed. cit.*, ( *The Cambridge Companion to...*), 2007, p. 216.

### Conclusion

Passing through different years, we notice that some cultural products remain true works of art. In German, 'true' means 'Wirklichkeit'. The truth in coexistence with Spiritual makes the work of art to remain in immortality and an untouchable metaphor. That is why Kandinsky's *Compositions* and Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* are so important for us today. They were important in the evolution of modernist art from their beginnings. And I think that true character is obvious only through Spiritual. So, the theory on Spiritual written by Kandinsky becomes validated through its insertion into the fascinating ballet's world.

But, there is one more direction in interpreting the relation between Diaghilev's *Ballets* and Kandinsky's canvas. First, we can say that the ballet needs an interpretation through a painting-language. As we know, many scenographers, theatre-directors and film-makers collaborated with painters. As an effect, we have a rare phenomenon during the 1909-1929's- the phenomenon I can see is the overload of the art with senses borrowed from all spiritual form of manifestations of the being, such ballet, theatre, literature, painting. All these manifestations are a specific language for the society. The ballet acts through a 'kerygmatic'<sup>43</sup> dimension [43] of the image as the painting does. Painting is born for the canvas, but ballet for the air. Secondly, we validate in this way that two different languages of representation can be defined unified- the Spiritual and material world of the canvas with the air's Spiritual world. In this case, I propose the term *air's Spiritual world*, to show the distinction between the arts executed with the hand and the arts executed using the body. We can think to the circus world and ballerinas, as well. They are *sui generis* beings who can live in an artistic way into the air. For the viewers conscience, their work of art represented on scene is a work of art immortalized into the air, due to the talent in synchronization between body-Spirit and the gravitational nature's laws. More than that, Kandinsky and Diaghilev were the air's artisans in the being's symbolizing plane.

What did we actually want to demonstrate through the investigation outlined in this article? We wanted to show two things: firstly, that Wassily Kandinsky's work must be understood through dance, and secondly, that there is nothing left untouched in the world of dance. We also have answered to the question "why do we dance?". The aesthetics of the twentieth century have succeeded in bringing painting, music and dancing together, but in order to understand why they have to deal together and not separately, we must approach process of understanding the philosophical aspects of the ballet. Geometry was a central nucleus from which all began: music was referenced to geometry, and ballet was already plummeting according to the geometric lines of the body as described by its movement. In the future, innovation in aesthetics research field would consist of the idea in unifying the classic ballet record with the painting register. Why do we say „classic"? Because they are "beautiful arts" [Bele- Árte] which

<sup>43</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, chapter "Aesthetic and religious experience", *The Relevance of the Beauty and other Essays*. trans., by Nicholas Walker, ed. by Robert Bernasconi, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p. 148.

promote moral and ethical values. Also, to emphasize this point of view, Kandinsky can only be updated through these perspectives - by finding connections between the lines drawn by him and the new ballets danced by Mikhail Barishnikov, for example. In this way, we believe that our analysis has achieved its purpose.

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