

NIJINSKY. By *Richard Buckle*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971. xiv, 482 pp. \$12.50.

Few lives have presented a greater contrast between magnificent achievement and world-wide fame, followed by eclipse, than that of Vaslav Nijinsky. Much has been written about him already, notably by his wife Romola. Until his astonishing performance, the art of the male dancer had not been considered of outstanding importance in the West. The success of Diaghilev's first seasons in Paris was due to the perfect combination of great dancing, fine music, and original decor, but hinged largely upon the appearance of Nijinsky. It was through the ballet that Paris, London, and New York became aware that Russia had made an important contribution to modern art, a realization which is only now being followed up.

As a ballet critic, Richard Buckle naturally deals with the history of the Diaghilev enterprise and describes the subject and choreography of each ballet in detail. Very little is known about Nijinsky's early life and scarcely anything about the years after he was declared to be a victim of schizophrenia, except as narrated by Romola. The present book is carefully documented with a footnote supporting every statement. Yet many questions remain unanswered. The author himself asks what might have happened if Nijinsky had continued to work with the ballet: could his illness have been averted or postponed? The first break with Diaghilev was caused by Nijinsky's marriage in South America. A series of minor mishaps followed, aggravated by world events—war and revolution. Perhaps Romola was more a victim of persecution mania than he was, during the second American tour in 1917, yet she is given ample credit for being his breadwinner and devoted nurse during the thirty years of "hope, despair, struggle, poverty, and heroism" which followed his forcible confinement in Switzerland. The world will never know what mental agony he must have suffered. Contact with Russian troops and the sight of Ulanova dancing with the Russian ballet in Vienna in 1945 were apparently the first breakthrough toward normality, but he died soon after in 1949.

My own recollections are only of the beginning and the end. The great thrill of seeing my first ballet, *The Sleeping Beauty*, in the Marinsky Theatre was the Blue Bird flying diagonally across the stage, his feet barely touching the ground, and thirty-five years later a glimpse of a weary middle-aged figure walking up the stairs at Sacher's Hotel in Vienna. Between these dates the only contact with his genius was an exhibition of drawings in London in 1937, Nijinsky's last expression of rhythm and beauty—in lines on paper instead of with the movement of his body on a stage.

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CINEMA IN REVOLUTION: THE HEROIC ERA OF THE SOVIET FILM.

Edited by *Luda and Jean Schnitzer*, and *Marcel Martin*. Translated and with additional material by *David Robinson*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1973. Illus. 208 pp. \$8.95, cloth. \$3.95, paper.

Cinema in Revolution is a peculiar publication. Luda and Jean Schnitzer and Marcel Martin edited the French original, which was published in 1966, and a fourth person, David Robinson, translated the book and provided it with additional material. It is a combination of interviews with, and writings of, several prominent persons in