

Interwar French Ballet and the German Occupation: Exploring the Resilience and Evolution of Dance Amidst Turmoil

Abstract

This article delves into the captivating history of French ballet during the interwar period and the tumultuous years of the German occupation. Drawing from the comprehensive work "Oxford Studies in Dance Theory," it sheds light on the challenges, resilience, and transformative advancements that shaped French ballet during this era.



The Fascist Turn in the Dance of Serge Lifar: Interwar French Ballet and the German Occupation (Oxford Studies in Dance Theory) by Mark Franko

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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The interwar period in France marked a time of both cultural flourishing and immense social and political upheaval. The years following the devastation of World War I witnessed a resurgence of artistic expression, with ballet taking center stage as a symbol of French cultural identity. However, the

outbreak of World War II and the subsequent German occupation threatened to extinguish the flame of French ballet.

Against the backdrop of war and occupation, French ballet not only survived but also evolved, demonstrating the indomitable spirit of its artists and the power of dance to transcend adversity. This article explores the resilience and transformative journey of French ballet during this extraordinary chapter in history.

The Interwar Years: A Resurgence of Artistic Expression

In the aftermath of World War I, France experienced a surge of artistic revival. The years between the wars witnessed a flourishing of literature, music, and dance, with Paris emerging as a vibrant cultural hub. Ballet, in particular, enjoyed a renewed prominence, captivating audiences with its grace, athleticism, and emotional expressiveness.

The interwar period saw the emergence of several influential choreographers and dancers who pushed the boundaries of ballet. Serge Lifar, a Russian-born dancer, became a leading figure in French ballet, creating groundbreaking works that seamlessly blended classical technique with modern influences. Other notable figures included Bronislava Nijinska, Leonide Massine, and George Balanchine, who each contributed to the evolving landscape of French ballet.

The interwar years also witnessed the establishment of several prestigious ballet companies, including the Ballets Russes de Serge Diaghilev and the Ballets de Paris. These companies showcased the talents of world-renowned dancers and presented innovative productions that captivated audiences across Europe and beyond.

The German Occupation: A Time of Challenge and Transformation

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 cast a dark shadow over the thriving French ballet scene. As German forces invaded and occupied France, the country's artistic and cultural institutions faced an unprecedented crisis. The German occupiers imposed strict censorship and restrictions on artistic expression, threatening to silence the voices of French artists.

In the face of adversity, French ballet companies and dancers displayed remarkable resilience and determination to continue their art form. Despite the challenges and limitations imposed by the occupation, they found innovative ways to perform and create new works.

One significant response to the occupation was the establishment of underground ballet schools and studios. These hidden havens provided a sanctuary for dancers to train and rehearse, keeping the spirit of ballet alive even amidst the turmoil of war.

Another notable development during this period was the emergence of a new generation of choreographers. Influenced by the horrors and uncertainties of war, these choreographers created works that reflected the anxieties and aspirations of their time. Maurice Béjart, Roland Petit, and Janine Charrat were among the young choreographers who emerged during the occupation, shaping the future of French ballet with their bold and innovative creations.

The Liberation and Post-War Renaissance

The liberation of France in 1944 marked a turning point for French ballet. With the lifting of censorship and restrictions, ballet companies and dancers were free to once again perform openly and express their creativity.

The post-war years witnessed a resurgence of artistic vitality in France. Ballet companies toured extensively, showcasing the resilience and artistry of French dancers to international audiences. The Paris Opera Ballet, under the direction of Serge Lifar, became a symbol of France's cultural recovery and prestige.

The post-war era also saw the establishment of several new ballet companies, including the Roland Petit Ballet, the B ejart Ballet Lausanne, and the Ballet du XXe Si ecle. These companies became hubs for experimentation and innovation, contributing to the continued evolution of French ballet.

The interwar period and German occupation were tumultuous years that tested the resilience and adaptability of French ballet. Despite the challenges and setbacks, French ballet emerged from this era stronger and more vibrant than ever before. The artists and dancers of this era demonstrated an indomitable spirit, finding creative ways to preserve their art form and adapt it to the changing circumstances.

The legacy of interwar French ballet continues to inspire and influence dance makers and dancers around the world. The resilience, creativity, and innovation that characterized this era serve as a reminder of the transformative power of art in the face of adversity.

Image Descriptions

Image 1:



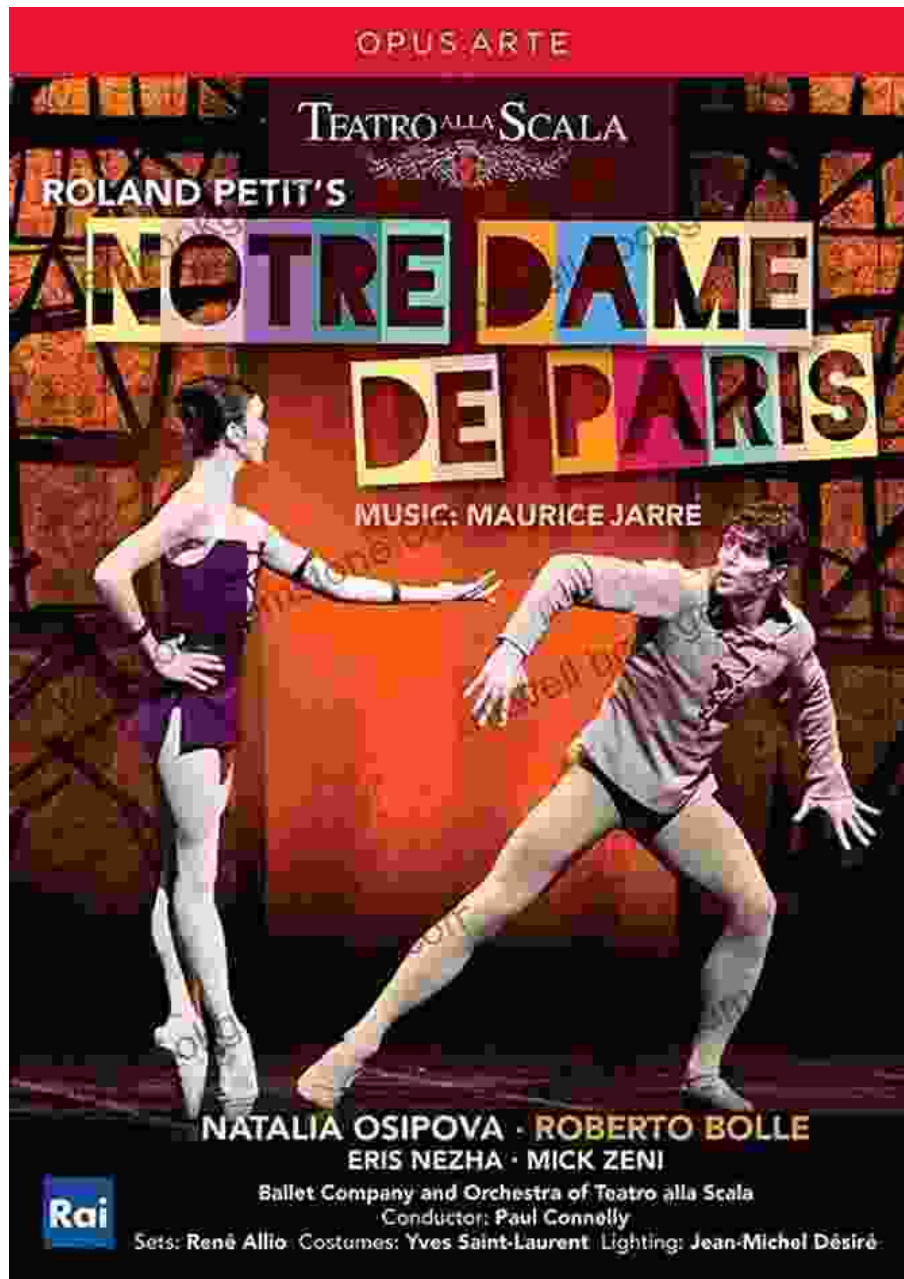
Alt Text: Serge Lifar, a renowned dancer and choreographer, performing a gravity-defying leap during an interwar French ballet performance.**

****Image 2:****



Alt Text: French ballet dancers practicing their art in secret during the German occupation, demonstrating their resilience and determination to preserve their art form.**

****Image 3:****



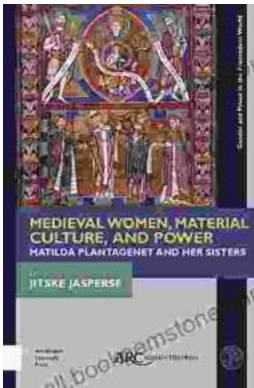
Alt Text: A vibrant poster showcasing the post-war resurgence of French ballet, with the Roland Petit Ballet promising a captivating performance.**

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