Alexander Pushkin's Influence on the Development of Russian Ballet

Kathryn Karrh Cashin
THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

ALEXANDER PUSHKIN’S INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF RUSSIAN BALLET

By

KATHRYN KARRH CASHIN

A Dissertation submitted to the Interdisciplinary Program in the Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2005

Copyright 2005
Kathryn Karrh Cashin
All Rights Reserved
The members of the Committee approve the dissertation of Kathryn Karrh Cashin defended on the 16th of March, 2005.

__________________________________________________________
Tricia Young
Professor Directing Dissertation

__________________________________________________________
Paul Halpern
Outside Committee Member

__________________________________________________________
Leon Golden
Committee Member
Humanities Representative

__________________________________________________________
Ernest Rehder
Committee Member

Approved:

__________________________________________________________
David Johnson
Head, Program in the Humanities

__________________________________________________________
Donald Foss
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.
This endeavor is dedicated with love to
   Ken and Katy
in great appreciation for their patience and support
   (you’re the best)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the members of my committee; Dr. Tricia Young, Dr. Leon Golden, Dr. Paul Halpern and Dr. Ernest Rehder, for their patience and support and would like to commend them for their inspirational teaching and excellence in their respective fields. Dr. Young, who directed my work, was exceptionally helpful. Quite simply, this project would not have been possible without her. She contributed an inordinate amount of time discussing the project and helping to formulate the structure of the work. Her excellent editing skills, knowledge of dance and dance history, support, patience and sense of humor were invaluable. Barbara Reis, coordinator for the Program in the Humanities, served as an important resource and was of tremendous assistance and I thank her for all of her efforts on my behalf. I also would like to thank my family, friends, and the Elles, as well as the dancers, parents and co-workers at The Tallahassee Ballet for their support and patience.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract...........................................................................................................vi

INTRODUCTION.................................................................................................1

CHAPTER ONE  Pushkin’s Literary Biography.................................................9

CHAPTER TWO  Pushkin and Russian Music...............................................21

CHAPTER THREE  A brief history of ballet in Western Europe and Russia from its origin until the era of Pushkin..........................................................45

CHAPTER FOUR  Pushkin and Russian Ballet.................................................77

CHAPTER FIVE  Pushkin, Soviet Ballet and Afterward..............................124

CHAPTER SIX  Pushkin and Ballet: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow........177

CONCLUSION..................................................................................................195

BIBLIOGRAPHY.............................................................................................202

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.............................................................................209
ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores and analyzes Alexander Pushkin’s contribution to the development of a unique Russian form of classical ballet. Pushkin’s gift as a writer and understanding of language, music and ballet converge to directly influence the evolution of ballet in Russia. To establish a link between Pushkin and Russian ballet, the evolution of Pushkin’s written word to its presentation musically, in the form of songs, and later on stage as opera is traced.

Pushkin’s works provide important inspiration for the Russian performing arts because of his use of Russian themes and incorporation of local color, characterizations and settings. His works lend themselves to musical interpretation, which provides additional inspiration.

A brief examination of Pushkin’s life and a chronological review of his literary career are provided. Similarly, each chapter begins with a brief historical overview of the subject covered (i.e. music, ballet history, ballet in Russia, Socialist Realism) so that a point of reference and background information is provided.

In order to illustrate Pushkin’s influence on the emergence of a uniquely Russian ballet tradition, selected ballets were examined according to five hallmarks identified as originating with Pushkin’s literary legacy and traceable through the development and codification of Russian ballet. Although other Pushkin-based ballets are included in this study, four are given special consideration. These include The Bronze Horseman, The Fountain of Bakhchisarai, The Queen of Spades, and Eugene Onegin.

Chapter One provides background on Pushkin while Chapter Two outlines Pushkin’s influence on the development of Russian music. Chapter Three reviews the history of ballet in both Western Europe and Russia and Chapter Four is dedicated to ballet in Russia and Pushkin’s significance to its development. In Chapter Five The Bronze Horseman and The Fountain of Bakhchisarai are analyzed, while in Chapter Six these two ballets and The Queen of Spades and Eugene Onegin are compared and
contrasted. Chapter Six also includes a discussion of Pushkin’s interest in the ballet as evidenced by his *Eugene Onegin* and explores the theme of madness in his works.
Like the poet, the choreographer finds new ways of saying things.
George Balanchine

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores and analyzes Alexander Pushkin’s contribution to the development of a unique Russian form of classical ballet. Pushkin is credited with the development of almost every Russian literary art form. He is further credited as a catalyst for the creation of uniquely Russian forms of music, opera and ballet. This paper will show that Pushkin’s gift as a writer and his understanding of language, music and ballet converged to directly influence the evolution of ballet in Russia.

Despite the large body of research investigating Pushkin and his legacy, very little scholarly work exists concerning his impact on the development of ballet. There are several possible reasons for this: 1) as a performing art, ballet is a relative late comer; 2) most Russian ballets are rarely performed outside of Russia; and 3) educated dance criticism is still an emerging field. In addition, most of the ballets based on Pushkin’s themes were created long after his death and may have been overlooked for this reason.

Certainly ballet existed and, indeed, flourished during Pushkin’s era. He was a great ballet enthusiast and his works reflect both his knowledge and appreciation of the art form (Schmidt 1989, 2). However, most of the ballets he viewed in his lifetime were imports from other countries with stories, characters, choreography, music and settings borrowed from them.

In order to establish a link between Pushkin and Russian ballet, it is important to follow the evolution from Pushkin’s written word to its presentation musically and later on stage as opera and ballet. Therefore, Pushkin’s contributions to music, including opera, will be considered because they show a direct link from his writings to the ballet genre. His works transcend the boundaries of literature and have been produced audibly and visibly on stage.

Pushkin’s works provide important inspiration for the Russian performing arts because of his use of specifically Russian themes and incorporation of local color, characterizations and settings. His themes and ideas developed from his unique Russian
experiences. Furthermore, he creates realistic characters and through them explores the psychological nature of mankind. Perhaps, most importantly for the purpose of this study, his works also provide inspiration because they lend themselves to musical interpretation, which will be examined as part of the evolutionary process.

There exists a staggering amount of scholarly research and analysis of Pushkin’s work and an additional study might seem unnecessary or redundant. However, Pushkin’s works continue to inspire new ballet productions, which provide more opportunities for examination and understanding of his enduring legacy.

Pushkin is considered one of Russia’s most important authors and was recognized as such during his lifetime. He, like Peter the Great, was influential in bringing Western European cultural traditions to Russia, and was key to the establishment of a Russian literary tradition:

Pushkin was the first, by virtue of the high aesthetic standards he achieved, to raise his writings to the advanced and enlightened level of European spiritual life in the 19th century. By so doing, he introduced Russian literature, as yet one more and highly significant national original literature, to the family of the most developed Western traditions of that time. Only against this historical and historical-literacy background—in the mainstream of European and, even more broadly, world artistic development—is it possible for us to grasp to the full the miracle of Pushkin’s genius and the place, role and significance of his work for the whole “sublunar world” (Blagoy 1979, 13).

Although Pushkin was considered a genius, this does not mean that his life was an easy one. He faced many financial and personal challenges during his short life and died at a young age. We are left to wonder what additional masterpieces he might have contributed had he lived to create a larger body of work.

Pushkin’s influence on the Russian literary tradition is enormous. David Budge, in his essay *Pushkin and the Novel*, states that “Pushkin’s shoulders must be the broadest in Russian literature. The weight of paternity he has to bear for everything that came after him is awesome and, at least in modern times, virtually unparalleled” (McMillin 1990, 3). This work credits Pushkin with an even broader legacy by linking his writing to the development of a unique Russian ballet.

To accomplish this task, this dissertation first provides a brief examination of Pushkin’s life as well as a chronological review of his literary career, in effect a literary
biography. This literary biography helps to establish the time period and influences that affected Pushkin’s writing. This becomes important as the works that are transposed to operas and ballets are investigated in later chapters. Without this point of reference it would be impossible to compare literary and performing art accomplishments in other countries as opposed to those in Russia. Similarly, each chapter begins with a brief historical overview of the subject covered (i.e. music, ballet history, Russian Imperial ballets, Socialist Realism) so that a point of reference and background information is provided. This study will demonstrate that Russia does indeed have a unique and readily identifiable form of ballet and that characteristics of this special genre can be traced to Pushkin’s literary contributions.

In order to illustrate Pushkin’s influence on the emergence of a uniquely Russian ballet tradition, selected ballets will be examined according to five hallmarks I have identified as originating with Pushkin’s literary legacy and traceable through the development and codification of Russian ballet: 1) main character gender (male as opposed to female) and nationality (Russian as opposed to Western European); 2) the Russian location of the story; 3) Russian musical composition; 4) Russian nationalistic attitudes reflected in the work; and 5) special dance techniques and choreography that illustrate unique aspects of Russian dance. Although other Pushkin-based ballets are included in this study, four are given special consideration. These include The Bronze Horseman, The Fountain of Bakhchisarai, The Queen of Spades and Eugene Onegin. This is not to say that all four ballets contain all five hallmarks. In fact only The Fountain of Bakhchisarai includes all five elements. The other three ballets lack the fifth hallmark, but can still be identified as Russian because they incorporate the other four characteristics which are unique to Russian ballet.

These works have been selected for several reasons. First, three of them; The Fountain of Bakhchisarai, The Queen of Spades and Eugene Onegin are still performed today, although not necessarily as originally produced. The Fountain of Bakhchisarai and The Queen of Spades are currently found in the repertoires of Russian ballet companies, and Eugene Onegin has been performed by Russian companies. Both The Queen of Spades and Eugene Onegin are found in the repertoires of Russian opera companies. Also, both ballets have enjoyed success outside of Russia. The Bronze Horseman is
included because of its special attributes that matched the dictates of Socialist Realism and made a unique contribution to the history of Russian ballet.

Several complications occur with a study of this nature, which may explain why an in-depth study of Pushkin’s direct contribution to the development of Russian ballet has not been fully explored. The first obstacle centers on the fact that not all of these selected ballets are currently part of Russian ballet repertoire today. For example, *Eugene Onegin* is performed in Russia as an opera with incidental dancing, but is part of many ballet companies’ repertoires elsewhere. One ballet version has appeared on a Russian stage but it was performed and choreographed by foreigners. *The Bronze Horseman* appears to not exist in any current ballet repertoire. *The Queen of Spades* is performed as a three-act opera in Russia, but is also part of the Bolshoi Ballet’s repertoire as a one act ballet choreographed by a non-Russian, Roland Petit. *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* appears not only in the major Russian ballet company repertoires (Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi Ballets), but in many other ballet company repertoires, particularly in Eastern Europe. The background information provided in Chapters One through Five is included in order to minimize confusion while simultaneously providing a solid basis for the conclusions contained in Chapter Six.

An exhaustive review of the vast amount of existing scholarship on Pushkin is outside the scope of this paper. It would even be impossible to categorize and summarize those works only presented in English. It has been over two hundred years since Pushkin’s birth and since that time countless biographies, compilations, anthologies and reviews concerning Pushkin have appeared. Pushkin has been examined through bi-literary, comparative (abroad and in Russia), and populist studies. He has been examined through the lenses of Romanticism, Realism and music studies. His letters, memoirs and diaries have been studied exhaustively.

Fortunately, the Pushkin bicentennial of his birth in 1999 has resulted in a proliferation of new and valuable works. While I used all available sources (books, articles, videos and personal observation) to help inform my subject, I was particularly reliant on the newer publications believing that they have a more complete and, perhaps, less biased approach.
As mentioned previously, there exists a tremendous amount of research concerning Pushkin’s life, writing and influence. However, besides incidental references in both his works and others’ critical reviews, very little has been written about the direct link between his text and the performing arts, in particular ballet. Therefore, to create the most comprehensive review and research of the material, various methodologies were employed to provide as complete a picture as possible.

Historiography was used to provide a review of Pushkin’s works and their subsequent impact on contemporaneous and later productions. Particular attention was paid to poems and other writings that resulted in their transference to other mediums; musical, theatrical, or as a ballet. Special emphasis has been placed on ballets based on Pushkin themes. The Pushkin-based ballets selected for study were compared with other ballets produced at the same time in both Russia and abroad.

To further support the argument that Pushkin’s writings advanced a purely Russian form of ballet, a methodology investigating the cultural contexts of the selected works was utilized. The selected works were reviewed for attributes that reflected particularly Russian characteristics. As mentioned previously, the ballets were compared and/or contrasted with other non-Russian works to identify unique Russian qualities.

Where possible, movement analysis was employed. There are no extant full-length video recordings of the four major ballets under investigation. Furthermore, these ballets exist primarily in the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi repertoires, thus making a first hand review difficult. Where possible, excerpts from these ballets were viewed and analyzed for stylized choreography. Written performance reviews were relied upon, when possible and appropriate, for additional information concerning movement.

While countless sources, both primary and secondary, concerning Pushkin’s work are available, writing about dance or ballet presents certain obstacles. Dance historian Jack Anderson notes:

Dance is the most perishable of the arts. It is forever in danger of vanishing. Many choreographers do not attempt to preserve their dances; some would not know how to go about doing so. Even today, when we have films and videotapes in addition to systems of dance notation, important works remain unrecorded. Usually dances are preserved—if they are preserved at all—only in the memory of the artists who performed
them. But memory is fallible, and steps can easily be changed or forgotten (Anderson 1986, 1).

In short, once a ballet has left the stage, that specific performance is gone forever. While it also is true that no two musical concerts or dramatic portrayals may be the same, they do (in most instances) leave behind materials that can be examined and analyzed. Music, which usually exists first in a written form, can also be recorded for play back. Plays, musicals and operas also leave behind written texts to be interpreted. A live performance may offer additional insights to a piece of music or a play, but a general sense of the subject and tone can be attained by hearing a tape of the music or reading the play.

As Anderson mentions, ballet can be videotaped, but it loses the perspective of the stage. While music has been recorded successfully for decades, until very recently quality videotapes of ballets were limited. Most of the ballets considered for this study were produced and performed before the advent of any means of recording.

Close reading and analysis of Pushkin’s text was also incorporated. Specifically, selected Pushkin works were examined for special attributes that lent themselves to musical or visual interpretation.

Although this is a multi-faceted approach, it is appropriate because the subject matter is also multi-faceted. In examining literary, musical and visual works, it is necessary to use several methods in order to do each genre justice. The comparing and contrasting of this data is a decisive factor in supporting the argument and can only be accomplished through employment of various methodologies.

In summary, a historical review of the works selected was conducted as well as critical reviews analyzing uniquely Russian aspects of both the writing and the ballets in order to demonstrate a pattern of influence that can be traced directly from Pushkin to the development of a uniquely Russian ballet genre.

To obtain the necessary research several techniques were employed. Extensive and intensive library research was used to identify and investigate pertinent sources. Primary sources including Pushkin’s personal letters, as well as first hand accounts of ballet performances, and contemporaneous reviews were considered. In addition, many of the sources were secondary. These sources report on audience responses and provided
historical background and points of reference. When possible, audio and visual materials were reviewed.

As mentioned before, careful review of Pushkin’s text involving these works was conducted. Particular attention was paid to sections of the writings that were manifested in the ballet.

These procedures are critical to the success of this project. Since there is no readily quantifiable data to extrapolate for conclusions, these various techniques and procedures were employed to yield sufficient scholarly information for an informed and supportable conclusion.

Chapter One provides background on Pushkin and his literary career. Chapter Two traces the development of Russian music and Pushkin’s influence on its development. Chapter Three reviews the history of ballet in both Western Europe and Russia while Chapter Four is dedicated to ballet in Russia and Pushkin’s significance to its development. In Chapter Five *The Bronze Horseman* and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* are analyzed and the impact of Socialist Realism is discussed. In Chapter Six *The Bronze Horseman*, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, *The Queen of Spades* and *Eugene Onegin* are compared and contrasted according to the five hallmarks established, particularly identifying the psychological characteristics of the male protagonists. Chapter Six also includes a discussion of Pushkin’s interest in the ballet as evidenced by his *Eugene Onegin*.

While Pushkin’s influence on the development of ballet is considerable, his works are certainly not the only contributing factors. Also, other ballets based on non-Pushkin themes exhibit many of the unique characteristics associated with Russian ballet. A ballet can be Russian without incorporating all five hallmarks by simply containing one or more of the aspects as identified as uniquely Russian. What is significant about Pushkin is the volume of work he influenced and how well his works were used to create these identifiable Russian ballet characteristics. Because of his gift for storytelling and characterization he has inspired numerous acclaimed composers and choreographers with works that lent themselves to transference to the stage. No other Russian author is as well represented in the repertoires of Russian opera and ballet.
Pushkin’s works are also represented in non-Russian repertoires. During the latter part of the twentieth-century, Pushkin’s influence reached outside of Russia and new productions of *The Queen of Spades* and *Eugene Onegin* were created by and for non-Russian companies. These works are considered valuable additions to ballet repertoire.

It is important to firmly establish that Pushkin’s works were musical by nature, not merely adaptable, and it is with this understanding that the dissertation begins. The first chapter outlines Pushkin’s musical ability and provides a glimpse of Pushkin’s talent and significance to the development of Russian music:

   Just as Mozart is instantly recognizable, so Pushkin’s lyric voice is singularly idiosyncratic. It continuously and originally asserts itself through the myriad contexts of his lyrics, his translations and adaptations from many languages, his folkloristic experiments, and in many phonic textures, metrics, and organization of all his work, outstandingly so in “For Distant Shores,” “Prophet,” and *Eugene Onegin*, “a novel in verse.” This degree of idiosyncrasy is possible only…through technique that was consummately, consistently, and often consciously musical…Pushkin’s voice is vitally connected with music in many ways (Friedrich 1998, 61).

Pushkin is not merely a word-smith; he creates art that is transferable to other genres.
CHAPTER ONE

Pushkin’s Literary Biography

This opening explanatory chapter is intended to provide information necessary to understanding Pushkin’s contributions and achievements. Its purpose is multifold and 1) offers a brief summary of Pushkin’s life as it relates to the analysis of his works; and 2) provides a chronology of his important works relevant to this study. It is divided into two sections: the first discusses Pushkin’s life and his career as a writer while the second provides a chronological review of Pushkin’s writings.

1. Literary Biography: Events that shaped Pushkin’s writing career.

Students and enthusiasts of Russian literature are well acquainted with Alexander Pushkin and are certainly aware of the more sensational biographical facts of his life. Like Raphael, Mozart and Lord Byron, his early death at the age of thirty-seven makes him a tragic and romantic figure. He was known to be passionate, loyal, gay and rash, but equally melancholy and defeatist. Pushkin’s behavior was noted by his friend, Ivan Pushchin, who remarked “What a strange mixture this magnificent creature was. Never did I stop loving him, and I know that he reciprocated my feelings. But sometimes, out of my deep friendship for him, I longed for him to look at himself truthfully and understand his behavior” (Feinstein 1998, 43). Of course his rich and varied writings reflect this dichotomy.

Pushkin simultaneously advocated political reform, but was equally proud of his noble heritage. He was a womanizer, but yearned for a serious attachment. He gambled (and lost often), but was nearly penniless. He was constantly involved with scandals, duels and women of questionable character. But in the midst of this personal chaos, Pushkin managed to emerge as one of the greatest of Russia’s poets. While a brief look at Pushkin’s life does not explain either his genius or his mania, it is helpful to put the man and his works in perspective.

Born in Moscow on May 6, 1799, Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin added another chapter to an already distinguished family history. The Pushkin side of the family
enjoyed almost six hundred years of noble standing. His mother descended from Gannibal, an Abyssinian prince who became a ward of Peter the Great. By the time of his birth, the Pushkin family influence and circumstances had declined, but the family was still considered part of the minor nobility (Shaw 1996, 48).

Pushkin’s heritage was both a source of pride and pain. He was inordinately proud of his African heritage and often went out of his way to identify himself with black African cultural roots. To the contrary, he was also troubled by his looks, which exhibited some traits of his African ancestry. His family reflected this same ambivalence; sometimes rejecting him and at other times embracing him for his accomplishments (Feinstein 1998, 2).

As a young boy, Pushkin was surrounded by literature, first through his uncle, Vasily Pushkin, a minor poet and then through his father’s fine library and literary connections. Many important writers of the day visited the Pushkin family, including Karamzin, Konstantin Batyushkov and Vasily Zhukovsky, and Pushkin took great advantage of the offerings in his father’s library, mostly stocked with sixteenth and seventeenth century French classics (Shaw 1996, 48).

Pushkin’s early education was supervised by tutors and governesses, but in 1811 he was selected to attend the first class of the Lyceum of Tsarskoe Selo. Alexander I created the school to educate children of important families for positions with the state. The Lyceum education encouraged writing and it soon became clear that Pushkin had a talent for it when his 1815 poem, “Recollections of Tsarskoe Selo” was praised by the great eighteenth century poet, Gavrilo Derzhavin (1743-1816). By his graduation in 1817, Pushkin already had a reputation as a writer and joined the literary society Arzamas. He was given a post in St. Petersburg with the Collegium of Foreign Affairs and joined many circles, including the Green Lamp, a group which showed an “interest in the theatre and actresses with desire for political reform” (Shaw 1996, 49). During this time he began work on *Russlan and Ludmilla*, his first large-scaled work, which was completed in 1820. He also created works with liberal views, or so called “revolutionary” poems.

These liberal poems offended the tsar and led to exile in South Russia, officially referred to as an administrative transfer. He arrived in Ekaterinoslav on May 6, 1820. This transfer proved fateful and fruitful for his writing. He took an extensive trip to the
Caucasus and Crimea where he came in contact with other cultural groups that influenced his writings. He also first discovered the writings of Byron on this trip. Transferred again on September 21, 1820, to Kishinev, Bessarabia, he again met unfamiliar cultural groups. It was here, during the years 1820 and 1823 that he wrote extensively, producing two major works that later developed into ballets.

Pushkin was transferred again in July, 1823, to Odessa, a decidedly more cosmopolitan city, where he enjoyed Italian opera and an active social life. Part of this social life included an alleged affair with the wife of his superior, Vorontsov. Vorontsov, who, understandably, was not impressed with Pushkin required him to perform his official duties instead of writing and socializing. Pushkin, who was offended by the triviality of his duties, tried to resign from his position. He was not allowed to, but was later dismissed from the service and exiled for comments he included in a letter stating that atheism was “not so consoling as it is usually thought” but was probably the most “plausible” belief. This letter was intercepted by postal officials, and since in tsarist Russia an offense against religion was considered an offense against the state, he was exiled to his mother’s estate in North Russia, Mikhaylovskoe. For the next two years Pushkin lived at his mother’s estate and endured not only his family’s criticism, but tsarist surveillance, and censorship.

The Decembrist Uprising in St. Petersburg on December 14, 1825, played a large part in the course of Pushkin’s future. Although Pushkin did not participate in the uprising, he was implicated as a sympathizer because the Decembrists had copies of his earlier political poems. He destroyed works that might prove dangerous and in 1826 asked the Tsar to end his exile. On September 4, Pushkin met with Tsar Nicholas I and was released from exile, although the tsar would become the new personal censor for Pushkin’s works.

Pushkin originally thought that having the tsar’s personal scrutiny was a positive outcome. He soon found that this was not the case when Count Benkendorf, Chief of the Gendarmes, informed him that he could not travel, publish, or present his works in any manner without prior permission. Pushkin also found that he had to defend many of his works and reassure the state that they were not anti-tsarist.
For the next five years Pushkin continued to write and began, consciously and in earnest, looking for a wife. On February 18, 1831, he married the beauty, Natalia Goncharova. They moved first to Tsarskoe Selo and then to St. Petersburg, where they lived for the remainder of his life. While Natalia became the belle of the court (there were rumors of an attachment between Natalia and Nicholas I), Pushkin turned his attention to historical research concerning several subjects including the Pugachev revolt. He traveled to Pugachev’s native area in the Ural region and on the way back stopped in Boldino where he had another burst of creative energy and wrote several more works.

Despite his marriage and creative genius, Pushkin continued to feel emotional and financial pressures. On December 30, 1833, Nicholas I appointed Pushkin a Kammerjunker, a position usually given to younger men. Pushkin suspected that Nicholas conferred this title to keep Natalia at court and submitted his resignation. Nicholas accepted his resignation, but noted that “everything between us is over” (Shaw 1996, 54). Pushkin, who needed the tsar’s support and was fearful of his sovereign’s retaliation, retracted the resignation.

Keeping Natalia and her sisters in court gowns was strapping an already taxed Pushkin. He asked the tsar for either a leave of absence, which would allow him to live in the country where the cost of living was lower, or a loan to cover his debts. He was given thirty thousand rubles and permission to publish a literary journal, The Contemporary. The journal was not financially successful and took time away from his more productive literary pursuits. During 1834 and 1835 he created only one major work, “The Tale of the Golden Cockerel”.

The beautiful Natalia continued to attract attention at court. A French émigré, Baron Georges d’Anthes openly pursued Natalia finally causing a scandal in 1836. Pushkin challenged d’Anthes to a duel, but retracted the challenge when d’Anthes married Natalia’s sister Ekaterina. After his wedding to Ekaterina, he pursued Natalia even more openly and arranged for a private meeting with her using subterfuge. Natalia arrived for a supposed meeting with a friend, to find herself left alone with d’Anthes. She escaped unharmed, but Pushkin felt compelled to challenge d’Anthes to a duel. At
the duel on January 27, 1837, d’Anthes shot and fatally wounded Pushkin who died two days later at the age of thirty seven.

Thousands of mourners came to the Pushkin apartment, while most of the court, which needed imperial support, sided with d’Anthes. The government, ever concerned about a public demonstration, restricted the size of the funeral and buried Pushkin privately next to his mother (Shaw 1996, 50-56).

Thus, Pushkin, hailed as the greatest Russian poet and father of Russian literature, left this world in pain, penniless, and buried without fanfare or ceremony. While he was aware of his accomplishments, many of his works were published posthumously, and he, like Mozart and Lord Byron, was unable to benefit during his lifetime from his own genius.8

II. Literary Biography: Chronology.

Certainly a complete listing of Pushkin’s works and their chronology are outside the scope of this study. Nor can this study catalogue and review the vast amount of Pushkin literature that has been set to music. In fact, according to Paul Friedrich in his work *Music in Russian Poetry*, no fewer than two hundred sixty-four of Pushkin’s poems have been set to classical music by Russian composers (Friedrich 1998, 62). Therefore, a brief chronology of the works examined specifically for the purpose of this paper will be presented.

To illustrate the link between Pushkin’s works and the development of stage productions, eventually including ballet, it is helpful to present these works chronologically. It is also enlightening to identify the stages of Pushkin’s writing and how his growth as an author shaped the development of Russian performing arts. The works to be included in this chronology are those that have been developed into operas and ballets. A general discussion concerning Pushkin’s impact on the development of *romances* will be discussed in Chapter Two.

For the purpose of this study, Pushkin’s writing career will be divided into four phases, based on the history of Pushkin’s completion of the work, not its genre or publication date. The four phases consist of: 1) Pre-exile optimism; 2) Southern exile,
Romanticism and developing realism; 3) Post-Decembrists Moscow and patriotism; and, 4) Boldino – a return to country writing, suffused with fatalism.

Pushkin’s life can be seen as a constant changing of residences and, therefore, venues. While Pushkin found his exiles stifling personally, they may have been beneficial for his writing, because for a major portion of his life he was removed from the hustle and bustle of urban and court living. While Pushkin appreciated the activities of a lively city, he generally was more productive in the country, especially during the fall months.

At least twenty of Pushkin’s works have been staged for the theatre, opera or ballet. For the purposes of this study, the writing and completion dates are considered important, because censorship of Pushkin’s works often delayed their publication for years.

In general these works were not put on stage until after Pushkin’s death, which means that, in some cases, there was a considerable time lag between the writing and public presentation of the work. This longevity further emphasizes the importance and enduring nature of Pushkin’s works.

During Pushkin’s earliest and most optimistic phase he created *Russlan and Ludmilla*, the first of his great works to later be set to music as both opera and ballet. Pushkin began work on *Russlan and Ludmilla* in 1817 following his graduation from Tsarskoe Selo and finished it March 16, 1820. Much lighter in tone than some of his later works, Pushkin breathed new life into the Russian fairy tale genre and it was hailed as “the first native example of a ‘new romanticism’” (Arndt 1984, 119). *Russlan and Ludmilla*’s publication occurred just weeks before Pushkin embarked on his first exile (to the south) and it was some time before he became aware of the success of his story.

*Russlan and Ludmilla* was the first of his works to be adapted as an opera and a ballet. Adam Gluszkowski created his ballet in 1821 with music by Scholtz and Pushkin’s contemporary, the choreographer Charles Didelot, reworked Gluszkowski’s *Russlan and Ludmilla* in 1823. Although these ballets appeared during Pushkin’s lifetime, he was unable to see them due to his exile. Mikhail Glinka’s opera by the same name appeared in 1842 (Roslavleva 1966, 53).
As previously mentioned, Pushkin’s exile to South Russia eventually resulted in the creation of several masterpieces reflecting his experiences during this time. These include *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1820-1821), *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (1821-1823), and early writings on his masterpiece, the novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*. During his exile Pushkin traveled with the Raevsky family to both the Caucasus region and the ruins of Bakhchisarai, once a center of the khans’ empire. While in the Caucasus he wrote “I am sorry, my friend, that you could not see this magnificent range of mountains, with their icy summits which from afar in the clear twilight look like strange, many-coloured and motionless cards” (Feinstein 1998, 54). He wrote less poetically about his travels over the Crimean Mountains to Bakhchisarai and noted “I roamed about the palace indignant at the carelessness with which it had been allowed to decay…” (Feinstein 1998, 57). But he remembered the ruined fountain located there and created from this memory one of his most important works.

Some researchers speculated that Pushkin’s contact with a member of the Raevsky family, Alexander, laid the ground work for many of Eugene Onegin’s characteristics. Four years older than himself, Pushkin described Raevsky as someone “who poured cold poison into my soul” (Feinstein 1998, 56). Onegin reflected the same cynicism in Pushkin’s work and will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Pushkin left the Crimea and the Raevskys behind and arrived in a small town in Bessarabia, Kishinev. He was allowed much freedom by his superior, Inzov, and was even permitted to visit friends in the Ukraine. Pushkin finished and saw published *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* while in the Ukraine in 1821. It was at this time that Pushkin began to come into contact with many men who would later become Decembrists. Pushkin supported many of the liberal ideals of the Decembrists, but never officially joined the group. Scholars provide several different explanations for this. Some believe that Pushkin was protected from association with the group because his genius as a poet was already recognized. Others speculate that Pushkin’s irresponsibility and impulsiveness made him unsuitable for recruitment. However, Professor Fomichev suggests that since Pushkin was already under surveillance and in exile, it was not in the Decembrists’ best interest to associate themselves with him. Pushkin’s experience in Kishinev was profound because his association, however limited, with the Decembrists
shaped the rest of his intellectual and writing career, and because he began to write
diligently on one of his most acclaimed works; *Eugene Onegin*.

Again, Pushkin’s travels become reflected in his writings. While in Kishinev he
visited nomadic communities surviving in the Bessarabian steppes. In addition, the whole
area had a large population of gypsies. Later in Odessa, he wrote another work destined
to become a ballet, *The Gypsies*, reflecting his exposure to their culture and traditions.

Pushkin also finished and published *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* while in
Kishinev. With the successful completion and publication of both *The Prisoner of the
Caucasus* and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, Pushkin realized for the first time that he
could support himself through writing. This realization was an important milestone for
other Russian writers and Pushkin. As with the development of literature in most
countries, members of the aristocracy were the first writers in Russia, but did not rely on
writing for their livelihoods. With the decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the middle
class, guaranteed incomes were becoming less certain. Pushkin, with his limited
resources, needed to write to supplement his income and began approaching his
avocation as a profession.

Transferred again, Pushkin found himself in Odessa in the service of Count
Vorontsov. The city of Odessa was much more expensive than Kishinev, and Pushkin’s
meager salary was far from sufficient. He remarked to friends that he must sell his poetry
for money. In Odessa he continued work on *Eugene Onegin* and began *The Gypsies* in
1823. While recognizing that he must write and publish to support himself, he was
critically aware of the censors, and found meeting his own needs and the censors’ dictates
demanding.

As previously mentioned, Pushkin’s stay in Odessa was cut short by some
imprudent comments he made in a letter. After only a year in Odessa, he was exiled a
thousand miles to the north, to his parents’ estate, Mikhaylovskoe, where he spent the at
once fateful and productive years of 1824-6. During this time he continued work on
*Eugene Onegin* and made further revisions to *The Gypsies*. In February of 1825 the first
chapter of *Eugene Onegin* was published, having won the approval of the censors.
Pushkin, who had lost his state position, desperately needed to write and publish to
sustain himself. He immersed himself in Shakespeare and began work on his play, *Boris Godunov*.

Pushkin’s time in Mikhaylovskoe was well spent, since he finished four chapters of *Eugene Onegin*. It is also perhaps fortuitous, because he was not in St. Petersburg for the ill-fated Decembrist uprising on December 14, 1825. For some unknown reason Pushkin did set out for St. Petersburg on December 1, but did not complete the journey. His distance from the event saved him from harsh punishment, but not from suspicion, since his writings were found in the possessions of the conspirators. Many conspirators claimed that Pushkin’s poem “Ode to Freedom” was a source of inspiration.

The severe treatment that his friends and associates received from Nicholas I greatly affected him both emotionally and professionally. He refused (out of fear) to publish more of *Onegin* and delayed publication of *Boris Godunov*. Living in isolated Mikhaylovskoe, he was uncertain of the events and happenings in St. Petersburg and understandably anxious. On September 3, 1826, Pushkin was summoned to Moscow to meet with Nicholas (Feinstein 1998, 62-143).

Pushkin met with Nicholas and according to all accounts, freely admitted that he supported the cause of the Decembrists. Nicholas did not rebuke Pushkin, but presented him as “…the new Pushkin for you, let us forget about the old” (Feinstein 1998, 148). There is much speculation concerning why Nicholas was so magnanimous, but the end result of the meeting was that the tsar would become Pushkin’s personal censor. At first Pushkin thought this was a positive outcome but, as mentioned previously, this was a false assumption. Tsarist censorship proved to be as difficult as before.

While in Moscow, Pushkin read his *Boris Godunov* at two friends’ homes and received a very enthusiastic response. However, his public reading resulted in Pushkin experiencing for the first time the long arm of tsarist censorship. The readings came to the attention of the police and he was informed that public reading was the same as printed publication. He quickly submitted the play to Nicholas for scrutiny and was dismayed to learn that his new censor was not a sophisticated reader. Pushkin’s work, of which he was so proud, was belittled by the tsar who predicted that it would not prove successful. Indeed, *Boris Godunov* did not revolutionize theatre in Russia at that time and was not recognized as a great work until after Pushkin’s death. In fact, *Boris*
Godunov did not receive critical acclaim until Mussorgsky transformed it into an opera in 1869, although censorship delayed its staging until 1874.

It was also during his time in Moscow that Pushkin published Poltava, based on the historical story of Mazepa, a Ukrainian rebel. Tchaikovsky created an opera entitled Mazeppa in 1883 using Pushkin’s narrative (Bakst 1966, 125, 196).

In August of 1830 Pushkin set out for his newly inherited estate in Nizhny Novgorod, Boldino. This proved to be the first of three productive autumns spent at his country estate. He completed Eugene Onegin and wrote the four “Little Tragedies” which were all transformed to the stage at a later date. These works are examined in Chapter Five.

When Pushkin returned to Moscow, he married and experienced a dry period, producing very little new work. Soon the father of four children, he was distracted and found it necessary to return to Boldino in October, 1833. Here he again enjoyed periods of great productivity and produced two masterpieces, The Queen of Spades and The Bronze Horseman within a space of a month. Both of these works were later transformed to the stage as ballets and are discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

In 1836 Pushkin began publishing the magazine The Contemporary. At first he was optimistic about the success of the journal because it was a serious periodical and more refined than any other published at that time. He soon discovered, though, that there was not a sufficient readership for a serious quarterly. His debts were mounting and he was unable to make his yearly October visit to the country, which usually proved productive. He found writing difficult because he was distracted by his debts, censorship and the rumors concerning his wife’s affair with not only d’Anthes, but also the tsar. The situation became tragic on February 8, 1837 when d’Anthes fatally wounded Pushkin in a duel (Yarmolinsky 1936, 45-47).

The preceding background serves as a brief chronological review of Pushkin’s life and the works that later develop into ballets. In Pushkin’s short lifetime he published a vast amount of valuable work despite enduring exile, financial and marital problems and censorship. The next chapter provides a review of Russian musical history and Pushkin’s influence on the development of music in Russia.
Notes for Chapter One

1 Pushkin’s mother, Nadezhda Osipovna, was a grandchild of Abram Petrovich Gannibal, an African slave who became Peter the Great’s godson, ward and personal favorite. An Abyssinian, Abram may have been more Arabic than African, but Pushkin enjoyed referring to himself as “negr” and found it exotic. His mother was known as the “beautiful Creole” and apparently was very self-centered (Feinstein 1998, 12).

2 Nikolay Karamzin was a distinguished historian, Konstantin Nikolaevich Batyushkov an outstanding poet, as well as Vasily Andreevich Zhukovsky, who is also credited with founding the Russian Romantic movement (Feinstein 1998, 17).

3 According to Vyazemsky, Pushkin was “struck by the poetry of a savage and majestic nature, by the poetry of the mores and customs of a bold, martial, beautiful people, and as a poet he was unable to abide in silence while all these things spoke in a new and powerful language to his imagination, his soul and his feelings” (Leighton 1987, 48).

4 Upon the death of Alexander I and the confusion that followed, this abortive revolution, which occurred on December 14, 1825, was an important landmark in the development of Russian political change and laid some ground work for the Russian Revolution. The participants were known as Decembrists, as well as their followers, and used the French Revolution of 1789 as its inspiration. Pushkin did not participate in the uprising, but knew many who did. His political poems were very popular with the Decembrists and copies were found among their possessions, which brought Pushkin under suspicion. Five Decembrist leaders were hanged and many more exiled. Pushkin, who already was in exile imposed by Alexander I, petitioned the new tsar, Nicholas I, for release from exile which was granted (Cross and Simmons 1937, 45-65).

5 Don Cossack Emelyan Pugachev led the great peasant uprising of 1773-5 against Catherine II (Feinstein 1998, 8).

6 This is the Pushkin family estate in Nizhny Novgorod province with twelve hundred serfs (Feinstein 1998, 11).

7 D’Anthes was a handsome French émigré in Russian service, who was adopted by the Dutch ambassador Heeckeren. Because of d’Anthes attentions to his wife, Pushkin received several anonymous “certificates” claiming that he was “coadjutor of the Order of Cuckolds and historiographer of the Order” (Shaw 1966, 55). Pushkin may have been cuckold twice. Since 1995, newly deciphered and analyzed Russian and Dutch archives suggest that d’Anthes and Heeckeren were less father and son than lovers. This research suggests that d’Anthes’ attentions to Natalia and his marriage to Ekaterina were covers. D’Anthes was exiled following the duel (Feinstein 1998, 1-2).
When Pushkin was informed that Raphael, Mozart and Lord Byron died during their thirty-seventh year, he exclaimed “Is this a fateful age for geniuses?” This was a tragic foreshadowing of his early death at the same age (Feinstein 1998, 197).

Five conspirators were hanged; one hundred officers were sentenced to penal servitude in Siberia; one hundred and twenty non-commissioned officers of the Chernigov Regiment were condemned to strokes of the birch that either killed or maimed them; three hundred and seventy six were stripped of their medals and exiled to the Caucasus; and, one hundred and twenty conspirators, all gentry, were sentenced to hard labor and deportation. The latter group included many of Pushkin’s good friends, most notably Ivan Pushchin, who was sent to Siberia (Feinstein 1998, 139-40).
CHAPTER TWO

Pushkin and Russian Music

Pushkin is immortalized not only through his written word, but also through the myriad of musical interpretations of his writings. He is popularized through a genre known as romances (or romans)\(^1\) as well as through classical compositions. In fact, two hundred and sixty four poems by Pushkin have been set to music in the form of romances or classical compositions and over one hundred operas have been inspired by these themes (Friedrich 1998, 62).

Before romances were popularized, however, Russian folk-songs dominated Russian musical culture to such an extent that Gerald Seaman claims that “Understanding the nature of Russian folk-song is imperative for anyone making a study of Russian music. Folk-song is the basis of a great deal of the so-called Russian ‘Classical’ music of the nineteenth century…” (Seaman 1967, 1). Although the primary focus of this study is not to chronicle every aspect of the development of Russian music, it is important to consider its early roots because they greatly influence several composers important to this study, including Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881), Alexander Dargomyzhsky (1813-1869), Andrei Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908), and Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (1840-1893). For Pushkin, folk-song also proved an invaluable source for stylizing his poetry. Together, composers and poet made great use of early Russian folk music.

Ritual songs, obryadovye pesni, may be traced to pagan cultures. Usually the songs refer to nature and equate human beings to some aspect of the natural world. Tchaikovsky incorporates such a work into his Piano Concerto in B-flat Minor and into his Pushkin-based work, Eugene Onegin.

Several composers incorporated ancient wedding songs into their operas. Early Russian weddings lasted several days and included a time of mourning for the bride, who was expected to perform rituals lamenting her loss of freedom. While the bride’s family performed these laments, the groom’s family entertained with gay songs and tunes. These wedding cycle songs are represented in Dargomyzhsky’s Pushkin-based Russalka and in several of Rimsky-Korsakov’s operas.
Mussorgsky incorporated another type of Russian folk-song into *Boris Godunov*, called bytovye songs. These songs are connected with the everyday existence of Russians and Pushkin integrated such a song in his poem *The Winter Road*.

The predecessor of Russian romance originated among the myriad of cultural groups that inhabit Russian territory. The most prevalent of these folk song genres is the byliny or stariny, as they are sometimes called. They are epic ballads that appear in the tenth and eleventh century. While the content of the byliny is quite varied, one popular theme is the struggle of the young Russian state as it asserts itself. Mussorgsky incorporated one of these byliny into his Pushkin work, *Boris Godunov*, which will be explored in later in this chapter.

In general, byliny fall into two major categories; the odnogolosnaya (monophonic or solo), and the mnogogosnaya (polyphonic or choral). The former is considered “Northern” and is usually more rhythmic than melodic, while the latter is considered more “Southern” and emphasizes melody as well as rhythm. Although less prevalent, a third type of byliny exists, the comic byliny. These are called byliny-novelly and are used, as comedy is used in most cultures, to make social comment (Seaman 1967, 3-13).

Another well-known folk song genre to emerge was the Historical Song (istoricheskaya pesnya). Early examples of this type can be found in the fourteenth century, but it was most prevalent during the reign of Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century. Gerald Seaman noted that:

> The principle difference between byliny and historical songs lies in their texts, those of the historical songs giving a less fanciful, more factual account of occurrences and events. The texts are shorter and the three-fold repetition, characteristic of the byliny, is employed less consistently. Like the epic ballads most of the historical songs reflect the historical past (Seaman 1967, 7).

Many historical songs referred to the peasant uprisings at the beginning of the seventeenth century and were unfavorable to the crown. Peasants during this time were reluctant to allow collectors to record their songs in writing for fear of punishment or censorship. Therefore, they sometimes employed self-censorship and changed the characters from rebels to robbers, or other less potentially offensive character types. Pushkin used such a song in his story *The Captain’s Daughter*. Up until the early
nineteenth century it was rumored that this particular song was the favorite of Pugachev, the rebel leader during the reign of Catherine the Great (Seaman 1967, 7).

Although historical songs became less prominent during the nineteenth century, they were still created through the World War II. They were displaced by the rise of the Russian romances. These “Russian songs”, or romances as they will be referred to in this study, appeared in the middle of the eighteenth century at court and in upper class homes in St. Petersburg. At first they reflected their folk-song heritage, but gradually changed into a more romantic style, reflecting the tradition of “classical” Western Music. As the genre developed the musical accompaniment became more complicated. Later folk-songs included dance rhythms.

These romances were also products of the emergence of Russian songs in opera, and were often called Russian art-songs. Opera performances during the reign of Catherine II (1761-96) frequently included “Russian songs” and helped to popularize this emerging genre (Abraham 1985, 1-2). These songs reflected a Ukrainian influence, which began the incorporation of European melody into Russian song. Simultaneously, the interest in sentimental pastoral poetry of this time contributed to the increasing popularity of “romance” in general (Asafiev 1953, 47).

The terms romances and romans prove difficult to define. Stuart Campbell notes that “Romans is the word usually employed in Russian when the equivalent of an art-song, a Lied or a melodie, is meant” (Campbell 1994, ix). However, he concurs with the term romance as its foreign translation.

Another Russian music expert, Gerald Abraham asserts that there are two types of Russian romances: 1) the term romans, which usually applies only to songs in French; and 2) russkaya pesnya – or “Russian songs,” which are similar to folk-songs. The difference between these two types of song is often blurred, with each genre borrowing from the other. No matter what term is used, in many cases these songs are based on “re-styled folk tunes” (Abraham 1985, 5).

Numerous other types of romances existed including the protyazhnya, a lyrical folk-song that was significant for its influence over emerging Russian poets. During Pushkin’s era the cultural elite discovered this type of folk-song and were impressed by
its “astonishing poetry and musical originality” and many poets, including Pushkin, incorporated its unique attributes into their writings (Maes 2002, 17).

It is this symbiotic relationship between Russia’s new poets and Russia’s past musical history that is important for this work, not the correct definition of Russian early song. Regardless of contradictory definitions, the term romances, in Russian music, seems to describe compositions that blend the simplicity of Russian folk-song with European romantic musical conventions (Leonard 1957, 63-64). For the purpose of this paper, this simplified definition is sufficient.

It is not surprising that romances derived from peasant folk-songs. With the rise of industrialization, rural workers migrated to the cities and began to both spread and lose their folk traditions (Seaman 1967, 25). At the same time, easier travel allowed non-Russians (particularly Westerners) to visit Russia. These foreigners brought their own cultural identity and past-times, which included music. Also, Russians who visited the West returned to their native land with Western ideas. Russian folk-songs began to assimilate Western musical qualities, just as poetry reflected their writers’ exposure to the West.

What makes romances different from Western folk-songs is the fact that Russian folk-songs reflect Russia’s unique position globally and politically. Russia is literally “caught” between East and West. It is part European and part Asiatic, as well as part Occident and Orient (Leonard 1957, 369). Much of Russia’s folk music is melancholy reflecting the country’s paranoia, which is well founded. Few countries have been invaded as many times and by as many different ethnic groups as Russia. These diverse ethnic groups leave behind their cultural traditions further enriching Russia’s base for artistic development.

Another unique aspect of Russian folk-song was that it derived from Byzantine roots instead of, for example, Celtic, Greek, Roman or Anglo-Saxon (Swan 1973, 22). While Western folk-songs may have pagan roots that have been influenced by the Catholic Church and Protestant sects, Western European music generally reflected Christian values. In contrast, however, Russia’s folk-songs were shaped by a myriad of religions. In this work, the merging of folk-song into a new musical form will be considered within the more western areas of Russia, in particular St. Petersburg. Here of
course, the predominant forces in the shaping of Russian music were the Russian Orthodox Church and the imperial court (Asafiev 1953, 111).

Because of its separation, both geographically and philosophically, from the Catholic Church, the Russian Orthodox Church avoided the upheavals of the Western Reformation. As a result, the Russian Orthodox Church appeared to wield more influence over the daily lives of Russians during the nineteenth century:

The centralized art of the ancient Russian cities, both musical and pictorial, was connected with the Church, and not for purely devout reasons. Religious life was firmly organized, religious art, begotten of Byzantine and Byzantino-Slav impacts, acquired at once its firm, constructively solid and lasting forms. Religion carried with it culture, education, and guaranteed the unity of the state. It was but natural that art, too, followed in the trail of the most organized cultural force. Besides, religious music was the art of written tradition, while all the secular art lived and was passed on purely orally, just as the folk music of all other countries (Asafiev 1953, 111).

However, as in Western Europe, by the nineteenth century musical composition was more secular. Emerging composers began to turn their attention to new sources of inspiration, which included native poets.

Politically, too, at this time Russia was unique. It was an autocracy, not a constitutional monarchy or other form of democracy. Censorship was prevalent and the institution of serfdom was still practiced. The tsar, Nicholas I, was accepted as ruling by Divine Right, thus uniting the Orthodox Church and the government.

Napoleon’s invasion and subsequent loss at the hands of the Russians played a significant role in westernizing the Russian empire. His defeat afforded Russia new respect from its Western allies. The repelled invasion also stimulated the growth of Russian nationalism and an appreciation for native Russian culture (Bakst 1966, 41).

Here, again, Russia adopted a Western concept, but with a decided twist. Nationalism in Russia borrowed the ideas of preserving and protecting national ideas. However, the purpose was not to build a strong nation state, but to prop up the autocratic government. Nationalism was given lip service, but was used as a rationale for stopping change. While Nicholas I officially adopted nationalism as part of Russia’s ideology, he used it as justification for the existence of class distinction and for expansion of the
empire. Specifically, he and his noble supporters did not want the serfs emancipated because of the social and economic upheaval it would cause.

The adoption of the doctrine of Official Nationality in 1833 declared that all Russians must adhere to the principles of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality. This means in effect that “The combination of orthodoxy and autocracy constituted the essence of Russian nationality” (Maes 2002, 13). Here, again, was another complication unique to Russia. With a country as vast in size as Russia, and as diverse culturally, classifying a “national” identity was problematic. Patriotism was rampant and justified Russia’s desire for expanding and strengthening its empire. This resulted in “an aggressive form of nationalism, entailing the forced Russification of ethnic minorities and national expansion at the expense of other peoples” (Maes 2002, 13).

It was ironic that Russian culture was both enriched and isolated by its dealings with the West. On the one hand, Russian writers and composers were borrowing heavily from Western European thought and methodology while tenaciously developing a sense of unique national identity. Visitors to Russia brought Western ideas to the country while the more mobile Russian elite, who were able to travel to Western Europe, were exposed to new concepts which were assimilated upon their return to Russia (Seaman 1967, 114). While Pushkin never received tsarist permission to leave his native Russia, he managed to borrow writing techniques and ideas from non-Russian sources through contact with these travelers and his own readings.

It was through these various methods that Russian artists begin to develop a Russian form of Romanticism. However, this Romanticism was not merely imitative - - it used Russia’s unique geography, ethnic diversity and passionate population to expand upon the Western basis of romanticism. Again, Pushkin’s influence was heralded as “significant in the development of vocal lyrics, romances, and operas - - musical genres connected with poetry. The content and variety of vocal forms in music were determined by the influence of Pushkin’s art” (Bakst 1966, 42).

According to Stuart Campbell “No Russian poet has inspired our composers so often as Pushkin. His short poems have served as texts for innumerable romances, and his large-scale works as the subjects for operas, beginning with Glinka” (Campbell 1994, 248). Campbell also asserted that while Pushkin’s popularity with composers resulted
from his genius, it was how this genius was represented that was significant. His genius was seen “in the unfailing clarity and precision of his ideas, in the remarkable conciseness of his expression (particularly important for music, which always prolongs the spoken word) and lastly in the relaxed lightness and music of his peerless verse” (Campbell 1994, 249).

Pushkin contributed to forming a uniquely Russian musical style, ironically, by borrowing from Western cultural tradition. Although Russian writers during Pushkin’s era had steered away from writing in the archaic Church Slavonic language, Russian language still did not lend itself easily to a comfortable literary style (Maes 2002, 12). Pushkin looked to other languages in order to understand their writers’ success in developing new literary genres. He learned to read English by studying Shakespeare and Byron and practiced their rhythm patterns with his Russian writing (Larvin 1948, 140). His exploration with new rhythm and rhyme patterns helped other Russian writers break from their Neo-classical roots and start writing in a manner more conducive to musical accompaniment.

As mentioned previously, folk-songs were routinely re-styled to create the new genre of romance. This restyling of tunes to accommodate the lyrics coupled with the fact that early Russian poetry is pseudo-classical and not ideally suited for use as lyrics hampered the efforts of composers in the early 1800’s. Furthermore, most composers at this time were amateurs struggling to master their own art. Pushkin, through his new style of writing, helped the progress of Russian music and as Gerald Abraham noted “from the first the composers recognized the challenge of fresh rhythms and metres” which Pushkin’s works offered (Abraham 1985, 5).

Romances led the way for the development of singularly Russian vocal and musical compositions. A natural result of this development was the emergence of Russian opera, with Russian based music, themes and characters. Russian opera came into existence some time after Italian opera, but brought with it a national consciousness that paralleled the social issues of the time in Russia.

Another factor made the development of Russian opera unique from the development of its Western counterparts. For Russian opera, composers borrowed
extensively from Russian literary texts. This differed sharply from the development of opera in the West because:

In this regard, we can detect a fairly strong difference between the situations in Russia and Western Europe. Whereas Western European composers most frequently worked with professional librettists or adapted foreign and mythological texts for their operas, Russian composers, with surprisingly few exceptions, appropriated literary texts by major Russian writers for their librettos (Wachtel 1998, xiii).

Russian composers, the majority of whom were amateurs until the mid 1800s, had little experience with professional librettists and wrote operas on subjects with which they were familiar.

Pushkin’s borrowing from the West was similar to Russia’s adoption of Western ideas; he used what he could, but was influenced, also, by the unique characteristics of Russia. In other words, Pushkin informed his writing techniques with elements of Western style, but faced censorship, isolation, and a conservative ideology terrified of change, while simultaneously identifying with a budding (if challenged) national identity. Pushkin’s professional life, itself, reflected the conditions of Russia.

Despite these challenges, it was clear that Pushkin was a major contributor to the emergence of a Russian national consciousness. His poetry, although popularized through romances, was further utilized for more formal musical presentation, specifically opera. “No one contributed more to nineteenth-century Russian nationalism than Pushkin” not only through his immediate impact as a writer, but because “For a hundred years Russian composers would use Pushkin’s stories, poems, and plays with the same avidity that the romantic composers of the West went to Byron, Goethe and Shakespeare (Leonard 1957, 38).

Yet again, despite Pushkin’s passionate nationalism, he was influenced by sources outside of Russia. Paul Friedrich noted that “Pushkin’s voice, while felt to be quintessentially Russian, draws directly or deviously on many foreign systems” (Friedrich 1998, 62). Pushkin was often exposed to foreign operas, particularly Italian ones. Friedrich asserted that Pushkin’s musicality was so entwined with Italian language and culture that they could not be separated. French was the second language to greatly influence Pushkin, as much for the authors’ enlightenment concepts as for their writing
styles. He was also fluent in Latin and studied the writings of English authors. In effect, he used the linguistic nuances and rhythms of Italian, French, Latin and English to inform the musicality of his own work.

Through the study of these languages and the perfection of his own techniques, Pushkin broke new ground for Russian musical compositions, particularly in the area of opera. His writing was so musically clear that, when speaking of Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*, “Tchaikovsky felt that the music for his opera of the same name had been ‘dictated’” (Friedrich 1998 62-63).

In order to illustrate Pushin’s contribution to Russian opera, it is important to look at the roots of its evolution. Opera was not new to Russia in the nineteenth century. Italian opera companies visited both capitals beginning in 1731. Most operas were performed in Italian, however. Finally, in 1755 an opera was sung in Russian by native speakers. A rudimentary form of Russian opera began to develop during the last part of the eighteenth century and over one hundred operas were written based primarily on Russian folk tunes. Like romances, these early operas show a direct link to early Russian music. Few of these operas survive today.

Although these works were written in Russian, most were composed by foreigners. Even those composed by native Russians in the vernacular merely reflected the Italian model (Montagu-Nathan 1914, 5). Furthermore, because they were sung by amateurs they were very simplistic. In 1772 the first Russian opera by a native composer appeared; *Anyuta*. The libretto by M. Popov, still exists, but the music has been lost (Seaman 1967, 93-95).

It was not until the 1830s that an identifiable Russian opera emerged. Two factors contributed to the birth of Russian opera; Pushkin’s writings and Glinka’s music. It is impossible to overstate the magnitude of Pushkin’s influence on Russian opera. His writing skills, innate musicality and choice of subject matter provided Russian composers with the tools they needed to create a new form of Russian musical composition. In order to appreciate this contribution, a brief chronological review of operas based on Pushkin themes is provided. Works with particular significance will be examined in greater detail in Chapters Five and Six. These include Tchaikovsky’s *The Queen of Spades* and *Eugene Onegin*. 
When considering Russian opera it is impossible to separate Pushkin from Mikhail Glinka. Campbell notes in his forward that “Pushkin and Glinka played parallel and contemporary roles as the fathers of Russian literature and music respectively, though Pushkin is the far more substantial figure” (Campbell 1994, xii). Like Pushkin, Glinka derived a Russian music base by studying Western music and was influenced by the rise of Western romanticism. He was more fortunate than Pushkin in that he was allowed to travel and was able to learn about Western musical composition first-hand. Glinka was also more fortunate in that he was less hampered by tsarist censorship.

Pushkin and other romance writers greatly influenced Glinka’s creative process and he, too, developed a sense of professionalism about his craft that was previously unknown (Seaman 1967, 155). He also studied Russian culture and investigated Russian language which greatly enhanced his ability to create Russian opera. In fact, it was Pushkin who suggested that Glinka “learn the Russian language from Moscow women engaged in baking communion bread “(Bakst 1966, 71). This comment emphasized that the Russian language was a second one to many educated Russians, who preferred to use French. French was preferred because Russian was emerging from its Church Slavonic roots, but had not become established as a national and generally accepted language:

For the development of a national language, it was essential that there be a generally accepted language in which the works could be written. Church Slavonic was too archaic and too closely associated with a specifically ecclesiastical culture for the post-Enlightenment world. The secular language of the chancelleries was not suitable, either, for Peter’s reforms in technology, war and public administration had created great linguistic confusion. Words and expressions imported wholesale from Swedish, Dutch, and German enriched vocabulary, grammar, and syntax but also dislocated them without any systematization of the innovations. Polite society increasingly used French, the language of diplomacy and ideally suited to witty and refined conversation (Hosking 2004, 269).

However, Russians were concerned with developing a national language. In 1783 The Russian Academy was founded to standardize the language and issued an authoritative dictionary. After Napoleon’s invasion in 1812, the use of French became less popular (Hosking 2004, 270). The need for a national language was even more acutely felt and Pushkin and Glinka reexamined the native language and began to incorporate it successfully into their works.
Glinka’s first opera was *A Life for the Tsar* which premiered in St. Petersburg in 1836. Many Russian musicologists considered this performance as the birth of Russian opera. Although heralded as the first truly Russian opera, it met with little success among the court aristocracy. Glinka’s next opera was *Russlan and Ludmilla*, based on Pushkin’s early poem (1820) of the same name. Pushkin agreed to help Glinka with the libretto, but was killed before the composer finished the work. Glinka took five years to finish the opera and it was first performed on December 9, 1842. This opera, too, was not critically acclaimed at its premiere and was not performed again until after Glinka’s death. Tchaikovsky explained that “Ruslan was not an operatic masterpiece. It was only a magical spectacle accompanied by excellent music, too difficult for execution” (Bakst 1966, 61). Similar to other artistic creations breaking new ground, *Russlan* was not heralded as important until later, when it was recognized for its originality and departure from Italian opera conventions (Bakst 1966, 58-60). Part of *Russlan*’s initial failure rested with the fact that numerous people had their hands in the development of various scenes. It took five librettists to serve as substitutes for “the single hand of Pushkin” (Montagu-Nathan 1914, 21). Also, the music was composed in short bursts with pieces of it performed in concerts before the premiere of the opera thus robbing it of any surprise or recognition of originality (Seaman 1967, 163). Problems continued through the very opening of the production because the score was edited, the scenery and the conductor were poor and the cast weak (Leonard 1957, 48). The problems with the production alone were substantial but, in addition, Italian opera predominated in St. Petersburg at the expense of the developing Russian opera. Nicholas I in 1843 established an Italian opera company in St. Petersburg to elevate Russian prestige in European eyes, thus denying the nascent Russian opera of a home and supporter (Maes 2002, 24-25).

Not all critics found *Russlan* objectionable. Writing in 1842, O.I. Senkovsky declared that his initial reaction to the opera was that it was tedious. However, he explained that the more times he saw the production, the better he was able to appreciate it and acknowledged it a masterpiece before it became popular to do so (Campbell 1994, 14).

*Russlan and Ludmilla*, despite its initial failure, is now considered one of Glinka’s masterpieces. It was also important because it continued the tradition of Russian epic
fairy tale opera, and laid the groundwork for the creation of a Russian national opera. These operas drew upon national subjects from Russian traditional tales with the overriding principle of the triumph of good over evil. For the purpose of this paper, *Russlan* is significant because movement and dance play a large role in it (Asafiev 1953, 8). *Russlan* is also important because, through Pushkin’s retelling of this simple Russian folk tale, he makes it great literature (Bakst 1966, 65-66).

For both Pushkin and Glinka, *Russlan* was a significant work; it was Pushkin’s first publicly published work; and it was considered Glinka’s masterpiece. *Russlan* not only served as Glinka’s legacy, but it “was a far more Russian work and much of it could not have been written by anyone but a Russian.” Furthermore, it was considered a “pioneer work of nationalism and it created almost at one stroke the essential style of modern Russian music” (Leonard 1957, 50). Hence Pushkin, through the genius of Glinka, directly contributed to a new form of Russian music.8

Dargomyzhsky was noted for two operas and one opera-ballet based on Pushkin themes: *Russalka* also known as *The Water Nymph* produced in 1855; *The Stone Guest* (1847); and, *The Triumph of Bacchus* (1848) (Debreczeny 1997, 175).9 Dargomyzhsky, who outlived Glinka, approached his operas based on Pushkin differently. He developed a Russian expressive declamatory style or melodic recitative. In this way the artistic realism of Pushkin became artistic realism in music. In other words, while Glinka used Pushkin to produce grand opera with fully developed music in the classical style, Dargomyzhsky relied more on the inflection of Pushkin’s verse for his compositions (Asafiev 1953, 12-13). Through his work, the intonation of Russian speech became the intonation of Russian music. In essence, Dargomizhsky was endeavoring to create a new type of *romance* - - a vocal monologue “full of dramatic tension in which the music reflected the poetic speech” (Seaman 1967, 216).

In particular, *Russalka* was important because of its use of folk idiom, characters and music. It was based on Pushkin’s unfinished poem, but modified to include more folk elements. However, it was not exclusively Russian in nature. It followed many conventions of typical French opera including the incorporation of ballet *divertissements* based on the French salon model (Seaman 1967, 220-221). What does set this work apart was the composer’s ability to produce a “genuine, profound dramatic tension” without
pretension (Campbell 1994, 55). As happened with *Russlan and Ludmilla, Russalka* met with both praise and criticism and it was not until much later that the work was heralded as a major achievement for Russian music (Montagu-Nathan 1914, 35-36). Part of the criticism of *Russalka* derived from the fact that it was a hybrid composition. Dargomyzhsky used both formal elements of opera and the folk music of the composer’s time. This hybrid nature, coupled with his extensive use of recitative, made his work unique for the time period, but inaccessible for some audiences (Asafiev 1953, 12).

Dargomyzhsky’s second composition based on Pushkin, *The Stone Guest*, met with similar results. In *The Stone Guest*, Dargomyzhsky was particularly interested in the representation of human emotions. He made little change in the original text and the result was almost exclusively a declamatory musical recitative. This innovative style caused Balakirev’s circle\(^{10}\) to call it a great achievement, but Tchaikovsky condemned it as “the sorrow fruit of a dry, purely rational process of invention…” (Bakst 1966, 85). *The Stone Guest* was devoid of ensemble or choral singing, and was based on dialogue only (Seaman 1967, 228). Regardless of its initial criticism, the work was considered a unique contribution to Russian musical literature (Bakst 1966, 86).\(^{11}\)

Campbell espouses that composing to Pushkin’s verses, while tempting, presented many “perils”. Specifically, “the more the poet’s work has become the meat and drink of the reading public, the more his verses are known by heart, the more difficult it becomes for the public to be reconciled to the unaccustomed operatic garb in which it encounters its precious subject matter” (Campbell 1994, 245). This suggests a partial explanation as to why early Russian operas based on Pushkin themes were not entirely successful, and only recognized for their genius in hindsight.

Mussorgsky, born in 1839, started his formal musical career by composing songs that he called “compositions from Russian national life- -musical pictures of national individuality in song” (Bakst 1966, 124). His genius as both a musical dramatist and democratic realist was revealed in his work *Boris Godunov* based on Pushkin’s play by the same name. He completed the opera in 1869 and submitted it to the imperial theatres which found it objectionable, in part because it lacked a major female role, and possibly because of its liberal national ideas. The imperial theatres officially rejected it in 1871. Mussorgsky reworked the piece, but theatre managements continued to refuse to produce
it. Instead excerpts were often performed at musicals in private homes. Finally, when one of the Maryinsky (Kirov) Theatre performers, Platanova, informed the management she would leave if the work was not produced, the director agreed to stage it in 1874 (Bakst 1966, 125).

Briefly, the play and opera are based, at least superficially, on an historical event in Russian history. Ivan the Terrible died leaving a simple minded son, Feodor, behind. Boris Godunov was chosen to serve as regent for Feodor, which he ably did for ten years. In 1598 Feodor died and Boris Godunov was elected to serve as tsar, but died himself in 1605 (Wachtel 1998, 24-25). Ivan the Terrible’s other son, Dmitry, died in 1591 and Pushkin used the speculation that Tsar Boris might have been involved in the child’s death to incorporate strife and conflict into the story. This interpretation of events allowed Pushkin to introduce a Pretender to the throne, establish Tsar Boris’ guilty conscience, and emphasize the internal political turmoil that eventually resulted in a Polish invasion. Pushkin’s gift as a master storyteller allowed for an interpretation of history that became so popular it is now widely assumed to be historical fact.

Mussorgsky used this very real person and his dilemmas to create a realistic musical drama, one that did not involve folk and mythical characters. He used the normal human voice with its intonations and the personality and emotions of a real person to bring his Tsar Boris to life. The result continued the evolution of Russian opera because “Mussorgsky’s writing for voices, with its pauses and rhythmic divisions, grew from emotional necessities, not scholastic considerations. For this reason, his musical textures sound natural, delightful, new, and typically Russian” (Bakst 1966, 129). Pushkin had provided the ground work for more progress in creating a national musical identity that was clearly distinctive.

Mussorgsky’s reworking of Boris Godunov in essence created two dramatically different versions. In addition Rimsky-Korsakov re-orchestrated certain sections after Mussorgsky’s death, creating yet another version. All of these versions have been produced at some point in time. Mussorgsky’s final version of 1874 is rarely performed. What is usually seen on stage is a combination of his original 1869 and 1874 published renditions. This confusion makes discussing Boris Godunov more complicated because it is not necessarily clear which version is being considered. Regardless of these issues,
Boris Godunov was a success in the composer’s time and continues to be performed by opera companies in Russia and worldwide and serves as a milestone for Russian musical and dramatic composition (Maes 2002, 101-115).

In 1883, Tchaikovsky completed Mazeppa based on Pushkin’s poem Poltava (1828). This is considered an unimportant work of Tchaikovsky’s middle period (Swan 1973, 130). Mazeppa, like other operas mentioned previously, was not initially triumphant. However, unlike the three operas discussed above, Mazeppa still has not received critical acclaim to this day and it is viewed as one of Tchaikovsky’s mediocre works. Concerning this work, and others considered mediocre, Richard Leonard writes:

Many reasons have been offered for the wide gulf which separates the best and worst of Tchaikovsky’s works. Excessive haste was certainly one reason for this failures; lack of self-criticism was another. Increasing neurotic tension in his later years and the deepening spells of melancholia also affected his art (Leonard 1957, 189).

In this particular case, it appeared that Pushkin’s popularity and familiarity was less a contributing factor to the failure of a piece than the creator’s own shortcomings. Furthermore, Tchaikovsky inherited the work from another composer/musician; K. Davidov. Davidov began work on Mazeppa in 1875, but in 1881 sent the libretto to Tchaikovsky for completion.

As noted previously in the case of Russlan and Ludmilla, too many people involved in the process, no matter how talented or sincere in their efforts, often produce a less acclaimed work. This may also be the case with Tchaikovsky’s Mazeppa. Tchaikovsky proved much more adept at transferring Eugene Onegin and The Queen of Spades to music and the stage. These works will be examined in Chapter Six.

A contemporary of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov also attempted to compose to Pushkin’s writings. His first task was to score Dargomyzhsky’s The Stone Guest in 1870. At that time he was unable to resolve the perceived problems with Dargomyzhsky’s composition. Unhappy with his initial attempt, Rimsky-Korsakov readdressed The Stone Guest in 1902, but the outcome of this work is unknown (Abraham 1968, 146).

His completed operas incorporating Pushkin themes include The Golden Cockerel, Mozart and Salieri, and The Tale of the Tsar Saltan, all based on poems by the same name. The first of these works, Mozart and Salieri (1897), appeared to have been an experiment. Rimsky-Korsakov set this tale (concerning the alleged murder of Mozart

35
by Salieri) to music without altering a word. The result was similar to that of Dargomyzhky’s *The Stone Guest*, a work that was almost recitative and equally praised and criticized. The work was praised by Alfred Swan who called it a “genuine work of art. This inspiration lay in the exquisite verses of Pushkin…which Rimsky leaves without alteration, finding the exact musical counterpart for them” (Swan 1973, 158). However, Richard Leonard disagreed noting that *Mozart and Salieri* remained “unexpressive and doctrinaire, and little more than a curiosity” (Leonard 1957, 163).

Regardless, the orchestration of *Mozart and Salieri* was more involved than that of *The Stone Guest* and the vocal parts were more melodic in *Mozart and Salieri* than in *The Stone Guest* (Bakst 1966, 86). Rimsky-Korsakov’s work on *Mozart and Salieri* helped him develop his own musical style by departing from the recitative mode.

Rimsky-Korsakov completed the more successful *The Tale of the Tsar Saltan* between 1899 and the year 1900, composed to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Pushkin’s birth. It was a refined work and offered an even more melodic, orchestrated style. Both Pushkin and Rimsky-Korsakov stylized their work as a *skazka*, or folk tale. Rimsky-Korsakov even included a story-telling device, a brief *priskazka* (fanfare), at the beginning of each act to remind the listener to pay attention. It was presented in a folk tale realm, without any realistic criteria. Rimsky-Korsakov used folk-style tunes in his music to replicate children’s songs, lullabies, the cries of street vendors, etc.

Like most folk tales, the story is complicated. In Rimsky-Korsakov’s telling, three wicked women spread rumors about Tsar Saltan’s wife and son, causing him to have them put in a barrel and cast out into the sea. They come ashore on a magical island where the son, Guidon, marries the swan princess and becomes ruler of the land. Guidon turns himself into a bumblebee to visit his father’s kingdom unrecognized, where he stings the eyes of the wicked women while sailors tell the Tsar of the wonders of Guidon’s island. Tsar Saltan visits the island and is reunited with his family, thus ensuring a happy ending. Guidon’s bumblebee trip is the well-known “Flight of the Bumblebee” and further immortalized Pushkin’s work with a recognizable tune (Maes 2002, 191-192). Pushkin’s inspiration literally gave flight to another genre and elevates Russian opera as a recognized art form.
Rimsky-Korsakov was in his element here and showed a “refinement of workmanship and a child’s picture-book quality of intimacy and beguilement” (Leonard 1957, 164). The opera proved so successful that the composer arranged the work for an orchestral suite entitled *Little Pictures from the Fairy-tale of the Tsar Saltan*. Oddly enough, he did not include the most famous part of the score, “The Flight of the Bumblebee”.

With the success of *The Tale of the Tsar Saltan* Russian opera established itself as a viable entity and elevated Rimsky-Korsakov’s status, celebrating his new found style. His orchestration was recognized as “a new kind of orchestra: sonorous and transparent, but not in water colors. These colors grow and glitter like the designs on the old peasant embroidery” (Asafiev 1953, 27). Certainly this description showed Russian opera as different from the mainstream conventions of Italian and French opera, although it may resemble Wagner’s more epic Germanic style.

Despite its success, the work was criticized for being weak as a drama. But this very weakness allowed the composer to show his own brilliance. Pushkin sharply characterized his puppets and Rimsky-Korsakov, who preferred ethereal beings to human beings in his work, benefited from these characterizations (Abraham 1939, 126–127). Rimsky-Korsakov found inspiration in Pushkin’s poetry, but “must be given all the credit of having invented music…that conjures up such a world to the imagination, even without the help of scenery and poetry” (Abraham 1939, 124). In short, Rimsky-Korsakov’s ability to recollect folk-songs, aided by his own imagination and Pushkin’s poetry, helped to create a Russian opera masterpiece.

After *The Tale of the Tsar Saltan*’s success, his next three operas, none of which were based on Pushkin themes, met with little success. Finally in 1903, Rimsky-Korsakov established himself as a composer of note with a non-Pushkin work, *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*. However, his greatest masterpiece based on a Pushkin theme, *The Golden Cockerel* was yet to come. In the meantime, his successes were few. It seems that Pushkin served as a magical catalyst for Rimsky-Korsakov.

Rimsky-Korsakov’s uneven creativity, like Tchaikovsky’s, may be attributed to outside influences. Rimsky-Korsakov was greatly affected by Wagner’s publication of *The Ring of Nibelung* in 1889 and struggled to both imitate Wagner’s music and eschew
it. It was not until 1900 with the success of *The Tale of the Tsar Saltan* that Rimsky-Korsakov came into his own as a composer just to be derailed again. This time the composer faced political crises similar to those faced by Pushkin. The early part of the 1900s was a bleak time for Russia and its citizens because of political and social upheavals, which foreshadowed the revolution of 1917. By 1905 Russia was in an uproar because of its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. Students at the conservatory where Rimsky-Korsakov taught participated in strikes, riots and more serious actions. Rimsky-Korsakov sympathized openly with the students and was dismissed. In addition his works were censored causing a public outcry.

Rimsky-Korsakov took his family to Italy for the summer of 1906, where he began work on his masterpiece, *The Golden Cockerel* (*Le Coq d’Or*). This last of Rimsky-Korsakov’s works was also revered as one of his best. *The Golden Cockerel*, completed in 1907, restored Rimsky-Korsakov’s reputation as a “superb technician and serious scholar” with a strong creative power (Leonard 1957, 165). The composer died before witnessing the success of his work. Not only did *The Golden Cockerel* ensure Rimsky-Korsakov’s place in musical history, it also set the stage for another masterpiece, Stravinsky’s *Firebird* (Swan 1973, 159).

Cesar Cui, another member of Balakirev’s group, or the Mighty Five, noted in 1884 that eleven operas based on Pushkin themes had been written by that time. He lamented that only five large-scale works remained to be transformed into operas. Cui chose one as his theme, and completed his Pushkin-based opera, *A Feast in Time of Plague*, between 1895-7. It was a one act opera including “dramatic scenes” and was finally performed in 1901 (Campbell 1994, 248.) Cui aspired to the grand opera and admired the operatic forms of Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) and Franz Liszt (1811-1886). Apparently, however, he was not particularly gifted in that area. Critics claimed that his genius lay in small forms, more suitable for the salon (Swan 1973, 78). In 1911, Cui tackled another Pushkin theme with his creation of *The Captain’s Daughter*. In all, Cui composed nine operas, with two based on Pushkin themes. They were all considered critical failures, including his last opera, *The Fair at Sorochintzi*, produced in 1918.

As a result of the 1917 Revolution life was extremely chaotic in Russia at this time and it was no surprise that Cui’s light operatic works were unnoticed. He died in
1918, the last survivor of the Mighty Five. Cui was not remembered for his music. He was, however, remembered for his propagandistic views that helped unite and identify an emerging Russian national music. Although his music was not considered nationalistic due to his extremely conservative opinions, he served as a spokesman for the Mighty Five and represented the progressive ideas of this group.

Yet another composer adopted a Pushkin theme for an opera, this time with more success. A young Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943) was charged with the task of completing a one-act opera as part of his final examination. In 1892 he completed his opera, *Aleko*, based on Pushkin’s poem, *The Gypsies*, spending just a few weeks on its composition. For his efforts he was awarded the gold medal of honor for composition from the Moscow Conservatory and graduated a year ahead of his class. The opera was produced in Moscow a year later and proved very successful (Leonard 1957, 82-83, 228-229).

While Pushkin’s text stressed Aleko’s independence and dignity, Rachmaninov’s music emphasized Aleko’s despair and crushing aloneness. In this tragic story, Pushkin tells of a young man who joins a gypsy group in order to experience freedom. He soon learns that universal freedom comes with a price. His love, Zemfira, expresses her independence and freedom by taking another lover. Aleko is enraged and kills Zemfira and her lover. The Gypsies, despite their abhorrence of codified law, will not tolerate such behavior and leave Aleko behind, shattered and alone (Bakst 1966, 256).

Rachmaninov began composition on another opera using a Pushkin theme only to be derailed by rising revolutionary fervor. In 1904 he completed work on an opera based on Pushkin’s *The Miser Knight* (also called *The Miserly Knight, The Covetous Knight* and *The Avaricious Knight*). His work was interrupted when he was appointed as conductor for the Imperial (Bolshoi) Theatre in Moscow. Rachmaninov produced *The Miser Knight* during his tenure at the Bolshoi Theatre, but it did not meet with the success of his earlier, student work, *Aleko* (Leonard 1957, 232).

In *The Miser Knight*, which was a word-for-word composition of Pushkin’s tale, Rachmaninov illustrated in his music an old man’s passion for an inanimate object, gold (Maes: 194). He did not succeed, however, to “attain to a perfect reincarnation in music of Pushkin’s verses, or to a complete preservation of his rhythms” (Asafiev 1953, 38).
The work was unusual for operatic format because it required only one actor/singer, the knight. Through this work, Rachmaninov further developed the declamatory principles found in Dargomizhsky’s *The Stone Guest* and Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Mozart and Salieri* (Bakst 1966, 256).

It was odd that within the Imperial Theatre, which was sponsored and subsidized by the Tsar, Rachmaninov discovered a large number of dancers, musicians and stage hands that supported the concept of revolution. Distressed by the social changes he feared, Rachmaninov took his family first to Italy and then to Dresden (Leonard 1956, 232). In 1917 Rachmaninov moved to America and became an expatriate, but was still claimed by the Soviet leaders as a Russian composer. This was ironic because Rachmaninov yearned for the Russia the Bolsheviks destroyed, particularly the aristocratic life and emotional tie to the Russian Orthodox Church. While living in the United States, Rachmaninov supported his family as a concert pianist, to the detriment of his composing talents. In a 1933 interview he claimed that since being separated from his country he has been unable to compose as before (Maes 2002, 271-272).

With the completion of *The Miser Knight* all of Pushkin’s “Little Tragedies” are transferred to a musical format (Maes 2002, 194). None of the tragedies fared very well with public opinion. The 1832 production of *Mozart and Salieri* failed because it was first produced as an overture for another work. Most of the audience arrived during the performance and was unable to hear the music. An 1854 production fared no better. *The Stone Guest* was first performed in 1847 and then removed from the program. In 1853 *The Miserly Knight* was a brief success, but the 1862 production of *The Feast During the Plague* was a complete failure (Debreczeny 1997, 175).

A contemporary of Rachmaninov and student of Rimsky-Korsakov, Anton Arensky (1861-1906), although a lesser known composer, was affected also by the need to set Pushkin to music. During the mid 1890’s he composed choral music for *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* and produced a ballet to Pushkin’s *Egyptian Nights*, also called *A Night in Egypt* in 1900 (Montagu-Nathan 1914, 258). As a follower and admirer of the “Mighty Five” and greatly influenced by Tchaikovsky, Arensky carried the torch for Russian composition into the twentieth century. Virtually unheard of in the West, his
name appears besides the recognized greats of his era. Perhaps his early death at the age of forty explains his obscurity.

With such a large volume of musical works based on Pushkin it does seem surprising that more of them are not familiar to Western audiences. Again, the unique political and geographic nature of Russia plays a part. Few Europeans and Americans traveled extensively in Russia during the nineteenth century. When they did travel to Russia, Western entertainment, such as Italian opera, was much in vogue, so their cultural exposure in Russia was largely that of Western Europe. Conversely, the Russians who traveled west generally enjoyed the cultural aspects of Western Europe, without exporting or espousing the virtues of Russian artistic talents. Furthermore, when Russian audiences preferred the work of non-Russian artists, it was difficult to promote native work. In short, Western audiences are not familiar with many of these Russian works because they are not widely enjoyed in the home country.

Even the names of many of the composers discussed above are unknown to Western audiences. With the exception of Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky, most non-Russian audiences are only familiar with composers who lived and worked outside of Russia, including Rimsky-Korsakov and Rachmaninov. Glinka is known to ballet and opera enthusiasts, but not generally otherwise, while Dargomizhsky, Cui and Arensky are virtually unheard of in the West.

However, the impact these composers had on the development of Russian music was staggering. Tchaikovsky is perhaps the best known and truly symbolic of Russian musical prowess. Glinka is known as the father of Russian opera. Both Rimsky-Korsakov and Cui were members of the greatly influential Mighty Five. Rachmaninov helped to bring Russian music to the West with his immigration, while Dargomizhsky furthered the development of Russian opera through his recitative style and Arensky served as a teacher to some of the finest composers. Finally, Mussorgsky brought a revolutionary form of Russian realism to his work.

The development of Russian compositions was partially based on Russian folk-songs, including Russian romances. As the romance became more sophisticated, composers began borrowing certain aspects that were uniquely Russian for their works. Of course they were influenced by outside forces, but concentrated on their own
interpretations of song and verse. The common link from romance to orchestrated works and operas was Alexander Pushkin. His influence was keenly felt and will be further explored with an additional examination of the operas *The Queen of Spades* and *Eugene Onegin* in Chapter Six. These works have been selected for closer inspection because they exist in current repertoires of the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi operas and have also been transposed into ballets.

The above chronological review of known musical and operatic works based on Pushkin writings and themes illustrates the importance of Pushkin to the establishment of a uniquely Russian form of musical composition. Pushkin appears to be inseparable and invaluable to this process. Pushkin also serves as a source of inspiration for Russian ballet which will be discussed in Chapter Five.
Notes for Chapter Two

1 The genre (perhaps simultaneously) referred to as romances, romans, Russian art-song, Russian song, Russian folk-song and protyazhnaya is difficult to define, particularly for non-Russians. Brief explanations concerning these differing terms representing similar genres is included to help explain the genesis of Russian classical (and ballet) music.

2 These include the Volga burlaki, or Volga boatmen, who are barge haulers made famous by the melodies collected by M. Balakirev (Seaman 1967, 7).

3 Gerald Seaman provides a musical example of this piece, which is considered an excellent example of its kind. Please see the musical appendix (Seaman 1967, 7).

4 Seaman asserts that there are two types of “Russian songs”: lyrical and sad; and, rhythmic and energetic (Seaman 1967, 128).

5 This is not to say that internal reforms in the Orthodox Church did not take place. Each subsequent Russian ruler made his/her impact on the Church, but not to the extent of the changes caused by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Western Europe. This is also not to say that Orthodox Christianity was the only religion in Russia. The vast Empire of Russia incorporates many ethnic groups and religions during this time. However, because the tsar was inseparable from the Orthodox Church, the power the church yielded was impressive.

6 The serfs were technically freed in 1861 (Treadgold 1995, 67)


8 At the time of Glinka’s death in 1857, only one copy of Ruslan and Ludmilla existed. His sister Ludmila Ivanovna Shestakov, fourteen years younger than the composer, had two new copies made just prior to the original being destroyed in a fire at the Maryinsky Theatre. She campaigned until 1872 to have the work revived and is credited with saving this masterpiece from obscurity (Leonard 1957, 57).

9 In 1840 Dargomizhsky also writes a one-act opera ballet based on Pushkin’s The Triumph of Bacchus. The work is not produced until 1967 and met with little success. It has never been revived or published (Leonard 1957, 58-59).

10 Mily Balakirev (1837-1910), a composer, piano virtuoso, conductor, and teacher was the leader of the “Mighty Five”, sometimes called Balakirev’s Group or circle. These composers stressed the folk roots of Russian music and were very influential on the development of Russian classical music (Schwarz 1983, 3).
The Stone Guest may also suffer from two many artists working on it. Dargomizhsky died in 1869 and Cesar Cui finished the work while Rinsky-Korsakov orchestrated it (Abraham 1936, 144-145).

Mazepa, a Ukrainian rebel, joins forces with Charles XII against Peter the Great. Peter defeats Mazepa at the battle of Poltava. While Pushkin does justice to the battle and politics of this historical battle, his long narrative poem also centers on the love story between the aging Mazepa and his god-daughter, Mariya, whom he marries (Feinstein 1998, 172).

The first performance of Mozart and Salieri was given in a new private Moscow opera house in the Solodovnikov theatre. BorisAsafiev claims that this is the first proper artistic setting in Russia for Russian opera, combining the right unity of spectacle and music (Asafiev 1953, 29).

These include Sevilia (1900-01), Kashchey the Immortal (1901-02) and Pan Voyevoda (1902-03) (Leonard 1957, 164).

See footnote number ten.

See footnote number seven.

There are four works known as “The Little Tragedies”. As discussed earlier, each has been set to music by a different composer. They are Dargomyzhksy’s The Stone Guest, Rimsky-Korsakov’s Mozart and Salieri, Cui’s A Feast in the Time of Plague and finally, Rachmaninov’s The Miser Knight.
CHAPTER THREE

A Brief History of Ballet in Western Europe and Russia from its Origins
Until the Era of Pushkin

While the roots of ballet have been well documented, it is important for the purpose of this study to briefly review its history during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Western Europe in order to later examine its development as a distinct Russian form. The development of ballet in each country differs slightly. However, because of Russia’s relative isolation and its slower adaptation of Western arts in general, Russia’s history is perhaps the most unique. Emphasis will be placed here on ballet in France because the Paris Opera dominated the ballet world during its formative years as a professional art form. Furthermore, the art of ballet in Russia first flourished under the tutelage of French masters. This is not surprising because French language and culture exerted a considerable influence on the Russian court. France did not, however, export its ideas of government. While France was experimenting with revolution, democracy and dictatorship, Russia remained an autocracy until 1917.

Certainly France exerted a strong influence on Russian ballet, but the Italian influence should not be overlooked. The Italian Renaissance served as a catalyst for the creation of a codified dance and aided its export to other countries as the influence of the Renaissance spread. Also, the first highly trained dancers to perform in Russia (in the early eighteenth century) were Italian and sparked a keen interest in ballet. This interest was rekindled in the late nineteenth century when very skilled Italian dancers and teachers revitalized ballet in Russia.

England’s early ballet history is included in this study to illustrate how Russia’s history compares with and contrasts to it, and because London became a major ballet center. Furthermore, several ballet masters who served in London later became important figures in Russian ballet history. Finally, the Danish ballet is discussed because students of August Bournonville (1805-1879), particularly Christian Johanssen (1817-1903), played a major role in the creation of Russian ballet. Other cities and countries developed
court and professional ballets, but are not included in this study because their influence is less pronounced.

Ballet was among the many arts that flourished during the Italian Renaissance, and it was here that the foundation of “classical” ballet was laid. The term “classical ballet” has a unique meaning in the ballet world and is often difficult to differentiate from the term “Romantic ballet”. George Balanchine explained:

The word classic when applied to ballet is not the contrary of romantic. It applies to a rigorous basic vocabulary of steps and movements capable of infinite variation and a system of instruction that makes such variation possible for individual dancers. Classic ballets can be romantic, realistic, or mythological in subject matter. The classic dance is the dictionary of ballet and, as a method of instruction, it is also its grammar: basic steps and movements that must be learned and mastered if the student is to become an instrument of its possibilities…Properly speaking, what we call the classic dance might be more easily understood if it were called the academic dance, after the academies in which it was evolved; but the word classic has come down to us, along with the tradition of the developed academic dance, and is now universally accepted (Balanchine and Mason 1954, 795-796).

As Balanchine noted, the academies played a crucial part in the history of classical ballet. These academies were created by European rulers to train dancers and perfect the art as a sign of each country’s sophistication and wealth. However, none of this would have occurred if dance did not have a prominent place in European courts prior to the creation of the academies. Classical ballet is a direct descendant of court ballets and the history of dance at court affects the timeline and prominence of dance in any particular country.

Every man and woman of the nobility learned the dance steps required at court and could perform skillfully. Although amateurs, it was important to be well trained; formal lessons usually began around age five. Court ballets were part of the pageantry and spectacle that illustrated a particular ruler’s status. The elaborate spectacles reflected the sovereign’s wealth and the subject matter reinforced the monarch’s divine right to rule, often through the use of allegory. Included in the festivities were costumed and masked performers, songs, instrumental music, speeches, poetry, dance, mock battles and jousts. Usually presented between dinner courses or acts of a play, or socially on the ballroom floor, dance was often employed to commemorate special events.
Many of these dances were more akin to elaborate pageants and were performed both outside and within the palaces. “Dinner Ballets” became popular in Italy during the fifteenth century. These long feasts featured lavish pageantry and dance interludes called “entries”. The French form of this word, *entrée*, survives today and is commonly seen on menus worldwide.

Although court ballet existed in France as early as the end of the fifteenth century, it was certainly strengthened by the arrival of Catherine de Medici (1519-1589) from Italy when she became the bride of the Duc D’Orleans. When Frances I died in 1547 she became Queen of France. She loved dance, brought her dancing master with her, and made it an important element of court life. The dance master was the first true dance professional, engaged by the nobility of Europe to teach not only dance steps, but also to choreograph, compose and perform music, as well as teach manners and deportment.

One of the first important French court ballets appeared in 1573 to commemorate the election of Catherine’s son, Henry, as King of Poland. The production, *The Ballet des Polonais*, was overseen by the Italian dance master Balthasar de Beaujoyeulx (d.ca.1587), and established the *ballet de cour*, or court ballet, in France (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 25-26).

During this period, prior to the development of the proscenium arch as a staple of theatrical performance, the action took place on the floor of a large hall in the palace. In general, the audience sat above the performers in galleries along three walls, with the royal family, or *presence*, on a dais at the end of the room. The dancers were nobles, not entertainers by profession, with the exception of the ballet master. Steps were borrowed from popular social dances and adapted to reflect what was considered noble refinement and deportment.

In England, court ballet was also taking root and was well-established by 1530, when Ann Boleyn came to the throne. The Boleyn family brought the influences of France to the court. During the reign of Elizabeth I, dance thrived in England and was immortalized in the writings of Shakespeare and others of the time. In fact, the written word had a tremendous impact on the development of court entertainments in England. These dances, or *Court Masques* combined speech, dance and song. However, “the literary content was so good that dancing was relegated to a subordinate position”
The last of the masques was in 1640 for Charles I. With the subsequent civil war, resulting in Charles’ execution and the rise of the Puritan regime, the masque disappeared. Although dance and ballet were not completely abandoned by English citizens, over three hundred years would pass before England established its own national ballet.

While court ballet was in decline in England, it was consolidating and solidifying its position in France. It reached its peak under Louis XIV (1638-1715), who reigned from 1643 to 1715. Louis began dance training as a young boy and first performed at court in 1651. Two years later, at the age of 15, he appeared as the Rising Sun Apollo in the Ballet de la Nuit. The allegorical significance of his appearance in the ballet is obvious; it established him as the Sun King, a title he used to great effect as he consolidated his role of absolute monarch.

Louis surrounded himself with great talent that benefited the court ballet. These talents included the poet Isaac de Benserade and the scenic and costume designer, Jean Berain. Most importantly, an Italian, Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-87), joined Louis’ court in 1653. Not only was Lully a fine dancer, he was also an accomplished composer and created elegant, sophisticated music for the ballet. The most prominent dance master of the era was Pierre Beauchamps (1631-1719). Besides teaching Louis XIV, he was also known for his choreography of which, unfortunately, none survives. Beauchamps helped to codify ballet terminology and is credited with establishing the five basic positions of the feet (Anderson 1986, 32). France also led the way in recording dance. Beauchamps created an early form of dance notation which, due to copyright dispute, has often been credited to Raoul-Augur Feuillet (c.1660). Known as Feuillet notation, it is still used today to reconstruct dances from the period (Au 1988, 25).

The year 1661 was critical for the development of French ballet for two reasons. In 1661 Louis XIV created the Academie Royale de Danse and appointed thirteen dancing masters to perfect the art (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 29). It was also the year that the playwright Moliere (1622-73) produced Les Facheux, which bridged the gap between court ballet and professional theatrical dance. Moliere had been commissioned to create both a ballet and a play for an event in honor of Louis XIV. He found himself short of dancers, so combined the play with the ballet thus allowing the dancers time to change
costumes during the scenes. The production was very successful and Moliere produced eleven more comedies-ballets, as they were called. Not surprisingly, Moliere’s collaborators were Lully and Beauchamps.

Moliere’s comedies-ballets linked dance, music and the action of the play. These differed sharply from the court ballets, which were episodic and thematic, versus his plot driven comedies-ballets. Both noble and professional dancers participated in these dances (Au 1988, 23-24).

The Academie Royale de Danse, while illustrating Louis’ desire for court and professional ballet to thrive, ultimately failed as an organization. In 1669, Louis founded the Academie Royale de Musique. This organization, too, met with artistic and financial problems. Lully, by all accounts a shrewd and aggressive individual, used this opportunity to encourage the king to establish the Academie Royale de Musique and Dance under his tutelage. The Academie, founded in 1672 with Lully as director and Beauchamps as its dancing master, eventually became the Paris Opera and the Paris Opera Ballet. As Jack Anderson notes, “Since dancers appeared in its productions from the start, the Paris Opera Ballet can boast of being the world’s oldest ballet company” (Anderson 1986, 33).

Through the creation of The Academie, ballet as a professional art was established. With the official sanction of the king, Lully and Beauchamps were able to train a generation of professional dancers. At first, because the professional stage was considered inappropriate for women, only male dancers were trained and had to appear in travesty to perform in female roles. In 1681 female dancers finally were allowed to perform. The first group consisting of four women was led by Mademoiselle de Lafontaine (1655-1738), who became the Opera’s first principal ballerina (Au 1988, 26). At this point in history France dominated the dance world because its monarch was a well-known and admired dancer, it had established the first professional ballet academy, produced theatrical ballet works and allowed female dancers on stage. Furthermore, with the advent of the Feuillet notation system, France was also a repository for dance knowledge and the first nation to codify the technique. By using this system, dance could be recorded and distributed, in effect making France an exporter of dance. France also
exported its language with these dance steps and French remains the language used to identify ballet steps worldwide.

During the early 1700’s a new form of dance, the opera-ballet\(^3\) was created. Two French men, choreographer Louis Pecour (1653-1729) and composer Andre Campra (1660-1744), perfected this form of theatre. Like its predecessors, it was a combination of dance and vocal music. However, these opera-ballets were loosely constructed and each act could stand alone. Often opera-ballets were set in exotic locales, although there were no specific plots. The most famous of these was Jean-Philippe Rameau’s *Les Indes Galantes* (1735) which consisted of a prologue and four entrees representing love stories in Turkey, Peru, Persia and North America. The opera-ballet was very successful, but still basically decorative. They were more similar to divertissements\(^4\) that appeared later and could be presented as a separate entity. This trend changed when, around the middle of the eighteenth century, a new form a dance was emerging; the ballet d’action (Au 1988, 26-27).

With the advent of ballet d’action\(^5\) choreographers acquired more creative power and became a dominant force in the production of dance. In essence, the emergence of ballet d’action allowed choreographers to present dance as a separate entity. This elevated the choreographer’s position to that of director. The two leading figures of the time were Gaspero Angiolini (1731-1803) and Jean Georges Noverre (1727-1810). Noverre became famous for this 1754 work, *Les Fetes Chinoises*. Chinese culture was very much in vogue at the time and the ballet was well received. While Angiolini collaborated in Vienna with composer Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787) and staged the ballet *Don Juan* (1761), Noverre was traveling Europe staging his ballets and writing his 1760 treatise on dance aesthetics that continues to be one of the most influential dance books ever published. In this work he defined and promoted the new concept of ballet d’action. Entitled *Letters on Dancing and Ballets*, Noverre asserted that ballets “should be unified works of art in which all aspects of the production contribute to the main theme, that technical display for its own sake should be discouraged, and that such impediments to movement as heeled shoes and bulky skirts should be discarded” (Anderson 1986, 47).
No account of dance history can overlook the importance of the Vestris family. The patriarch of the family, Gaetan Vestris (1729-1808) joined the Paris Opera in 1749. Noted for his jump and *pirouettes*, or turns, he was considered the leading male dancer in Europe of his era. Gaetan fathered two sons; Auguste and Apollon. It was Auguste (1760-1842), however, who was to further his family’s dance legacy. By the age of twenty-one, he was a principal dancer with the Paris Opera, where he danced for thirty-five years before retiring to teach the best pupils. Because of his family’s lengthy involvement in dance and his own long tenure at the Paris Opera, Auguste helped to solidify and establish ballet as a thriving art and linked the traditions of eighteenth-century dance with the newly emerging forms of dance—classical and Romantic (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 48-49). Furthermore, while the French nation underwent radical changes during this period, specifically the French Revolution, subsequent governmental chaos, and the rise and fall of Napoleon, Vestris provided continuing effective leadership at the Paris Opera. This stability helped ensure that the Paris Opera endured.

Prior to the French Revolution, ballet had begun to draw a wider public. Choreographers experimented with themes that appealed to a rising middle class rather than adhering to the allegorical recipe of the court ballets. In other words, ballet in France was distancing itself from its imperial court roots and becoming a more democratic form of entertainment. With this democratization, choreographers had more power over decisions in the theatre than when commissioned by a noble patron. This change to reflect the growing strength of the masses may also have helped to secure the Paris Opera’s survival (Anderson 1986, 48).

This does not mean, however, that the Paris Opera enjoyed the success of influential new ballets. On the contrary, under the despotic direction of Pierre Gardel (1758-1840), during the last years of the eighteenth century, the Opera continued to produce unremarkable ballets based on Greek myths or revolutionary themes. Despite the change in subject matter, the choreography remained coolly remote, dignified and did not appeal to the increasingly democratic masses. As a result audiences, particularly those of the middle-class, began attending “boulevard theatres” where the stages were filled with action, mystery and conventional sentiment (Cohen 1974, 65.) Clearly, it was time for change and new leadership and talent was required to affect it.
Four choreographers bridged the gap between the classicism of eighteenth-century ballet and the new era of Romanticism. They were the Italian, Salvatore Vigano (1769-1821), and three French men; Jean Dauberval (1742-1816), Charles Didelot (1767-1837), and Carlo Blasis (c. 1797-1878). Vigano danced in Italy, Spain and Vienna, where he choreographed *The Creatures of Prometheus* (1801). In his early works he employed mimed action but gradually incorporated Noverre’s ideas and created an expressive form of mime-dance that was popular until the advent of Romanticism. Dauberval is remembered as the first choreographer of *La Fille mal Gardee* (1789). Considered to be a bridge between Baroque and Romantic ballet, *La Fille* departed from the earlier forms in the incorporation of ordinary people and themes into his work, instead of mythological heroes. However, it was not yet codified into the Romantic. None of his original choreography has survived (although other versions of *La Fille* are still performed), but he set the stage for new characters and story-lines to be presented. Didelot, a pupil of Dauberval, Noverre, and Vestris was not only a fine dancer, but greatly influenced ballet in Russia, most notably as a choreographer, which will be discussed in Chapter Four. Blasis, if indirectly, also asserted an influence on Russian ballet. Born in Naples, he studied in France with Dauberval and Gardel. In 1817 he returned to Italy and began work at La Scala, Milan. An extremely well educated and multi-talented individual, Blasis wrote his *Code of Terpsichore* while serving as a dancer and choreographer at the King’s Theatre in London between 1826-1830. He again returned to Italy in 1837 and became the head of the ballet school at La Scala, Milan. During his tenure he trained many virtuoso dancers who, in turn, taught other dancers who eventually enchanted Russia and the world. One of his students in particular, Enrico Cecchetti (1850-1928), played a significant role later in Russia. Cecchetti became a teacher with the Russian Imperial Ballet and helped to shape the training of Russian dancers (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 49-50, 96).

These four innovative choreographers and teachers laid the groundwork for a new era in ballet. When change occurred, it was sweeping. This new art form, called Romanticism, developed during a time of social upheaval. Individuals were questioning old ideas and breaking ties with the past. Several factors fueled the rise of Romanticism; the excesses of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, and the rise of both
industrialization and the middle-class. It was a time of social, political, financial and cultural turmoil. Old social conventions were discarded and new ways of looking at the world began to emerge.

The origin of Romanticism was largely literary and the art forms that later developed Romantic styles were influenced by this literature. Romanticism first appeared in writings in northern Germany, and soon spread to France as German literature became increasingly popular (Guest 1980, 2). Romanticism had a tremendous impact on ballet. As Susan Au notes:

Romanticism was perhaps the most important single influence on 19th century ballet, though it came later to the ballet than to literature, music or the visual arts. In fact, the Romantic ballet often found inspiration in the works of other Romantic artists; literature was particularly influential and provided themes for many ballets (Au 1988, 45).

This comment illustrates the decline of court influences and proprieties on dance, and the emerging importance of a popular literature on choreography. Although technique remained important, subject content and performance style began to dominate the stage. This necessitated a change in technique, costuming and theatrical effects. Also, the importance of the female dancer became elevated, while that of the male decreased. This occurred in part because the lead characters became otherworldly feminine creatures and choreography was created to emphasize these special qualities. The male characters remained mortal, seeking the unattainable women without success. Their importance as specific characters was secondary, as was their appeal to the choreographer.

Romantic ballet, despite the many diverse aspects of the Romantic movement, concentrated on and represented two major characteristics of Romanticism. The first centered on the mystical and irrational. Choreographers created ballets based on supernatural themes, usually incorporating sylphides, water nymphs, demons and other spirits. The majority of these creatures represented the feminine and reinforced the “metaphor for the artist’s yearning for the unattainable” (Au 1988, 45).

Exotic locales provided the second major characteristic of Romantic ballet. The advent of the Industrial Revolution and subsequent railroad development allowed people to contemplate travel to previously remote and largely inaccessible locations. However, once there, individuals wanted the location to be non-industrial and exotic, representing a
site of their dreams. Romantic ballet provided the ideal opportunity to fulfill this yearning because “In its blending of realism and fantasy, Romantic ballet could be both a danced travelogue and an escape into a dream world” (Anderson 1986, 61).

As with the development of other cultural movements, Romanticism did not emerge overnight. It was manifested in different countries at different times and affected artistic genres at different times, as well. Romantic ballet arrived rather late at the Paris Opera because of Gardel’s recalcitrance; it arrived later still at the Russian ballet because of distance and isolation.

When Romantic ballet did appear it brought with it changes, as mentioned previously. Lighter shoes, forerunners of today’s pointe shoes, softer skirts made of layers of tulle and a more ethereal technical style prevailed. Men, displaced because of technical style and lack of significant roles, found themselves relegated to supporting roles. Perhaps, however, the most important change occurred with the use of gas lighting. Introduced in London in 1817, it did not reach the Paris Opera until 1822. This innovation allowed a variety of effects and helped to create a mystical moonlit mood, an important feature of the Romantic ballet.

One ballet in particular is considered the first fully Romantic ballet: Filippo Taglioni’s La Sylphide. Taglioni (1777-1871) produced the ballet at the Paris Opera in 1832 for his daughter Marie (1804-1884) who danced the title role. The ballet proved very successful and set the standard for dance in the Romantic era. The story, set in Scotland which had been made a fashionable and exotic locale by Sir Walter Scott’s novels, centered around a young man, James’, betrothal to a mortal woman, Effie, and his desire for another unattainable woman, the Sylphide. The new Romantic ballet convention of sunlight verses moonlight created a stir with audiences. The sunlight scenes represented and contained the mortal world, while the moonlight scenes represented the ethereal and supernatural world. During the sunlight scenes, James dances at bridal parties with his fiancée, Effie, but becomes distracted by sightings of the Sylphide. At night, using the moonlight, James attempts to follow and detain the Sylphide to no avail. James, out of desperation, seeks the help of a witch, one that he has previously scorned. The witch provides him with a scarf in order to bind the Sylphide to him. Unknown to James, the scarf is poisoned and his attempts to capture the Sylphide
result in her death. The last scene of the ballet shows Effie’s bridal procession with his
rival replacing him as groom.

Taglioni’s portrayal of the Sylphide contributed greatly to its success. Her light
and effortless technique, plus the successful use of pointe\textsuperscript{10} shoes, made her an instant
sensation. Her demure carriage and unpretentious nature contributed to her appearance of
otherworldliness, as did her ability to “fly”. By using wires, Taglioni could magically fly
on stage and after the death of her character, the Sylphide, is elevated skyward. This
emphasized the Romantic conventions of the unattainable, otherworldly, ethereal
personification of women. Her impact was so great that not only did she revolutionize
ballet, she caused a stir in the fashion world:

Marie Taglioni’s dancing was in large part responsible for this, for she
infused the role with such poetry that dancers and nondancers alike strove
to imitate her, the former by learning to dance on their toes or
‘taglioniiser’, and the latter by donning apparel and coiffures ‘a la
Sylphide’ (Au 1988, 50).

With the triumph of \textit{La Sylphide} a new type of ballet heroine emerged based on folklore
rather than goddesses or nymphs of the ancient world. This heroine was fragile of both
body and mind. Rather than heroic, she was frivolous and playful, and caused her own
demise by teasing a mortal and enticing him to pursue her. Thus with \textit{La Sylphide} an
entirely different style of ballet dominated the stage. By incorporating a colorful story-
line based in an exotic location featuring the unrequited love of real people in pursuit of
supernatural creatures, and utilizing the innovations of pointe work, fly wires and gas
glighting, Romantic ballet was born.

Other theatrical conventions helped to separate Romantic ballet from its
predecessors. The use of an act curtain was employed which, when lowered between the
acts, allowed scene changes to occur without audiences viewing them. Also, the lights in
the audience, or “house” lights, were lowered, thus separating the audience from the
action on stage and focusing its attention on the performance (Cohen 1974, 67). The
proscenium stage further separated the audience from the performers in effect creating a
magical living picture within the proscenium frame.

The next major Romantic ballet was \textit{Giselle} (1841), created for another famous
dancer of the period, Carlotta Grisi (1819-1899). \textit{Giselle} combined local color,
supernaturalism, fine choreography and dramatic unity. Originally conceived by Theophile Gautier\(^1\) (1811-1872), it was co-choreographed by an Italian, Jean Coralli (1779-1854) and Jules Perrot (1810-1892), an exceptional French dancer and Grisi’s lover.

Gautier was fascinated by the descriptions of German folklore in Heinrich Heine’s (1797-1856) *De l’Allemagne*, particularly his accounts of the wilis. Wilis, nocturnal feminine spirits, forced men to dance until they died of exhaustion (Au 1988, 52). Heine’s material, which incorporated the night, female spirits and dance, provided Gautier with the perfect basis for his libretto for *Giselle* and further strengthened the position of Romantic ballet.

In brief, the story concerns Giselle, a young peasant girl, who has fallen in love with a nobleman, Albrecht, who is masquerading as a peasant in order to mingle with the commoners. Giselle is unaware that Albrecht is not a peasant and that he is engaged to another woman of his own rank. When she discovers his duplicity she goes mad and kills herself with his sword. Upon her death, Giselle joins the wilis--virginal maidens who die of broken hearts before their wedding day because their lovers have betrayed them. The wilis seek revenge by dancing any men to death who cross their paths at night, thus providing the Romantic moonlight scene. A repenting Albrecht visits Giselle’s grave at night where the wilis appear and attempt to dance him to death. Giselle is not interested in revenge and protects him until dawn, when the sunlight returns and the mortal world predominates. The lead role of *Giselle* differs from that of *La Sylphide* because the heroine performs in both the sunlight and moonlight scenes. Giselle performs as a mortal in the sunlight scene and as an ethereal immortal creature in the moonlight scene. However, there is a parallel between *Giselle* and *La Sylphide* in that a man-hating woman with supernatural powers appears in both. In *Giselle*, this female is the Queen of the Wilis who orders Giselle to kill Albrecht. In *La Sylphide* the female villain is a witch who tricks James in to destroying the object of his affection. Also, both ballets are similar in that the male leads betray the women in the ballet, resulting in the death of the unattainable female.\(^12\)

Coralli choreographed the *corps de ballet* or ensemble dances, while Perrot, choreographed solos for Grisi. The music, composed by Adolphe Adam, was exceptional
at the time because it employed leitmotivs. This allowed Adam to create musical themes in Act I that reappeared in Act II reminding the audience of previous scenes. The score was also unusual because it consisted largely of original music choreographed specifically for the ballet instead of borrowed melodies (Au 1988, 52).

Coralli was credited with the choreography for *Giselle*, although Perrot’s contribution was generally recognized. *Giselle*’s success marked the beginning of Perrot’s choreographic career, however, not at the Paris Opera. Despite his talents, Perrot did not receive a permanent position with the Opera. This proved fortuitous for Russian ballet where Perrot eventually found employment and helped shaped the future of ballet in that country.

*Giselle* and *La Sylphide* succeeded because they combined fine dancing, choreography and music with the psychological interests and preferences of Romanticism. They are popular today for many of the same reasons and remain an important part of most ballet companies and principal dancers’ repertoires.

While Paris dominated ballet during its Romantic period, other European cities and countries also developed ballets in the Romantic style, but often with specific national inflections. Perrot left France for England where he worked at Her Majesty’s Theatre in London until 1848. During his tenure there, after restaging *Giselle*, Perrot choreographed several Romantic ballets including *La Esmeralda, Eoline, Catarina, Ondine* and *Lalla Rookh*. Most importantly, he choreographed *Pas De Quatre*\(^{13}\), which brought the four greatest ballerinas together in one ballet. *Pas de Quatre* resulted from Queen Victoria’s request in 1843 to see Fanny Essler (1810-1884) and Fanny Cerrito (1817-1909) dance together. Once accomplished, the director of Her Majesty’s Theatre, Benjamin Lumley, proposed a *pas de quatre*, uniting Taglioni, Cerrito, Grisi and Lucille Grahn (1819-1907). Producing a *pas de quatre* of this nature was more complicated than it might seem. Romantic ballerinas, including these particular prima ballerinas, had well-publicized rivalries and never performed in the same venue. Not only did this ballet cause a stir in the dance world, it also made history. In 1845 this unprecedented event took place and secured Perrot’s reputation as an outstanding choreographer. The Romantic ballet was alive and well in London until the middle of the century when public tastes turned to opera (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 69-70).
Denmark also enjoyed its own form of Romantic ballet. Danish choreographer August Bournonville not only created a distinctly Danish ballet, but also developed a unique Danish technical style. His ballets reflected his bourgeois and Lutheran values and included ordinary people, *joie de vivre*, Christian symbols and strong moralistic values. He eliminated visible preparations\textsuperscript{14} and ostentatious *port de bras*\textsuperscript{15} in his choreography. Bournonville’s ballets also included substantial roles for men at a time when the importance of the male dancer was diminished elsewhere.

It was not unusual for Bournonville’s classes to include a large number of men. Therefore, unlike the ballet masters in other countries who were concentrating on female technique, Bournonville desired to train his men as highly technical dancers, not mere ballerina porters. His technical style differed from other ballet masters’ because he emphasized fast footwork and clean, classical *port de bras*. He required that both men and women master *ballon* and complicated *batterie* or “beats”\textsuperscript{16} resulting in a style …distinguished by a fleetness of step that was not seen in the French or Italian schools of classical ballet training. Different approaches to elevation underlined the contrast between the masculine and the feminine qualities of Danish dancing. While the men were noted for the strength and breadth of elevated movement, the women’s *ballon* was characterized by lightness and delicacy crowned with lovely arm carriage (Lee 2002, 171).

In 1836 Bournonville choreographed *La Sylphide* for Grahn. His *La Sylphide* differed considerably from Taglioni’s version. Bournonville’s ballet included more national color and was known for its dramatic qualities and magical effects, still used today. Furthermore, he did not use the Jean-Madeleine Schhneitzhoeffer (1785-1852) score, but instead commissioned Herman Lovenskjold (1815-1870) to compose an original score.\textsuperscript{17} Most significantly, Bournonville’s choreography utilized great numbers of men for the character\textsuperscript{18} dances in the bridal party scenes (Lee 2002, 167-171).

Bournonville’s other ballets\textsuperscript{19} were generally more akin to “cozy romances” than conventional Romantic ballet (Cohen 1974, 68). His librettos differed from those of conventional Romantic ballets by including reunited lovers and happy endings instead of unrequited love and tragic separation of the protagonists. Also, his ballets were unusual because they featured developed male roles and steered away from idealizing and eroticizing the female.
Bournonville’s legacy is significant. His choreography is performed today by Danish and non-Danish companies, and his technical style remains prevalent in Denmark and is taught throughout the world.

Italy, an unusual political entity in Europe, approached ballet during the Romantic era in a distinctive manner. Instead of producing Romantic ballets, Italy employed melodrama for its productions where:

...kidnapped princesses, swashbuckling outlaws, chaste heroines, valiant lovers, and cruel villains were rampant on stages from Milan to Naples. Since the plots were extraordinarily complicated, a distinctive system of double casting was employed: ballerini per le parte mimed the action with stylized, rhythmical gestures; ballerini performed the dances that were inserted wherever the plot could be made to justify an entertainment or a celebration. The arrangement, similar to the recitative-aria division of opera, seemed to satisfy both the adherents of the ballet d’action and the devotees of virtuosity; actually it obliterated the touchstone of expressive movement that marked the peak of the romantic ballet (Cohen 1974, 68-69).

Clearly ballets in Italy differed from those found in London, Denmark and Paris at the time. Training in Italy differed, as well, and eventually greatly influenced the training in Russia. Italy had long been the home for strong technical training and its dancers were well-known for their virtuosity. In the late nineteenth century when the Italian dancers took St. Petersburg by storm, the effect was to rejuvenate the Russian ballet.

European ballet, Romantic or not, with its new conventions and mass appeal, firmly established itself as a separate performing art and became a regular and popular feature in most European capitals. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, Romantic ballet had reached its apex and was in decline. A single major work was created in the latter part of the century by Arthur Saint-Leon (1821-1870). The work, entitled Coppelia and set to music by Leo Delibes (1836-1891), incorporated humor and folk dance with ballet. It also included a third act of divertissement celebrating the wedding of the two main characters which “revealed Saint-Leon’s preference for dancing rather than drama, and reflected the growing taste for spectacle” (Au 1988, 58). Coppelia appeared in 1870 and met with immediate success. However, Saint-Leon’s triumph was short-lived because of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war and the dire circumstances in Paris. The Opera was closed and food became scarce. Both Saint-Leon and the lead
dancer of *Coppelia*, Giuseppina Bozzachi (1853-1870), died during the year; she on her seventeenth birthday. *Coppelia* remains an extremely popular ballet today and perhaps, if Saint-Leon had survived the hardships of the Franco-Prussian war, more masterpieces would have been created. Regardless, his contribution foreshadows the creation of Diaghilev’s *Ballet Ruses* and modernism, both more concerned with dance and spectacle than drama.

The Paris Opera reopened in 1871 and moved to its current building in 1875. Although the Opera had a fine new facility and the Opera Ballet school continued to train fine dancers, ballet was in decline. Many considered it no more than light entertainment. Furthermore, the importance of male dancers was at an all time low. In fact, the male lead in *Coppelia* was played *en travesti*. This trend continued until the mid-1950’s (Anderson 1986, 74-75).

This trend was not confined to France. The artistic significance of ballet was in decline in Denmark and Italy, as well, and England’s Lumley remarked that the audience seemed to be demanding “We only want legs, not brains” (Anderson 1986, 74-75). While Italy continued to produce fine technical dancers, the golden age of the choreographer and Romantic ballerina was over. Ballet did not disappear from Western Europe, but became secondary to opera and other performing arts by the end of the century. In Russia, conversely, ballet began to thrive toward the latter part of the nineteenth century and would dominate the dance world by the early twentieth.

Russia’s ballet history and tradition both emulated and differed from that in Western Europe. As elsewhere in Europe, ballet in Russia first took an identifiable form at the imperial court, however almost a century later than in the capitol of Western Europe. When it did take root in the middle of the eighteenth century, it was a result of importation, not creation, which mirrored the establishment of court ballet in the rest of Europe. Russia’s path veered from the rest of ballet history in Europe because it did not suffer decline in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It also differed because the establishment of a national Russian ballet, with native dancers and choreographers, occurred much later there than in other Western European countries and, as we shall see in the next chapter, Pushkin played an important role.
Nonetheless, a rich history of dancing existed prior to the importation of ballet and long before the era of Pushkin. To say that a Russian style of dance did not emerge until after Pushkin is incorrect. Western Europe’s form of ballet was exported to Russia and superimposed on its dancing as early as the seventeenth century. This is not surprising because, particularly since the time of Peter the Great, many forms of Western culture were imported by Russia, including language and clothing styles.

But, prior to the influence of the West, Russia had a strong dance tradition. To better understand how Russia emerged in the twentieth century as a leader of ballet, a brief history of early Russian dance follows and clearly illustrates the importance of dance in Russia long before Western ballet took root.

The step most commonly identified as “Russian” existed as early as the sixth century. Silver figurines found near Kiev show men in the prisiadka position; the familiar squatting pose with the heels raised and the knees very turned out (Roslavleva 1966, 17). Another special feature of early Russian dance is the khorovod, or round-dance. This type of dance is still performed today and involves a large ensemble making very complex patterns of movement with unexpected transitions. Some historians claim that Marius Petipa (1818-1910), during his tenure as ballet master in Russia in the 1800s, used this round-dance as inspiration for his choreographic masterpieces (Demidov 1977, 3).

Given Russia’s history, it is not surprising that dance and ballet developed differently from Western Europe. The Muscovite princedom that later became the kingdom of Russia was never directly under the authority of the Catholic Church, nor was it greatly influenced by it until the late fifteenth century. Russia instead was influenced by the Greek and Orthodox churches and the Byzantine Empire. In fact, while Italy was experiencing the early phase of the Renaissance, Russia was emerging from over two centuries of Muslim and Mongol domination and influence. Around 1450, the same time the Muslim Turks occupied and conquered Constantinople, Russia finally began to reassert itself as an independent entity. It was not until approximately 1462 that Russia started consolidating under one ruler, Ivan III (1462-1505). This was long after England and France had acquired centralized government under one leader and started building monarchies. Ivan III was a Muscovite prince who first took the title tsar (from the Russian word for caesar, czar). He married Sophia, a niece of the last Byzantine
emperor. A native of Rome, not Constantinople, Sophia brought a large Italian retinue with her to Moscow. With this retinue came the Latin language and the influence of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church’s power took root and gathered strength until towards the late seventeenth century when the head of the Russian church, Patriarch Nikon, asserted that the Russian Orthodox Church should predominate in all matters. Tsar Alexis did not agree that the Russian Orthodox Church should have dominance over the state, but did incorporate the Church, in the Byzantine tradition, into the hierarchy of the state. In other words, in Russia there was no separation of church and state and the tsar functioned as leader of both. This greatly diminished the influence of the Catholic Church, which continued to decline under subsequent tsars (Treadgold 1995, 12-13).

While Catherine de Medici was introducing court entertainment to a well-established French monarchy and spreading the ideas and discoveries of the Renaissance, Russia was still emerging from feudalism. With the ascension of Ivan IV, also known as Ivan the Terrible (d.1584) in 1533 the Russian empire was born, at the expense of the feudal lords or boyars. At the Battle of Kazan in 1532, Ivan IV defeated the Mongols and released Russia from their domination. Ivan IV ruthlessly consolidated his power and eliminated any boyars that questioned his right to rule. Russia was now in a position to develop a court that could in turn host a court ballet. However, Russian court ballet was slow in developing and does not appear in a formal way until 1629, almost fifty years after the appearance of the first French court ballet (Ballet des Polonais, 1573). This delay was probably because Ivan IV faced more pressing issues, such as consolidating, fortifying and building his empire, than perfecting his court activities. Instead he bolstered and championed the Russian Orthodox Church and developed an almost monastic code for every activity. This codification did not include dance, although dance certainly existed and thrived in Russia, as witnessed by foreign visitors.

Early travelers to Russia remarked on the unique nature of Russian national dance and how well the peasant dancers used their bodies. They were also surprised to discover that Russia had a long tradition of paid dancers that formed professional troupes, or skomorokhi. Skomorokhi groups usually consisted of males only and performed largely in the grotesque or comic style, although female troupes existed as well. Often the skomorokhi formed resident companies at the rural estates of princes and boyars, but
other groups traveled as far West as Italy. This migration allowed a style of early Russian
dance to spread and institutionalize the art form. *Skomorokhi* dances were eventually
performed to Russian epic songs, *byliny*, which further popularized and broadened the
influence of the *somorokhi*.\(^{28}\)

The popularity of the *skomorokhi* threatened the Russian Orthodox Church and in
1551 it forbade the *skomorkhi* to perform close to any church or at weddings, which had
been a common practice. It is conceivable that the nomadic and pagan nature of these
troupes coupled with their ability to undermine authority by the use of comedy, made
them undesirable to the Orthodox Church.

Of course, since most churches were located in the heart of a village or town,
deprived of this venue, the *skomorokhi* began to suffer financially. Also, denied work at
weddings, the *skomorokhi* began to decline or migrate north to very rural estates. Most
estates also boasted an orchestra and many members of the *skomorokhi*\(^{29}\) learned to play
an instrument and became well-rounded, better trained professional entertainers
(Roslavleva 1966, 18-9).

While the nobility and the tsars, including Ivan the Terrible, appeared to follow
the church dictates concerning *skomorokhi* publicly, they enjoyed their performances
privately.\(^{30}\) The first Romanov tsar, Mikhail Federovich, set aside a room for
entertainment and appointed Ivan Lodigin in 1629 to teach poor children to dance.
Lodigin was in effect the first Russian dance master, and his students the first formally
trained tsarist entertainers.

The next tsar, Alexei Mikhailovich (r.1645-1676), heard from his ambassadors
that the European courts were presenting special entertainments that included the visual
and performing arts, particularly a new component of highly technical and structured
dance.\(^{31}\) He recognized that these events served as monarchical status symbols and
ordered that such a work be produced for his court (Swift 1968, 6). This order presented
three problems, 1) besides the ambassadors, no one else had seen this style of “French
dancing”; 2) it had to be conceived, rehearsed and presented within one week; and, 3) it
was necessary to find someone capable of producing the theatrical feats required. Nicolai
Lima, an engineer in the tsar’s army was made responsible for the special effects for the
production. This spectacle, which included song and speech in addition to dance (most
likely produced by Russian natives due to the time constraints), was presented in 1673 outside Moscow and delighted the tsar.

Alexei died in 1676 and with him any tsarist interest in presenting Western European theatrical performances in Russia for the time being. The development of a Russian court ballet was derailed until the ascension of Peter the Great (r.1682-1725). Peter traveled extensively and often anonymously throughout Western Europe. He discovered that his country differed considerably in all cultural aspects and found this difference disturbing. Upon returning to Russia, Peter began importing and imposing many Western European traditions and initiated steps to change the language, dress, activities, and even the site of the Russian court.

Until the early 1700’s Moscow was the capital of Russia. Peter built a new capital in St. Petersburg, in effect resulting in the establishment of two Russian capitals. The existence of two Russian courts adds to the confusion when writing about court ballet and later, Russian ballet, because they developed separately in both cities, but with overlaps of ballet masters and repertoires. However, Peter’s interest in Western European culture, a desire to build a new capital city modeled on those in the West, and his travels were essential to laying the foundation for dance and ballet in Russia.

Peter was particularly fond of Western European masquerades and revels and introduced them to his court. He also introduced West European ballroom dances in his “assemblies”. His court balls were significant not only for their Western attributes, but because he broke with tradition and required both sexes to attend (Swift 1968, 8). Attendance at assemblies was obligatory for the nobility and helped to raise the status of dance from a low and prohibited entertainment to a fashionable and required skill. Peter incorporated the word *tanets* into the Russian language to define dance as a formal body of steps. During his forty-three year reign, dance was mainly social and he did not attempt to make it theatrical, but his defiance of the Church’s dance prohibition greatly elevated its position (Lee 2002, 183).

Although great strides were being made leading to a Russian ballet tradition, Russia’s ballet history lagged almost a century behind that of the other European states. It was not until the 1730s that trained ballet dancers from other countries performed in
Russia. At this time several Italian dancers arrived in Russia and began giving performances and lessons.

During the reign of Anna Ioanovna (r. 1730-1740), the first ballet using Russian dancers was performed. It was presented on January 29, 1736 as the finale for Francesco Araja’s opera *La Forza dell’amore e dell’odio*. Over one hundred pupils from the Corps de Cadets, trained by Jean Baptiste Lande (d.1748) participated in the ballet. Dance training for cadets at the Shilakhetny Corps began regularly in 1731, but it was not until the arrival of Lande in 1734 that real progress was made (Swift 1968, 8)

Lande also founded the St. Petersburg Ballet School in 1738 and began teaching the palace servants’ children (Roslavleva 1966, 17-22). Trained dancing, which had been banned by the Orthodox Church, now was obligatory for members of the nobility and the court was taking an active role in its development.

Lande was succeeded by Antonio Rinaldi, also known as Fossano (d. c. 1760). Fossano was a leader of a group of commedia dell’arte players from Meissen and was known for his tour de force acrobatic dancing. Both Lande and Fossano are credited with introducing the danse d’ecole to Russian dance students, thus establishing professional ballet training in Russia. However, the choreographers and soloists continued to be imported from Western Europe (Lee 2002, 183-184).

It is important to remember that by 1661 Louis XIV of France had already established L’Academie Royale de Danse. Although Lande’s school was created in 1738, it was not until approximately 1740, during the reign of Empress Elisabeth Petrovna (r.1740-1762), that any form of a Russian ballet company existed. Finally in 1752, almost a century after the establishment of a ballet academy in France, the Empress created the Imperial Theatre School, more commonly known as the Ballet School. The dancers, probably twelve boys and twelve girls, were housed in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg and were wards of the state.

Similar to Louis XIV’s influence on the development of professional ballet in France, Catherine the Great (1729-1796) played a major role in the establishment of Russian ballet. When she came to power in 1759, she imported ballet masters from Western Europe to arrange festivals for her court, and created the post of Director of the Imperial Theatres in 1766. These masters included the Austrian choreographer Frantz
Hilferding van Weven (1710-1768) and later Gasparo Angiolini (1731-1803), who arrived in 1766. Hilferding had served as ballet master in both Stuttgart and Vienna and was well acquainted with Noverre’s ideas of reform and the new concept of ballet d’action. He created at least six ballets during the six years he worked in Russia. One was particularly significant because it was used to honor Catherine the Great at her coronation in 1762. Entitled Olympiad with music by Thomas Trest-Manfredini, it paid homage to the tsarina and her divine right to rule (Lifar 1954, 25-34).

Upon arrival, Hilvering found that Russian ballet had one clear advantage over ballet in other countries. In Russia, ballet had never been produced with opera, so a struggle was not necessary to establish Russian ballet’s independence.

Hilvering brought a large number of dancers with him from Austria, but was equally interested in training Russians. He was successful at both training dancers and producing ballets and his choreographic works marked the beginning of ballet d’action in Russia (Lee 2002, 185). Hilferding also involved the nobility in his ballets including the Tsarevich Paul Petrovich, the Prince of Courland and the Countess Sivers (Swift 1968, 9).

Angiolini, another Viennese, succeeded Hilverding in 1766 and produced his first work, Dido Forsaken. An outspoken opponent of Noverre, Angiolini nevertheless choreographed in a very similar style. It was believed that the feud between the two was more personal than philosophical, and the great Russian poet Alexander Radishchev in one essay “compared the Angiolini-Noverre feud to two stubborn fisticuffers falling from exhaustion into poses that even these choreographers would fail to reconstruct ‘in their excellent ballets’” (Roslavleva 1966, 26).

Angiolini over the next twenty years made three extended visits to Russia, mounting old and new productions. He was well-known for his musicality and created psychologically sensitive ballets that engaged the audience, often using Russian history and folklore for inspiration (Lee 2002, 186-187).

In 1764, Catherine founded the Moscow Orphanage for wards under the age of four. It was decided that when they were older they would be taught dance in addition to their other studies. With this decision another ballet school was, in effect, created. More than a century after the establishment of a school in Paris, the Italian ballet master Filippo
Beccari was hired to organize a dancing school at the Moscow Orphanage (Rosvlavleva 1966, 23).

With the creation of the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres in 1766, Catherine greatly enhanced the position of all of the performing arts in Russia. Furthermore, since the Romanov palaces did not afford a good venue for productions, Catherine ordered that in both St. Petersburg and Moscow a large theatre for ballet and opera and a small theatre for dramatic productions be built.

In 1773 Catherine established a theatrical school in Moscow and placed Beccari and his wife in charge of the students’ instruction. The students were trained in dance, music and drama and upon graduation performed for the imperial court in St. Petersburg. This institution, now known as the Bolshoi Ballet, continues to function in today’s Russia.

A uniquely Russian feature emerged at this time. Wealthy landowners (the descendents of the boyars) began emulating the imperial support of ballet and created private serf theatres. Many families hired ballet masters who trained their serfs in the style of danse d’école. The serfs’ day consisted of dance classes, rehearsals and working in the fields. Serf dancers were often bartered or sold to other estates. The director of the Imperial Theatre, Count Nicholas Sheremetiev staffed a theatre at his estate with one hundred and sixty six serfs, of which twenty-six were dancers trained by Noverre’s student Charles Le Picq. An expensive luxury, the custom of retaining serf dancers declined in the early 1800s.

Le Picq replaced Angiolini in 1786. Le Picq, one of Noverre’s favorite students, spent the next twelve years staging some of Noverre’s works and spreading the ideas contained in his teacher’s Lettres. Le Picq was responsible for its publication in Russia and the book became popular in French-speaking circles. Thus, although Noverre never visited Russia, his ideas on ballet d’action were well-known and well-represented there (Lee 2002, 187).

The flourishing of ballet under Catherine II was almost derailed by the ascension of Paul I. Paul enjoyed ballet, but liked the military marches better. He dismissed the men from the ballet and had their parts played by women. He also employed Chevalier Peicam de Bressoles (Peicam), who was devoid of talent, but had a beautiful French actress as a
wife. She turned heads and was able to use her influence to assure that her husband kept his post.

It was fortunate for Russian ballet that Paul’s reign was not lengthy. Even more fortunate was the arrival of two foreigners, Auguste Poirot (commonly called only “Auguste”) and Didelot (Lifar 1954, 41-43). Alexander I succeeded Paul I on the throne and a new era in the development of Russian arts began. Most significantly, the year Didelot was asked to serve at the Imperial Theatre (1799), Pushkin was born. Didelot arrived in St. Petersburg in 1801 and raised the standards of dance in Russia significantly. With the birth of the nineteenth century came a new impetus for the ballet. A contemporary of the time, Grekov, claimed that:

Didelot caused a real revolution, and it is to him chiefly that Russian ballet owes its present position. On the average he created two or three ballets a year. In all his works he achieved a perfect union between mime, dancing, and plastic materials, and this gave particular power to the visual impression of the whole (Lifar 1954, 50).

Didelot eventually made ballet in Russia fashionable. However, his initial years in Russia, while productive, were sometimes difficult. Upon arrival in St. Petersburg Didelot found three active theatres including the Bolshoi Kamenny Theatre (now the site of the Leningrad Conservatory), the Maly Theatre, and the Hermitage Theatre, which was reserved for the exclusive use of the imperial family and guests. All three theatres were state supported and boasted outstanding workshops, wardrobes and scenic decorations, far surpassing those in the West (Swift 1968, 84-85).

The Kamenny Theatre was originally built in 1783, but was re-built more grandly in 1802 and renamed the Bolshoi. The rebuilding of the theatre was beneficial for Didelot because it was well equipped with a deep stage suitable for his ballet’s aerial flights. This meant that “not only could the dancers ‘fly’ across the stage but they could also ‘fly’ from the front to the back” (Doeser 1977, 208).

What was not readily available was a group of well-trained dancers, particularly male, and a viable repertoire. Paul I’s dictate that men should not perform ballet had greatly weakened the productions and his appointment of Peicam had stripped Russian ballet of any great choreographic talent. A Frenchman, Peicam did not endear himself to Russian ballet fans. Basically a con artist and a dictator, Peicam managed to rid the
Russian stage of Russian and Italian dancers. Only ballets approved by him could appear on stage. Upon Paul I’s death, Peicam and his wife, Madame Chevalier, hastily left the country.

At first the fact that Didelot was French made life difficult for the ballet master because Peicam was so resented by the dancers and nobility. Also, Didelot had to share the post of ballet master with a native, Ivan Val’berkh\(^{44}\) (1766-1819), the first Russian to hold this position. Val’berkh was a prolific choreographer and championed the rights of Russian dancers and resented foreign interference. Val’berkh’s ballets were presented in the old ballet d’action style and included a considerable amount of pantomime. For many his patriotic ballets of 1812 “were a trifle too literal and pedestrian, but they reflected his eagerness to join with his countrymen in their struggle to publicize their victory” (Roslavleva 1966, 36).

Val’berkh was sent by the imperial court to Paris in order to study and improve his skills for use in Russia. Didelot’s rivals in Paris, of which there were many,\(^{45}\) made a special effort to point out Didelot’s faults to him (Swift 1974, 89-90). This made for an uneasy alliance between the two artists. Val’berkh, who had been appointed Director of the School and Inspector of the company at the St. Petersburg Bolshoi Theatre in 1794, was sent to Moscow in 1807 as Ballet Master. This allowed Didelot more freedom to produce his own works and dancers (Doeser 1977, 208).

Despite these hardships, Didelot was able to consolidate his position and produced his first work in 1802. Apollo and Daphne was extremely well received by St. Petersburg audiences. Although he produced three more ballets\(^{46}\) during the next two years, his choreographic efforts were derailed for a time. The loss of his wife, Rose, in 1803 and lack of suitable dancers for his choreography delayed the production of more new works. Instead, he turned to training the dancers he needed. In 1807 (the same year Val’berkh left for Moscow) he resumed choreographing with the production of Medea and Jason and in the following three years produced at least eight other ballets.

Didelot and Val’berkh were not the only ballet masters in Russia at the time. Another Frenchman, Auguste,\(^{47}\) continued to be part of the artistic team and mounted original ballets. He was known for his excellent dancing, as well as for his fine choreography and teaching skills. He spent thirty years in Russia and, despite his French
background, was a champion of all things Russian. Auguste strove to combine popular Russian dance with academic dance. He and his partner, Kolossova, studied folk dancing and made it very fashionable.

Other foreign dancers and choreographers also were prevalent from 1808-1810, thus making the dance scene in Russia very active. This flurry of activity was derailed with the advent of the great “patriotic war” against France and Napoleon (Lifar 1954, 54-7).

Since the French were no longer welcome in Russia, Didelot was forced to return to Britain. In his absence Auguste and Val’berkh became friends and produced ballets jointly. Although French, Auguste was so acclimated to Russia that he did not seem foreign and remained comfortably in place during the Napoleonic Wars. His allegiance was clearly with Russia and most of the ballets produced were patriotic and enjoyed tremendous public success, thus laying the ground work for ballets in Russia choreographed and danced by Russians.

Val’berkh separately choreographed The New Heroine, or the Woman Cossack (1812) and with it proved that Russian ballet dancers could replace foreign dancers (Au 1988, 61). One such emerging ballerina was Avdotia Istomina (1799-1848) whom Pushkin later greatly admired and immortalized in Eugene Onegin. Despite Istomina’s success, ballet in Russia was in decline because of the lack of strong teachers or ballet masters to teach the emerging Russian dancers and produce new important works. Val’berkh was ill and presented only one new work from 1816 until 1819 and Auguste, who was more interested in demi-caractere work, primarily arranged divertissements and did not create any substantial ballets (Lifar 1954, 59).

The directors of the Imperial Theatres decided to recall Didelot to bolster the flagging ballet and as expressed by Prince Tufiakine:

...his presence would be infinitely valuable and useful, since all our best stars...were formed by him, just as our most successful ballets are those which he created. I have noticed that since he left, our ballets, and the dancing Academy also, have begun to be in danger. So to remedy this peril, I request the committee to agree to M. Didelot’s terms (Lifar 1954, 58).
Didelot, pleased to accept, returned to St. Petersburg in 1816 and became the sole ballet master and choreographer. In fact, he became a dictator and was eventually very unpopular with the management. However, his productivity was remarkable and his tenure ensured Russia’s place in the world of dance. From 1817 to 1828 he created thirty-one ballets, many of them considered masterpieces. Included in this list of masterpieces were the Pushkin-based works *Russlan and Ludmilla* and *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*. Both of these ballets are examined in the following chapter.

Didelot’s dominance in Russian ballet was divided into two phases. He spent the first phase (1801-1811) building the training ground for Russian dancers. As noted, upon his arrival he found that strong dance traditions, a school and repertoire were all in place, but dancers capable of the choreography he desired were not. By 1808 he had produced a fine corps of Russian dancers that sustained the French leads. Didelot was short of strong male dancers, but at a time before female dancers began to dominate the stage in Western Europe, he had already produced several fine female dancers (Lifar 1954, 54).

The second phase occurred when he returned to Russia in 1816. This is by far the most productive phase and coincided with the rise of Pushkin as a great artist. The two artists became acquaintances and their influence on each other will be explored in the next chapter.

As we have seen, Russia’s early ballet development differed from that of Western Europe, although it adopted many of the major characteristics at a later date. Also, it shared many of the personalities and talented individuals dominant in the Western European ballet world. In other words, Russian ballet, although isolated by distance and culture, did not evolve without foreign influences. In fact the opposite is true. Russian ballet today would not be what it is without this outside influence.

What is important to this research is at what point, and how, did Russian ballet become readily identifiable as unique? The following chapter continues to relate the history of Russian ballet, explores Pushkin’s influence, and establishes the unique aspects and characteristics of Russian ballet.
Notes for Chapter Three

1 The highest ranking noble or official was considered the presence and performers would direct the action and their bows first and foremost to these individuals.

2 Also commonly spelled as Beauchamp.

3 Opera-ballet is an eighteenth-century form of theatrical dance usually consisting of three to five acts of unrelated plots held together by a theme presented in the prologue. They were known for elegant music and beautiful décor (Lee 2002, 351).

4 A divertissement is a series of dances for simple diversion and pleasure (Balanchine and Mason 1954, 799).

5 Ballet d’action is a ballet with a plot that is advanced through gesture and pantomime.

6 Popular stages of this time were called “boulevard theatres”, perhaps similar to Off-Broadway (Cohen 1974, 65).

7 The term “mime” is abbreviated from “pantomime”. Players in Greek and Roman pantomimes wore masks and only expressed themselves with their bodies. A vocabulary of mime was created using gestures to indicate certain expressions and actions. This vocabulary was gradually incorporated into dance and was prevalent in the older ballets including Giselle and Coppelia.

8 Blasis’ Code of Terpischore is considered an invaluable work because it was both a manual for dancers and illustrated what dance technique was like during that time period (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 50).

9 A sylph is an ethereal element of the air usually characterized by a slender girl or young lady.

10 The type of pointe shoe used by Taglioni differs from that of today, but was the forerunner of the conventional pointe shoe. Her shoes were unblocked and provided very little support. Today’s pointe shoes have a square, or blocked, pointe for easier balance. The shoes are made of glue, fabric, wood, and sometimes fiberglass. Although reinforced, the shoe is not strong enough to support a dancer. Years of training are required to perfect the technique of dancing on pointe, or sur le pointe.

11 Gautier was a poet, librettist and critic.

12 James betrays both Effie and the sylph in La Sylphide resulting in the death of the sylph, while Albrecht betrays his noble financee and Giselle resulting in Giselle’s death and transformation in to a wilis.
13 *Pas de quatre* refers to a dance for four dancers. The choreography for *Pas de Quatre* has been passed down from dancer to dancer (although there is some disagreement over the actual steps) and is still performed today.

14 Most ballet steps involving turning or jumping have a standard “preparation” where the dancer takes a pose or *plie* (bending of the knees) before performing the step in order to better facilitate its execution.

15 *Port de bras* literally means “carriage of the arms.” The arms move or pass through classical positions based on the *dance d’ecole* lexicon. The term also applies to the complex use of the head, shoulders and upper back (Lee 2002, 352).

16 *Ballon* is a characteristic of elevation. The dancer should be able to leave the ground with ease, achieve great height and land softly and smoothly. *Batterie* refers to any movement in ballet where one foot beats against another or both feet beat together. They are commonly referred to as “beats” (Balanchine and Mason 1954, 794).

17 The Paris Opera Ballet did not want *La Sylphide* produced outside of Paris and so asked an exorbitant price for the rights to the Schneitzhoeffer score (Lee 2002, 168).

18 Character dances are a form of theatrical dance based on national and folk dances (Lee 2002, 347).

19 Bournonville choreographed thirty-five ballets in addition to *La Sylphide*. Some of the best known include *Napoli* (1842), *Konservtoriet* (1849), and *Flower Festival in Genzano* (1858) (Lee 2002, 169).

20 Italy’s development as a nation is singularly different from other European countries because it does not become a nation-state until 1946.

21 Some form of court ballet and/or professional ballet school could be found in almost every major European city and country by the end of the eighteenth century. Academies were formed in London (1705), Denmark (1748), Vienna (1748), Sweden (1773), Moscow (1776), Milan (1778), Bordeaux (1780), St. Petersburg (1783) and Prague (1784) (Lee 2002, 99).

22 This was the first incorporation of a Hungarian *czardas* into a ballet (Anderson 1986, 74).

23 The bishop of Rome (pope) was the head of the Christian (Catholic) Church in the West, and the bishop (patriarch) of Constantinople was the head of the Eastern (Orthodox) Church in Byzantium. They differed over leadership, language (Latin verses Greek), celibacy (Orthodox priests may marry) and doctrine. In 1054 the patriarch of Constantinople refused to submit to Roman rule, and a permanent schism occurred (Matthews and Platt 2001, 193).
The French monarchy begins with Hugh Capet in 987 and the English with William (the Conqueror) in 1066. Italy becomes a battle ground between France, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire in 1494. Spain and the German princes were under the control of Charles V, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire (Matthews and Platt 2001, 223, 316).

The Russian religious philosopher, Iosif Volotsky, claimed that the tsar was really only the highest of all priests. This placed a tremendous amount of authority in the hands of one person. Apparently, when Napoleon met Alexander I in East Prussia, Napoleon remarked, “I see that you are an emperor and a pope at the same time. How useful” (Remnik 1994, 361).

Peter the Great, around 1700, began a new cultural revolution that stridently pushed aside Catholic influences and replaced them with ideas and institutions borrowed from the Protestants and Germanic states (Treadgold 1995, 13).

Russia’s history also differs from that of Western Europe because, due to geography, historical timeline and Byzantine influence, Russia does not experience the trauma and upheaval of the Reformation and Counter Reformation. Although other religious groups existed in Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church was closely associated with the tsar and government, making it the predominate religion. This is similar to the Anglican Church’s position in England during the reign of Elizabeth I, although church and state were officially separated.

The skomorokhi also made a valuable contribution with the creation of the puppet-theatre. Its hero, Petrushka, was later used as a source for the Stravinsky ballet by the same name (Seaman 1967, 41).

The skomorokhi continued to gain popularity and challenge the Orthodox Church. In the middle of the seventeenth century the Moscow Patriarch ordered that all folk instruments in the city be destroyed. They were burned along the banks of the Moscow River (Seaman 1967, 41).

Ivan employed the skomorokhi to satirize the boyars (Seaman 1967, 41).

The first theatrical court performance appeared in 1660. It was produced by a German national who was also a Lutheran pastor. Alexei was concerned about the Orthodox Church’s opinion of the Russian court presenting a production, but when he consulted his dukkhovnik, or spiritual advisor, he was advised that it was proper to proceed because the Byzantine court had allowed such amusements in the past (Swift 1968, 6).

Tanets is based on the term tanz, the German word for dance.

A military school for young men of the nobility (Roslavleva 1966, 21).
This school is the direct ancestor of the Vaganova Choreographic Institute which would later dominate the dance world by producing outstanding teachers and performers (Swift 1968, 8).

Commedia dell’arte is an improvised comedy with stock characters and originated in thirteenth-century Italy (Lee 2002, 348).

Generally refers to a physically demanding divertissement or dance steps requiring great physical strength, ability and prowess.

Danse d’école literally refers to the dance school. At this dance school, dance education is the based on classical dance where the basic tenents of academic dance are taught emphasizing the five basic positions, turnout and seventeenth century classical dance conventions.

Empress Elizabeth made French the official court language (Lee 2002, 183).

Also known as Catherine II, she reigned from 1762-1796.

Bolshoi literally means “big”.

During the late eighteenth century, twenty serf theatres, or pomeschiki existed in Moscow and the surrounding area (Swift 1968, 13).

Didelot’s Flore and Zephire opened in London in 1796. It was remarkable because dancers were suspended from wires which made them appear to be flying (Steinberg 1980, 433).

Peicam and his wife, Madame Chevalier, became close to the Imperial Court and Paul I took a special interest in her. They used their position of selling their patronage for ranks and posts. By intimidating others to purchase tickets to their benefits at greatly inflated prices, the couple became wealthy. Lists of those solicited were provided to the tsar and anyone who refused to buy a ticket would be subject to imperial disfavor (Swift 1974, 87).

Ivan Val’berkh is also referred to as Waldberg or Lessogorov-Wahlberg. This confusion probably occurs in part because of transliteration issues and in part because foreign names were preferred for ballet dancers and masters (Roslavleva 1966, 34).

Didelot wanted to stay with the Paris Opera and had made a successful debut there. However, he was greatly envied and was not ask to become a permanent member (Doeser 1977, 208).

Apollo and Perseus, Roland and Morgane, and Fanny or Love Avenged (Lifar 1954, 52).

Ironically, he is the brother of the notorious Madame Chevalier (Lifar 1954, 38).
Based on the true story of Nadezhda Durova (Au 1988, 61).
The Russian ballet, of which the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi schools and companies are the best representatives, continues to be regarded as among the finest ballet institutions in the world. What is remarkable is that the Russian tradition has managed to survive centuries of turbulent times and, in fact, to thrive. In part this survival is due to the tenacity of dancers, choreographers and audiences. However, it appears its survival is also due to its strong link to a virile past. Russian ballet, which was first introduced as an exotic French import, eventually developed its own distinct and widely admired style. This was possible because at the same time a native Russian-language writing style was emerging, so were native Russian composers. Soon after, native Russian dancers and choreographers asserted themselves as equal to their Western counterparts. However, the impetus began with the development of a Russian writing style, and Alexander Pushkin is credited with its creation. It is Pushkin’s vivid storytelling, musicality, character portrayal and use of Russian themes that set the stage for a Russian ballet that has survived for almost two centuries.

Through the previous chapter we discovered that Russia’s ballet history from as early as the sixth century through the beginning of the nineteenth century both emulated and deviated from that of Western Europe. This trend continued during the nineteenth century, but a new element was presented with the writings of Pushkin. Russian ballet was now positioned to develop separately from Western ballet and eventually become a leader in the dance world. With the return of Didelot, who is often referred to as the “father of Russian ballet” (Steinberg 1980, 433), in 1816 and the emergence of Pushkin (the undisputed father of Russian literature) as a major native literary talent, Russia was poised to make great strides in developing its own unique ballet form.

The era of Pushkin coincided with that of Didelot and his dictatorship at the Imperial Ballet in St. Petersburg. While Russia’s ballet development lagged a century behind the art’s development in other Western European countries, this gap would soon be closed. Didelot’s considerable talent and strong will, and Pushkin’s inspiration, lay the
foundation for a special form of Russian ballet. Pushkin and Didelot did not live to see Russia dominate the ballet world, but their legacy can be tied to its success and survival.

Pushkin’s writings and themes aid the creation of ballets that can be examined for specific Russian characteristics including: 1) main character gender (male as opposed to female) and nationality (Russian as opposed to Western European); 2) the Russian location of the story; 3) Russian musical composition; 4) Russian nationalistic attitudes reflected in the work; and 5) special dance techniques and choreography that illustrate unique aspects of Russian dance. As the history of Russian ballet unfolds, Pushkin’s influence is reflected throughout the development of new works.

As discussed in previous chapters, Pushkin’s talents have contributed to written and musical compositions, as well as theatrical works, which are uniquely Russian. When these aspects are combined, they serve as the basis of Russian opera. However, when the spoken words are removed, the basis of Russian ballet is revealed.

Pushkin’s impact on the development of Russian music and opera was significant and so was his influence on the creation of a unique Russian ballet. This was not surprising because in most countries the evolution of ballet has been clearly linked with the development of a musical heritage. However, in Russia the bond may be closer than in other countries (Slominsky 1947, 19). As previously noted, Pushkin’s experimentation with fresh rhythm and meters provided a new challenge for composers. In speaking of Russian composers in the early part of the nineteenth century, Gerald Abraham notes:

They were luckier than their predecessors in that they had better lyrics to set; instead of the stiff pseudo-classicism of Sumarokov and Derzhavin and the feeble pastorals and love-poems of the sentimentalists, they had Zhukovsky – whose narrative ballads, first set by his friend, the dilettante A. A. Pleshchevey inspired a new genre of Russian song – they had Delvig¹ and above all they had Pushkin (Abraham 1985, 5).

While composers found his work inspirational, so did choreographers and dance enthusiasts. As we shall see, it is Pushkin’s influence that finally allows Russian ballet to be recognized as a distinct genre, not as a foreign import of another country’s talents and initiatives.

Pushkin and Didelot’s influence were considerable, but the singular nature of Russia’s history and geography provided them with fertile ground to enhance their artistic
and creative powers. Even the stifling power of tsarist and, later, Soviet censorship played a hand in shaping the development of the arts. As creative geniuses, Pushkin and Didelot found ways to circumvent censorship, as did their successors.

Russian history, including its ballet history, is unique because there are two Russian capitals and each has a significant ballet company. Both companies were created by imperial decree and continue to enjoy the support of the government. As a dance historian, this presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Having two imperial companies to research adds to the volume of material available and certainly increases research opportunities. However, it is often a challenge not to confuse the two. Part of this confusion comes from the naming of the institutions. Today the Bolshoi Ballet is located in Moscow, and the Kirov in St. Petersburg. However, originally the ballet in St. Petersburg was often referred to as the Bolshoi, after the theatre in which it performed until 1889. In 1860 the Maryinsky Theatre was built in St. Petersburg and by 1889 the St. Petersburg imperial ballet was performing exclusively at the new theatre and the ballet company became known as the Maryinsky Ballet. The St. Petersburg ballet was again renamed after the assassination of Sergei Kirov (1888-1934) in 1934. Kirov, part of the 1930’s Soviet Politburo, was rumored to be favored to replace Josef Stalin (1879-1953) as General Secretary, but had been sent by Stalin himself to “clean up” the opposition in St. Petersburg. Officially, Kirov was assassinated by a member of the old Left Opposition, but unofficially it is suspected that Stalin actually ordered the assassination (Treadgold 1995, 212). The confusion caused by the renaming of the ballet institutions was compounded by the fact that one of the imperial cities was also renamed by the Soviets. St. Petersburg was renamed Leningrad in 1924 for Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) in honor of the deceased leader. Renaming tsarist institutions and cities for Soviet leaders and heros (both living and dead) had become fashionable, and Stalin quickly honored his once-potential rivals (Lenin and Kirov) in this way.

The ballet in Moscow became known as the Bolshoi Ballet after it performed at Moscow’s Bolshoi Theatre in 1825. Therefore during Didelot’s era two major imperial ballet companies existed; the Maryinsky (later Kirov) in St. Petersburg and the Bolshoi in Moscow. To avoid confusion, from Didelot’s era until 1934 the ballet institutions will be referred to as the Maryinsky and the Bolshoi.
At this time ballet in Russia was making progress, but was still hampered by the ideology of the patrons and the system of training dancers and choosing repertoire. Since both the Maryinsky and the Bolshoi Theatres were state owned and controlled, the majority of the auditorium was reserved for the court and high officials and seats were hard to come by. For the most part, since the subject matter was censored, ballets proved to be very conservative (Cohen 1974, 91).

However, the importance of each ballet institution was uneven:

…right up until the end of the nineteenth century, the Moscow company was in the position of a stepchild. The best talents were assembled in Petersburg. And the management of the imperial theaters devoted special attention to the Maryinsky Theatre, where the tsar’s court liked to go. This explains why the Petersburg company was well ahead of the Bolshoi, with a more established reputation and greater fame in Europe (Demidov 1977, 6).

Also, the regulation of each institution was uneven. The Maryinsky Ballet was subject to stricter imperial guidelines than the Bolshoi Ballet. Therefore, while the Maryinsky Ballet had access to more resources and more support from the imperial court, the Bolshoi enjoyed greater artistic freedom.

It is difficult to determine when ballet in Russia became specifically Russian ballet. In other words, does the non-Russian acknowledgement of the outstanding training in Russia which produced remarkable native dancers not constitute recognition of a distinctly Russian ballet? As early as 1860, Theophile Gautier remarked of dancers in St. Petersburg from the Imperial school that:

Their Academy of Dancing produces some remarkable soloists; it has given birth to a corps de ballet which is unparalleled for its unity, precision, and speed of movement. What a joy it is to see those straight lines, those clean groups, disbanding at the exact moment to re-form in a different way; those countless little feet moving in perfect time, those dancing armies, all carrying out their manoeuvres without the least confusion or mistake. There is no chattering, no laughter, never a glance cast at boxes or stalls. It is indeed the domain of dumb pantomime; and never does the action step from its frame (Lifar 1954, 9).

Through this first-hand account, it seems that there is a recognizable and distinct form of Russian ballet training and execution in the mid-nineteenth century. Also, beginning in 1844, native Russian ballet dancers who trained in their own country began appearing
regularly in Western Europe to great acclaim. However, while the dancers were being acclaimed both nationally and internationally, the ballets they were dancing were products of non-Russian choreographers based on non-Russian themes, with non-Russian music. This led to the assumption on the part of many dance historians and critics of the time that “Russian ballet was really nothing more than an offshoot of French ballet, kept in a hothouse safe from the North winds…” (Lifar 1954, 11). Furthermore, Serge Lifar points out that while the dancers may be Russian, their training and choreography were not:

At first sight the historians seem to be right—it is enough, indeed, to mention the outstanding names in the history of Russian ballet: Lande, Le Pic, Chevalier-Bressolles, Auguste Poirot, Didelot, Blache, Mazilier, Perrot, Petipa, Saint-Leon. To these could be added the names of Wahlberg (at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries), Glouchkovski (beginning of the nineteenth), and Leon Ivanov (end of the nineteenth). Three Russian names, not one a genius, compared to ten French ones—and again, the three Russians were pupils of the French school (Lifar 1954, 11).

Certainly this observation makes it difficult to claim that during this time there was an independent, native Russian classical ballet. It takes the convergence of native Russian writers (particularly Pushkin), composers and choreographers to establish Russian ballet as a distinct and original genre.

Again, to illustrate the development of a uniquely Russian ballet, it is important to trace chronologically the creation of works based on Pushkin. Once the link between writer, composer and choreographer has been established, selected ballets will be examined in greater detail to determine what makes them specifically Russian and different from their Western choreographic counterparts.

Pushkin is not the only Russian writer of his era to have his works transformed into ballets. However, the number of Pushkin-related works created is significant and many enjoy continued success. This makes Pushkin a dominant influence in the development of a native Russian ballet.

Charles Didelot may have been the choreographer most closely associated with Pushkin in the 1820s, but he is not the first choreographer to develop a ballet based on one of Pushkin’s poems. Didelot could not read Russian, so it is not surprising that one of
Didelot’s native Russian students used Pushkin’s poetry first for inspiration. Since 1812 the Bolshoi Ballet was dominated by Adam and Tatyana Gluszkowski. Adam, a favorite of Didelot’s, was noted for his dancing, teaching and choreographing, while his wife, Tatyana was celebrated in poetry as an excellent dancer. In 1821 Adam Gluszkowski turned to national, rather than foreign literature for his choreographic subject matter. His first choice was Pushkin’s *Russlan and Ludmilla* (published in 1820) with music by Friedrich Scholtz (Roslavleva 1966, 53). It was very popular in Moscow and was presented three years later in St. Petersburg. Six years later (three years after the appearance of Didelot’s *Russlan and Ludmilla* and *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*), Gluszkowski choreographed Pushkin’s *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (Slonimsky 1947, 21). He produced a third Pushkin-based work in 1831 with music by Zhukovsky, *The Black Scarf*, which was inspired by Pushkin’s poem of the same name (Roslavleva 1966, 53).

Didelot’s versions of *Russlan and Ludmilla* and *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, produced in 1823, proved to be more popular than Gluszkowski’s, partly because Gluszkowski’s ballets were “choreographed in accordance with eighteenth-century recipes, and could not match Didelot’s poetical imagination” (Roslavleva 1966, 53). However, Gluszkowski’s contribution was important because his efforts mark a clear departure from basing ballets on themes by foreign writers. Gluszkowski was, in fact, a Russian choreographing a Russian ballet in the early 1820s. He and his works were overshadowed by the great French masters of the time, but remained as a stepping stone bridging the gap between non-Russian ballet and a native Russian ballet.

Didelot built on Gluszkowski’s works and created ballets that remained popular for many years after their appearance (Larvin 1948, 145). In fact *Russlan and Ludmilla* proved to be a watershed for Russian ballet for several reasons. First, the poetry itself manifests a purely Russian Romanticism, which reached its peak in the 1820s. As one Russian literary expert, Lauren Leighton, noted:

> Russian literature of the eighteenth century can at best be called merely derivative, not only because of the strictures of style and genre imposed by Neoclassical aesthetics, but also because the very process of becoming European in that century demanded cultural imitativeness. The new freedom promised by Romantic imagination and originality was all the more exhilarating to Russians, therefore, and by the 1820s they had
plunged headlong into new forms and styles, new themes, new notions flooding in from European Romantic Idealist philosophy and aesthetics, new attitudes and opinions (Leighton 1987, viii).

*Russlan and Ludmilla* amazed Pushkin’s contemporaries because of its originality. It was original because it strayed from the neoclassical model and dealt with a Russian folk tale instead of a foreign hero or event. It incorporated many of the ideas of Romanticism including the supernatural, nature, local color, and pursuit of a virtuous (although, in this case, attainable) woman. Most importantly for Russian literature and emerging Russian Romantics it:

…even dared to express a bold dream - - the possibility that they might actually create what they still did not possess but desperately wanted, a modern *national* literature as great as the literatures of other European nations. The Romantic Idealist concept that most attracted the Russian Romantics was national or native originality (*autochthony*); the word coined to express that dream, *narodnost*, became almost synonymous with the new word *romantizm* (Leighton 1987, ix).

Through *Russlan and Ludmilla*, Pushkin broke new ground for Russian literature and enabled Didelot and Gluszkowski to do the same for Russian ballet.

*Russlan and Ludmilla* also democratized poetry thus providing a link between literature and the Russian people (Larvin 1948, 86). It was democratized because Pushkin not only wrote in Russian as opposed to French, but also included Russian peasant speech in the work. Even Russians who could not read were able to enjoy Pushkin’s work when read aloud in their native tongue. *Russlan and Ludmilla* brought a native poetry to the Russian masses.

Didelot’s ballets were extremely successful at developing Russian Romanticism as well, and initiated the process towards creating a native and unique Russian ballet. In *Russlan and Ludmilla* he was able to send chivalric knights, both good and evil, to rescue the maiden, Ludmila. However, these knights were not from France or England, but from the Russian city of Kiev. They did not storm an ivy covered castle in Western Europe, but an ice-laden one in the arctic.

However, what inspired Didelot to choreograph *Russlan and Ludmilla* was not only its marketability, but the very adaptability of Pushkin’s writings to music and
subsequently, choreography. As D. S. Mirsky, while writing of *Russlan and Ludmilla*, noted:

> What is really most conspicuous in the poem is that bracing cold of eighteenth century frivolous sensuality which refuses to take life solemnly and uses everything to build up a romantic (if you like) but fantastic, unreal ballet-like decoration. The poetry of *Russlan and Ludmila* is closely akin to the poetry of classical ballet, and it is not irrelevant to compare it to the splendid ballets of Didelot, which were then the most popular show in Petersburg and of which Pushkin wrote later with such enthusiasm (Abraham 1985, 21).

With these observations it becomes clear that the link between Pushkin, composer and choreographer was indeed strong and identifiable. At this juncture only two of the three collaborating artists are Russian, but Didelot lays the groundwork for Russian choreographers to use Pushkin for inspiration and succeed.

During the year 1823 Didelot also choreographed *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*. *Russlan and Ludmilla* and *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* contrast sharply. *Russlan and Ludmilla* is Pushkin’s beautiful re-telling of a Russian fairy tale. It is a fanciful story about magical transformations and monsters and allowed the choreographer to employ some of the basic traditions and conceits found in most romantic ballets of the time. *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* is altogether a different tale. Instead of relying on a Russian fairy tale, Pushkin created a story modeled on those of Lord Byron. Pushkin drew on his experiences in the East during his exile and used his observations to incorporate local color into his story.

The story, in brief, concerns a Russian poet and loner\(^\text{13}\) who is captured by the Circassians and taken to their encampment. A Circassian girl nurses him back to health and declares her love for him, which he cannot reciprocate. She helps him escape, but when she falls into a freezing river, he makes no attempt to save her. This storyline, unusual for a ballet, began to separate Russian ballet from its Western counterparts, which were still presenting ballets based on classical themes (Romantic ballet did not appear until 1832 with the premiere of *La Sylphide*). For example, the Paris Opera’s repertoire at the same time consisted of *Telemaque*, *Psyche* and *Le Jugement de Paris*. These ballets dealt with tales from antiquity and were not entirely new to the repertoire because, although all three ballets were choreographed by Gardel, they were in fact based
on previous works by Dauberval and Noverre. Didelot, instead, was creating ballets based on Russian themes and tales while, most importantly, using new Russian literature. In other words, Didelot’s inspiration for a new type of ballet came from new Russian literature:

> Taken from the poem by Russia’s national poet Alexander Pushkin, the inspired imagery of *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* literally gave wings to the ageing master. Didelot could not read Russian, but he was very closely connected with Petersburg literary circles, with writers and artists of his day. Practically any representative of the Russian intelligentsia spoke French. And, Didelot confirmed the source from which he got the suggestion to borrow poetical subjects from Pushkin, by saying in the Preface of the published programme that he used Pushkin’s poem for his new ballet because ‘all men of letters praise this excellent creation of Russian poesy.’ It is important to note that the ballet…was created only four and a half months after the poem’s first publication, so ‘the men of letters’ were probably people very close to Pushkin and well acquainted with the poem before its actual publication (Roslavleva 1966, 49).

It seems clear that Didelot was looking for new sources of inspiration and was influenced by the opinions of Russian critics. His choice of Pushkin was a compliment to the writer because, while Didelot was a recognized artist with a long history of success, Pushkin was a young man still building his reputation. Didelot’s decision to create a second Pushkin-based ballet, *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, further strengthened the basis for Russian ballet. Didelot and Pushkin were simultaneously taking Russian literature and Russian ballet to new heights.

Pushkin completed the poem in 1821; it went on sale in 1822; and Didelot’s ballet (with music by Catarino Cavos) emerged in 1823. Didelot noted in the ballet’s program that:

> All litterateurs praise this outstanding production of Russian poetry. I asked for a short extract of it to be translated, and found the content very interesting. Of course it would have been far better if I could have read through the original in order to feel the meter and the richness of ideas in it, but unfortunately, not being able to read Russian, I had to be satisfied by a translated extract (Swift 1974, 170).

Didelot’s comments illustrated that Pushkin’s writings were very fashionable and creating a new ballet on a current best seller was perhaps a very clever marketing ploy on Didelot’s part.
Pushkin reciprocated Didelot’s admiration. He noted that Didelot’s ballets had “more poetry than all French literature” (Degen 1992, 41). More importantly, Pushkin immortalized Didelot in his novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*. This mutual admiration will be discussed at greater length upon the investigation of *Eugene Onegin*.

Pushkin was able to comment on Didelot’s talents because, prior to his exile, he was an avid fan of the ballet. When Didelot returned to Russia in 1816 his arrival was hailed as “the renaissance of ballet” (Swift 1974, 138). However, it was not all smooth sailing, and Didelot found many issues with which to contend. One issue involved the “left-flank” of the Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. This left-flank consisted of young military officers, state servants and literary figures, including Pushkin. They sat in the first rows of the left side of the theatre and used codes to call for outrageous applauding and exclamations for whomever was the chosen ballerina for the evening (Swift 1974, 38). Pushkin was often a participant in this group and recounted his activities in his *Eugene Onegin*. The left-flank seemed to appreciate Didelot’s talents, but was more appreciative of the ballerina’s qualities. Although this demonstrated how socially important attending the ballet was, it also disrupted the performance and was an irksome problem for Didelot.

Didelot’s influence on Pushkin was considerable. Pushkin, prior to his exile, attended every ballet produced in St. Petersburg. Shortly after viewing Didelot’s *Theseus and Ariadne*, Pushkin started work on his 1818 poem, *Festival of Bacchus*. The final scene of *Theseus and Ariadne* included a festival dedicated to Bacchus and possibly served as inspiration for this work (Swift 1974, 146).

It is unfortunate that the collaboration between Didelot and Pushkin was short-lived. The defeat of the Decembrists’ uprising in 1825, which Pushkin quietly supported, derailed the Russian ballet from this line of development because Pushkin was exiled and his works censored. Pushkin was exiled at the time of the premiere of *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, but he was aware of its production and eagerly anticipated word on its reception. It was difficult for Pushkin not to be able to see the ballet and begged from Bessarabia that his brother “Write me about Didelot, about the Circassian girl Istomina, whom I once courted, like the Prisoner of the Caucasus” (Swift 1974, 171).
Had he been able to attend the ballet he might, however, not have been as complimentary of Didelot and his talents. Didelot significantly changed the story-line. First, he placed it in “ancient times”, around the ninth-century, instead of during the nineteenth-century. Secondly, he created a happy ending with the “Shade of the Prisoner’s dying bride blessing his marriage with the Circassian girl” (Roslavleva 1966, 50). One aspect of the production of which Pushkin would have approved, however, was the fact that his favorite ballerina, Avdotia Istomina (1799-1848), was given the role of the Circassian Girl. This role established her as a leading artist and secured her career. Pushkin immortalized her in *Eugene Onegin* and the names of Pushkin, Didelot and Istomina became permanently linked through this work. This interest, appreciation and understanding definitively tied Pushkin to Russian ballet.

With Pushkin in exile and his works censored, the collaboration between Pushkin and Didelot ended. What had started as a promising era for the development of Russian ballet became one of stifled creativity. After Alexander I’s death and the Decembrist uprising, Nicholas I imposed greater censorship and was less tolerant of new ideas. In general, Russian ballet, having lost its newfound inspiration, again featured works based on foreign themes or fairy tales (Roslavleva 1966, 55).

Didelot, and most of the creative talents in Russia, found the year 1826 difficult. Russian soldiers who had pursued Napoleon’s troops westward had made discoveries about different governments and lifestyles and questioned the autocracy of the tsar. The failed Decembrists coup in 1825 contributed to a general malaise. Furthermore, theatres were closed for nine months after the death of Alexander I to allow for a proper mourning.

The Decembrist Revolt had far reaching effects on every aspect of Russian life, including the arts. On the day of the Revolt, Governor-general Miloradovich, a fan of the ballet and an important figure on the imperial theatrical committees, was mortally wounded by rebels. He was replaced by Prince Sergei Sergeevich Gagarin, who was not a fan of Didelot.

For two years Didelot produced very little and was continually at odds with his superiors. By 1827 Didelot faced another problem. During his tenure Didelot had trained numerous excellent Russian dancers in addition to the famed Istomina and had managed
to ensure that they received the roles they deserved. In 1827 the directorate imported a new Parisian ballerina, Adele Bertrand-Astruc, and her partner, Alexis. Didelot was told to give her the main parts in his ballets. Since she was only a lower soloist in Paris, he was forced to produce ballets in the Parisian style because she could not dance the more physically and technically demanding Russian ones (Swift 1974, 181).

Didelot was a champion of Russian dancers and found the imperial court’s attitude toward native Russian dancers troubling. It was ironic that a culture clinging so hard to its autocratic and Russian Orthodox past, was simultaneously importing talents from the West while ignoring the development of its own native artists. Yuri Slonimsky pointed out that:

…as soon as Didelot became accepted as one of their own by the progressive artistic intelligentsia, as soon as he identified himself in spirit and in essence with Russian culture—and he really did—he became undesirable for the Court circles that engaged him. The more Didelot tried to be useful to Russian art, the less chance he was given to carry out his intentions (Roslavleva 1966, 51).

In other words, it appeared that as Didelot became associated with the intelligentsia, he became a threat to the government. This illustrated Didelot’s terrific power and influence, and the potential propagandist power of ballet.

Shortly after the Decembrist Revolt, the new emperor, Nicholas I, created a new institution, the Ministry of Court, which managed everything connected to court life, including the imperial theatres. Nicholas also established the secret police apparatus called the Third Section in 1828. By July of 1828 even the ballet had come under its jurisdiction and had to present its programs for approval before they could be presented to the public. This greatly stifled Didelot’s creativity.

A power struggle ensued between Didelot and Gagarin resulting in Gagarin arresting Didelot for insubordination in 1829. Didelot was officially dismissed on January 29, 1830. However, he was allowed to have his benefit concerts as previously contracted. Didelot had been considerably more popular with his audiences than with imperial officials, who wanted the scandal of Didelot’s dismissal to die down. Therefore, officials delayed the benefit until 1833, hoping that the old ballet master would be forgotten. That was not the case, however, and Didelot was received in triumph.
In 1834 Didelot received a written testament officially acknowledging his accomplishments. As one chronicler remarked “the power-loving Prince Gagarin was very happy to be delivered from the insubordinate subject, but the public lost in Didelot a ballet master, the likes of which existed neither before nor after him” (Swift 1974, 185). Sarcastic reviews appeared about post-Didelot ballets while his ballets continued to be produced with great success, most notably *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*.

Didelot, with his emphasis on Russian dancers and Russian themes, began the “Russification” of imperial ballet. He brought mime, strong technique, and dramatic effect to the art in Russia. Perhaps most importantly, he strengthened the position of the male dancer at a time when it was declining in Western Europe. With the premiere of the Romantic ballet, *La Sylphide*, in 1832 at the Paris Opera, male dancers in Western Europe began to lose prominence. They became “porters” and secondary to the ballerina, while they remained the protagonist in Didelot’s new works.

During Pushkin’s lifetime a unique, native Russian ballet was created, but its development was thwarted, at least temporarily, after his demise and that of Didelot. Through the productions of *Russlan and Ludmilla* and *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* some aspects of the five factors identified as uniquely Russian ballet characteristics appear. These include: 1) main character gender (male as opposed to female) and nationality (Russian as opposed to Western European); 2) the Russian location of the story; 3) Russian musical composition; 4) Russian nationalistic attitudes reflected in the work; and 5) special dance techniques and choreography that illustrate unique aspects of Russian dance.

In the case of both *Russlan* and *The Prisoner* the first criteria (character gender and nationality) was met in a uniquely Russian fashion. These ballets offered lead roles for both men and women, as well as supporting roles for both genders. The titles alone illustrated the importance of the male dancer. The knight, Russlan, must fight other knights and save his love from an evil sorcerer. The Prisoner is a Russian army officer captured by Circassian men. In both cases, there are ample important roles for male dancers. Furthermore, the protagonists are Russian; Russlan is a prince of Kiev, while the Prisoner is identified as Russian. *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* continued to be
produced and performed in Russia while the advent of the Romantic ballet in Western Europe virtually eliminated important roles for male dancers.\textsuperscript{17}

The location was, again, unique. Most Russian ballets prior to \textit{Ruslan} and \textit{The Prisoner} concerned ancient Greek, Roman or Biblical stories; the activity was certainly not based in Russia.\textsuperscript{18} An exception occurred during the Napoleonic wars, when ballets were created to glorify Russia’s defeat of Napoleon’s army, but they were soon removed from the repertoire. However, \textit{Ruslan} and \textit{The Prisoner}, both based in Russian locations, remained in the repertoire for decades.

With the third criteria, musical composition, the case was different. Both scores were composed by non-Russians and did not specifically incorporate Russian folk songs or a tone different from that of musical works in Western Europe.

Nationalistic attitudes were reflected differently in both pieces. With \textit{Ruslan and Ludmilla} (1820) we saw a proud, courageous prince of Kiev who heroically struggled against great obstacles and betrayal to save his love and the fate of his kingdom. Written only a year later, the tone of \textit{The Prisoner of the Caucasus} differed greatly. \textit{Ruslan and Ludmilla} was Pushkin’s first work of note and presented a youthful optimism in his retelling of the fairy-tale. Instead, \textit{The Prisoner} reflected disenchantment with the heroic and fantastic and more concern with human nature. This was perhaps not surprising since Pushkin was exiled to the South shortly after the publication of \textit{Ruslan}. No longer was he the care-free gentleman attending ballets and operas but, in effect, a political prisoner.\textsuperscript{19} Many historians attributed his change in locale and simultaneous close reading of Lord Byron for this shift in style and emphasis. Pushkin definitely incorporated characteristics of his new surroundings in \textit{The Prisoner} and most likely fell under the spell of Byron’s \textit{Childe Harold}, another man saying a sad farewell to his native land (Feinstein 1998, 56). Regardless, \textit{Ruslan} and \textit{The Prisoner} could not be more different. Ruslan, the noble knight and courageous hero, was replaced by an army deserter and self-centered man. Both works reflected the nationalistic attitudes of their time. \textit{Ruslan and Ludmilla} mirrored the more optimistic ideals of post-Napoleonic Europe while \textit{The Prisoner of the Caucasus} illustrated the country’s pessimism under an increasingly insecure and reactionary tsar, Nicholas I. It has been suggested that one possible explanation for Didelot’s significant changes to \textit{The Prisoner} was to protect Pushkin. By
placing the story in ancient times and providing a name for the officer-prisoner (Rostislav) this transference “removed the possibility that the viewers, many of whom were intellectuals disenchanted with their government, might identify the personality of the officer-prisoner with that of the poet himself” (Swift 1974, 170).

Finally, Didelot created a technique and style that was different from that found in Europe. It incorporated mime and built upon the Russian expressive use of arms. Didelot was known as an exacting and demanding task-master and was feared by both the dancers and the management. Nonetheless, his methods produced superb native Russian dancers. It was no longer necessary to import foreign dancers for the leading roles.

Therefore, during the Pushkin-Didelot era, four out of five characteristics that define Russian ballet today were developed. As Serge Lifar noted:

By about 1830 Russian ballet had been founded, thanks chiefly to Didelot. From then onwards, one would have thought, he had only to follow his own path. But alas, the ungrateful management of the Imperial Theatres had no other aim but to get rid of Didelot at the earliest opportunity (Lifar 1954, 67).

Didelot, with his own talents and inspired by Pushkin, served as a catalyst for the creation of a Russian ballet that eventually rivaled those found in Western Europe. Didelot’s works, for the most part, would disappear from stage as they were originally presented. However, Pushkin’s works, which had the advantage of being written, would persevere and continue to inspire future artists until a distinctive, highly-acclaimed Russian ballet was established.

The Decembrists Revolt kept two remarkably talented men separated both by distance and the ability to produce their creations without fear of repercussions. The eras of Pushkin and Didelot were intricately connected not only by their interest in creating Russian art, but by their productive time periods. Didelot was summoned to Russia the year Pushkin was born. Both men found their creativity stifled between the years 1826 and 1837 by historical events that resulted in increased censorship. Finally, both men died the same year, 1837. Almost one-hundred years would pass before what Pushkin and Didelot started would be achieved; the creation of a native and unique Russian ballet.

Despite the loss of Pushkin and Didelot, the next one hundred years were not unproductive for the development of Russian ballet. Its development, while redirected,
did not suffer the same decline it experienced in Western Europe. The works of Pushkin were sidelined temporarily, only to reappear when needed to consolidate the position of ballet in Russia.

Other artists served as stepping stones to bridge this one-hundred year gap. Also, the tables began to turn: instead of importing foreign ballets to Russian audiences, Russia became an exporter of ballet. Each artist contributed, albeit some more than others, to the emergence of a strong, identifiable Russian ballet.

Didelot retired in 1831, followed closely by Auguste, and was replaced by a retired French artillery officer, Alexis Blache. He was a poor teacher and choreographer, whose only claim to fame was that he was the son of choreographer Jean Blache,20 the creator of Mars and Venus in 1826 at the Paris Opera. He produced uncelebrated ballets with foreign subjects and music.21 When he was dismissed in 1838, his ballets disappeared from the repertoire.

Antoine Titus was engaged as deputy ballet master at the same time. From Berlin, and more talented than Blache, he presented his first ballets in 1832. These ballets included The Swiss Milkmaid, which was not enthusiastically received by audiences or critics, and Kia-King, which enjoyed tremendous success as did the 1833 production of Caesar in Egypt. However, ballets based on Russian themes with Russian music were absent. Even Russian dancers were overlooked in favor of foreign dancers. The French dancers Bertrand-Astruc and Alexis were given lead parts, as were other French women, including Mademoiselle Croisette and Laure Peyssard. Russian dancers were superior to the foreign imports, but the Imperial Theatre management continued to bring in second-rate artists from abroad to dance the lead roles because of old prejudices. Basically, after “Didelot and Auguste had left, ballet went pitifully down and gradually lost its Russian individuality” (Lifar 1954, 72).

Between Pushkin and Didelot the foundation had been laid for the development of the Romantic ballet in Russia. Pushkin’s poetry and Didelot’s ballets already exhibited many of the aspects of Romanticism. Their works concerned human characters, the supernatural, local color, and (in Didelot’s case) pointe technique, which was so important to Romantic ballet (Roslavleva 1966, 56). However, it was not until 1837 that Romantic ballet, as celebrated in Western Europe, arrived in Russia. Marie Taglioni, in
the twilight of her fame in Western Europe, came to St. Petersburg in 1837 and made her debut there in *La Sylphide*. She caused quite a stir and helped rejuvenate interest in the ballet, which had declined after Didelot’s departure. For the most part she only appeared in her father’s ballets and did not help develop the Russian repertoire. In fact, when she left Russia, most of her father’s ballets disappeared from the Russian repertoire. She left Russia in 1842, but her technical and artistic legacy continued with some Russian students, notably Tatiana Smirnova, who benefited from her example. Taglioni was referred to as “Mary, full of grace” and particularly influenced Smirnova. She incorporated Taglioni’s modest, virginal and light style into her own (Lifar 1954, 80-81).

Another Russian dancer, Yelena Andreyanova (1819-1857), was inspired by Taglioni and emulated her style. Taglioni identified Andreyanova and Smirnova as Russia’s leading Romantic dancers, which indeed they became (Roslavleva 1966, 60).

At approximately the same time, Glinka was making huge strides for Russian arts. Again, Glinka’s contribution and collaboration with Pushkin was important. Glinka’s opera *Russlan and Ludmilla* (1842), based on Pushkin’s poem, inspired others to create operas and ballets based on Russian themes, not imported Western European tales.

Similarly, Glinka was considered a pioneer in the development of Russian ballet music:

> The development of the ballet in Russia has been closely linked with the development of music. Music has indeed been the air of the ballet. And ever since Glinka’s brilliant operas brought the magic of Naina’s dance (*Russlan and Ludmila*) and the enchanting rhythm of the Polish dances (*Ivan Susanin*) to the stage, there has existed a firm bond between Russia’s composers and the ballet theatre which secured lasting fame for Russian ballet art (Slonimsky 1947, 19).

Glinka was the Russian composer who began to connect the dots between Pushkin’s writings, Russian music and the emergence of Russian ballet. As in music, Glinka’s contributions were too great to be overlooked in dance. He was credited with establishing Russian Romantic ballet with distinct features of its own. Most ballet composers of the time were not considered great artists, but merely adequate composers for the task. Glinka on the other hand “was considerably in advance of the ballet of his time, and the symphonic music of his opera *ballets d’action* was not to be adequately choreographed for years to come” (Roslavleva 1966, 57).
Many acclaimed composers of the era found composing music for the ballet beneath them but Glinka, who was a fan of the ballet, did not share this sentiment. Glinka studied ballet technique as a youth and regularly attended performances. He was impressed by Marie Taglioni and Romantic ballet and probably based his flying maidens’ scene in *Russlan and Ludmilla* on what he witnessed during Taglioni’s visit in St. Petersburg.

Titus was incapable of choreographing to the level of Glinka’s music and Glinka remained unrecognized for his romantic ballet genius during his lifetime. Even the younger Tchaikovsky failed to recognize the importance of Glinka’s works. Finally, a Russian composer who understood ballet, Romantic conventions and Russian dance potential was in place, but the necessary understanding of his peers to strengthen Russian ballet and its place in dance history were absent:

Yet it was Glinka who created a very important bridge leading to the future flowering of the symphonic dance. Had his really remarkable dance suites then been understood and properly choreographed, they might have become the crowning achievement of Romantic Ballet. Musically they did attain a height of perfection undreamed of by composers of the Romantic Ballet (Roslavleva 1966, 57).

After a rough transition, Russian ballet benefited from some extraordinary foreign artists. Two Frenchmen arrived on the scene who greatly shaped the future of ballet in Russia; Jules Perrot (the creator of *Giselle* and *Pas de Quatre*) arrived in 1848 just shortly after the arrival in 1847 of the younger Marius Petipa (1818-1910). Perrot, while in Western Europe, had partnered some of the leading ballerinas of the era including Fanny Elssler and Carlotta Grisi. These three talents, Perrot, Elssler and Grisi, all arrived in Russia around the same time (1847-1850) but, for a while at least, Perrot was overshadowed by the popularity of Elssler and Grisi. As a result, Perrot turned to choreography and soon appreciated the talents of the dancers in Russia as he began to stage his ballets (Roslavleva 1966, 65).

Petipa’s legacy shaped the development of Russian ballet for almost fifty years. While in France he studied under his father, Jean Petipa, and Auguste Vestris and also received a musical education. He frequently partnered Elssler and Grisi and was known as an excellent partner, as well as a fine character dancer and mime.

93
In 1847 his father took a teaching post in St. Petersburg and Marius Petipa became a much acclaimed dancer in Russia. He soon became Perrot’s assistant and later, in 1862, ballet master under Saint-Leon. It is important to note that Petipa spent his first twenty years in Russia as a dancer, not a choreographer. This allowed him to observe Perrot and Saint-Leon and build on their foundation (Lee 2002, 206).

Perrot, who was eight years older than Petipa, was appointed ballet master for the Maryinsky Ballet soon after his arrival in 1849. He was considered a fine dancer, but was more acclaimed for his choreography. He produced at least two new ballets per year and began to reintroduce realism to ballets, which had been missing since Didelot’s tenure. Critics noted that:

One Russian commentator considered him to be a painter of living pictures that were full of naturalness and yet remained true to the choreographer’s intent…Not since Didelot had Russian audiences witnessed such animated ballets where vitality of thought, passion, mime and dancing invested human beings with images of the choreographer’s fantasy (Lee 2002, 203-204).

Perrot’s ballets were known for their dramatic quality and “Each movement spoke to mind and heart; every moment expressed some feeling; every look was in keeping with the action” (Lee 2002, 203).

Elssler was acclaimed for her performances in Perrot’s Esmeralda and other ballets including The Fairie’s Goddaughter. Carlotta Grisi arrived approximately three years after Elssler and first appeared on the Russian stage in 1850 in Perrot’s ballet Giselle. Perrot briefly left Russia in 1851 and was replaced by another Frenchman, Joseph Mazilier (1801-1868). Mazilier was not popular with the administration or public and was replaced within the year by his predecessor, Perrot, who returned to Russia. Grisi left Russia after her 1852-3 season and was replaced by three foreign dancers; Fleury, Guiraud and Iella. These dancers were no match for Russian stars and soon left. In fact, Russian dancers, who had been held back by Blache and Titus, were beginning to be noticed. They had proven to be attentive students of Grisi, Elssler and Petipa. Perrot had brought Russian ballet close to the standards and attention garnered by Didelot. Almost simultaneously a composer of note, Cesar Pugni, arrived on the scene and created music to Petipa’s dictates. Despite the turmoil, the years of 1845-1855 were productive for
Russian ballet, although its future seemed unsure. Elssler and Grisi inspired the students and capable musicians created scores, but it took the genius of Marius Petipa to make Russia the dominant force in the world of ballet.

Nicholas I’s rule came to an end in 1855 and Perrot was caught in the throes of change. The Crimean War began in 1854 and the public appeared to be more concerned with social questions than burning arts issues. Although Perrot was still at his post in 1855, his era had ended. Perrot restaged and revised many of his earlier, successful ballets to help his flagging career, but to no avail. Perrot left for Paris in 1860. Fortunately for the training of Russian dancers, Carlo Blasis (1797-1878) was engaged to teach in both Moscow and St. Petersburg beginning in 1856. From Milan, Blasis was noted for his outstanding teaching and indeed was considered one of the finest instructors of his era (Lifar 1954, 101-107).

In 1859 Petipa was named ballet master for the Imperial Theatres. This is the same year that Saint-Leon was also hired by the management. Saint-Leon eventually delayed many of Petipa’s plans, but was also a prominent figure in ballet at the same time. Saint-Leon was no great talent or gentlemanly figure. He was prepared to accept any compromise that would improve his position. His ballets showed three basic fundamental characteristics: 1) they suited public and management tastes; 2) they had new effects; and 3) they enhanced and mirrored the principal dancer’s talents.

Saint-Leon did choreograph a ballet based on a Russian story. He produced The Little Hump-Backed Horse in 1864 based on the tale by Yershov. The choreographer could not read Russian and relied on translations. Next, he placed this Russian tale in non-Russian settings and used music by Pugni, who was unfamiliar with Russian tunes and incorporated part of Rossini’s Tancredi into the ballet’s music. It was a critical failure, but widely praised by the dancers and public. Russian critics noted that the central figure was Ivanushka, not the Tsar-Maiden. Saint-Leon was unable to see a ballet driven by any other character than the leading ballerina. This was unfortunate, because Russian ballet, particularly in Moscow had every reason to be proud of its male dancers. This was particularly impressive, because the standards of male ballet dancing were at an all time low in most of Western Europe.
That same year, Saint-Leon failed to learn from his mistakes and produced *The Goldfish* based on Pushkin’s poetic fairy-tale by the same name. He changed the ages of the protagonists and so re-arranged the story that it was unrecognizable. He included fantastic theatrical effects, such as machine driven flying carpets and castles that rose from the stage floor, but the ballet was a dismal failure both critically and with the public. Saint-Leon’s contract was not renewed in 1869 and he returned to Paris where he created his masterpiece, *Coppelia*, and died in 1870 (Roslavleva 1966, 68-75).

Other ballets were created on Russian themes from 1869 until 1876, but they failed to enchant the critics, public or withstand the test of time. However, in 1875 Tchaikovsky began work on *Swan Lake*; a ballet that eventually would become considered a masterpiece, perhaps even the hallmark of classical ballet. Briefly, the story concerns a melancholy prince, Siegfried, who must select a wife by his twenty-first birthday. In act one he attends an outside feast with his court and friends, but when the men begin to hunt, he asks to be left alone. As act two begins, the prince is poised to shoot a swan, when she reveals herself as a maiden (Odette). She explains that she has been transformed by an evil sorcerer’s (von Rothbart) curse and only appears in human form at night. To escape her fate a prince must declare his love for her and intent to marry. Siegfried makes this declaration and they dance together, while other swan-maidens dance as well. When dawn approaches, von Rothbart appears and compels Odette to leave the forest-lake and Siegfried. Act three returns the action to court and a ball for Siegfried’s twenty-first birthday. Princesses from foreign lands dance for him, but he is not interested. Suddenly a black swan appears (Odile) and Siegfried, believing the swan to be Odette, dances with her and declares his love and commitment. Too late he realizes that von Rothbart has fooled him with Odile. His betrayal condemns Odette to death. In act four, Siegfried returns to the forest-lake to ask forgiveness. The swan-maidens again dance under the moonlight.

Over the years of its existence different endings of the ballet have been created. The most traditional is that Odette drowns herself leaving behind a broken-hearted Siegfried. Other versions have the couple drown together, while others (particularly in the case of Soviet Union productions) have a happy ending where the couple overpowers von Rothbart and survives.
Disagreement exists over the origin of the tale; some claim that it comes from German folk-tales compiled by Johann Musaus and widely read by educated Russians, while others assert that the basis of the tale lies in Russia’s own folk-lore (Roslavleva 1966, 82). Furthermore, there is considerable ground for arguing that Pushkin may even have been the inspiration. In his Tale of the Tsar Saltan Pushin relates the story of a white swan that is saved by the prince (tsarevitch) from a wicked hawk. The swan, who is able to speak to the Prince, later reveals herself as the princess of his desire. In this passage the Prince asks the swan if she knows of a beautiful princess:

“Whom then would you fain have courted,  
May I ask?” “It is reported  
That a princess lives far off  
No one can adore enough,  
Who of day the gleam outbrightens  
And of night the gloom enlightens;  
In her hair the moon is borne,  
On her brow the star of morn,  
Forth she steps in splendor vested  
Like a peacock fanned and crested,  
And her speeches sweet, it seems,  
Murmur like the purl of streams.  
Is this truth,” he asks, “or error?” (Arndt 1984, 392)

Although the swan replies that this princess does exist, she cautions that he needs to be careful about the wife he picks:

“Yes, there is such a maiden,  
Wiving, though, is not like trading,  
Wives are not, like mitts of pelt,  
Plucked and tucked behind your belt.  
Here is some advice to ponder-  
Think about this as you wander  
Homeward, ponder long and hard,  
Not to rue it afterward.” (Arndt 1984, 392)

The prince assures the swan that he plans to marry the princess. Hearing this she replies:

Spoke the swan-bird, deeply sighing  
“Wherefore fare so far a-trying?  
Know then, Prince, your fate is nigh,  
For the princess fare-am I.” (Arndt 1984, 392)
Pushkin provides a rich and fanciful description of her transformation from swan to princess. The prince keeps his word, and the couple is married with the blessing of his parents.

This happy ending is dramatically different from the traditional tragic ending of Swan Lake, which may provide one reason that the tale is not readily identified as Pushkin’s, but more likely a German fairy tale. Regardless, the white swan can be identified, also, as a Russian invention. However, the character names are Germanic, not Russian, and the story traditionally takes place in Germany.

Tchaikovsky worked closely with the choreographer, Wenzel Reisinger\(^29\) (1827-1892), and composed Swan Lake very quickly, possibly basing the main theme on an earlier musical children’s work (c.1867) entitled The Lake of Swans. Rehearsals began in 1876 and, due largely to Tchaikovsky’s immense popularity in Moscow, the opening night performance (February 20, 1877) was sold out well in advance.

Swan Lake was not an immediate success. Tchaikovsky’s music set new standards for symphonic compositions that were unfamiliar and some audience members were disappointed. However, the real disappointment was the choreography by Reisinger. Both the score and choreography were modified by other artists in an attempt to make it more palatable, but it would be several years later that the masterpiece known to modern-day ballet enthusiasts emerged.

Reisinger, who is virtually unknown as a choreographer, fell into obscurity as Petipa’s choreographic meteor began to rise. Petipa is best known for the works he created toward the end of his life, particularly those works with music by Tchaikovsky. Although Petipa began choreographing for Russian audiences as early as 1871, he met with limited success initially, but was ultimately regarded as a master choreographer. The first Tchaikovsky/Petipa collaboration occurred when Ivan Vsevolojsky (1835-1909), the director of the Imperial Theatres since 1881, asked Tchaikovsky to compose The Sleeping Beauty based on Perrault’s tale. Petipa, who had already choreographed two successful ballets (Pharoah’s Daughter (1862) and La Bayadere (1877))\(^30\) was engaged as the choreographer and provided Tchaikovsky with a detailed outline of the requirements of the ballet.\(^31\) Tchaikovsky followed Petipa’s instructions dutifully, but with artistic inspiration. His music was a challenge for Petipa and established both a new
form of musical-choreographic synthesis and a new form of Russian music (Roslavleva 1966, 75-83, 116).

Set in the French court, the story is the familiar one about a princess (Aurora) who is fated by an evil fairy (who has been slighted) to prick her finger on a spinning needle and die. The Lilac Fairy, who delayed giving her christening gift, modifies the curse so that the princess does not die, but will sleep until a prince awakens her with a kiss. For sixteen years, no spinning needles could be found in the kingdom. During Aurora’s sixteenth birthday festivities, an old woman appears concealing a spinning needle in a bunch of flowers. Aurora takes the flowers she offers, pricks her finger, and falls into a deep sleep. The woman is revealed as the evil fairy, while the Lilac Fairy puts the court to sleep alongside the sleeping princess. These scenes take place during the prologue and act one. In act two, the Lilac Fairy shows the prince a vision of the beautiful princess. Aurora appears magically (along with other female dancers) and he dances with her and falls in love. The Lilac Fairy leads him to Aurora, whereupon he awakens her with a kiss (also awakening the entire court), declares his love and hasty preparations are made for the wedding. The wedding takes place in act three with characters from Perrault’s other fairy tales in attendance. These fairy tale characters provided the rationale for the divertissements in the act, and the wedding pas de deux became one of Petipa’s signature grand pas de deux.32

Although The Sleeping Beauty was unique and clearly first conceived in Russia, it cannot be heralded as a “Russian” ballet. With the exception of the composer, very little about this production was Russian. The story was based on a French fairy tale, the choreographer was French (Petipa); Princess Aurora was Italian (Carlotta Brianza) and Enrico Cecchetti (another Italian) played both the roles of Carabosse (the evil fairy) and the Blue Bird. A Russian, Paul Gerdt (1844-1917), did perform Prince Desire, but the Lilac Fairy was played by Marie Petipa, Marius Petipa’s French daughter (Au 1988, 68).

However, Petipa did incorporate one uniquely Russian aspect into his composition of The Sleeping Beauty. In act two, during the Vision Scene when Prince Desire first glimpsed Princess Aurora, Petipa arranged and moved the corps de ballet into and out of intricate floor patterns using classical ballet movement and a complicated path on the ground as a means to shape the corps de ballet’s tableaux. This movement pattern
was copied from the ancient Russian form of round-dance called *khorovod*. *Khorovod* dances involve “big ensembles with very complex patterns of movement and unexpected transitions from one type of movement into another, forming new and beautiful compositions every time” (Demidov 1977, 3). In act two of *The Sleeping Beauty*, Petipa made good use of this tradition as he concealed and revealed Princess Aurora to Prince Siegfried. He used the *corps de ballet* as a screen separating the two until it was clear that the prince had fallen in love with the princess and would be able to break the evil fairy’s curse.

Using the *corps de ballet* to make interesting tableaux was not a new ballet convention. However, in the Romantic ballets *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*, the *corps de ballet* was used differently than in *The Sleeping Beauty*. In the Romantic ballets, the *corps de ballet* created linear patterns; straight lines downstage and upstage, as well as diagonals and star shapes. Also, each dancer generally executed the same steps simultaneously. The *corps de ballet* patterns in *The Sleeping Beauty*, although sometimes linear, were also circular, with different groups of the *corps de ballet* executing different steps or creating different montages on occasion. Furthermore, particularly in the case of *Giselle*, the *corps de ballet* was used less as a “screen” separating the lovers than as a tool enforcing the lovers’ fates. Giselle was not hidden from Albrecht, but actively engaged in saving his life by protecting him from the revenge of the wilis (*corps de ballet*). The Sylphide in *La Sylphide* interacted with her sister sylphs, effectively playing hide-and-seek with James, but she was not “screened” from him. In act two of *The Sleeping Beauty*, Petipa used complicated patterns and sequences of steps to keep Prince Desire from contact with Princess Aurora. He employed circles, asymmetrical tableaux and shifted crisscrossing double diagonals to create a special effect. Petipa built upon the *corps de ballet* conventions of the past, but incorporated the Russian *khorovod* patterns for a new effect.

Now regarded as a masterpiece and a necessary part of most ballet companies’ repertoires, *The Sleeping Beauty* was not an immediate success. Petipa was accused of only presenting foreign fairy tales; it was not until much later that the characteristics now associated with Russian ballet, including the *khorovod*, became clearly evident (Doeser
Furthermore, he disconcerted the audience, which was more used to the Italian style of ballet, than Petipa’s new one. Russian balletomanes complained:

…that in his production people danced with their arms. But this was precisely Petipa’s discovery. It was this that constituted the great accomplishment of the Russian style of dance. “The dance of the arms” endowed the classics with new expressiveness and a new depth. Dance became more diversified and more beautiful, and was enriched with unexpected shadings and nuances. All these plastic “intonations” were born of the characteristic movements found in Russian folk dances (Demidov 1977, 6).

Petipa suffered a fate not unusual among extraordinary artists; at the height of his choreographic career he was ahead of his time and at the end of his choreographic efforts (as we shall see), he was behind them.

The public liked *The Sleeping Beauty* sufficiently, though, for Vsevolojsky to commission another work. He asked Tchaikovsky to compose *The Nutcracker* based on the senior Alexander Dumas’ adaptation of E. T. A. Hoffman’s *Nutcracker and The Mouse King*. He composed it in 1892, again to Petipa’s requirements, but Petipa became too ill to choreograph the work. Instead the task fell to his assistant Lev Ivanov (1834-1901). Ivanov proved equal to the task and is particularly remembered for his “The Waltz of the Snowflakes”. Tchaikovsky died in 1893, thus depriving Petipa of any further collaboration with him.

*The Nutcracker* is really a coming-of-age tale. It involves a young girl, who receives a Nutcracker on Christmas Eve from a mysterious uncle, Herr Drosselmeyer. Clara’s brother, Fritz, breaks the nutcracker, but Drosselmeyer repairs it and it is placed under the Christmas tree. After the Christmas Eve festivities, Clara returns to the tree to retrieve her nutcracker. Suddenly, everything in the room begins to grow to enormous size, including the nutcracker. A mouse king arrives with his super-sized mouse army and the nutcracker and mouse king fight. The nutcracker is losing the battle until Clara, in an act of desperation, attacks the mouse king with a shoe. The mouse king is defeated and the nutcracker reveals himself as a handsome young man, the Nutcracker Prince. He takes her on a magical journey through a snowy kingdom until they arrive at the Sugar Plum Fairy’s kingdom. Clara is warmly greeted by the court and praised for saving their Prince’s life. A celebration ensues with dances and treats from foreign lands providing
another rationale for a series of *divertissements*. One of the most famous *grand pas de deux*’s is included in this series; *The Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier pas de deux*.

As with the case of *Swan Lake*, there are countless versions of *The Nutcracker* and several different endings. In some productions, Clara has merely been dreaming and wakes up at the end of the ballet. In others, Clara and the Nutcracker Prince continue to travel or stay in the Kingdom of Sweets. Another popular ending involves Clara transforming into a young woman and performing the part of the Sugar Plum Fairy, while the young Nutcracker Prince becomes her cavalier. Regardless of the ending, *The Nutcracker* is the most widely performed ballet by far in the United States and Canada and most ballet companies make a significant portion of their revenue from productions of *The Nutcracker*. It is still performed in Russia, but it is not as popular there as in the United States and Canada. This may be because, until very recently, Russian ballet companies were funded by the state and did not need to rely on ticket sales.

Again, *The Nutcracker* was produced in Russia, but was not exclusively Russian. The story is a German invention and it is often set in a foreign country, usually Germany. The music is by a Russian composer based on information provided by a Frenchman and, although it was choreographed by a Russian, it is choreographed in the same classical vein as *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Nonetheless, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker* have become known as among the best examples of classical ballet and are included in the repertoire of most major ballet companies in the world. They are identified with Russia because they were produced there and because of Tchaikovsky’s revolutionary music. Also, these ballets are significant because Petipa was choreographing in a new manner that simultaneously established Russia as the leader in the dance world while furthering the evolution of a uniquely Russian ballet:

Among the characteristic elements in Petipa’s choreography for the *corps de ballet* were dazzling successions of exquisite, kaleidoscopic patterns. His masterful juxtaposition of embellished *leitmotivs* and movement themes unfolded one after another. For principal dancers and soloists, he placed great emphasis on variations that afforded artists the opportunity to perform choreography designed to highlight their particular qualities…So extensive was the final result of Petipa’s compositional approach that a new look appeared on the Maryinsky stage. The spectacular dancing and his dexterous use of extravagant décor, rich in special effects, completely
overshadowed the delicate expressionism and heavily mimed human drama of the previous age (Lee 2002, 211).

With their eventual world-wide success, these ballets exported Russian ballet classicism and Russian music.

Ivanov and Petipa readdressed Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake in 1895, after the composer’s death. With the help of Tchaikovsky’s brother, Modest, the work was rearranged and the scenario modified. Petipa choreographed the mortal scenes of acts one and three (Prince Siegfried with his court at a hunt party and later at the ball), while Ivanov was responsible for the moonlight scenes of the second and fourth acts (involving the swan-maidens in white tutus). Petipa used the grand pas de deux concept in act three, while Ivanov instead choreographed an adagio for the couple and a solo for Odette only in act two. Ivanov also successfully incorporated the khorovod choreographic structure into acts two and four and his choreographic patterns are still considered masterpieces today (Demidov 1977, 3).

With the three ballets composed by Tchaikovsky, the concept of “classical ballet” was born. The term “classical ballet”:

…indicates a concept of choreography that stresses formal values such as clarity, harmony, symmetry and order. The academic ballet technique is paramount and its rules are rarely transgressed. Although classical ballets are not entirely devoid of emotional content, this aspect usually takes second place (Au 1988, 62).

Therefore, while ballet training was in decline in Western Europe, Russia’s tradition of strong technical training, supported both financially and philosophically by the tsar, resulted in the formation of a new style of ballet. Since both men and women were extensively trained in the physicality of the art, the soft, feminine qualities of Romantic ballet were no longer practical for the Russian repertoire. This did not mean that the role of the ballerina declined. In fact, with the advent of the grand pas de deux, the opposite was true. The grand pas de deux also strengthened the position of the male dancer because he was required to be an excellent partner, perform a demanding solo, and then finish the series with an even more physically demanding duet.

However, as Susan Au notes, this increased emphasis on the technical aspects does not mean that classical ballet is “devoid of emotional content” (Au 1988, 62).
Certainly in the case of *Swan Lake* emotional content is very important. It is a story of love, betrayal and loss with exceptionally emotive music by Tchaikovsky. What makes the emotional content take second place is the juxtaposition of the acts. For example, acts two and four require artists with the ability to perform difficult choreography while expressing the tragic nature of their situation. In acts one and three most of the dances are part of a series of *divertissement* and are purely presentational. However, Prince Siegfried is required to show his melancholy in act one and infatuation with Odile in act three. Emotional content is not missing, just rearranged. With Romantic ballet, mood and expression took precedence over virtuoso displays of technique (although ethereal technique was required for the ballerina). In classical ballet, where technically demanding *divertissements* and *grand pas de deux* are some of the defining features, technical display is emphasized but held together by the emotional portrayal and content of the story.

Confusion continues to exist between Romantic and classical ballet. Part of this confusion comes from the terminology alone. Generally, when one thinks of classical, one thinks of ancient Greece and Rome, which predate the Romantic era. Also, in the case of *The Sleeping Beauty*, and particularly in the case of *Swan Lake*, aspects of Romanticism appear. In other words, these ballets are referred to as classical, but share some components of Romanticism.

In the case of *The Sleeping Beauty* the Romantic aspects are less clear than those in *Swan Lake*, but are nonetheless present. Princess Aurora represents the ideal, and almost, unattainable woman. Young, beautiful and virtuous, she has been harmed by an evil power. She appears in a daylight scene (her sixteenth birthday party), but is separated from the ones she loves by a fateful prick of her finger, causing her to sleep until her prince finds her. Prince Desire first sees her in a vision in Act II (a moonlight scene) and cannot save her because of the interference of the Lilac Fairy and other spirits. The Lilac Fairy finally leads him to the sleeping princess where his kiss awakens her and the couple is happily united. The idealized, unattainable woman, the moonlight separation scene, and the supernatural aspects of the story all recall specific characteristics of Romantic ballet. The happy ending, however, breaks with Romantic tradition.
The Nutcracker contains even fewer characteristics of the Romantic than does The Sleeping Beauty, and certainly even less than found in Swan Lake. This may be because the story is about children, and an unattainable love is not appropriate or believable yet. The “Kingdom of Snow” scene takes place in the moonlight, but there are no daylight scenes. There is an aspect of the supernatural (or unexplained) because objects and creatures grow to abnormal sizes and the nutcracker becomes a human prince. However in some productions these unexplained events are interpreted as merely Clara’s dream, which would negate the supernatural characteristic. There is no betrayal, but it could be argued that Clara’s attachment to the nutcracker signaled her desire for an unknown and, therefore, unattainable man. Finally, none of the popular endings is tragic.

Swan Lake is a better fit for the Romantic model than either The Sleeping Beauty or The Nutcracker. First, we have a prince (Siegfried) who cannot find happiness or love among his peers. During the first act he attends an outdoor festival and hunting party, but cannot enjoy it. He sends his men away and decides to hunt alone. In act two he discovers a swan-maiden (Odette); a young woman who must be a swan by day, but turns into a maiden at night. He dances with her, along with the other swan-maidens, under the moonlight until an evil sorcerer (von Rothbart) takes Odette away. In act three Siegried is tricked into believing that another swan-maiden in black (Odile) is his true love and declares his love for her. This betrayal condemns Odette to death. Prince Siegfried realizes he has been tricked and returns to the lake to be with Odette. He cannot save her, and she becomes the unattainable woman. Swan Lake certainly exhibits some of the qualities attributed to Romantic ballet: 1) there are daylight and moonlight scenes; 2) the supernatural is involved; 3) the man betrays the woman; 4) the woman is unattainable; and 5) the ending is tragic.

Despite their Romantic characteristics, both The Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake also differ from Romantic ballets. They differ largely in costuming and technique, as well as in emotional range. In both The Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake the short, classical tutu is used as opposed to the long, Romantic tutus of La Sylphide and Giselle. Also, the pointe work differs greatly. In classical ballet, pointe work is used more for showcasing technical virtuosity than for the ethereal presentation required by Romantic ballet.
Finally, classical ballet is not devoid of emotional content, but the dramatic aspects of the ballet do not overshadow the technical.

Classical ballet borrowed from, but outgrew some of the characteristics of Romantic ballet. As George Balanchine\textsuperscript{35} explains:

\begin{quote}
What is classic in ballet is what has been developed over the years; what is romantic is a period through which that development passed. Romanticism in ballet, in other words, is not the opposite of classicism...

After this time, what we recognize as the great classical ballets-\textit{Swan Lake}, \textit{The Sleeping Beauty}, etc.-were created on the basis of the new uncovered, unconcealed technique and a more exacting dance discipline. Thus, unlike literature, music, and the other arts, ballet’s great period of classicism came \textit{after} the development of Romanticism (Balanchine and Mason 1954, 804).
\end{quote}

The short, or classical, tutu worn in \textit{Swan Lake}, \textit{The Sleeping Beauty}, and \textit{The Nutcracker} certainly uncovered the dancer and revealed her technique. This required the dancers to adhere to the highest technical standards, because there was no place to hide any deficiency. Arms and legs were bared for the audience to see and admire, as opposed to covered in the Romantic ballets \textit{La Sylphide} and \textit{Giselle}, which used the long, Romantic tutus and softly draped arm treatments. Gone, too, was the soft lighting of the gas lamps that were being replaced by more modern lighting systems. Ballet was exposed; less costuming and better lighting. Also, not only was the ballerina exposed, so was the corps de ballet. The corps de ballet also was costumed in the short tutu for many scenes (including most of \textit{The Sleeping Beauty}, acts two and four of \textit{Swan Lake}, and most of the second act of \textit{The Nutcracker}) and was required to be technically proficient on pointe.

The use of the pointe shoe was no longer confined to the ballerina roles. Petipa, in particular, had made pointe work \textit{de rigeur} for most female ballet dancers.\textsuperscript{36} Classical ballet is Romantic ballet uncovered, unconcealed and more technically demanding, while simultaneously retaining some of its dramatic qualities including narrative structure, daylight and moonlight scenes, and the use of the supernatural (or unexplained) to further the action. The expression of love between a man and a woman is a characteristic found in both Romantic and classical ballet.

After the era of Petipa\textsuperscript{37} and Tchaikovsky, ballet would undergo yet another transformation and become something other than Romantic or classical. The dawning of
the twentieth century brought more challenges and opportunities for ballet in Russia and the importance of Pushkin became reemphasized.

Despite Petipa’s triumphs, his position with the Russian ballet was not secure. In 1901 Teliakovski became the director of the Imperial Theatres. Teliakovsky was an excellent cavalry officer, but not an expert on ballet, or even an enthusiast, and was no fan of Petipa’s. He removed Petipa’s name from programs and went out of his way to antagonize the Frenchman. 38

Desperate, even Petipa tried his hand at choreographing to a Pushkin theme. In 1902 he began to choreograph *The Enchanted Mirror*, a four act ballet based on stories by Pushkin and the Grimm brothers. Music for the ballet was composed by a musician who was not highly esteemed, Korestchenko. Petipa knew the work would not be well-received because the music was poor and the dancers resistant. Petipa, who had been involved with the ballet in Russia for almost fifty years, was associated with the old ways and it was becoming clear that change was inevitable:

Year by year saw a deafening increase in the protest of the revolutionary young dancers, though as yet their demands were confused, almost blind, and solely destructive. Petipa was not accused by being bad, but merely outdated. The old ballet was regarded as a synonym for the dead ballet, but nobody quite knew what changes were needed, nobody could map out a definite programme.

In short, reform at all costs was the motto (Lifar 1954, 174).

Several problems presented themselves at the close of Petipa’s career. The dancers wanted better roles to play and new ways of expressing themselves. They wanted the *corps de ballet* to be less of an ornamental stepchild and more of an essential aspect of the production. The audience wanted better music, which they received with Tchaikovsky, but the dancers struggled to interpret it. Audiences also wanted better décor and costumes, and the designers wanted more say over their creations. The era of ballet master as dictator was over. Petipa, as the most successful symbol of this dictatorship, had to be eliminated. However, Petipa was not eager to leave his post, and it was up to the management to effect the change. Teliakovsky, who persecuted Petipa, did so to please the progressive, intellectual movement, but did not have enough tact or skill to determine the new course for the ballet. Petipa was accused by the progressives of “…suffocating ballet, impeding its progress, and blocking the way to young
talent…(Lifar 1954, 177). He was dismissed in 1901, but until Fokine’s appearance, the situation continued to deteriorate.

In January 1903 *The Enchanted Mirror* was presented as part of Petipa’s benefit for fifty-five years of service. As the curtain rose, the audience began to boo. Petipa blamed Teliakovski and his friends for arranging the disaster. The scandal led to Petipa’s ultimate dismissal in 1904, although he continued to draw his full salary until his death in 1910.

In addition to Petipa, both Ivanov and Cecchetti left influential legacies in Russia. Ivanov was known as an innovative choreographer, while Cecchetti was recognized as a great teacher, one who brought the Italian technical style more firmly to the training of Russian dancers, which complimented their French tutelage. Ivanov was also important to the development of a Russian ballet style:

...Ivanov’s ballets are notable for their unmistakably Russian stamp, free from affectation. The Russian style was already beginning, though timidly, to creep into choreography, particularly with the *Polovtsian Dances* from *Prince Igor*, originally arranged by Ivanov, to which Michel Fokine was later to add such fire and ardour (Lifar 1954, 152).

Clearly Russian ballet was beginning to develop unique characteristics. Ivanov was known for his keen musicality and was particularly praised for his ability to choreograph to symphonic music. Without affectation (the use of extensive mime, props, and technical effects traditionally found in ballet during the late nineteenth-century), Ivanov was able to evoke the emotional quality and tragedy of Odette’s situation. Acts two and four of *Swan Lake* employed a simple painted backdrop of a lake for its setting. Odette did not fly magically, but instead conveyed her dismay at being a swan-maiden through choreography and expression. Ivanov also utilized the round-dances of the *khorovod* to conceal and reveal Odette to Prince Siegfried, instead of using an actual physical barrier as part of the set. This lack of affectation was more clearly noticed because, particularly in act one, Petipa employed props extensively. He had twenty-four women carrying small baskets of flowers and twenty-four men carrying sticks tied with ribbons. He also incorporated stools to make different levels of dancers on stage. The effect seemed contrived, which served as a sharp contrast to Ivanov’s simple stage set. Ivanov used the dancers as his affectation; creating stylistic steps for the swans as well as complicated
floor patterns that remain in productions today. Ivanov, by removing artifice, understanding symphonic music, choreographing in a new style with new patterns, continued laying the groundwork for a unique Russian ballet style (Roslavleva 1966, 134).

Even as the Petipa/Ivanov/Tchaikovsky works established Russia as the leader in the ballet world, the ballets they produced were still not uniquely Russian. They only met portions of the requirements for a uniquely Russian ballet. As a reminder, these characteristics include: 1) main character gender (male as opposed to female) and nationality (Russian as opposed to Western European); 2) the Russian location of the story; 3) Russian musical composition; 4) Russian nationalistic attitudes reflected in the work; and 5) special dance techniques and choreographic structures that illustrate unique aspects of Russian dance.

The main protagonists in all three ballets (The Sleeping Beauty, The Nutcracker, Swan Lake) by these collaborators were women (Odette/Odile, Aurora, Clara), not men, although the male parts were significant. Furthermore, the dancers who played the leading roles were foreigners, not Russian. The stories were created by foreign writers or were foreign tales, and were based in Germany and France, not Russia. With the exception of the white swan-maiden legend recorded in Pushkin’s The Tale of the Tsar Saltan and possibly incorporated into Swan Lake, none of the stories reflected a Russian nationalistic attitude. However, the ballets did contain aspects of the third and fifth criteria. The music was composed by a nationally-recognized Russian composer and further recognized as ground breaking. Likewise, some of the choreography, particularly in the case of Swan Lake, was choreographed by a Russian who implemented aspects of an ancient Russian folk dance, specifically the khorovod.

Petipa’s ballets, although not uniquely Russian, firmly established ballet as an important performing art in Russia, while the art was clearly not as well regarded in Western Europe. Petipa did not enjoy tremendous praise at the end of his career, but is now credited as one of the most important figures in Russian ballet history. During his tenure, attending the ballet was one of the most important social opportunities for any family or person. Ballet was extremely popular and the “dance scene there was unlike that of any other country in the world” (Anderson 1986, 85). Although there were several
privately owned ballet companies, the most prestigious of the ballet troupes were those
attached to the state-supported theatres. The directors of these companies were appointed
by the tsar and the dancers were Imperial servants. The tsar and his family often attended
rehearsals as well as performances. Only aristocratic families, higher government
officials and the upper levels of the military could attend performances at the two
imperial theatres in St. Petersburg. Annual subscriptions were necessary, and since the
theatres were habitually sold-out, there was no need for a public box office. It was
important to not only attend, but be finely and opulently dressed (Lee 1954, 215).

Part of the popularity of the ballet arose from the fact that the imperial family
subsidized it and patronized it. Also, dancers were not considered low-class citizens.
Instead they enjoyed unusual respect:

If dancers were morally suspect in western Europe, Imperial patronage
made dancing a respectable career for both men and women in Russia.
Dancing provided women with job security and the opportunity to lead an
independent life. Male students at the state ballet schools were considered
the equals of students at military or naval academies and had similar
uniforms (Anderson 1986, 85).

Ballet was part of the social fabric of Russia and a well-respected art.

In 1901, Tsar Nicholas II built the Narodny Dom, or National Palace that housed
a three-thousand seat theatre. Low-priced tickets were made available to the general
public and the popular ballets were modified for less sophisticated audiences. Ballet had
been made accessible to the masses and was very popular (Lee 2002, 215).

As the era of Petipa declined, a new Russian choreographer emerged who began
to break away from the classical and more formal aspects of late nineteenth-century
Russian ballet. Alexander Gorsky (1871-1924), who worked primarily in Moscow, was
very inspired by the concepts espoused by Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938), who
aimed at creating a form of drama that was more “natural” (Au 1988, 72). He was
summoned to St. Petersburg where he took on the duties of dancer, stage manager, and
ballet master. He had been brought in to erase any remnants of Petipa but, in fact, his
reforms were limited. Gorsky tried to employ some of Stanislavsky’s method with some
success, but was hampered by the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. He was also hampered
by the pressure of public opinion, which expressed disapproval of his challenges to
mainstream ballet. He began to depart from the rules of academic ballet and became a champion for more reality in ballet, sometimes to his own professional detriment. He created a new genre, the mimed drama, which did not incorporate classical dance, but instead used pantomime and plastic shapes. He emphasized the realistic portrayal of a story and created his own *tableaux vivants* for the stage. Critics noted that his ballets were missing one element, dance.

When he restaged a classical ballet, he made changes to make it more realistic. For example, when he revived *Giselle* he costumed the Willis in nightgowns instead of the traditional Romantic tutus (Demidov 1977, 121-122).

Gorsky became a controversial figure in the history of Russian ballet, having been both praised and vilified.\(^{45}\) He remained in Russia until 1924, but there are no known ballets produced by him from 1917 until his departure (Lifar 1954, 178).

Gorsky’s name is virtually unknown outside of Russia, but Russian ballet historians claim that his influence was immense. Part of his obscurity may be due to the fact that he was overshadowed by the *Ballets Russes*\(^{46}\) which became prominent at the same time he was working. However, Gorsky was not overlooked by Diaghilev, the mastermind of the *Ballets Russes*. In fact, in 1913 Diaghilev commissioned Gorsky to produce *The Red Masks* to music by Tcherepnin. The ballet was never produced because the composer failed to complete the score and because World War I broke out in 1914. Roslavleva asserted that:

Gorsky’s significance in the history of Russian ballet is immense. He was the first Russian choreographer with a definite artistic programme that made a significant imprint on the whole history of ballet. He led the Moscow ballet out of a blind alley to the position of a mature artistic ensemble capable of seriously competing with the ballet in St. Petersburg (Roslavleva 1966, 166).

Gorsky’s contributions would soon be overshadowed by the power, influence and popularity of Serge Diaghilev’s (1871-1929) *Ballets Russes*. Russian ballet was about to become a major export item from Russia and simultaneously establish Russia as the dominant force in the world of ballet and dance.

Gorsky influenced and foreshadowed the work of Mikhail Fokine\(^{47}\) (1880-1942) who graduated from the Imperial School in 1898. Fokine agreed with Gorsky that ballet
had become too formal and stylized, and that the inevitable and unchanging use of the tutu and the *pointe* shoe hindered the artistic development of the art. He believed that the tutu and *pointe* shoe were inappropriate for some ballets and, when he began to produce his own ballets, often replaced them with clothing and shoes that better reflected the time period and clothing conventions of the subject. This was a novelty in ballet and Russia became a trend-setter when Fokine’s ideas and choreography were incorporated into the *Ballets Russes* productions that were seen in the West (Au 1988, 72).

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, major changes were occurring in the artistic scene in both Western Europe and Russia. Avant-garde painters were becoming appreciated and the impressionistic music of composers such as Debussy was hailed as a triumph over the old. Ballet was changing as well.

Mikhail Fokine saw Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) perform in St. Petersburg in 1905. Duncan was a pioneer of the then-fledgling American modern dance movement. Fokine appeared to have been greatly influenced by her dancing as well as her costuming. He admired her free expressive movement as well as the Greek drapery she wore. That same year he produced his impressionistic piece *The Dying Swan* to music by Saint-Saens. The dance movement departed from traditional ballet vocabulary, however the costuming remained a tutu and pointe shoes. The great Anna Pavlova (1881-1931) became well-known for her exquisite portrayal of a dying swan in this work.

Fokine opposed acrobatic stunts in ballet and was more interested in narrative strength and credibility. He believed that all aspects of the performance including dance, music, costuming and décor should be expressly created to work together. He championed ballet as art, not theatrical entertainment.

It is ironic, then, that one of Fokine’s best known masterpieces does not necessarily adhere to his preferences. Fokine choreographed *Les Sylphides* under the original title of *Chopianana* (1907) in Russia prior to his association with Diaghilev. It is considered a masterpiece and is in the repertoire of almost every major ballet company. Some dance historians consider this his homage, or tribute, to Romanticism. The dancers (*sylphides*) appear in the moonlight and dance in long, Romantic, white tutus and *pointe* shoes. There is no story, although the mood is almost nostalgic, which is a characteristic of Romanticism. He used existing concert music by Chopin, sometimes changing the
male solo for different performers. Although the sets were originals by Alexandre Benois (1870-1960), the music and costumes were borrowed from other performances, thus breaking his tenet that all aspects of the performance should be expressly created for the work. Fokine, though, with his new ideas and burning creativity was ready to leave Russia and produce his works for new audiences. Diaghilev, through his Ballets Russes, provided the perfect opportunity to expose the Western world to excellent Russian choreography, music and dancers and established Russia as the leader in the dance world.

Diaghilev was a student of Rimsky-Korsakov’s and came to love ballet through his interest in art and music. He was a founder of the magazine Mir Iskoustva (The World of Art) and, more importantly, began exporting Russian art and culture to Paris. Diaghilev exported Russian art for two reasons: 1) to display Russian accomplishments and achievements; and 2) to escape the rigid conservatism of the arts in St. Petersburg that were imposed by the imperial court and aristocracy (Kerensky 1970, 29-30). Between 1906 and 1909 Diaghilev organized exhibits of Russian visual and performing arts in Paris. The first exhibit in 1906 featured Russian art. It was followed closely by a second presentation in 1907 of Russian music. In 1908 he presented the Pushkin-based opera Boris Godunov and decided to return in 1909 with a group of dancers from the Maryinsky Ballet. Among other artists, Diaghilev brought Pavlova, Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950), his sister Bronislava Nijinska (1891-1972) and Tamara Karsavina (1885-1978). They performed at the Chatelet Theatre to a packed house on May 18, 1909. The performance, which included Fokine’s choreography, was a triumph and Diaghilev “had indeed conquered Paris” (Reyna 1965, 136). The second production included Les Sylphides and Cleopatre (1908). Ballets Russes returned to Paris in 1910 with productions of Fokine’s Le Carnaval, Schereazade, The Firebird, composed by the young Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), and a revival of Giselle (Lee 2002, 239). In 1911, Diaghilev produced the highly-acclaimed Petrouchka, with choreography by Fokine and music by Stravinsky. Diaghilev produced a similar concert in London in 1911 (Kerensky 1970, 29).

Diaghilev represented a departure from the status quo of Russian dance productions. Instead of the ballet master or theatre administration producing ballets, Diaghilev broke new ground for ballet and art presentation by being a “presenter”. He
functioned outside of theatre management and facilitated the collaboration of artists. At first his projects were supported by the imperial theatre and court but, after disagreements, he was forced to find private funding for his productions. This, also, was revolutionary in Russian ballet. However, what Diaghilev lacked in imperial funding, he found in freedom of artistic expression.

The Ballets Russes began as a Russian production. The dancers, musicians, choreographers, designers and most of the composers (Chopin was a notable exception) were Russian. They were assembled as a rare combination of singularly Russian talent that, ironically, only performed as a recognized group outside of Russia. After Diaghilev’s initial success, the exclusiveness of this Russian troupe became difficult to maintain. French composers were engaged, including Claude Debussy who composed The Afternoon of a Faun and Maurice Ravel, Daphnis and Chloe (Reyna 1965, 140).

Diaghilev also found that he could not continue to travel with Russian musicians because of financial concerns. The first season in Paris ended in a deficit, and for the second season he decided to leave the Russian musicians in Russia, thus avoiding the cost of their travel and housing, and employ Parisian artists. Next, Diaghilev found himself in a position where his company was in greater demand than anticipated. He was able to retain Fokine as choreographer and Karsavina as prima ballerina because, as a prima ballerina, her engagements at the Maryinsky were limited. However, he had to find corps de ballet dancers from outside Russia because low level dancers at the Maryinsky were not allowed to perform in foreign engagements. This began the de-Russification of the Ballets Russes.

Regardless, the Ballets Russes through its revolutionary style and clear evidence of talent, established Russian dance as the pinnacle of dance during the 1910s. The Ballet Russes brought Russian talent (although not exclusively Russian) to Berlin, Monte Carlo, Vienna, Budapest, Rome, London and eventually to South America in 1913 and North America in 1916. It continued to export its avant-garde style, through different artists and different venues, until 1929 (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 117).

During the first seasons of the Ballets Russes, Fokine’s choreography dominated the repertoire. When Diaghilev began encouraging Nijinsky’s choreographic efforts, Fokine became jealous and left the company in 1912. Other choreographers would be
engaged by Diaghilev including Leonide Massine (1895-1979) and George Balanchine\textsuperscript{52} (1904-1983), but Fokine’s works began the process of introducing to the West the unique nature of Russian ballet and the tremendous artistic talent that had been nurtured and developed during the last part of the nineteenth century when ballet was a dying art form in Western Europe. One Russian critic, Valerian Svetlov, noted that Fokine served as the bridge between old classical ballet and new modernism and explained that:

\begin{quote}
...the great revelation of the Diaghilev Ballet was the impact of the male dancers, the suitability and rightness of the costumes and the tremendous difference from the productions to which Parisian audiences were accustomed. There, before Diaghilev, they were used to seeing the ballerina as the centre of all the action, and the dancing of the \textit{corps de ballet} as a sort of padding, contrived for the moments the ballerina’s rest (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 117).
\end{quote}

It was clear to audiences that Russian ballet, through Diaghilev’s \textit{Ballets Russes}, established a new standard for ballet and that the art form was worthy of survival in the twentieth century. Audiences were particularly impressed with the remarkable technical and dramatic talent of Nijinsky.

After Fokine’s departure Nijinsky became the prominent choreographer and dancer. In 1912 he produced \textit{The Afternoon of a Faun} with music by Debussy. The ballet was ground-breaking because the female dancers (as nymphs) did not wear \textit{pointe} shoes but instead danced flat-footed and turned-in, and the male dancer was not a strong masculine character, but a sensitive faun. At the end of the ballet, the faun lowers himself onto one of the nymph’s veils. This was seen by some as obscene and caused an outcry in Paris. Diaghilev astutely capitalized on the publicity (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 118).

In 1913 Nijinsky choreographed \textit{Jeux} which was followed quickly by \textit{The Rite of Spring} with music by Stravinsky. Both the music and choreography were considered revolutionary; too revolutionary for mainstream public tastes. Nijinsky was dismissed by Diaghilev when he married a Hungarian dancer whom he met during a tour of South America. He gave his last public performance in 1917 and then succumbed to a mental illness and spent the remainder of his life institutionalized.

Nijinsky was replaced by Massine who choreographed four ballets for Diaghilev including \textit{The Three-Cornered Hat} and by his sister, Bronislava Nijinska. Nijinska created several ballets for the company, most notably \textit{Les Noces} (1923) and \textit{Les Biches
(1924). In 1925, Balanchine joined the choreographic team and began his long, extremely successful career as a master choreographer (Reyna 1965, 142-149).

By this time many of the dancers were British and Irish, and a significant amount of music used was not composed by Russians. Still, Diaghilev’s ballet company was considered Russian because of Diaghilev’s significance as a Russian “presenter” and his original concept of a Russian ballet exported as an exotic and dynamic force to the West. Another noteworthy aspect of the Ballets Russes was that although the dancers, musicians and composers hailed from various countries, the choreographers remained predominately Russian.

While the Ballets Russes was enjoying great success in Western Europe and later the Americas, ballet in Russia was in turmoil. There was a de facto “schism” in the Russian ballet around 1911. The great stars of the Maryinsky Ballet were dancing abroad with Diaghilev and the less advanced dancers were left behind in Russia without outstanding artistic leadership and training. The loss of life and deprivations of World War I made ballet an afterthought in everyday living and the Russian Revolution of 1917 almost provided the coup de grace when many dancers and artists fled the country.

Russian ballet truly mirrored Russia’s military predicament in that it also faced two fronts; one abroad and one at home. On the one hand, talented Russian artists were enjoying tremendous artistic freedom in the West, while the heavy bureaucracy of the ballet in Russia kept a stifled, yet dedicated, native ballet afloat. Diaghilev wanted more and more avant-garde and revolutionary works to be produced, but neglected the dancers’ training. Training continued in Russia, but without new artistic expression. The “schism” was not only founded in distance and ideology, but in practicality. The Ballets Russes in the West needed a solid training foundation to survive and the ballet in Russia needed inspiration to move successfully into the Soviet era.

The Ballets Russes as it was originally conceived died with Diaghilev in 1929. In 1932 many of those associated with the original Ballets Russes joined the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo. The group was directed by Rene Blum and Colonel de Basil, an ex-officer of the Imperial Russian Army. The troupe included Massine and Balanchine and tried to carry on the tradition established by Diaghilev. The troupe survived many name changes, artistic changes and permutations. By 1936 the group was renamed the Original
Ballet Russe and toured Spain, London, New York, Australia, and New Zealand. The outbreak of World War II derailed the group’s tours in Europe, although they continued to tour Australia and the Americas. Finally, in 1947 it presented a few performances and then disbanded shortly afterwards (Reyna 1965, 155-159).

Although the Ballets Russes no longer existed, its heritage did. Many of the great artists that joined Diaghilev and his successors stayed in Western Europe, America, Australia and South Africa and founded private training centers of their own. Their defection to the West helped to solidify and reestablish ballet in the Western world as one of the great performing arts. Through its revolutionary work, it also opened the door for modern dance.

Ballet and modern dance would develop differently, however, in Russia. Always isolated by distance, Russia was now more isolated than ever before because of its new and radical government system and ideology. Previously Russia imported great ballet dancers, choreographers and ballet masters for its imperial ballet. After the Revolution anything foreign was suspect as “decadent” and anti-socialist. The Iron Curtain impacted ballet and dance, thus forcing the art to develop on its own without outside influences or assistance. For the first time ballet in Russia was not an imported luxury, but a home-grown product. This set the stage for the development of Russia’s unique, identifiable form of ballet that would complete the continuum by including the five characteristics that define Russian ballet.

Along with foreign dancers, composers, choreographers and ballet masters, Russian ballet was also isolated from “decadent” foreign themes. It became increasingly difficult to find stories and themes that would pass the scrutiny of the Soviet censors. Ironically, the works of Pushkin, which suffered tremendously under tsarist censorship, were seen as appropriate thematic choices.

Approximately ninety years after Pushkin’s death, he would be called upon to provide inspiration for a unique Russian ballet. Chapters Five and Six explores how the Russian ballet survived the Soviet era and thrived with the assistance of Pushkin’s works.
Notes for Chapter Four

1 Sumarokov, Derzhavin, Zhukovsky and Delvig were all poets prior to Pushkin. Baron Anton Delvig was a school mate of Pushkin’s and admirer of his poetry. Delvig became involved with the Decembrists and lost his place in society after the group’s demise. Derzhavin is considered the greatest poet of the generation preceding Pushkin’s (Feinstein 1998, 27).

2 The St. Petersburg Bolshoi Theatre was built in 1783 as the Kamenny (or Stone) Theatre. It was rebuilt in 1802 and renamed the Bolshoi, but burned down in 1811 (the year Didelot left after his first visit to Russia). It was rebuilt in 1818, two years after Didelot’s return to Russia, and modified in 1836 to accommodate more machinery. In 1889 it was declared unsafe and ballet performances moved to the Maryinsky Theatre that had been built in 1860 (Doeser 1977, 209-210).

3 The Maryinsky theatre is named after Tsar Nicholas I’s crippled daughter, Marina (Lee 2002, 215).

4 Some older communist party leaders approached Kirov and suggested that he challenge Stalin for the post of general secretary. Kirov declined, but in the elections to the Central Committee, Stalin’s name was crossed off the ballot by over one hundred delegates, while Kirov only received a few negative votes. Stalin falsified the election results and retained his powers. The majority of the Central Committee was not prepared to challenge Stalin. Stalin, who was known for his paranoia and insecurity, although not formally accused of having Kirov eliminated, is suspected of aiding his assassination (Hosking 2004, 461-463).

5 On December 1, 1934, a young party member, Leonid Nikolaev (who had a personal grudge against Kirov), killed Kirov in the party headquarters. Members of the Left Opposition were arrested and forced to confess that they had planned to assassinate Kirov (and ultimately Stalin himself) under the manipulation of Lev Trotsky (1879-1940), who was living abroad (Hosking 2004, 463-464).

6 The renaming of St. Petersburg (which is called Petrograd sometimes in Russia) to Leningrad started a trend to honor dead and living Soviet heroes. Ekaterinburg became Sverdlovsk, Elizavetgrad became Zinovievsk and Tsaritsyn became Stalingrad (Treadgold 1995, 157). Since the fall of the Soviet Union this trend has been reversed. Leningrad was renamed St. Petersburg in 1991, and after Krushchev’s “secret speech” in 1956 enumerating Stalin’s crimes, Stalingrad was renamed Volgograd (Treadgold 1995, 382).

7 Renaming is almost a Soviet Union convention. The three communist leaders most often associated with the birth of the Soviet Union all changed their names. Vladimir Lenin’s original last name was Ulianov; Stalin’s was Dzhugashvili; and Trotsky’s was Bronstein.

8 Also commonly spelled Gluszkowski.
9 She is not mentioned in Pushkin’s poetry, however.

10 Also commonly spelled Glouchkovski.

11 Also known as the Captive of the Caucasus.

12 In 1824 Prince Shakhovskoi produced a dramatic three-act version of The Fountain of Bakhchisarai that included a chorus and ballet. This work did not receive many performances, probably because Shakhovskoi was removed from the Theatrical Committee following the Decembrists Revolt in 1825 (Swift 1974, 172-182).

13 He is also a Russian army officer who left his post for some undisclosed reason.

14 Catarino Alberto Cavos was Didelot’s most important musical collaborator. Although born in Venice, Cavos spent forty-three years in Russia and is classified as a “Russian composer.” He began directing the opera in 1806 (Swift 1974, 85).

15 Istomina made her debut on August 30, 1816, as Galathea in Didelot’s ballet Acis and Galathea (Swift 1974, 160). As early as 1820, Istomina may have danced briefly on pointe without the aid of wires (Anderson 1986, 66).

16 The first East Slav state, Kiev, was founded on the southern edge of woodlands running along the western side of the Volga. The second East Slav state, Moscow, was founded further north along the same woodlands. Kiev proved to be too vulnerable to foreign attack to survive as the main seat and Moscow became the capital (Hosking 2004 2, 7).

17 La Sylphide was produced in 1832 followed by Giselle in 1841. Both ballets weakened the role of the male dancer and the lead males (James in La Sylphide and Albrecht in Giselle) were represented as shallow and deceitful. The Prisoner of the Caucasus was presented with great acclaim in 1835 and 1838.

18 Didelot created Apollo and Daphne in 1802 and Medea and Jason in 1807. Val’berkh created The New Heroine in 1812 based on the heroic deeds of a Russian woman during the Napoleonic invasion.

19 Pushkin had distributed some verses which suggested that Nicholas I had behaved cowardly at the battle of Austerlitz. The tsar, who liked to think of himself as the liberator of Europe from Napoleon, began to fear for his own position and was particularly concerned about irreligious and seditious verse. The stanza became widely known and quoted in prominent circles. Pushkin could have been sent to Siberia, but older writers and admirers pleaded his case and he was exiled to a more humane location (Feinstein 1998, 47).
Alexis Blache was one of thirty-two children fathered by Jean Blache (Swift 1974, 176).

His ballets included Don Juan, Fete Espagnole The Power of Love (with music by Blache himself), Telemachus on Calypso’s Island, and Soumbeka (Lifar 1954, 73).

Smirnova became the first Russian “Myrtha” (The Queen of the Wilis) and Andreyanova, the first Russian “Giselle” for the Maryinsky Ballet. This historic first performance took place in December, 1842 (Roslavleva 1966, 60).

Some of the more successful ballets include The Naiad and the Fisherman (1851), Gazelda (1853), Armida (1855), and Eoline (1858) (Lee 2002, 203).

Perrot was able to restage Giselle in Russia, particularly the corps de ballet scenes. For the first time it was possible for Perrot to establish himself as the legitimate co-author of Giselle, a fact that had been overlooked since its premiere in 1841 in Paris (Lee 2002, 202–203).

The first names of these dancers is not available at this time.

Perrot dies there in 1892 (Lifar 1954, 103).

Petipa revised The Hump-Backed Horse in 1895, as did Gorsky in 1901. The Bolshoi Ballet version ultimately represented the male character as the lead, which secured its place in the repertoire. Choreographic as well as musical changes were numerous. Over eighteen composers are represented in the ballet (Doeser 1977, 212).

Sergei Sokolov (1830-1893) graduated from the Bolshoi in 1850 and choreographed a ballet to a Russian theme with music by a Russian composer, Yuri Gerber. Entitled The Fern it was performed in 1867, but failed to excite the public or the critics (Roslavleva 1966, 80).

Reisinger was the ballet master for the Bolshoi Ballet. An Austrian, he is also known as Julius Reisinger (Anderson 1986, 228).

La Bayadere remains an important part of most major ballet company repertoires, although the choreography may not be exclusively Petipa’s.

This was not an unusual practice, since often the choreographer had a clearer idea of the project than the composer, but Tchaikovsky elevated the status of ballet composer with his talents.

Petipa created the formula for the grand pas de deux. The formula consists of four sections: 1) a long adagio section for the couple; 2) a male solo; 3) a female solo; and 4) a coda where both dancers perform difficult choreography accentuating their technical abilities.
In theatrical terminology downstage refers to the part of stage nearest the audience while upstage denotes the area farthest away from the audience. This terminology is a result of the “raked” stage used during Shakespeare’s era where the part of the stage nearest the audience was low, or down, while the part of the stage furthest from the audience was elevated, or up, ensuring that the audience could see the entire stage. Modern theatres incline or “rake” the audience seats, not the stage.

The character is called many names including Clara, Maria, Marie, and Masha.

Balanchine takes the concept to the extreme with the creation of his neo-classical works. He stripped ballet of its narrative and scenery, thus exposing the audience to the purest form of technical display. This does not mean his works are devoid of emotion. His works are often thematic and produce an emotional quality without scenery or narrative. For example, two of his highly acclaimed works, *Serenade* (1934) and *Davidsbündlertänze* (1974), with music by Tchaikovsky and Schumann respectively, seem to deal with the concept of death or loss. The audience is often moved by these works despite their lack of narrative. He also explored different themes (for example “Americana”) and produced three ballets based on American past times: *Square Dance* (1957), with music by Corelli and Vivaldi; *Stars and Stripes* (1958), with music by Sousa; and, *Western Symphony* (1954), with music by Hershy Kay.

The exception would be for those female dancers who specialized in character dances that required hard, heeled shoes.

Petipa continued to choreograph and created another classical masterpiece in 1898, *Raymonda*, with music by Alexander Glazunov. He also choreographed Glazunov’s *The Seasons* in 1900. Neither work is well-known in the West.

At Petipa’s jubilee, Teliakovski gave orders that Petipa’s flowers should be presented behind the curtain instead of in public (Lifar 1954, 166).

The court scenes in ballets such as *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake* were apparently popular with the tsar and his family because they reinforced and reflected the opulence and importance of the imperial court.

There were a few seats for music students from the conservatory and for family members of those employed by the imperial theatres (Lee 2002, 215).

Literally means the People’s House.

Petipa was forced to retire in 1904 and, although he received the title of “ballet master for life”, he was shunned by the theatre. He died in 1910 (Lifar 1954, 169).

Also commonly spelled “Gorski”. 
Konstantin Stanislavsky was a theatrical actor, director, teacher, and created an acting method based on inner identification with a role and the natural use of the body. He was a co-founder of the Moscow Art Theatre (Anderson 1986, 230).

Gorsky revised Petipa’s works without sufficient grounds to do so and became known as somewhat of a maverick and radical (Demidov 1977, 122).

The Ballets Russes also is sometimes spelled Ballet Russe. After Diaghilev’s death the latter spelling was used to identify the touring company called the Original Ballet Russe.

Also known as Michel Fokine.

Karsavina made her premiere at the Maryinsky Theatre in 1902 (Steinberg 1980, 435).

The performance included Le Pavillon d’Armide, Prince Igor (with music by Borodin), and Le Festin (Reyna: 136). Other best-known Fokine ballets include Schereazade, The Firebird, Specter of the Rose, and Petrouchka (Kerensky 1970, 32).

The Firebird is Stravinsky’s first ballet composition (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 116).

The Ballet Russes never performed as such inside Russia.

Born in St. Petersburg of Georgian parents, Balanchine’s given name was Georgi Melitonovitch Balanchivadze (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 125).

For example, Marie Rambert founded a ballet school in London while other dancers started programs in Paris, Canada, etc. George Balanchine migrated to the United States and, along with Lincoln Kirstein, started the first major ballet training center in the United States, the School of American Ballet. He also founded what is today claimed to be among the finest ballet companies in the world, New York City Ballet. Igor Stravinsky moved first to Paris and the New York. Sergei Prokofiev returned to Russia under the Soviets and is a notable exception.
CHAPTER FIVE

Pushkin, Soviet Ballet, and Afterward

Russian ballet, which had achieved such a great level of technical and artistic accomplishment under Petipa, Fokine and Gorsky, had deteriorated artistically prior to the 1917 Revolution. Not only had the deprivations of World War I, the exodus of talent with Diaghilev, and the uncertainty and chaos associated with pre-revolutionary Russia impacted Russia’s ballet institutions, popular support in St. Petersburg and Moscow was dwindling. Russian ballet was at a crossroads; the institutions either had to find a new artistic vision, or suffer the fate of ballet in Western Europe and become regarded as a second-rate art.

Dissatisfaction on stage and backstage was responsible for much of the problem. In the first case, audiences had grown tired of seeing on stage the same old ballets with recycled sets and costumes. Backstage, outstanding dancers, choreographers and composers were being molded, but the management of the imperial theatres, especially the Maryinsky, was indifferent to this emerging talent that challenged the status quo. Choreographers and composers wanted to produce new works and dancers wanted new roles to perform, but the management continued to produce conservative ballets. A general feeling of uncertainty and unease made imperial institutions resistant to change, which encouraged Diaghilev and his associates to take their talents to Western Europe in order to produce new works. This talent-drain at the Maryinsky was actually a boon for the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow. As the great talents of the Maryinsky left, the status of the Bolshoi rose. This would prove fortuitous after the Revolution when the seat of government was reestablished in Moscow.

The fear of change, talent-drain and lack of artistic vision at home in Russia was in sharp contrast to the reputation of Russian ballet abroad. Russian ballet was being hailed as the finest representation of the art worldwide outside of Russia while declining in importance and prestige at home:

Thus before the 1917 Revolution, a paradoxical situation had developed in Russian ballet. Russia, being the seedbed of twentieth-century ballet, was reviving the balletic art throughout the world: yet at the same time Russia
was cold-bloodedly forfeiting, at home, everything that it had gained (Demidov 1977, 9).

Despite this desperate situation, Russia’s long legacy of fine training and popularity had built a solid foundation for the art. Furthermore, Russian ballet (as discovered in Western Europe) was indeed recognizable as a unique style. However, it would take much experimentation and a new artistic vision to rehabilitate Russian ballet at home. Ironically, during an era when change was so rampant, change in Russian ballet occurred by looking backward to Diderot and Pushkin for inspiration and affirmation that Russian ballet was part of the fabric of Russian society, not just a foreign import that should be discarded.

What was difficult to realize in Russia was that Russian ballet had developed its own style, and was not just a copy of the Italian and French models. The uproar caused by the Ballets Russes in Western Europe was not only because of the revolutionary nature of the choreography, music, sets and costumes. Russian dancers were different. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian ballet style had begun to contribute its own special characteristics to the genre. It built on the imported styles of Italy and France, but over time combined the two styles and enhanced this combination with its own unique characteristics:

The Italian school was devoted to the principles of rigid virtuosity: a strict style that did now allow fluidity, flexibility, or gentleness. The French ballet cultivated romantic dance, charming for its unearthly beauty, ethereal nature, and faery-like fantasy. The Russian school endowed classical dance with a special spiritual abundance. It created its own style of broad movements, flowing and majestic, proud yet gentle…There is a good reason why the plasticity of arm movement began to play a tremendous role in Russian classical choreography. There had been no such thing in either Italian or French ballet (Demidov 1977, 4).

The exodus of talent, conservative mind-set, and failure to recognize the greatness of Russian ballet at home, almost caused the demise of the ballet. However, Russian ballet had proved tenacious over the years and the residual strength of the institutions provided a foundation sufficient enough to weather the 1917 Revolution and subsequent social changes.
Russian ballet had its own style of dancing, but the period of experimentation following the Revolution and Russia’s extreme isolation from the West became an incubator for creating unique Russian works. Russian ballet was on the threshold of being just that—Russian Ballet. It has been estimated that forty percent of Russia’s ballet personnel left immediately after the Revolution (Clarke and Crisp 1973, 206). Since so many talented dancers, composers and choreographers had left Russia, new artists had to be identified and trained. Furthermore, foreign talent was not flocking to Russia therefore Russian ballet was in effect forced to develop by using its own dancers, choreographers, and composers. For the first time in its history, Russian ballet was separated from contemporary foreign influences. This laid the foundation for creating Russia’s own unique ballet. Russian dancers, choreographers and composers were being trained, but Russian themes for new ballets were not yet fully developed. For example, Gorsky, who kept the level of training high in Moscow, created ballets for the Bolshoi Ballet until the Revolution. However, all of his works were based on non-Russian themes. In 1923 he presented one more work, Tannhauser, to music by Wagner.

It was not surprising that Russian ballet was in a state of turmoil during the early part of the 1900s. The entire country was experiencing massive social upheavals and transformations. The Revolution did not immediately decide the governmental future of the country. A bloody civil war between the Red (communist) and White (anti-revolutionary) Armies ensued, which the Red Army eventually won. Also, Russia was still at war with Germany until March 3, 1918, when the treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed (Treadgold 1995, 118). In 1917 the power of the Russian Empire passed to the Communist Party only to be passed to Lenin and other leaders of the Central Committee in 1922. By 1924 this power had been transferred again to three men; Stalin, Trotsky and Nicholas Bukharin (1888-1938). Stalin eventually eliminated any potential competition for supreme leadership of the Soviet Union so that “not yet an autocrat at the end of 1929, Stalin by then was in a position to shape policy pretty much according to his desires” (Tucker 1974, 492).

As early as 1917, though, Lenin had a philosophical position on the arts in Russia. Lenin believed that religion must be destroyed in the Soviet Union and the only substitution for religion was the arts. However, he was not willing to give artists true
creative freedom. Lenin “recognized the fact that the artist claimed creative liberty, but he declared that the regime, not the artist, should and would determine the outcome in the arts” (Treadgold 1995, 180). Lenin was uncomfortable with the new artistic “isms” that were springing up around him and was noted for preferring the writings of Pushkin over many of the current writers’ works of the revolutionary era. As it became evident that censorship would increase and freedom of artistic expression decrease, many of the best Russian writers left or fell silent in the new Soviet Union (Treadgold 1995, 181). Since the writings of those who left the Soviet Union were censored or banned, and those who remained behind were silent, new literary works to provide inspiration for ballets were not readily forthcoming. This eventually forced choreographers to reexamine “acceptable” works, and Pushkin’s importance was soon established.

The Russian ballet became known as the Soviet ballet. While the Bolshoi retained its simple name, the Maryinsky was first renamed the State Academy of Ballet and Opera in 1917 and then renamed the Kirov Ballet after Kirov’s assassination in 1934. However, for the purpose of this paper and for simplification, the ballet companies will continue to be referred to as the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi. Also, the Soviet ballet will continue to be referred to as the Russian ballet because, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Soviet ballet again became the Russian ballet. Despite these name changes, these two companies retained their own individual identities and strengths.

To some it is a miracle that these Russian ballet organizations survived the destruction and restructuring necessitated by the October 1917 Revolution. The aftermath of the Revolution featured sweeping reforms and generally a feeling of not only “out with the old”, but “out with the foreign.” Ballet in Russia embodied several characteristics that were considered undesirable by the new Soviet regime. First, ballet was introduced in Russia by French, Italian, Danish and Swedish teachers brought in to teach at the Tsarist courts (Swift 1968, 5). Secondly, ballet had been enjoyed primarily by members of the elite classes and was strongly identified with, and supported by, the Imperial Court. During the tsarist era, seats were indeed difficult to come by. As noted by former dancer Tamara Karsavina:

A competition for seats, for the right to be a subscriber, well proved the interest it aroused. To obtain a seat, a petition to the Chancery of the Imperial Theatres had to be filed; the chance of success was so small that
big premiums were constantly offered by advertisement to the original holders of the stalls. The subscribers held tenaciously to their prerogative (Karsavina 1948, 125).

Why did ballet, a foreign elitist art, survive the cultural cleansing after the 1917 Revolution? There were two main reasons for its survival: Lenin and popular support. Both the Mayrinsky and Bolshoi Ballets were criticized for being antiquated, elitist, and out of step with the revolution. Others argued that ballet was part of Russia’s cultural past and should be preserved. Lenin, after struggling with his proletarian conscience defended ballet against those who urged its demise, including a Comrade A. V. Galkin:

It seems to me that Comrade Galkin has a somewhat naïve idea of the role of the significance of theatres. A theatre is necessary not so much for propaganda, as to rest hard workers after their daily work. And it is still early to file away in the archives our heritage from bourgeois art (Swift 1968, 5).

Furthermore, Lenin opposed demands for the complete rejection of the cultural past and told the Young Communist Organization in 1920:

Marxism has won its historical significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because, far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, it has, on the contrary, assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture. Only further work on this basis and in this direction, inspired by the practical experience of proletarian dictatorship…can be recognized as the development of genuine proletarian culture (McMahon 1985, 59).

It is possible that one key to the survival of Russian ballet during the 1917 Revolution lies in the fact that the audiences were not entirely aristocratic. Although seats were hard to come by, an enthusiastic lower-class audience attended the ballet. Again Karsavina asserted that:

Less pontifical, but hardly of smaller importance, were the lesser “balletomanes”, the pit and the gallery. They also crowned and dethroned. Erudition and the terminology of the ballet they may have lacked, but in spontaneity of admiration, in fantastical transports of young enthusiasm they far outstripped their colleagues of the stalls (Karsavina 1948, 126).

Neither the Maryinsky (Kirov) nor Bolshoi Ballets closed during the Revolution and subsequent civil war. Performances continued without heat, or other amenities, to full
houses. After a brief break in their seasons, caused by the chaotic aftermath of the Revolution, both ballet companies resumed performances to full houses. As Alexander Pleschevez, the senior St. Petersburg ballet critic noted in 1918:

This season I considered as a question of “to be or not to be?” for the ballet. The question of whether the ballet would survive on the state stage or would be wiped out as an amusement and caprice of its elect admirers, was in the air of the theatre. The new audience, the masses who flocked to the ballet after its liberation from the subscribers, took a definite stand: It valued the ballet and chose it as an accessible art…The popular audience is sensitive, responsive and perceptive (Souritz 1990, 44).

The Russian ballet had survived the immediate crisis, but still lacked leadership and inspiration.

Control of the imperial theatres, including the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi, was turned over to the Central Theatre Committee (Tsentroteatr) by a decree of the Council of People’s Commissars of August 26, 1919. Some theatres were allowed to remain autonomous, but the Tsentroteatr was charged with insuring that the repertoire of these theatres adhered to socialistic ideals (Swift 1968, 32-33). The president of the Tsentroteatr was Anatole Lunacharsky (1875-1933), the people’s commissar of education in the first Soviet cabinet under Lenin (Treadgold 1995, 182). By incorporating ballet under the auspices of the Soviets, ballet was ensured survival but lost much of its artistic freedom.

Although ballet in Russia weathered its rebirth surprisingly well, its adolescence proved difficult. Soviet censorship, general chaos in the newly created Soviet Union, and anti-utopian sentiments in the artistic communities complicated the development of Russian ballet in the 1920s and early 1930s. It would be the late 1930s before Russian ballet matured into a style and force of note.

Immediately after the Revolution, Soviet proponents for demolishing the ballet did not disappear, but redirected their criticism. These critics called for new Soviet ballets replacing tutus with overalls, swans with factory workers, and beautiful lyric music with pedestrian mechanical sound. Numerous new ballets were produced along these lines, but almost all had such short stage lives that they have been lost (Souritz 1990, 318).

Artistic censorship did not begin with the Soviet regime, it merely shifted emphasis. Prior to the Revolution, tsarist censorship policies restricted materials that
insulted personalities or disparaged religion, the government or morality. Russian artists were long accustomed to tempering their works within an acceptable range and generally acquiesced. Censorship under the Soviets was far more complicated and far more pervasive. It is not surprising that this censorship succeeded absolutely when one considers that government support of the arts was more important than ever since it was the only form of support available under the new Soviet system (Wallach 1991, 75).

During the 1920s, when art groups and censors under Lenin were less organized than later under Stalin, more experimental works appeared. At first, choreographers produced works that seemed to be exactly the kind of ballets that would be favorable to Soviet critics and the proletariat alike. In 1924 Fyodor Lopukhov (1888-1973), the director of the Maryinsky (Kirov) Ballet, produced the *Red Whirlwind*. Its purpose was to create an idealistic allegory expressing the greatness of the Revolution. However, the audience began leaving the theatre far before the end of the ballet and it only received two showings (Swift 1968, 63).

Kasyan Goleizovsky (1892-1970), a choreographer for the Bolshoi Ballet, produced a work which suffered a similar fate. Goleizovsky’s 1927 ballet, *Smerch*, strived to show capitalists opposing the world of the proletariat and the death of the old order. Again, the audience left before the ballet ended (Swift 1968, 68).

These are just two examples of the many experimental works produced during the 1920s that were unable to generate public enthusiasm and critical acclaim. Choreographers were trying to please the censors, critics and audience, while simultaneously distancing themselves from the choreographic traditions and practices of the past. The result was disastrous (Souritz 1990, 285).

After several failed attempts to please the masses with Soviet themed ballets, the Soviet critics were in an awkward position. The proletariat had demonstrated vividly by leaving the theatre that it preferred the old classics (still performing to sold-out houses) to works based on Soviet themes. Since the proletariat could not be at fault for its predilection, then fault had to lie with the choreographers. The price for failure was severe. In the magazine, *Workers and Theatres*, Lopukhov was accused of “artistic bankruptcy…of the ballet and an absolute lack of understanding of the tasks facing the Soviet Theatre” (Swift 1968, 66). He later practiced *samokritika* (self-criticism) and
confessed to his mistakes in a 1929 declaration. Goleizovsky’s works were declared to be “too impregnated with mysticism and erotics to meet with general recognition in the U.S.S.R.” (Swift 1968, 69). He was later “rehabilitated” and his ballet Don Quixote appears in today’s Bolshoi Ballet repertoire.

The previous brief review is just a microcosm of what befell numerous Soviet choreographers in the early 1920s. It is included to illustrate the difficulties inherent in producing successful Soviet ballets at this time.

Dance historians have debated why Russian choreographers in the 1920s chose such problematic subject matter for their works. Elizabeth Souritz claimed that it was a genuine desire to produce “Soviet” ballets reflecting societal changes and the new revolutionary spirit (Souritz 1990, 317). Serge Lifar and Mary Grace Swift disagreed noting that Soviet ballet was forced to experiment to survive. According to Lifar:

Soviet papers are quite ready to publish didactic articles dealing with ballet’s policy and what it ought to be, and this fact alone proves that Soviet ballet has its ideas imposed on it, it follows dictates which are foreign to art, and its evolution is unnatural, forced and artificial (Lifar 1954, 288).

Swift agreed with Lifar and stated that:

The question of whether such ballets have been produced spontaneously, without state or party insistence, scarcely seems worth examining. Russian artistic ability in music, dance, painting, and literature captured the admiration of the entire world long before the revolution; few could dispute the fact that the people have inherent good taste and artistic potential (Swift 1968, 291).

This difference of opinion resulted from a difference of perspective. As a Soviet citizen, Souritz was more likely to see the experimentation as voluntary compliance with new Soviet ideals, especially since this experimentation was not limited to dance. As non-Soviet citizens, Lifar and Swift would be less inclined to see the value of these unpopular works, because ballet in the West during the 1920s was breaking new ground and developing original choreographic styles through the works of Ballets Russes’ artists while modern dance was emerging as a powerful alternative to classical ballet.

Finally, on June 14, 1927, a new ballet, The Red Poppy, premiered and was praised by critics and enthusiasts alike. Its story concerned a Chinese tea house dancer
who sacrificed herself to save a Russian sailor. Although very popular, it was criticized for being choreographed in the “detestable old style” (Roslavleva 1966, 183). The music by Reinhold Gliere (1875-1956) was “charming but uninspired” and the choreography by Tikhominov still contained the antiquated act of divertissement (Lifar 1954, 300).

*The Red Poppy* was important to the progress of Russian ballet because it brought ballet in Russia to its next stage of development: the dramatic ballets of the 1930s (Roslavleva 1966, 218). It was prominent in the history of the Russian ballet because it was the first successful attempt to render a modern theme (the evils of imperial colonization) on a Soviet ballet stage (Slonimsky 1947, 19). Furthermore, it proved to be extremely popular and was performed one hundred times by December 23, 1928 (Souritz 1990, 251). However, its popularity declined and it was removed from the Bolshoi’s repertoire in 1960. It was initially successful because it bridged a gap between the old imperial ballet and the new socialist ballet, but was ultimately unable to survive as a classic:

In judging *The Red Poppy* now and taking into account the development of Soviet ballet for the following half-century, one can understand both its close ties with its own time and the influence it had on the future. Created at a turning point, the ballet had new qualities destined to become definitive during the 1930s. But there was also much in it that should have served as a warning. *The Red Poppy* proved that classical dance had a right to exist, particularly in the form of extended ensembles, complex choreographic structures, and the very form of the ‘grand ballet’ with divertissements. But the ballet also made it clear that it is impossible to limit dance to a copy of the old, that classical dance had to be enriched (Souritz 1990, 253).

Basically a melodrama in three acts, the lead character, the Chinese tea dancer Tao-Hoa, is touched by the Soviet captain’s humane actions towards a coolie and showers him with flowers, including a red poppy. They become friends (she begs him to take her to the Soviet Union but he declines), much to the chagrin of Tao-Hoa’s rival, Li Shan-Fu. The British harbor master, Sir Hips, fears the influence of the Russians (Soviets) on the Chinese, and plans to employ Shan-Fu to kill the captain. Tao-Hoa witnesses the knife attack, which the Captain survives, and takes opium to forget the horror of what she has witnessed. Next, Sir Hips plans to poison the Captain, but Tao-Hoa spills the poisoned
tea. In the final scene, the Soviet ship leaves at the same time as armed coolies begin a
revolt. During the chaos, Shan-Fu fatally shoots Tao-Hoa.

The libretto of The Red Poppy allowed for a tremendous amount of varied
divertissement. The sailors from different countries danced very athletic variations; the
Chinese tea dancers performed “exotic” Oriental dances; and the “decadent” Europeans
and Americans performed the Charleston and other popular social and vaudeville dances.
Tao-Hoa’s use of opium also allows for the inclusion of fantastic divertissement as she
hallucinates about goldfish growing to human size.

Many of the experimental works of the 1920s were performed only a few times.
The success of The Red Poppy can be attributed to its incorporation of classical ballet
conventions with a modern theme (Souritz 1990, 231-254).

Experimentation continued in the early 1930s. From 1930-31, St. Petersburg
(Leningrad) audiences saw three new ballets “that aroused opposition by their
‘misguided’ modernism” (Schwarz 1983, 74). The first was Footbolisty (The Football
Players) with choreography by Igor Moiseyev (b. 1906) and L.A. Lashchilin and music
by Victor Oransky. They were represented by fragments of revolutionary songs, while the
ignoble characters danced to jazz music. Ironically, the jazz music proved more popular
to the audiences. The score and choreography for Footbolisty are now both totally
forgotten but “More significant were the failures of two other ballets, both with music by
Shostakovich – Zolotoi Vek (The Golden Age) and Bolt, for they revealed the official
hostility towards artistic experimentation” (Schwarz 1983, 74). The Golden Age was
produced as the result of a libretto contest in 1929 won by cinema producer A. V.
Ivanovsky and was set at an industrial exhibit (that also included athletic events) in a
capitalist city. Choreographed by Vassily Vainonen (1901-1964), it included many
elements considered to be a positive representation of Soviet propaganda; Fascist athletes
behaving badly; a noble Negro saving a girl; corrupt capitalist referees; and, Soviet
athletes befriending the Negro, as well as other pro-Soviet themes. The ballet was
condemned by Soviet critics and audiences alike.

Bolt, referred to as “the first industrial ballet” in the Soviet Union was presented
in 1931 with choreography by Lopukhov. Its theme revolved around a male character, the
drunkard Lenka Tulba, who after being fired from his job, sabotaged a mill by placing a
bolt in it. As part of the ballet, dancers praised Soviet industrialization by imitating the movement of spinning machines, but also mocked industrialization with a dance by blacksmiths suggesting the old ways were preferable. The choreographer was also accused of denigrating the Soviet cavalry with the inclusion of dance in which a group of horsemen made galloping movements on stools (Swift 1968, 85-91) *Bolt* cost Lopukhov his position with the Maryinsky (Kirov) Ballet and redirected the path of Russian ballet. The music (by Shostakovich) was condemned as vulgar and commonplace. An outraged commentator claimed that:

*Bolt* is not simply a failure of one theatrical appearance…It is a failure witnessing the depravity of that method which continues to rule in ballet theatre and which graphically points out that its path, up to the present, lies hopelessly far from the general path of Soviet theatre. It seems…that *Bolt*—is a last warning (Swift 1968, 90).

This comment proved prophetic because Russian ballet was soon tied more closely to Soviet dictates and predilections.9

The period of experimentation came to an abrupt end on April 23, 1932, with the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party’s decree on the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic organizations. The decree dissolved all former organizations in the arts and organized all artists into central artists’ unions. Shortly thereafter, the Academy of the Arts was revived as the only route toward a professional career in the arts. The Academy espoused Socialist Realism as the only true art form. Finally, at the All-Union Conference of Soviet Writers in August, 1934, Socialist Realism became the only acceptable style for all the arts throughout the U.S.S.R. (Wallach 1991, 75).

According to Soviet writer and teacher Andrey Sinyavsky, Socialist Realism called for “A true, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Further it ought to contribute to the ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of Socialism” (Weber 1992, 425). Certainly, as Wallach notes, the definition provided for Socialist Realism was so vague and contradictory that it virtually required self-censorship by the artist (Wallach 1991, 76). The artist, unsure as to what was actually acceptable had to second-guess the censors while simultaneously examining their consciences. This uncertainty led to inconsistencies in artists’ works as they tried to find an acceptable vein in which to produce their art. Consequently, Russian
ballet under the Soviets developed in an erratic pattern until the combination of Pushkin’s thematic material and a resurgence of artistic talent combined to produce acclaimed ballets.

Many foreign observers thought that the new policy was a sign that Marxism in the Soviet Union was being replaced by Russian nationalism since it emphasized the Russification of the subject matter and the glorification of the U.S.S.R. at the expense of Marxist theory. This was not necessarily the case, but the tenets of Socialist Realism were so poorly defined that no one could easily interpret them. Stalin used Socialist Realism the same way he used Marxism; in whatever way he needed to in order to justify his actions:

The selective use of Russian nationalistic themes was permitted and even demanded, but they had to be themes which served the ends of Stalin and the Soviet state at the moment: defense of the fatherland, ruthlessness against domestic enemies, and the benefits of Moscow’s rules for the borderlands. Party policy in literature (as well as history and other branches of writing) used such themes to justify Stalin’s cruelties and stimulate “Soviet patriotism” by ostensibly expatiating on the heroic deeds of Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, and other early practitioners of social transformation by force (Treadgold 1995, 267).

Socialist Realism cannot be equated with Russian nationalism because some foreign writers were considered acceptable to read (Shakespeare, Dickens, Twain, for example), while many native Russian writers were banned (from time to time) including Fedor Dostoevsky (1821-1881). The works of Pushkin remained on the acceptable list throughout the Soviet era and helped to establish what has been called a “cult of literature” in the Soviet Union (Hosking 2004, 553).

To adhere to the dictates of Socialist Realism and appeal to audiences, Soviet choreographers during the 1930’s chose themes of noble passion, heroic deeds and romantic love. The next successful ballet and stepping stone for the development of Russian ballet was The Flames of Paris based on the French Revolution. Produced in 1933, it was the first experience in the Soviet Union with ballet dramaturgy and incorporated music, song and dance into one production. The Flames of Paris with music by Boris Asafiev (1884-1949) and choreography by Vainonen dealt with history, but provided the art with an action and interesting characters. Asafiev’s music was a montage
of orchestrated French Revolution songs and other French pieces which worked well with Vainonen’s character style of choreography. Asafiev’s music for the ballet was “compiled rather than composed. He used the music of the period—not only popular songs and dances of the Revolution, but also music by composers like Gossec, Gretry, and Mehul. The court of Louis XVI was depicted by using the music of Lully and Gluck” (Schwarz 1983, 150). It is ironic that a Soviet composer turned to imperial compositions for one of the first mildly successful ballets under the new Soviet regime.

With the Flaming of Paris a new development in the Soviet Ballet began; the need for male heroes as well as female. Female heroines dominated nineteenth-century and early twentieth century ballet. The titles alone provided a sense of the pervasiveness of the female in ballet; La Sylphide, Giselle, Coppelia, The Sleeping Beauty. Since the Soviet Union, at least in its propaganda, declared that men and women were equal, the same political view would be expressed in the arts. New heroes with new agendas and attributes were needed, which in turn began to change the nature and presentation of dance in the Soviet Union:

New heroes called for new ways of acting and new ways of dancing. Powerful leaps and sweeping breadth of movement, associated in the future with the style of Soviet choreography, were introduced by the choreographers in order to give their heroes visual semblance of the loftiness of spirit. A new type of ballerina was born, an expressive dancer, absorbing virtuosity technique for the purpose of complete freedom of stage performance. The very nature of dancing, whether male or female, became more energetic, sparkling, full of an optimistic attitude to life (Roslavleva 1966, 226).

Unlike The Red Poppy, The Flames of Paris looked to the past for subject matter. It concerns the 1792 French Revolution and incorporates scenes such as the peasant storming of Versailles and revolutionaries dancing in Parisian squares. The ballet includes numerous roles for both males and females, but the most prominent character is “Mirelle”, an actress (Bellev 1956, 39-42). Again, the libretto provided opportunities for divertissement, but to a lesser degree than in The Red Poppy; a ball at Versailles was interrupted by revolutionaries and lively dances were performed by Parisians in the streets. Much of the time, though, the corps de ballet merely watched the action (Lifar 1954, 302).
Although *The Red Poppy* and *The Flames of Paris* met with comparative success and remained in the Russian ballet repertoire for many years, neither can be considered unique Russian ballets as defined throughout this work. In both ballets, the main character remained female and non-Russian (Tao-Hoa, Chinese; and Mirelle, French) and the location portrayed was not in Russia but in either China or France. Although the composers for both ballets were Russian, they incorporated foreign themes and songs into their compositions. However, Russian nationalistic attitudes were reflected in both works.

In the case of *The Red Poppy*, Soviet attitudes toward the corrupt West and its policy of capitalistic imperialism were clearly expressed by the connection between the Russian captain and the Chinese girl against the immoral activities of the English harbor master. In *The Flames of Paris* the choreographer illustrated that the masses were triumphant over the despotic aristocracy, another popular Soviet theme of the time. Also, both ballets included special dance techniques and choreography that illustrate unique aspects of Russian dance. Specifically, these ballets were noted for the extreme athletic elements that were incorporated. The sailors in *The Red Poppy* and the revolutionaries in *The Flames of Paris* performed huge leaps and acrobatic tricks, thus initiating the change from Russian ballet as soft and effete to strong and vigorous. Russian music, national attitudes and choreographic characteristics were being incorporated into new works. However, missing were the strong Russian character, story, and location. Finding suitable stories had become increasingly difficult under the Soviet regime, which hampered the development of Russia’s unique ballet characteristics.

Two periods of experimentation illustrated the importance of finding a balance between suitable ideological content, music, and choreography that would yield a positive critical and audience response. Russian ballet endeavored to reflect the times and change the nature of ballet to fit its new standards and propagandist needs. V. I. Golubov noted the first experimental period ended with a hybrid ballet that was “realistic therefore it is worthy of praise: and so we had honest and clean little spectacles which were all timely and topical but you could smell bureaucracy and mothballs miles away” (Morley 1945, 17). Soviet ballet leaders discovered during this first experimental period of the 1920s that most citizens found the new experimental ballets to be inaccessible. They clearly demonstrated that they did not want propaganda in their ballets. Instead they
wanted easily understood story-lines and librettos danced superbly. Through ticket sales they voted to keep the old classics such as Swan Lake alive. According to A. Zvorykin, the second experimental period of the early 1930s aimed at “Improving the material bases of culture so as to make it possible to satisfy the basic cultural requirements of the population, fostering national artistic creation” (McMahon 1985, 59). As Stalin continued to consolidate his power and the concept of “national artistic creation” became more narrowly defined, the era of experimentation was over. Choreographers could not afford to experiment and fail because the ramifications were too costly. They were faced with finding “safe” subjects that also provided an opportunity for meaningful artistic expression.

With the new decrees fostered in the early 1930s which emphasized the importance of classical Russian literature as an essential part of the national heritage, artists began to look to Russian literature for inspiration. Choreographers endeavored to find satisfactory heroes suitable to survive Soviet censorship and proletarian criticism, while simultaneously fulfilling the dictates of Socialist Realism (Roslavleva 1966, 226). They combed Russian literary classics for suitable material and discovered that Pushkin’s subject matter, realistic style and problems with tsarist censors made him a favorite author of the Soviet government. Therefore Soviet choreographers freely and confidently created works based on Pushkin. This pleased the Soviet leaders who strove to convey the idea of a cultural continuum with Pushkin, Lermontov, and other great literary artists from Russia’s past (Swift 1968, 99).

One work must be included in this discussion that, although not uniquely Russian, is particularly significant. It is ironic that one of the most respected and praised works to emerge during the Soviet era was not based on a Russian theme, or set in a Russian location. The 1939/40 collaboration between Lavrovsky and Prokofiev resulted in the Russian/Soviet masterpiece, Romeo and Juliet. The Maryinsky (Kirov) dancers feared that the ballet would fail because the music was difficult to understand and dance, and because it did not include any divertissement. The opposite proved true and Romeo and Juliet immediately was a popular and critical success. A writer for Soviet Art proclaimed that, “The success of Romeo and Juliet, a production of rare beauty, content and interest, is not just an ordinary success for Leningrad ballet, it is a success for all of Soviet
choreography, and a testament to its colossal creative and ideological growth (Robinson 1987, 373).

Given the history of most new ballets in the Soviet Union, the success of *Romeo and Juliet* was almost a miracle. Perhaps the fact that the ballet was based on a non-Russian source set in the Middle Ages protected it from criticism. More likely, its success can be contributed to the collaborative genius of Shakespeare, Prokofiev and Lavrovsky. The Lavrovsky/Prokofiev *Romeo and Juliet* was significant for a number of reasons: 1) it was the first Shakespeare play to appear as a ballet in the Soviet Union; 2) it was the first multi-act ballet in the Soviet Union that was not interrupted by *divertissement* and variations for its stars; 3) it was the first Russian/Soviet ballet to be presented in the West (where it also was critically and popularly acclaimed); and, 4) it became the first full-length Russian/Soviet ballet to be filmed in its entirety (Leyda 1956, 31). The 1954 film version, which won a Video Review VIRA Award in 1986 for its exceptional quality, showed the West that the Russian/Soviet ballet was different from its Western counterparts. Two characteristics set it apart and were particularly notable in this film production: 1) the need for very strong actors and actresses; and, 2) the sheer physical strength required to execute the difficult lifts (where the female dancer is lifted overhead by the male) in the choreography and enact the fight scenes. Westerners, who were unaccustomed to seeing so many strong male dancers, were surprised by the athleticism required by the choreography.

It is obvious that *Romeo and Juliet* did not meet the qualifications as a unique Russian ballet as defined in this paper. The ballet was based on a foreign author’s tale in a foreign city with foreign characters and no peculiarly Russian nationalistic attitudes are reflected in work. *Romeo and Juliet* was composed and choreographed by Russians and in two important areas it did further the development of uniquely Russian ballet characteristics. Specifically, the ballet has both strong male and female roles. In fact there are more roles for men in *Romeo and Juliet* than for women. The choreography is unique because it does not have separated solos for the ballerina, nor does it contain *divertissement*. Its choreography is also unique because it requires great athletic ability of the men who must fence convincingly and be capable of executing very difficult lifts.
Finally, it calls for conveying a story without the use of conventional mime. The dancers must perform simultaneously as ballet technicians and excellent actors.

Despite the success of *Romeo and Juliet*, choreographers were urged to find Russian sources for their ballets. They were advised to follow the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism, which means they should be mindful of the principle of *narodnost*. The word *narod* means “nation” or “folk” in Russian, and was used after the Revolution by artists to draw attention to Russia’s cultural heritage. However, in the early days of the Revolution *narodnost* was not so important. Soviet writers and artists could produce works “in accordance with the internationally-minded principles of Karl Marx, who wanted a worldwide rule by the proletariat and the abolition of national boundaries, thus precluding nationalism” (Swift 1968, 3). This partially explained why choreographers were comfortable producing non-Russian works in the early years including *The Red Poppy* and *The Flames of Paris*. In contrast, while Stalin was consolidating his power and facing growing German strength, historians, writers and artists were charged with exalting the national past. Furthermore the Stalinist slogan called for works that were “socialist in content and national in form” (Swift 1968, 4). Choreographers felt compelled to look to Russian heroes and writers for acceptable content while simultaneously hoping for inspiration. As the constraints on artists continued to intensify, the importance of finding suitable material increased.

In the following years numerous ballets appeared based on Russian literary works, in particular those of Pushkin. During the first half of the twentieth century over fifteen new ballets were created based on Pushkin themes, although not all of the ballets were produced for the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi Ballets (Roslavleva 1966, 264). These included another version of *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1938), *Mistress into Maid* (1946), *Tale of a Priest and His Workman Balda* (1924; 1940), *The Stone Guest, The Stationmaster, Tale of the Dead Tsarevna and the Family of Bogatyrs, Gypsies* (1937), *Cleopatra* (1926), *The Bronze Horseman* (1949), *The Queen of Spades*, and most importantly, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (1934) (Roslavleva 1966, 98). However, most of these ballets met with little success because either the critics or the populace did not appreciate them and few remain in Russian ballet repertoire today. Those ballets with an
enduring legacy, which helped to shape the future of Russian ballet will be discussed for the purpose of this paper.

Ballet is often difficult to research because of its mercurial nature. No universally adopted notation system exists that allows for preserving a written copy of the production. Ballets can be videotaped today, but the perspective of the stage is lost. In essence, once a ballet has left the stage, that specific performance is gone forever. Further complications arise when trying to research this elusive art in a country isolated by geography and ideology. The Soviet Union was too secretive to share the development of its arts with many. Furthermore, the hardship of travel to this area discouraged the casual visitor.

The Pushkin-based works that will be examined were all produced during the Soviet era, which complicates the research process, because videotaping early works was impossible and writers were silent. This is not to imply that no scholarly research exists concerning dance in the Soviet Union. Several valuable resources are available. However, there are three general drawbacks associated with these sources: 1) they are often “survey” works and superficially cover large amounts of material and an expansive time period; 2) they are largely written by non-Russians with limited access to primary source materials; and, 3) they are mostly older, dated works that pre-date the fall of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, when a work is produced by a Soviet citizen, it is often an anthology of favorable articles by dancers or critics making the work so obviously biased as to be discredited as a reliable source. In other words, while dance criticism was an emerging field in the West, it was almost unheard of in the Soviet Union. Lifar explains that for almost the first thirty years of ballet under the Soviets very little was written concerning the art because:

...in Soviet Russia every new tendency is judged by contemporary political standards. There is an enormous difference here; social demands have always existed everywhere, but they have nothing to do with political dictates which are fatal to art. The Soviet ideology is extremely fickle, and thus criterions are continually changing; one night a ballet will be a great success, the next day it suddenly becomes an ‘intolerable choreographic false note.’ Under these circumstances there are two alternatives: either the ballet critic must risk being deported, or else find himself flatly contradicting his own words. And so most critics take the only safe and possible way out, they keep silent.
This is not so in Western Europe, but here it is impossible to write a history of Soviet ballet because of the lack of sufficient material. In fact Soviet ballet and art are guilty of such narrow isolationism that it is almost impossible for us to know what goes on behind the Iron Curtain. If sometimes a chance work should appear (usually in English), it is so openly ‘inspired’, so prejudiced, that little reliance can be placed in it. Soviet historians prefer to depict things as they ought to be, to their way of thinking, and not as they really are.

Thus it is almost impossible for us to paint a picture of Soviet ballet, and still more to study the trends of its development (Lifar 1954, 287).

The purpose of emphasizing this point is that sometimes ballets appear and quickly disappear without explanation. So little is written about some works it is often impossible to determine what caused their failure or success. This makes the ballets that did meet with success and are discussed during Soviet tenure particularly important, and many of them are based on works by Pushkin. Pushkin becomes the link between the triumphs of ballet under the tsars and the creation of a viable and healthy ballet under the Soviets.

Traditionally, part of a choreographer’s work is to push to find new modes of expression. Under the Soviets, choreographers could only push the envelope so far. However, choreographers, by experimenting with Pushkin themes, no matter how unsuccessful the result, furthered the development of Russian ballet. Pushkin’s descriptive text, large volume of work and varied story-lines or themes provided many opportunities for creating a successful work. The best “fit” occurred with Pushkin’s *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (1934). Although this ballet was one of the first to be successfully produced under the Soviets based on a work by Pushkin, it will be discussed last because it remains a vital part of Russian ballet repertoire today.

One of the first Soviet ballets produced using a Pushkin work was *The Tale of the Priest and His Workman Balda* (1924). Because of its anti-clerical theme Pushkin’s poem was subject to severe tsarist censorship and published posthumously (1882). The story ridicules a Russian Orthodox priest who hires a seemingly simple peasant, Balda (“Blockhead”). Balda works hard for very little, but after his work is completed he is allowed to give the priest three “blows”, or punches. Balda hits the priest and sends him to his heavenly reward. The Soviet leadership liked the ballet because it
illustrated the people’s retribution against exploitation and because it furthered Lenin’s attempts to separate the populace from the Orthodox Church and other organized religions (Swift 1968, 147). Very little is written about the original work and the choreographer remains unknown. Although a new version was presented by the Leningrad Little Opera (Maly) in 1940 with choreography by Vladimir Varkovitsky and music by Mikhail Chulaki, again, very little written evidence is available concerning the work. Regardless, the ballet most likely appealed to Soviet censors but found little popular support with audiences and eventually disappeared from Soviet repertoires. Two other ballets based on Pushkin themes premiered during the late 1930s and 1940s, both with choreography by Rostislav Zakharov (b.1907). In 1938 he created a new version of The Prisoner of the Caucasus and choreographed Mistress into Maid (1946). Both works were composed by Asafiev and were short-lived. Pushkin continued to inspire Zakharov. Of his twenty-eight ballets, seven are based on subjects provided by Pushkin, including the extremely successful The Fountain of Bakhchisarai (1934), which will be discussed later in this chapter (Roslavleva 1966, 231).

Although not the first Pushkin-based Socialist Realism ballet, one ballet in particular, The Bronze Horseman, allowed Russian/Soviet choreographers to experiment with a new and unusual theme for ballet. The poem deals with establishing the city of St. Petersburg for Peter the Great. Due to its marshy location, building the city cost many human lives and great hardship. The Soviet description of the ballet noted that it personified the tsarist state, which exploited the masses (Swift 1966, 146).

The Bronze Horseman was first produced in 1949 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Pushkin’s birth and was performed at both the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi theatres. According to Moscow dance critic Juri Slonimsky, the ballet, although popular with the censors, was not equal to the poem (Slonimsky 1956, 68). In fact, the composer, Reinhold Gliere, when approached about writing the music reportedly stated that “The Pushkin plot interests me greatly, but excuse me for my frankness, I can’t imagine how a ballet can be made out of the poem The Bronze Horseman” (Nepomnyashchyy 2000, 61). Gliere was no stranger to successful ballet music, having composed The Red Poppy, nor was he unfamiliar with working with Pushkin themes; in 1926 he wrote the music for Cleopatra based on Pushkin’s Egyptian Nights. However,
the subject matter of the poem did seem daunting to both the composer and choreographer and the ballet became more of a love story between the two main characters, Eugene and Parasha, than a faithful representation of the poem (Slonimsky 1956, 68).

Both the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi Ballets produced versions of *The Bronze Horseman* in 1949. A brief description of the Bolshoi version appears here because the Maryinsky (Kirov) ballet eventually adopted it after discarding its own version. *The Bronze Horseman* was a ballet in four acts, six scenes, and a prologue of three scenes. As the number of acts and scenes suggests, it was a massive ballet. The prologue concerned Peter’s founding of the city of St. Petersburg as the new capital. The three scenes of the prologue show him selecting the site, launching ships from the new port and holding a ball at the summer palace. Then in act one the action jumps to 1824 and the gay city life that Pushkin enjoyed. Eugene arrives in Senate Square looking for his love, Parasha. She is late and does not arrive to meet him until almost midnight. In act two, Eugene visits Parasha at her home on the island of Vassilevsky. Heavy clouds gather and Eugene leaves for home before the Neva bridges are raised. During act three a great storm arrives with torrential rains. Eugene returns to Senate Square where people are gathered to watch the rising river. Many flee in terror, but Eugene decides to canoe to Vassilevsky to save Parasha. He discovers that her house is destroyed and that she is dead and returns to the square. Mad with grief, Eugene circles the bronze statue of Peter the Great, The Bronze Horseman. He blames the tsar for having the audacity to carve a city out of a marsh. As his madness increases, Eugene believes he hears Peter pursuing him on horseback. Eugene dies but the city continues to thrive, illustrating the tsar’s interest in preserving and strengthening the state at the expense of the common citizen (Bellew 1956, 73-81).

Pushkin completed the poem in 1833, but it was not published until after his death in 1837, and then with considerable censorship. The poem was based on an account of a real flood that occurred in 1824 and was paradoxical because it simultaneously praised Peter for his daring leadership and accomplishments, but also condemned him for the loss of life associated with building his new capital (Arndt 1984, 423).

The libretto, created by P. F. Abolimov, deviated from the original poem in several instances, particularly in the prologue. Abolimov expanded the prologue to
include fragments of ideas from other Pushkin works including *The Blackamoor of Peter the Great* and *A Little House in Kolomna* which allowed for a “full-blown panorama of the Petrine period” (Nepomnyashchchy 2000, 64). There were differences between the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi versions, particularly concerning the treatment of the prologue. The prologue in the Maryinsky (Kirov) version was much shorter than that of the Bolshoi version, which seems ironic given the fact that the Maryinsky (Kirov) ballet was located in Peter’s city. The Maryinsky (Kirov) version opened very simply with the depiction of a monument to Pushkin on a “thematic” curtain followed by a simple scene on stage concerning the meeting of Eugene and Parasha. In the Maryinsky (Kirov) version the couple took dominance, while in the Bolshoi version, the state and state spectacle prevailed. The ballets ended differently, too. The Kirov version concluded with Eugene’s death followed by an epilogue in which Gliere’s “Hymn to a Great City” was played while the audience viewed the curtain with the picture of Pushkin’s statue. The Bolshoi version’s final scene returned to Senate Square, which was dominated by a symbol of imperialism and the power of state, the Bronze Horseman.

Catherine Nepomnyashchchy asserts that this difference in staging resulted from the different experiences of each city. During the World War II, the people of Leningrad (St. Petersburg) endured terrible deprivations caused by the German siege. Millions died of starvation, but the city never surrendered to the Germans. The city became a symbol of Soviet durability, but also of individual heroism. Moscow, which is located much further east, also experienced shortages, but certainly not to the degree of Leningrad. The citizens of Leningrad hoped that, having survived their horrific ordeal, they would be allowed some extra privileges or relaxed censorship. The opposite proved true. In August 1946 the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party attacked two Leningrad journals and began the Leningrad purges and campaign against “cosmopolitanism”. Stalin, ever paranoid but made more so by Hitler’s deceit, could not allow the leaders of Leningrad to become political threats. He purged the competition and reminded Leningrad that it was the second city in the Soviet Union (Nepomnyashchchy 2000, 67-69).

The differing versions of *The Bronze Horseman* reflected the varied attitudes of the cities. The Leningrad version focused on the individual and personal suffering, while
the Bolshoi version glorified the state as an institution, supreme over individuals. This made *The Bronze Horseman* ballet particularly important at the time even though it is non-existent today. The two opposing versions reflected the positions of the cities involved and proved a powerful reminder of who had control of the state. *The Bronze Horseman* was used to promote the anniversary of a Russian/Soviet hero (Pushkin) while simultaneously reasserting Moscow and Stalin as supreme:

So why was the sesquicentennial of Pushkin’s birth, which coincided with Stalin’s campaign against “Cosmopolitanism” and the Leningrad purges designed to reduce the city and the memories of its sufferings to second rank, celebrated with a ballet ostensibly dedicated to Petersburg, a ballet for which Gliere won the State Prize in 1950? Perhaps it is not too whimsical to suggest that the fate of the concluding music to the ballet, “The Hymn to a Great City,” suggests a further answer. Adopted as the unofficial anthem of Leningrad, the music was played *ad nauseam* in public parks and played in the Leningrad train station on the arrival of the Red Arrow express from Moscow. I would suggest, then, that the ballet, like its concluding hymn, rendered the trials and heroism in the war and perhaps even the risky cultural “foreignness” of Leningrad banal, adapting and thereby reabsorbing them into an ordered and therefore acceptable national narrative which left the center, Moscow and Stalin (synonymous with the state), safely in place with Leningrad, like Muradeli’s Georgia, relegated to the periphery (Nepomnyashchy 2000, 69).

Although *The Bronze Horseman* is of little import today, it is significant for several reasons. First, the choice of a Pushkin-based theme reasserted that Pushkin’s influence should not be overlooked or discounted. Indeed “Pushkin becomes a touchstone for the emblematic peculiarities of Soviet culture, most notably the throwing together of those strange bedfellows mass and “elite” art and the dogged primacy of the literary text in the visual and musical media” (Nepomnyashchy 2000, 61). In other words, Pushkin’s talents continued to link Russian written word with Russian performing arts. Secondly, the fact that a ballet whether, knowingly or unknowingly, was used as a political tool emphasizes the important role ballet played in the propaganda and psyche of the Soviet Union. This brings us to a significant point: despite the hardships of the German siege, the Maryinsky (Kirov) Ballet was in a position to stage new works almost immediately after the war.

During the early part of World War II ballet performances continued in Moscow until the majority of the company was moved to Kuibyshev. Iris Morley, an English reporter, noted that while stationed in Moscow for ten months, she had the opportunity to
see the Bolshoi Ballet three times. The Maryinsky (Kirov) Ballet dancers were evacuated to the Urals for the greater part of the siege\textsuperscript{19}, but returned quickly at the end of it (Morley 1945, 8-20). The removal of the ballet from Leningrad might have signaled a convenient time to dismantle such a former imperial institution, but the opposite proved true. Morley noted that in the winter of 1944, although the siege was over, Leningrad was not rejoicing. Leningrad was free but “…looking at the faces of the people in the street we chiefly saw the cost and what it would mean getting back to health, what the journey itself would mean” (Morley 1945, 12).

Morley and other foreign correspondents completed tours of the battlefields and other historical parts of Leningrad before touring the greatly damaged Maryinsky (Kirov) Theatre. Whereas other parts of the city were quiet and somber, the area surrounding the theatre was alive with people and workers. Red Army men were laying bricks, girls were laughing, and the auditorium was full of scaffolding. The army had lent the theatre two hundred men and declared its reconstruction a priority. The theatre was scheduled to open May 1\textsuperscript{st}, approximately three months later, and apparently was an important, tangible manifestation that Leningrad had survived and would return to its former glory. Having witnessed this Morley questioned how:

…if this were an English city the desperate desire of the people for some public recommencement of life would manifest itself and I come to the conclusion most likely in a football match or at least some kind of sport. In Russia the collective belief in life, civilization, art—call it what you like—takes the form of dance. That in essence is why the Kirov theatre is in Leningrad and not in London (Morley 1945, 13).

Morley recognized that Russian/Soviet ballet was different from its counterpart in England; it was a more integral part of Russian/Soviet culture. Not only had Russian/Soviet ballet proven itself to be worthy of existence in post-revolutionary Russia and post-war Soviet Union, it was being recognized as special by non-Russians.

Immediately following the war, and prior to the premiere of The Bronze Horseman, several new ballets were produced, but mostly in the naturalistic style and with war themes, with one notable exception: Cinderella, with choreography by Zakharov and music by Prokofiev which appeared in November, 1945, at the Bolshoi (Bellew 1956, 155). In the case of the former works, very little is known about them.
which makes it difficult to determine what characteristics included in the works would have furthered the development of Russian ballet. In the case of the latter work, Cinderella, a great deal is known because it remains in the repertoire of both ballet institutions. In the original version, female dancers performed in heeled shoes, not pointe shoes. That convention has changed, but the story remains the same familiar fairy tale. Cinderella does not incorporate many of the aspects as defined in this paper to identify a unique Russian ballet. The main character is female, as opposed to male; the location is not in Russia; no particular nationalistic attitudes are reflected in the work; and, the choreography essentially follows the classical model. The music, however, was composed by a Russian. Prokofiev, remembering the difficulty the dancers had understanding and appreciating the music for Romeo and Juliet, conscientiously chose to follow a classical model to make it more accessible to dancers. It features beautiful lyrical motifs for Cinderella, the Prince and the Fairy Godmother and has been used by choreographers worldwide, although the choreography has not been exported with it (Maes 2002, 328-329).

It seems odd that non-Russian themed ballets such as Romeo and Juliet and Cinderella remained in the repertoires of Russian/Soviet ballet companies while other works choreographed specifically because of their very Russianness were removed. Apparently some important feature or ingredient was missing, such as interesting choreography or enduring theme that made them short-lived.

With two different versions of The Bronze Horseman presented and one, the Bolshoi, being adopted as definitive, it is intriguing that the ballet is not part of the Maryinsky (Kirov) or Bolshoi repertoires today. By most accounts, if nothing else, the stage effects were brilliant. Zakharov used a simple device to create the flood; a large tarpaulin covered the stage with people moving under it to create waves. Lighting was important to the scene, but the choreography also was carefully arranged and well rehearsed so that furniture, logs, boats, etc. are carried away by the “flood waters” (Nepomnyashchy 2000, 66).

However, what appeared to be lacking was a strong choreographic style and opportunities for brilliant dancing:
Judging by photographs and criticisms, it is essentially a fantasy, with mime and décor playing a leading role at the expense of the dancing. The scene where the water reaches the Horseman’s statue ... may be beautiful and majestic, but it seems unlikely that the flotsam and the roofs are capable of dancing. And the last tableau, where the ‘Pioneers’ place a crown on the Horseman’s head (Peter the Great) cannot be very balletic either (Lifar 1954, 305).

Therefore, although Pushkin’s subject matter was considered acceptable for new ballets, it was no guarantee for a success.

So little is written, at least in English, about The Priest and His Workman Balda, The Prisoner of the Caucasus and Mistress into Maid that it is difficult to ascertain which aspects of these works caused them to fail and what, if any, characteristics might have furthered the development of a uniquely Russian ballet. Suffice it to say, however, that they were experimental works that allowed for introduction of new subject material. No longer were supernatural creatures represented on stage, or foreign locations featured. In the case of these works, and that of The Bronze Horseman, the subject matter now consisted of mortal human beings and their experiences. However, more of the identifiable Russian characteristics were beginning to appear in these ballets. With the exception of Mistress into Maid the main roles were becoming evenly divided among males and females and were for Russian characters. Even in the case of Mistress into Maid, the lead male role was significant. Briefly, Liza, the mistress, disguises herself as a maid in order to meet a young nobleman, Alexey, of whom her father does not approve because the families have quarreled. Liza, using the name Akulina, meets Alexey and they fall in love. After a riding accident in which Liza’s father is saved by Alexey’s father and the families are reconciled, Alexey is invited to Liza’s house for dinner. She disguises herself as an old woman to attend the dinner and her father, who dotes on her, finds Liza’s charade amusing. Alexey is told he must marry the elderly Liza. He arrives at the house to find Liza undisguised and the lovers are reunited (Yarmolinsky 1936, 530-555).

The narodnost required to comply with Socialist Realism was evident in these works. The action in all four ballets occurs in Russia and the ballets are choreographed and composed by Russians. Since the ballets deal with Russian citizens, Russian nationalistic attitudes were reflected in the works, but to varying degrees. Mistress into
Maid was basically a simple love story of mistaken identities, but an extreme reading through the lens of Socialist Realism might suggest an argument that the aristocracy was fickle and easily deceived. The libretto of The Prisoner of the Caucasus has been discussed previously (in Chapter Four), but with its main character deserting from his army regiment and his un-heroic treatment of the Circassian girl (resulting in her death), it could be argued that he was an anti-Soviet hero because he placed his personal freedom above all else. The popularity of The Priest and His Workman Balda with the Soviets centered upon its ridicule of the church. However, this may not reflect a “Russian” nationalistic attitude as much as a “Soviet” one. The poem was always controversial; praised by some for its sense of humor and daring, and condemned by others for its disparagement of religion and an historical institution. Under the tsars it was withheld from publication (although it had been widely read by Pushkin’s friends), while it was promoted by Soviet leaders. What the average citizen thought about the poem is unclear, but if the general population was offended by it, this sentiment might account for some of its unpopularity as a ballet. The nationalistic attitudes of The Bronze Horseman have been discussed previously, but are worth repeating in this context. The Maryinsky (Kirov) version reflected the horrors of Leningrad’s war experience and emphasized the power of the individual. The Bolshoi version glorified the state and reiterated the need for strong leadership, thus establishing a direct link between Peter and Stalin. The latter version prevailed, poignantly illustrating the power of the state over the individual in Soviet Russia.

To reiterate, these works are based on Russian stories by a Russian writer in Russian locations with Russian characters. The very Russianness of the stories provided an opportunity to express Russian nationalistic attitudes, whether pro-individual or pro-state. Furthermore, the ballets were composed, choreographed and danced by Russians. However, although the importance of the male role was present, what were missing include the strong choreographic structures and pronounced dancing style that have become identified with Russian ballet. Based on what is known about these ballets, they lack the following uniquely Russian choreographic characteristics as previously defined: 1) the use of elaborate floor patterns, or khovorod; 2) an opportunity for the lead dancers
to utilize the expressive use of the arms or \textit{port de bras}; 3) extremely athletic male dancing; and, 4) spectacular lifts.

To conjecture, the ballets may have failed because, although the subject matter, composers, choreographers and dancers were acceptable, they were so stripped of actual dance that they were no longer the best representations of Russian ballet. Also, in the case of \textit{The Bronze Horseman}, the change in political climate may have hastened its removal from the repertoire. If the ballet was associated with Stalin, after his death and Nikita Khrushchev’s (1894-1971) 1956 “secret speech,”\textsuperscript{21} it may have been one of the many pro-Stalin entities (city names, etc.) that disappeared.\textsuperscript{22}

But aPushkin-related ballet masterpiece was created much earlier than \textit{The Bronze Horseman} and is still part of the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi Ballet repertoires today. \textit{The Fountain of Bakhchisarai} (1934) premiered two years after Socialist Realism was officially adopted as the acceptable standard for the Soviet arts in 1932, but avoided many of the pitfalls associated with producing a ballet under the new guidelines. This may have occurred because the dictates of Socialist Realism were so new and difficult to interpret and, therefore, equally difficult to conscientiously incorporate into a work, that the collaborators ignored them. The enduring success of the ballet was also enhanced by the artistic maturity and talents of the collaborators who had survived the experimentation of the 1920s and achieved a definitive advance in Russian/Soviet ballet. The ballet first appeared in Leningrad in 1934 with music by Asafiev, libretto by I. S. Volkhov and choreography by Zakharov and was produced in Moscow by the Bolshoi Ballet in 1936 (Bellew 1956, 27). The collaborators were all respected veterans in their related fields and Pushkin’s genius, although posthumously, further strengthened the collaborative effort.

Pushkin completed \textit{The Fountain of Bakhchisarai} in 1823 and it was published the following year. The inspiration for the poem came from Pushkin’s “southern exile” where he spent most of his time in Bessarabia and Odessa. He was influenced by the “Islamic spell” cast by the newly Russian southern territories including the Caucasus, the Crimea, and Cossack borderlands with Turkey and wrote the most “oriental” of his verses there.\textsuperscript{23} While in Bessarabia he visited the ruined palace of the Crimean Khans at the site of their ancient capital \textit{Bahcesaray}, which in Turkish means “garden palace”. All that
was left of the once-famous garden and fountain was a cast-iron pipe emitting a faint trickle of water (Arndt 1984, 247).

Bakhchisarai is located twenty miles northwest of Yalta in the Crimea and has become a tourist attraction thanks to Pushkin. The original palace was built in 1518 and burned by Russian soldiers in 1735, but the man who inspired Pushkin was Kirim Giray Khan, who led Tatar raids during the 1760s. The Khan’s wife was poisoned and he ordered the construction of the Fountain of Tears in her honor in 1764. Catherine the Great had the palace rebuilt in 1787, but it had fallen into disrepair by the time Pushkin visited it in 1820. Alexander I restored the palace yet again.

The palace was occupied and controlled by many different groups over the centuries. In the eighteenth-century when Russia was at war with the Turks, General Aleksandr Suvorov, commander of the Russian forces, used the palace as his military headquarters thus “…the Bakhchisarai palace became a symbol for Russian nationalism as well as an object of Crimean Tatar identity” (Rupen 1999). During World War II it was occupied by Germans until 1944 and Stalin declared that “…the Tatars had helped the German occupiers. The Crimean Tatars became one of the so-called punished peoples, non-Russian minority ethnic groups exiled to Central Asia” (Rupen 1999).

Pushkin’s influence saved the palace from destruction. Once the Crimean Tatars were deported the Soviets, true to form, began giving cities new Russian names. Bakhchisarai became Puszkinsk and the Soviets discussed plans to destroy the palace. The Moscow authorities recognized that they could not rename the now famous Fountain of Bakhchisarai and abandoned their scheme to deny the Tatars an historic site. To further complicate the area’s identity, in 1954 Khrushchev transferred the area from the Russian Republic to the Ukraine. The Soviet Union saw them as Russian nationals, while the Tatars preferred a separate identity. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Tatars returning to the area have expressed their interest in being independent (Rupen 1999).

Despite the dismal condition of the ruined palace and garden in 1820, Pushkin used his imagination to create a hauntingly beautiful poem evocative of the “Eastern” poems of the English romantics but without creating clichéd characters:

Rhetorical queries re-launch the plot at intervals, and an epilogue of author’s reminiscing in present time sustains the general note of wistful lyricism and the power of highly musical, wonderful mellifluous verse.
This last quality, and the absence of any hero, other than all-assuaging time, separate the poem from Byron’s stereotypic figures and his slap-dash poetics (Arndt 1984, 247).

Thus the collaborators were able to capitalize on Pushkin’s carefully-drawn characters without being restricted by their specific characteristics. The three main characters from the poem consist of Khan Girey, Maria (an aristocratic Polish maiden kidnapped for the Khan’s harem) and Zarema, who serves as the harem’s “queen” and was kidnapped earlier from an unknown location.

The collaborators also were able to utilize Pushkin’s beautiful visual descriptions of the Khan’s palace and gardens as an unlikely backdrop for such intense human sadness. Pushkin provided counterpoint between the beauty of the location and the misery of its three main inhabitants. He described the beauty of the night in the following passage:

> How rich the night of Orient sky
> How lush the shaded splendor of it!
> How genially its hours flow by
> For the disciples of the Prophet!
> Sweet languors from their arbors well,
> In their enchanted lodgement dwell,
> Their harem, safe in stout defenses,
> Where by the magic of the moon
> All throbs in a mysterious swoon,
> Voluptuous rapture of the senses! (Arndt 1984, 259)

The three protagonists are oblivious to the enchantment of their environment. Khan Girey, 24 who was victorious in battle, and with an entire harem at his disposal, cannot be roused from his melancholy:

> No—he has tired of armored fame,
> That formidable arm is tame;
> The lure of stratagems has faded.
> Should rank defilement have invaded
> His harem on betrayal’s spoor,
> A child of charms enchanted have traded
> Her ardent heart to a giaour? (Arndt 1984, 252)

His followers are concerned and unsure of how to treat the master:

> What sorrows marks the Ruler’s bearing?
> The hookah wafts its fumes no more;
The Eunuch, not a tremor daring,
Awaits his signal at the door.
The pensive potentate has risen,
The portals gape. In silence grim
He enters the secluded prison
Of wives but lately dear to him. (Arndt 1984, 254)

Similar passages occur throughout the poem, moving backward and forward in time, thus providing a clear picture of the khan’s power over men, but his lack of power over his own feelings toward women.

Zarema had been the chosen wife until the arrival of the new captive, Maria. The two women are opposites: Zarema is dark and spirited, while Maria is pale and timid. Their desires also are opposites. Zarema desperately wants the attentions of the khan and Maria, equally desperately, does not. The khan is smitten by the pale, beautiful new arrival, Maria, and spurns his former lover. Thus Pushkin establishes a heart-breaking love triangle between the khan, Zarema and Maria against a backdrop of natural beauty.
Zarema, as despondent as the khan, laments the loss of Girey:

They sing . . . Zarema, though, is far,
The Harem’s queen, love’s brightest star!—
Alas, all pale and overwrought,
She does not hear her praise. Distraught,
A palm by tempest bent and spread,
She sadly hangs her lovely head.
No thing can hearten her or spur:
Girey has ceased from loving her.

Betrayed! . . . But how can one believe you
Excelled in charms? By whom conceive you
Outshone? Around your lily brow is laid
A double coil of raven braid;
Your wonder-working eyes seem able
To blind the day, make night more sable;
Who sounds with fuller voice than you
The transports of enflamed desire? (Arndt 1984, 255)

Conversely, Maria wants nothing to do with Girey or with the other women. Girey, overcome by Maria’s grief and weeping, as well as her beauty, does not force her to join the harem. This confirms Zarema’s belief that he no longer loves her. He has made special allowances for the new fair maiden:
This Khan’s serial is now confining,
O grievous thought! the young princess,
Mute bondage has Maria pining
In tears of utter hopelessness.
Girey indulges her distress:
Her laments, sobs, despairing pleas
Disturb the Potentate’s brief slumber,
And he has waived for her a number
Of the Seraglio’s stern decrees. (Arndt 1984, 257)

Zarema leaves the harem at night, oblivious to the beautiful moon-lit scene, and goes to Maria’s chamber. She beseeches Maria to spurn Girey and explains that she also was kidnapped from a Christian home, but had come to love Girey as her husband. Maria is unable to reassure Zarema that she has no interest in the Khan and turns away from her. Zarema stabs Maria in the back, and she dies of the wound. Girey witnesses the attack and has Zarema “cast to the waters’ silent swirl. The very night the Princess died,” (Arndt 1984, 264). Khan Girey resumes his raiding and battles, but with a heavy heart. He returns to the palace and erects a marble fountain in Maria’s honor. The poem ends with a visit by the narrator who questions whether the “shades” of Maria and Zarema haunt the area.

Pushkin’s poem contains several conventions of Romanticism. It is set in an “exotic” location with abundant local color. He incorporates nature and the possibility of the supernatural in the work. He also includes sunlight and moonlight scenes. However, the ballet does not follow the conventions of Romantic ballet.

The ballet differs from the poem because it adds elements that are needed to transform a relatively short poem into a full, evening-length ballet. The ballet consists of one prologue and four acts and is set in the eighteenth-century. It opens with a scene simply showing a marble fountain in a golden alcove with a motionless figure in golden robes and a spiked helmet kneeling before it. The opening picture of the prologue fades to act one which takes place in the garden of an eighteenth century Polish mansion. Before the actual dancing begins, a shrouded creature is chased into the woods by Polish guards, which foreshadows coming events. Maria appears searching for the young man she loves. He is given the name Vatslav, although he does not exist in Pushkin’s poem. Maria and Vatslav are dressed in white which symbolizes the innocence of their love “And when
Ulanova dances Maria the limpid arabesques, the rhythmical pauses in the lifts, become those dreams and half-realised raptures which are part of falling in love the first time (Morley 1945, 40). Maria’s father and guests arrive and they lead a polonaise followed by a kracovienne. Maria dances to Vatslav’s harp playing and then the two perform a pas de deux at the conclusion of which the guests join in a mazurka. The party is quickly dispelled by the sound of an approaching army on horseback and a mortally wounded guard enters to warn of an impending attack by a Tatar horde. The Poles are quickly overrun by the Tatrans and the castle begins to burn. Vatslav tries to save Maria, but Girey stops him, killing him with a concealed dagger. Maria, who has hidden her face in a scarf, is stopped by Girey. He tears the scarf away and is dazzled by her beauty.

Act two takes place in Bakhchisarai, the capital of the Crimean Tatans. The ladies of the harem are impatiently awaiting the return of the khan. The warriors return, bearing Maria on a litter. Girey enters and Zarema dances for him, but he is indifferent to her. Maria enters playing the harp and immediately becomes a curiosity. Zarema and the other ladies continue to dance for the khan, but he only notices Maria. Act three occurs in Maria’s bedchamber. Girey comes to woo her but realizes that she cannot return his love because he killed her lover. He sees how terrified and sad she is and leaves her alone with only one attendant, an old woman. Zarema enters and begs Maria to return the khan to her. The old woman summons the khan and he arrives in time to see Zarema threaten to stab Maria. Girey tries to stop her, but she eludes him, stabbing Maria in the back. Girey threatens to stab Zarema, and she, realizing she has lost her love forever, does not protect herself but steps forward to take the blow. He decides not to kill her, but has the guards take her away. The action of act four takes place in the fountain court. Girey’s generals return from a fresh campaign with more prizes and captives for the harem, but they do not interest him. Zarema is brought before him and he orders his men to throw her from the steep precipice. His men perform fierce warrior dances to entertain and distract their leader, but nothing can assuage his grief. His only comfort comes from the “fountain of tears” that he has erected in memory of Maria (Balanchine and Mason 1954, 249-251).

The poem, in addition to not including Vatslav, also does not mention dancing. However it does not seem outside the realm of possibility that dancing took place.
Therefore, with the exception of the classical \textit{pas de deux} in act one the ballet does not lose its plausibility with the inclusion of dance. Mary Swift noted that the realism of the ballet, as opposed to the Romanticism of the poem, helped it remain in Russian/Soviet ballet repertoires because, “Its lush, oriental settings were heavily realistic, and, as if to justify the existence of the production, a program issued at a revival of the ballet in 1951 assured the spectator that ‘it assisted the formation of realism on the Soviet ballet scene’” (Swift 1968, 98).

Another difference between the ballet and the poem concerned Zarema’s death. In the poem she was killed “The very night the Princess died” (Arndt 1984, 264). In the ballet she was brought before Girey in Act IV, a daylight scene, who ordered his men to throw her over the precipice. This change in story-line allowed for another act to be included in the ballet which in turn presented the opportunity for a series of \textit{divertissement}.

The ballet was more realistic than the poem, which is generally considered a Romantic work. Although sunlight and moonlight scenes were included, supernatural beings did not appear in the moonlight. The characters remained un-transformed for the duration of the ballet. Also, the costumes were very realistic. The harem ladies wore harem pants, while the Tatars wore conventional Tatar clothes and the Polish nobles wore costumes “while superficially in the fashion Versailles are given a certain native wildness by aigrettes, high boots, furred tunics and sabers” (Morley 1945, 40). Maria did wear a white costume throughout the ballet, but it was not a conventional tutu and resembled more of a gown that would have been appropriate for a social gathering of the time (mid-eighteenth century). Two aspects of the costuming were not realistic though: the use of \textit{pointe} shoes for both Maria and the harem ladies; and, Vatslav’s classical white tights and traditional male ballet bodice or tunic. Both the \textit{pointe} shoes for women and the white tights and bodice for men are part of ballet conventions. Eliminating the \textit{pointe} shoe, in particular, would greatly affect the technical aspects of the choreography. The simple ballet tights and bodice for the male allow the maximum amount of freedom of movement and the color white symbolizes the heroic and noble nature of the character. Other realistic aspects were incorporated into the ballet such as Maria’s Polish harp (or lyre) and the inclusion of native Polish dances. These realistic touches, absence of the
moonlight scenes with supernatural beings, lack of betrayal by the male lead, and the
presence of an attainable, but unattained, woman, distance the ballet from the
conventions of Romantic ballet. To qualify, Girey does betray Zarema, by losing interest
in her in favor of Maria, and does betray Maria by killing Vatslav, but this betrayal is
different than the betrayal found in Romantic ballet. In the case of the two great
Romantic ballets, *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*, the male lead pledges himself to one woman
while seeking the affections of another. In *La Sylphide*, James is engaged to Effie, but
pursues the sylph, ultimately causing her death. Albrecht is engaged to a noble woman in
*Giselle*, but wins the affection of the peasant girl, Giselle, who dies upon learning of his
deceit and becomes a supernatural wili. In the case of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*,
Girey has not promised himself to any woman. His betrayal of Zarema is implied
because, prior to Maria’s arrival, she was the favored wife. As a member of a harem,
Zarema is technically one of Girey’s many women, or wives, and not necessarily entitled
to any special status or treatment. Despite this, Zarema feels betrayed, but blames Maria
instead of Girey. Maria has been betrayed by a series of events caused by Girey, but not
by him personally. Even their deaths are not caused directly by Girey. Girey does not kill
them, but Zarema’s actions doom both women. Therefore, the betrayer in *The Fountain
of Bakhchisarai* is both male and female. This is an abrupt departure from the
conventions of Romantic ballet, where the woman is portrayed as an innocent victim and
represented in an ethereal and other-worldly manner.

The female lead differed in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* from other ballet
conventions as well. Both Zarema and Maria were attainable. Zarema was desperate to be
with Girey, and Maria, although repulsed by his attentions, was equally attainable. Maria
was a captive with no means of escape and Girey had in fact imprisoned her, but had not
won her affection. In this respect she was unattainable, but Girey believed in time that he
would win her heart, thus making her attainable (Balanchine and Mason 1954, 251). It is
these particular details that make the ballet more realistic than romantic and equate
Zakharov’s *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* with the works of Didelot.

While Didelot was known for his “flying” scenes in the early 1800s, Zakharov
became known in the 1930s and 40s for his “disaster” scenes on stage, including the
flood in *The Bronze Horseman*. One of the most spectacular scenes in *The Fountain of*
Bakhchisarai that helped to establish it as a theatrical masterpiece was the burning of the Polish manor. It was incredibly realistic, and when writing of a Bolshoi Ballet performance Morley noted:

…I spent the morning going over a battlefield outside Vitebsk where a few hours before some thousands of Germans had been slaughtered by the Red Army in their drive through White Russia. In the afternoon I flew back to Moscow and in the evening went to this ballet as Ulanova was dancing. Perhaps I had gone in search of escapism, but when the Tartars put the Polish mansion to the sack, all the unspeakable scenes which I had seen earlier in the day and which had had a curious waxwork unreality now came alive and seemed to live their last agonies before my eyes, as if this were the reality and the other the play (Morley 1945, 40).

Having had the opportunity to view this ballet in St. Petersburg in 1985, I can attest to the fact that the fire scene was phenomenal. The entire stage appeared to be in flames and the audience could, in fact, feel the heat. As the fire intensified, the manor began to disintegrate. By the end of the scene, what was once a beautiful manor and garden had been reduced to rubble. To this date not even the phenomenal stage effects of Broadway musicals, such as The Phantom of the Opera, have impressed me as much. In the earlier part of the twentieth-century, this type of theatrical feat must have dazzled the audience.

Special effects aside, the ballet had many positive components that helped to assure its success. As previously mentioned, the ballet was fortunate to have a talented set of collaborators at work. Asafiev, who earlier had composed The Flames of Paris, decided to abandon his principle of collecting “authentic” material and instead wrote an original score without incorporating popular songs or tunes into the work as he had done with The Flames of Paris, although he did incorporate Alexander Gurilyov’s To the Fountain of Bakhchisarai for the beginning and end of the battle, and used one of John Field’s popular pieces as the leitmotiv for Maria (Doeser 1997, 224). One critic noted that Asafiev had created “an ‘original’ score—which, unfortunately, lacks any originality” (Schwarz 1983, 150-151).

Despite this observation, Asafiev was very thorough and researched various musical materials before composing. Since The Fountain of Bakhchisarai was a Pushkin work, Asafiev chose to work with an early nineteenth-century idiom. This resulted in a waltz being included in the harem scene, which stretched the credibility of the
production, but audiences did not seem to mind. Another observer thought Asafiev’s music was the perfect accompaniment for *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* noting, “Here he stylizes the music of the period so successfully as to make us think that the tunes to Pushkin’s moving tale about the beautiful Maria held captive by the Khan were composed by a contemporary of the great poet” (Slonimsky 1947, 29).

Asafiev created ten ballet scores from 1935-1941 and adjusted his compositions to match the given topic. He studied historical details, national color and popular customs. He collaborated closely with the choreographer, librettist and stage director, which made the ballet a tight unity between the various elements presented on stage. Asafiev’s work may lack originality, but it served as a catalyst for other composers to create original works (Slonimsky 1947, 151).

The costuming, staging, music and subject matter all contributed to the successful creation of a uniquely Russian ballet, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. The choreography, and subsequent fine dancing, also ensured the ballet of recognition as an enduring masterpiece. Zakharov trained at the Leningrad ballet school and danced briefly before concentrating on choreography. He studied all aspects of theatre and was influenced by Stanislavsky. Before beginning work in the studio, Zakharov met with the principal dancers and discussed the emotion and psychology of the roles, which was a revolutionary approach. He also spent numerous hours in museums researching the “essence of the imagery” (Doeser 1977, 224). He chose Galina Ulanova (1910-1998) and Olga Jordan to perform the role of Maria. Ulanova, in particular, was the embodiment of Maria and was noted for her distinct personal style and special characterization. She was a tomboy in her youth and trained for the ballet reluctantly. The role of Maria was the turning point in her career and she embraced the art of dance, finally feeling comfortable with her choice of career.

Maria was considered the main character by the choreographer, but that was not necessarily the way the audience interpreted it. Some audience members believed that Girey was the central figure and that it was his tragedy unfolding, not the women’s. Girey represented a man “whose flashing career has been suddenly brought to an inconceivable halt by his passion for Maria and her absolute rejection of him” (Morley 1945, 41). This observation shifted the focus from the ballerina to that of the male dancer, increasing the
importance of his role and gender on stage. Dancers who portrayed Girey had to be at once virile and commanding, as well as tender and melancholy. Furthermore, the fact that there are two female protagonists splits the importance of the principal female role, further strengthening the prominence of the male.

Zhakarov demanded a tremendous amount of artistry and technical ability from both his male and female dancers. In act one Maria must be youthful and virginal, but also capable of executing a *pas de deux* with the athletic lifts associated with Russian/Soviet ballet. Vatslav was the youthful suitor until forced to fight with the powerful khan. Girey, having won the battle, turned to Maria, and instead lost his heart. As he removed her veil, she arched away from him in a carefully choreographed moment that clearly revealed to the audience his infatuation and her repulsion (Morley 1945, 41). To some critics this was the high point of the ballet; the mansion had turned to ashes and both principals were undone by the other. What followed, though, was the convention of *divertissement* in acts two and four, while in act three the action returned to the principals and their emotions.

In act one Maria’s homeland and circumstances were established. The inclusion of a Western manor home, Polish costuming and dances, and a young innocent couple provided a contrast from the sensual setting of act two and allowed the choreographer to logically include an additional choreographic style. In act two the action was transferred to the khan’s harem in Bakhchisarai where his women, led by Zarema, were awaiting his return from battle. They performed pleasing, but non-demonstrative dances, indicating their security and lack of anxiety. Girey returned with his men bearing Maria on a litter. He paid homage to the newcomer and allowed her to be left alone, which indicated to the other women the level of his devotion to her. Maria’s special treatment was not lost on Zarema and she performed a dance:

...which is entirely on points, is a masterpiece expressing all the love and agony which she dare not wholly reveal. With its suggestion of fear and self-control which finally breaks when she sees Girai is about to leave her she forces us to accept her as a personality, a living woman and not merely as the *deux ex machina* who is to move the plot forward (Morley 1945, 42).
In other words, Zarema reacted to her situation realistically and indicated that she was not willing to play the role of the discarded woman or victim.

Act three took place in Maria’s bedroom, which featured an intimate environment including a stone arch, stone column and alcove bed. Maria played her harp for comfort, but was not comforted. Girey arrived intent on rape, if necessary, but her extreme aversion to him made him realize that there would be no joy in the conquest. Zakharov choreographed several technically difficult lifts for Maria and Girey that emphasized their respective plights while simultaneously employing a Russian/Soviet ballet convention:

In *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, for example, Zakharov has introduced a series of “lifts” for the Khan Girei and Maria which for pure plastic beauty and meaning are unsurpassed anywhere in the world today. With a slight emphasis, their inventiveness and intricacies could be revealed to gain acclaim from the audience which, in Moscow as much as elsewhere, is ever-ready to applaud the spectacular (Bellew 1956, 9).

Furthermore, the lifts were so carefully intertwined in the choreography that they did not draw attention away from the story-line:

In the choreography of R. Zakharov…L. M. Lavrovsky…V. M. Chaoukiani…and V. Vainonen, there is much sensitivity and imagination and although it is often obscured almost completely by scenery, costume and other story-telling devices, not one of them has sought compensation by utilizing excessive turns or other acrobatic tricks.

Indeed their choreography has a quality of understatement which could well be noted by some Western choreographers (Bellew 1956, 9)

Since *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* was one of the earliest Russian/Soviet ballets, Zakharov was pioneer in the use of athletic lifts and careful placement of them so as to not disrupt the narrative.

Girey, discouraged by Maria’s rejection, left her unharmed in the chamber. Zarema, who escaped the harem by stealth, arrived and, finding Girey’s discarded mantle near the bed, was driven mad by jealousy. Girey, summoned by Maria’s and her attendant’s cries, returned and tried to stop Zarema’s murderous advances, but to no avail. Zarema plunged the knife into Maria’s back and Maria’s reaction reflected Zakharov’s unique choreography:
Not dancing, one would say, because the movements are for the most part slow, meditative, only occasionally breaking into broken sequences of recognizable classicism. In this form they are plastic, more like the movements of acting, yet it cannot be described as mime if by mime we mean conveying a drama through gestures; in essence this is not a drama at all but a poem and the liquid movements of the classic dance are made to reflect the rhythms and images of poetry (Morley 1945, 42).

In addition, Slonimsky noted that Zakharov’s strong point:

…is the development of realistic characters…His *mises-en-scène* are austere and fresh. And his third act is still one of the best bits of direction. He succeeded in presenting the dialogue between Maria and Zarema as a tense duet—a thing choreographers have long dreamed of attaining (Slonimsky 1947, 34).

It was in this act that a new technique of expression through dance was created; Lavrovsky would learn from Zakharov and develop it further in his *Romeo and Juliet*.

The action in act four took place in the khan’s fortress. His captain, Nuralli, endeavored to distract him with a series of Tatar dances (utilizing the ballet convention of *divertissement*). Girey remained unmoved, even when Zarema appeared before him and he sentenced her to death. Girey’s men danced brilliantly and enthusiastically, but the scene was dominated by Girey’s unhappiness. The fortress became dark and the fountain appeared illuminated. The ballet ended atypically for a Soviet one, with no happy ending (Morley 1945, 42-43).

The unique characteristics of Russian/Soviet ballet came together and fostered a special entity with *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. Pushkin’s seemingly romantic verse transposed well into realism because no fantastic elements were included in the text although many conventions of Romanticism were present. The ballet seemed to appear as interpreting a romantic poem, but in a new guise:

The ballet reflects the poet’s thought that love and violence are incompatible, that true love is all-conquering. Pushkin showed the ballet theatre the way to interpret lofty thoughts. He was the first to teach dancers how to master new ideas and poetical resources.

The romantic form of expression, so peculiar of Pushkin’s earlier works, accords well with the poetical nature of the art of dancing (Slonimsky 1947, 56).
With this observation, romanticism and realism converged to create a new “ism” for Russian/Soviet ballet. Zakharov was able to capitalize on both the most simplistic and the most complex aspects of the poem. In acts one and three, he used Pushkin’s pristine narrative to emphasize the poignant relationships between Girey, Maria and Zarema. However, Zakharov also masterfully incorporated the implied “crowd” scenes to add texture and choreographic depth to the work. For example, in act one he included dances for the Polish nobility, although the dances were not specifically mentioned in Pushkin’s text. In act two, the ladies of the harem performed numerous dances to simulate the passage of time and entertain the audience before the arrival of the khan. When the khan arrived with Maria the story returned to the plights of the individuals, as evidenced by Zarema’s dance to regain the khan’s affection.

The first three acts contained choreographic innovations. In act one the conventional inclusion of native dances transformed into a choreographed battle thus allowing Zakharov to utilize his talents for staging realistic “disaster” scenes. Act two featured the women of the harem, in their realistic harem attire, performing sensual dances that did not resemble the virginal and chaste corps de ballet work of La Sylphide and Giselle. Also in this act, Maria rejected the male suitor, which also was unusual (the sylph enticed James; Giselle protected Albrecht from the wilis; Odette agreed to marry Siegfried; Tao-Hoa wanted to leave with the Captain, etc.). Her rejection of Girey provided an opportunity for Zakharov to develop a new type of female character and through it a new choreographic style. During act three, Zakharov was able to return to the intimate staging required to portray the stories of three individuals, instead of moving large groups of dancers in the corps de ballet. Stripped of the backdrop of shifting dancers, the choreographer was obliged to relate a complicated story but chose not to use pantomime. He choreographed steps (including spectacular lifts), placed the performers carefully on stage, and coached their acting skills to produce the desired effect. Maria died simply, without histrionics or death throes. She leaned against the wall, felt her back for the knife, and slowly slid to the floor. She did not cry out against Zarema or for help. She accepted her death and, without pantomime, informed the audience that she welcomed it.
Act four was exceptional because it was dominated by the male dancers. Upon the
deaths of Maria and Zarema, the days of the harem and light diversions were over:

The Harem, utterly neglected,
Knows not the favor of his stay;
Within, their womanhood rejected,
Beneath the Eunuch’s frigid sway
The fretful wives grow old. Their orders
Long since excluded the Georgian girl: (Arndt 1984, 264)

Therefore, for the fourth act of the ballet, Zakharov had a choice: 1) follow the typical
customs for ballet and include a supernatural scene where Maria and Zarema return as shades to haunt Girey; or 2) break new ground by remaining true to Pushkin’s text and permitting the men to carry the story-line. Zakharov chose the latter and produced significant choreography for the final act.

In act four, Girey’s followers continued their pillaging of other areas and returned with booty, including women. Girey remained unmoved, so his men danced to try to raise his spirits. Zakharov choreographed extremely athletic and rhythmically complicated dances, employing the khovorod and creating complicated floor patterns for the men. Previously, in conventional Romantic or classical ballet, the use of khovorod had been for the female corps de ballet. With his athletic as opposed to lyrical choreographic style, and by utilizing the men as the corps de ballet, he had created a ballet uniquely Russian/Soviet. Because of the lack of male dancers in the West, men are rarely used as a large group for an extended period of time. They normally function as demi-soloists, dancing in groups of six or less, or as partners for the women. Generally, a Western ballet company will employ one male dancer for every two or three female dancers and the choreography reflects this inequality. Therefore, when one refers to a corps de ballet in the West, it usually means the female dancers only, although male dancers may be listed in programs as part of the corps. Zakharov had a luxury that he used to great advantage; a large group of well trained male dancers that could be utilized as a male corps de ballet and carry an entire act. The importance of the male dancer makes Russian ballet and The Fountain of Bakhchisarai unique.

Critics of the ballet claimed that act four was unnecessary. They asserted that the action of the ballet ended with the deaths of Maria and Zarema and that the inclusion of
the fourth act made the ballet too long\textsuperscript{32} and digressed too significantly from Pushkin’s text (Morley 1945, 41). However, many patrons, including myself, found the choreographic invention and athletic execution of the material in act four worth watching.

*The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* was the first uniquely Russian ballet as defined by the criteria of this paper. Pushkin’s excellent writing and beautiful telling of the story presented Zakharov with an extraordinary theme for a ballet. As important, the theme was acceptable to the new masters of Russian art that were desperately trying to superimpose a nearly impossible aesthetic on artists, Socialist Realism. Pushkin, as an exemplary writer for Soviet dictates, was a safe choice of author and as “the sun of Russian poetry, in the official Soviet view had to become one with the sun of socialism” (Brintlinger 2000, 169). Fortunately for Zakharov, he was also an exceptional writer who could not only tell a story well, but fill it with visual images that were so necessary to effectively transferring the tale to stage. Pushkin’s innate musicality also aided the composer, Asafiev, with his task of merging text with music and ultimately aiding the choreography.

Specifically *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* meets the criteria for a uniquely Russian ballet. Pushkin’s writing and theme assisted its creation which can now be examined for specific Russian characteristics including: 1) main character gender (male as opposed to female) and nationality (Eastern as opposed to Western European); 2) the Russian location of the story; 3) Russian musical composition; 4) Russian nationalistic attitudes reflected in the work; and 5) special dance techniques and choreography that illustrate unique aspects of Russian dance.

Certainly in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* there are two very important female lead characters, and thus roles, and the story is impossible without Maria and Zarema. However, it is the character Girey that both begins and ends the action of the poem and ballet. In the case of the poem, Pushkin states in the opening lines:

\begin{quote}
With brooding eyes sat Khan Girey  
Blue smoke his amber mouthpiece shrouded;  
About their fearsome ruler crowdes  
The court in sedulous array. (Arndt 1984, 251)
\end{quote}

The ballet opens similarly with a lone male figure kneeling before the fountain.
However, the endings are different. In the poem the narrator/visitor/Pushkin laments, in a monologue, the loss of the women and refers to Girey’s grief while questioning if the area is haunted. In the ballet, Girey is surrounded by his male followers who endeavor to cheer their master. In both cases, though, the action is over long before the narrator’s observations or the Tatar dances. Girey is the main character in the ballet because: he kills Maria’s lover; he brings Maria and Zarema together; he arouses Zarema’s jealousy toward Maria by his treatment of the newcomer; he fails to protect Maria; and, he sentences Zarema to death. Despite his power over these individuals, he is unable to find contentment and happiness; he is powerless against Maria’s aversion and Zarema’s passion. Because Girey is the catalyst for the story he, although male (which is unusual for romantic or classical ballet), serves as the main protagonist in the ballet.

Girey also is not a Western national, but an individual from the East with a longstanding connection with Russia. The Tatars were defeated in 1480, and although they continued their raids, they never again challenged the sovereignty of the state (Hosking 2004, 88). They were pushed to the outskirts of the newly formed Russia. However, Tatars had roamed the land for centuries and as part of the fabric of the countryside, contributed to the cultural development of the Russian people. Girey’s forefathers inhabited the same areas as the people of Rus and Muscovy, but were separated from them by faith (Muslim verses Christian), language and culture. The Tatars were a separate ethnic and cultural group, but at both the setting of the tale and its writing, the Crimean Tatars were under Russian dominance.

Pushkin writes of events in the past but carefully inserts himself into the narrator’s observations, probably basing his comments on his own visit. From his verse we know that The Fountain of Bakhchisarai relates an old tale, but is being re-examined by a narrator of Pushkin’s time. Pushkin visits the deserted palace, which means that Bakhchisarai is part of Russia during the visitor/narrator/Pushkin time otherwise Pushkin would be forbidden to make the visit since he must endure internal exile and is never allowed to leave the borders of Russia.

The setting of the ballet is Russia, but again must be qualified. The area is newly annexed by the Russians and incorporated into the state, but is the home of many other nationalities and cultural groups. Pushkin discovers this on his exploratory trips in the
area, but recognizes their ethnicity as just part of Russia’s diverse heritage. For him
Russia is a combination of races and cultures. This is not surprising because Pushkin’s
cultural heritage is not exclusively Russian, but also African. He at once eschews and
embraces his African heritage, but never forgets it. Similar to the characters of his poem,
he wants to embrace his Russianness without abandoning his other identities. Regardless,
the area is within Russia’s borders and under the tsar’s control, and as historical events
unfold, comes under the control of the Soviets. Certainly for the purpose of Socialist
Realism, the ballet is comfortably situated within the Soviet sphere and is suitable for
Russian/Soviet identification purposes.

Also, in terms of nationalistic content, The Fountain of Bakhchisarai probably
served Stalin’s purpose, or it would not have been allowed to remain in both ballets’
repertoires. Using the alleged complicity of the Crimean Tatars with the Germans during
World War II as an excuse to persecute the Tatars, Stalin would condone any social
comment that put the Tatars in an unfavorable light. The ballet had been acclaimed since
1934 and Stalin may not have been inclined to censor it because of Pushkin and its
popularity. However, if Stalin viewed the ballet as an anti-Tatar statement, its future
existence was secure. Taken on its surface, the ballet presented the Tatars as raping and
murderous people, who were unable to control their violent tendencies and act rationally.
This interpretation presented the Tatar people as primitive and therefore in need of
Russian domination. Certainly nationalistic attitudes were present in the ballet or could
be projected onto its interpretation.

The music for The Fountain of Bakhchisarai was composed by a Russian, Boris
Asafiev, who researched music of the ballet’s time period, but adapted it for his own
compositional purposes. Although the music is Russian by nature and Russian by
composer, it is not well-known. Unlike the music from Tchaikovsky’s ballets, which are
used universally and often, and Prokofiev’s well-known music for Cinderella and Romeo
and Juliet, Asafiev’s music and his name are virtually unknown in the West. Part of the
reason is because Asafiev’s music is not memorable, nor particularly revolutionary.
Asafiev was more of an academic than a composer. He established Soviet musicology in
1921 and was chosen to lead the music division of the Russian Institute of Art History in
Leningrad. He led many study groups in 1922 and published numerous articles on
Russian/Soviet music (Maes 2002, 244-245). His greatest talents may have been in other areas than composition.

The fourth criteria concerns Russian nationalistic opinions. Prevailing Russian attitudes of the time required that the fringe territories of the nation be, whether by force or acquiescence, controlled by the tsarist state. The wild territories of the Bakhchisarai area could be incubators for sedition, which meant that the tsar’s power was needed to discourage revolutionary actions from inside the state. The tsar’s presence, through his army, was also needed to protect the area from outside domination. The border area of Bakhchisarai was important because it was almost too far West for the tsar to crush any revolutionary ideas, but too far East and, therefore too close to Russia not to protect it from Russia’s Western enemies.

Pushkin’s poem reflects the national psychology of his era, which simultaneously embraced the naturalism and individualism of Romanticism, while espousing a new found nationalism as a result of Napoleon’s thwarted invasion. Pushkin, through his visit and later writing, further incorporated the Tatar territories into the psychology of Russia. The people may have seemed “exotic” to ordinary Russians, but the land was necessary to protect the homeland.

*The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* was written at a time when imperial Russia was flexing its muscle following the defeat of Napoleon and recognition that Russia’s borderlands had to be protected. Russia justified its control of the “south” because it could assert that it was in the best interest of the principalities involved who wanted stabilization and the cessation of aggression, which simultaneously would secure Russia’s Western borderlands. Pushkin painted a romantic and realistic picture of the territories that most Russian citizens were unable to visit. They were happy to incorporate these territories into Russia because of their “exotic” nature and because this area protected their nationalistic interests by serving as a buffer from Western and southern aggressors.

The attitudes of the nation were also reflected by the Russian army’s willingness to annex and incorporate other citizens and nations into Russia proper. Russia defeated Napoleon and was anxious to establish itself as an equal to the imperialistic aspirations of its sister countries. Also, the Soviet Union was even more imperialistic than Russia.
Stalin did not hesitate to annex territory he needed to protect Soviet interests. The Soviet sphere of influence after World War II stretched as far West as Berlin and Czechoslovakia.

Certainly the special dance attributes of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* made the piece unique and, because of the other components, uniquely Russian. Zakharov employed several devices that made the work distinctive choreographically: 1) he used realistic staging and costuming; 2) he masterfully displayed the burning of the manor house and Girey and Maria’s subsequent meeting; 3) he juxtaposed the refined dancing of the Poles in act one with the seductive and fiery dances of act two, most notably Zarema’s solo; 3) in act three he simplified the action, focusing only on the three main protagonists and through his choreographic innovations of plasticity, innovative lifts and acting, broadened Russian/Soviet ballet’s scope; and 4) in act four he broke with classical ballet convention and chose to choreograph an act focusing on the male dancers, serving as soloists as well as traditional *corps de ballet* instead of creating unrealistic roles for the female dancers.

What makes *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* even more important as a Russian/Soviet ballet is that it is part of the standard repertoire today for the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi Ballets. In addition, several Russian regional ballet companies currently include it in their repertoires. It can also be found in the repertoires of many of the companies located in former Soviet satellite states. It has not, however, been included in the repertoires of any Western ballet companies. Several factors contribute to this exclusion. First, Western companies have continued to create full-length ballets, with the majority of them based on Shakespeare or fairy tales. However, new Western ballets are generally short in length and neo-classical. Balanchine has served as the master choreographer for this trend and most new choreographers have followed his lead.

Secondly, the staging of the first scene with its realistic fire would make it an expensive undertaking for most companies. The money to produce ballets with stage effects of such magnitude is difficult to find in the West (and has become difficult to find in Russia, as well). Finally, although more men are choosing ballet as a career, men are still in short supply in the West. Ballet in Russia and the Soviet Union was considered an honorable and desirable vocation. Western attitudes still equate male dancing with effeminacy.
Given the current state of male training in the West, act four would be difficult to cast and stage. This trend, however, is changing and as ballet companies expand their repertoires, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* might become a Western classic, too. Regardless, the ballet is a classic in Russia and surrounding nations and resulted from a culmination of exclusively Russian characteristics.

This does not mean that the work is unknown in the West. The Maryinsky (Kirov) Ballet included it in its repertoire when it performed in London in 1995 and 1997, and it premiered in North America in New York in 1999. The difference between American ballets and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* was noted immediately. One reviewer noted:

> It is hard to believe that Rotislav Zakharv’s *Fountain of Bakchisaray*, premiered in 1934 in St. Petersburg/Petrograd, is only now being seen in North America. It is equally hard to believe that this ballet – considered one of the earliest and best examples of the Soviet genre “dram-ballet” – was the same year that George Balanchine produced the abstract *Serenade* …they are as different as night and day (Szoradi 1999).

This comment confirms that, at least with the example of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, Russian/Soviet ballet is unique. Also, the mere fact that *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* remains in Russian repertoire is remarkable because, despite the fact that many Soviet ballets were created, very few were kept in the new Russian ballet repertoire.

By the time the ballet premiered in the West, however, the Soviet Union had collapsed. The Kirov ballet was again Russian, although it did not return to the name Maryinsky for marketing purposes.³⁷

The Kirov ballet dazzled New York audiences, both in terms of technique and choreography, and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* was extremely well-received. Uliana Lopatkina as Zarema “drove the Met audience crazy with her incredible kick-the-head leaps and soaring jetes in the Act II Harem Scene” while the men had a similar effect in Act IV when they performed their Tatar dances “driving the Met audience to a frenzy of ‘bravos’” (Szoradi 1999).³⁸ The female corps de ballet was noted for its undulating group dances in act two and both the male and female corps were praised for their performances of the Eastern European dances in act one. Sixty-five years after its premiere in St. Petersburg/Leningrad, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* was enthusiastically greeted by a
sophisticated audience used to much different fare. It is a singularly and uniquely Russian classic and recognized as such.

Although the path to developing a unique Russian ballet began with the solid base established by the imperial government in the late 1700s, Pushkin’s influence should not be overlooked. Less than sixty years after the creation of the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi Ballets, works based on Pushkin were being created. Even more significant is the fact that, one hundred and eighty five years later, works are still being presented in Russia based on Pushkin’s themes, the most recent of which is the 2002 production of *The Queen of Spades*. However, Pushkin and Zakharov’s *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* became the masterpiece that, at least for the moment, best represents Russia’s unique ballet.

Pushkin’s continuing influence, both within and outside of Russia, will be examined in the next chapter. The specific works to be considered include *The Queen of Spades* and *Eugene Onegin*. 
Notes for Chapter Five

1 The same sets and costumes were often reused for different ballets regardless of their subject matter (Demidov 1977, 7).

2 After the thwarted revolution in 1905, the imperial authorities closed down the dramatic art school attached to the Bolshoi in Moscow (Reyna 1965, 199).

3 Prior to the Revolution, the tsar’s family was more closely associated with St. Petersburg and the Maryinsky Ballet than the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow. This made the Maryinsky Ballet the more important of the two institutions.

4 Gorsky’s works included Don Quixote, Notre-Dame de Paris, Salammbo, L’Amour va vite, and a new Swan Lake in 1911 (Reyna 1965, 199).

5 Boris Pasternak (1890-1960) and Anna Akhmatova (1888-1966) are the only two notable poets of the “Silver Age” who survived to publish in the post-Stalin period (Treadgold 1995, 181).

6 Although the city of Leningrad reverted to its previous name, St. Petersburg, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the ballet in St. Petersburg remains the Kirov Ballet.

7 Workers loved attending the performances but had to be told not to smoke or eat while in the theatre (Swift 1968, 33).

8 Prokofiev was his most famous student.

9 Ironically, Bolt has been “rehabilitated” and has just been included in the Bolshoi Ballet’s current repertoire for this season.

10 For example, some tsars were vilified and others praised depending on how the Soviet leaders needed to use their legacies to justify certain acts. Marxist theory would declare that all autocratic rule would be despotic (Treadgold 1995, 266).

11 Dostoevsky was sentenced to death by Alexander II for his writings and revolutionary ideas. At the last minute his life was spared. He became a devoted monarchist and religious man. These attributes would make him unacceptable as a role model for the Soviets.

12 Other popular ballet titles included Esmeralda, Raymonda, and Nikyia.

13 Galina Ulanova, who danced Juliet at the Bolshoi Ballet premiere, was reported as quipping at the reception following the performance “Never as a tale of greater woe, Than Prokofiev’s music to Romeo” (Schwarz 1983, 153).

14 In addition to Pushkin’s works, one work based on a novel by Nicholas Gogol (1809-1852) with choreography by Lopukhov and music by Vassili Solovyov-Sedoi, became a
relatively successful ballet, *Taras Bulba*. Although little written material is available concerning this work, it first appeared in Soviet repertoire in 1940 but is not currently performed (Slonimsky 1947, 32). In 1941 Zakharov produced another version (Roslavleva 1966, 232), while in 1952 another version with music by Gliere was completed and staged commemorating the centennial of Gogol’s death (Nepomnyashchy 2000, 69). The 1940 Lopukhov version is noted for being “over-crammed with Ukrainian dances” (Lifar 1954, 304).

15 The original tale was written in 1831 and the unexpurgated text was first published in 1882 (Yarmolinsky 1936, 321).

16 The Maly Opera was founded in the 1930s by Lopukhov after he was forced to leave the Maryinsky (Kirov) Ballet. He created a version of *The Prisoner in the Caucasus* around 1935 which was regarded as superior to the 1938 Zakharov version for the Bolshoi Ballet (Doeser 1977, 238).

17 It premiered at the Kirov on March 14, 1949, followed by performances with the Bolshoi Ballet on June 29, 1949.

18 This thematic curtain might have been a special act curtain, (also commonly called the “main rag”) which is the curtain that is usually in place at the beginning and end of a production and in between acts, or a scrim created for the production or the picture on the curtain might have been projected. From the text it is difficult to determine which device was used.

19 In 1943 a new ballet, *The Red Veil*, with choreography by Lavrovski was presented in Leningrad. It was strongly attacked for its naturalistic excesses and weak choreography (Lifar 1954, 305).

20 Cinderella’s nationality is not determined in the Russian/Soviet versions. However, the Prince travels to foreign lands, including Andalusia and an unspecified eastern nation, searching for Cinderella (Bellew 1956, 155-161).

21 Khrushchev delivered his “secret speech” on the night of February 24, 1956 in which he itemized Stalin’s crimes. This began the process of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union (Treadgold 1995, 368).

22 The XXII Party Congress in 1961 continued the policies of de-Stalinization: Stalin’s body was removed from the mausoleum in Red Square; Stalinsk was renamed Donetsk; Stalinabad was renamed Diushambe; and, Stalingrad, Volgograd (Treadgold 1995, 382).

23 The term “southern” is misleading here. It would be considered east from Europe, but is south of St. Petersburg. This area was called the southern front and warfare continued until General A. P. Ermolov took over the Caucasus. After the defeat of Napoleon, many soldiers congregated there on their way home from the West and it became a hotbed for Decembrists. Native populations were threatened including those of the Circassians and the Turks. Russia’s political domination of these areas made the area Russian, but still
“exotic” because the native population was not Russian. Pushkin repeatedly uses the theme of the Western/Oriental love affair in his “southern” works (Greenleaf 1994, 108-109).

Various spellings exist, including Girai.

Galina Ulanova is one of the most celebrated Russian ballerinas. She created the roles of Maria in The Fountain of Bakhchisarai and Juliet in Romeo and Juliet and was highly praised for her performance in the film version of Romeo and Juliet

A polonaise is a festive, processional, couple dance of Polish origin performed with a moderate tempo (Randel 2003, 668).

Also called cracovienne or Krakowiak, the kracovienne is a Polish dance from the region of Krakow with a rapid duple meter and syncopations. It was popular in the nineteenth century because of performances by Fanny Essler and music by Chopin (Randel 2003, 448).

There are numerous types of mazurka, but regardless of their nature many of them originated in the province of Mazovia near Warsaw (Randel 2003, 495).

Pushkin does use the terms “shade” and “spectral” when the narrator/visitor visits the fountain and questions if the ghosts of Maria and Zarema haunt the area, but they are the only references to the supernatural contained in the poem (Arndt 1984, 265).

Pushkin does not refer to dance in the poem.

Like female dancers, male dancers are hired to be either members of the corps de ballet, soloists or principals. However, because of the smaller number of male dancers hired, they often have the opportunity to dance in smaller group numbers or perform duets or solos. Their corps de ballet experience is different than that of the female dancer. At a February 27, 2005, performance of New York City Ballet in New York, I observed that the number of women on stage in three out of four ballets (one piece was a pas de deux) outnumbered the men by at least two to one. The ballets included Jerome Robbins’ Fanfare, Peter Martin’s Chichester Psalms and Balanchine’s Stars and Stripes. Particularly in the latter two pieces, the choreography made it obvious that the men had to partner two women each. When the men performed together as a group, the smaller group size made them seem more like individual dancers than corps de ballet members. The training is different as well. Female dancers are trained at an early age to dance as a group, with no one dancer standing out. Female corps de ballet choreography requires the dancers to all look and move the same, as if there were only one dancer on stage and numerous copies.

The ballet may seem too long because the intermissions at Russian theatres are unusually lengthy. They are twenty-five minutes instead of the usual fifteen (Morley 1945, 41). Patrons walk the floors of the very large anterooms together in a circular
pattern between acts. The path is often reversed from clockwise to counter-clockwise half-way through the interval.

33. Also referred to as The Golden Horde or Mongols (Hosking 2004, 88)

34. Pushkin, like many Russian/Soviet citizens was exiled to remote parts of Russia, but was not allowed to leave the country. They were at once exiled and imprisoned.

35. *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* is an important part of Russian ballets repertoire and is well-known by dancers and audiences alike. This is evidenced by the fact that it was performed on the day of Galina Ulanova’s funeral on the Maryinsky stage without being previously scheduled (Degen 1992).

36. Both the Russian and Soviet ballets had access to funding because of imperial support in the first case and state support in the second. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the ballet companies have been handicapped by cuts in funding and support.

37. A visit to the Kirov Ballet website reinforces the ballet’s identity as both Maryinsky and Kirov. The official site is under the name Kirov, but its home page has the name Kirov in the foreground, while the name Maryinsky is used like a watermark or wallpaper behind it, in effect superimposing the two names. A link concerning the ballet’s naming explains that after the breakup of the Soviet Union they kept the name Kirov for marketing purposes because almost no one outside of Russia recognized the ballet as “Maryinsky”.

38. In this movement the dancer throws one leg away and up in the air. It is a jump in which the weight of the body is transferred from one foot to the other. There are small *jete* steps and large, powerful steps called *grand jete* (Balanchine and Mason 1954, 800).
The significance of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* has been established in both terms of its Russianness and its uniqueness. This does not mean that other Pushkin-based ballets do not exist or that Pushkin no longer inspires new creativity. Other Pushkin-based ballets were created after *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, but are not uniquely Russian because they were created for non-Russian ballet companies. Two of the works are included here because they, although created by outsiders, have been added to the repertoires of Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi Ballets. The works are Pushkin’s *The Queen of Spades* and *Eugene Onegin*.

*The Queen of Spades* was written in 1834 and became a Tchaikovsky opera in 1890, which is still presented worldwide. The story, briefly, is about Herman, an impoverished officer who dreams of making his fortune at the gaming table. He discovers that an elderly countess always knows which three cards will win and becomes obsessed with learning her secret. He feigns love for Liza, the countess’ poor niece, and gains access to her house, where he approaches the countess in bed demanding to know her secret. The old woman dies of fright but returns to him as a ghost and tells him the cards are “three, seven and ace!” (Maes 2002, 152). When Herman next gambles he discovers that the first two cards are correct, but the last card is actually the queen of spades instead of the ace. Herman is overcome by shock and spends the rest of his days in an insane asylum.

The opera deviates from the story in several ways. First the relationship between Herman and Liza becomes romantic love and Liza is the countess’s granddaughter, not her niece, and thus out of Herman’s league socially. Secondly, Liza is engaged to Prince Yeletsky, Herman’s superior. Herman, instead of seeking personal gain, wants to win at the gaming table in order to improve his financial standing and be worthy of Liza. Liza who begins to see Herman’s obsession with the secret of the cards and winning, commits
suicide. Finally, the opera is transposed to the eighteenth-century, which allows the
guests of Catherine the Great to be treated to a series of pastoral *divertissements*.

It is consistent with the original tale in that Herman does visit the countess in bed
and she does die of fright. Furthermore, Herman’s madness becomes complete when he
plays his last game with Prince Yeletsky.

Tchaikovsky completed the opera in only forty-four days. It was significant for
the way it portrayed the characters realistically as well as supernaturally. Act one begins
with a light-hearted trip to the park, where a ballad introduces central motifs
foreshadowing disastrous events. In the bedroom scene of act two, reality is abandoned,
and all of the central motifs are combined after the countess’s death. Herman’s
hallucination is complete in the first scene of Act III which takes place in his army
barracks. He is plagued by the countess’s death, but brought back to reality by bugle
calls. Tchaikovsky masterfully transfers Pushkin’s tale of madness to music and the stage
through various techniques:

The sound magic is stepped up on the appearance of the countess,
announced by the whole-tone scale obligatory in scenes of ghostly
apparitions in Russian music. By avoiding the expected cadence at the end
of that scene, Tchaikovsky is indicating that Herman will never be rid of
his obsession. In the rest of the opera Tchaikovsky gives free reign to his
inventive genius. Liza dies to an extravagant distortion of the fate motif,
with the melody in the horns and trombones and the accompanying chords
in the trumpets. The final scene in the gaming house begins with
contrasting gaiety, but as Herman plays his hand the central motifs carry
the opera through to its inevitable catastrophe (Maes 2002, 153).

With music composed that seems to reflect the psychological state of the characters and
further the story, it is surprising that a successful ballet was not created during the Soviet
period of experimentation with Pushkin themes. Attempts may have been made that we
are unaware of, or the intense psychological nature of the subject matter may have
discouraged choreographers from staging it. The story-line would have made it difficult
to introduce large *corps de ballet* scenes with the exception of the Act I *divertissement* or
perhaps as dances in the gaming house, which would have broken the narrative. Also, the
main character may have been undesirable for Soviet purposes. He was a weak-minded
Russian who frightened an old woman to death in her bed (although her aristocratic
nature might have made this acceptable to the Soviets), was addicted to gambling and
succumbed to madness. Certainly this is not the positive aspect of the new Soviet man that officials would want to promote.

However, two non-Russians have created highly acclaimed ballets to Pushkin’s story, one of which was added to the repertoire of the Bolshoi ballet in 2002. The first was choreographed by the Frenchman Rolan Petit (b. 1924) in 1977 but entitled La Dame de Pique for his company, The Ballet National de Marseilles. Petit’s work was recognized as combining the elements of chic, sex, and high theatricality (Lee 2002, 286). The Bolshoi Ballet production was entitled The Queen of Spades and is still listed as part of the company’s repertoire. With the inclusion of Petit’s The Queen of Spades in the Bolshoi Ballet repertoire, history has repeated itself. The Russian ballet is employing Russian dancers, music and themes, but using a French choreographer.

A more recent work was choreographed by the Danish choreographer Kim Brandstrup for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal. It premiered in October 2001 and was enthusiastically received. It was a multimedia event with film animation and video images set to Tchaikovsky’s music reworked by Gabriel Thibaudueau. This seven hundred and fifty thousand dollar production’s action was transferred from tsarist Russia to Stalinist Leningrad. It seems unlikely that Stalin would have approved of this production with its aristocratic references and anti-heroic portrayal of a Soviet soldier. However, the ballet was positively reviewed and Pushkin’s tale has provided a story ballet that “looks and sounds great and bodes well for the future” (Howe-Beck 2002, 63).

The final work to be considered is Eugene Onegin. The novel in verse took Pushkin over seven years to write and was completed in 1830. It was staged as an opera with music by Tchaikovsky in 1878 and, as with The Queen of Spades, is still produced worldwide. The story is simple and set among provincial landowners in the early 1820s. A young girl, Tatyana, falls in love with Eugene Onegin, who is from St. Petersburg. He rejects her and she marries instead an eminent general who in turn makes her a prominent citizen in St. Petersburg. Onegin encounters her again in the highest social circles of St. Petersburg, but she rejects his advances. A second plot runs through the story involving Onegin’s friend, Lensky. Onegin, who is easily bored, becomes so at a ball to which Lensky has dragged him. He flirts with Lensky’s financee, Olga, infuriating Lensky. Lensky challenges Onegin to a duel and is killed by Onegin.
Pushkin’s story itself is not necessarily the important part; rather it is the way he
tells the story and his use of irony. The plots are intricately interwoven, which makes it
difficult to transfer to stage and some critics claim that Tchaikovsky’s score is
fundamentally incompatible with its literary source. Others condemn Tchaikovsky’s
score for ignoring the irony. He is, however, praised for his ability to portray the
characters, particularly Tatyana. But Maes asserts that:

Both sides ignore the special role music plays in this opera, for in
transforming Pushkin’s detached and ironic narrative voice into music
Chaikovsky unquestionably succeeds. The opera is closer to the original
than is generally thought, the secret lying in a meticulous use of musical
conventions, echoing the virtuosity with which Pushkin handled literary
codes (Maes 2002, 130).

Tchaikovsky sets the opera in his own time period and social milieu and incorporates the
use of romances to further the characters’ stories. Romances were very popular at the
time and would have been presented in salons. Tatyana declares her love for Onegin in a
letter (which is unconventional during this social era) and through the romances tells the
audience what she has said. Onegin scorns the letter, humiliating Tatyana. Tchaikovsky,
ironically, uses fragments from these romances when Onegin again sees Tatyana and
regrets his treatment of her. The final scene between the two also features a string of
romances. By including them in his opera, “The conventional idioms in the scene show
that even the most fervent feelings of the characters are influenced by social conventions”
(Maes 2002, 131).

Tchaikovsky’s Eugene Onegin is an excellent representation of musical realism.
The composer did not refer to it as an opera, but as “lyrical scenes,” and based it on the
characterization of the persons and their milieu (Maes 2002, 129-131). It would seem to
be an ideal subject for a ballet because of its excellent composer and intimate story line.
For some reason, however, choreographers did not try to stage it during the
Pushkin/Soviet experimental period either. The subject matter was complex for a ballet,
but the two ball scenes would provide excellent opportunities for corps de ballet dancing.
Perhaps no attempts were made to choreograph the ballet because of the very setting of
the story; aristocratic Russia. Besides portraying the psychological realism of the
characters, the opera and story convey the social conventions of the time. It would be
impossible to transfer the story to another time period where the social conventions would be exactly the same. Soviet choreographers would not have been encouraged to create a ballet representing a time period even before the Decembrists uprising in 1825 or presenting the aristocracy in any kind of favorable light. On the other hand, Onegin is a great anti-hero and represents all that was wrong with the useless, bored existence of an aristocrat in the 1820s. Tatyana, conversely, is virtuous and will not betray her husband to return Onegin’s feelings. For whatever reason, Eugene Onegin has only recently been staged at the Maryinsky (Kirov) Ballet, but the choreography is by a South African, John Cranko (1927-1973), and simply called Onegin.

Cranko became director of the Stuttgart Ballet in 1961 and created Onegin in 1965. He used the music of Tchaikovsky, but not the opera by the same, instead employing lesser-known compositions which were arranged and orchestrated by Kurt-Heinz Stolze. Balanchine, who never chose to choreograph a ballet to Pushkin’s story, noted that he could not speak of it without emotion. For him Pushkin’s work:

…is the beginning of greatness of the Russian language. There are problems about the translation of Eugene Onegin into English…but for the reader with no Russian, it is difficult to explain the poem’s greatness. For it is not what we think of as an epic of a huge, classic poem. It is a story, first of all, a work in poetry in a language that was unknown before, a language that became with Pushkin the Russian language of literacy and spoken liveliness (Balanchine and Mason 1954, 208).

With so much praise associated with one work, most Russian choreographers may have been intimidated and avoided staging it. However, Cranko found the subject very balletic. In his ballet he has three different dance styles; the first act is a youthful peasant dance; the second is a bourgeois party; and, the third is a sophisticated St. Petersburg ball. He noted that it was merely a matter of weaving the characters through the various dance scenes with their problems and stories to complete the ballet (Balanchine and Mason 1954, 208). Cranko presented the ballet in three acts and six scenes; and it has met with success worldwide and is included in the current repertoires of National Ballet of Canada, The Royal Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Boston Ballet, and the Australian Ballet, just to name a few.

A newer Onegin was choreographed by a Russian, but for a non-Russian company. St. Petersburg choreographer Vasily Medvedev staged his new ballet Onegin.
for The National Theatre in Prague in 1999. One critic noted that Medvedev’s version differed from Cranko’s because “the performance is about Eugene and Tatyana, as it is in Pushkin’s, rather than about Tatyana and Eugene, as in the opera and in Cranko’s version… Medvedev succeeded… in creating a really modern ballet on the basis of classical literature…” (Modestov 2000). Since that time a group led by Medvedev, called the Stars of St. Petersburg Ballet has presented excerpts from the ballet while on tour in Oregon, New Mexico, and Santa Fe. With new productions of The Queen of Spades and Eugene Onegin it is clear that Pushkin continues to influence dance. What is interesting is why certain works are chosen to be transferred to stage and why hundreds of others have not been.

Pushkin provided the inspiration for four remarkable works presented on stage as ballets; The Bronze Horseman, The Fountain of Bakhchisarai, The Queen of Spades, and Eugene Onegin. Each work has some characteristic that is shared by at least one other work. The Bronze Horseman and The Fountain of Bakhchisarai were both choreographed during the early Soviet era when the dictates of Socialist Realism were being employed and both pieces take their inspiration from existing tactile symbols. In the case of The Bronze Horseman it is Peter’s statue in Senate Square, St. Petersburg, while in the case of The Fountain of Bakhchisarai, it is the famous Fountain of Tears. The Queen of Spades and Eugene Onegin were first presented on stage as opera in the late nineteenth-century and have been performed continuously since that time, both in Russia and abroad. They were transformed to ballets much later than the other two works and by non-Russian choreographers and have only recently been seen on Russian stages as ballets. The Fountain of Bakhchisarai differed from the other three ballets because it was set in the eighteenth century instead of the nineteenth century. The main characters for The Fountain of Bakhchisarai and Eugene Onegin were aristocratic, while those of the other two ballets were not. Only one of the works, The Fountain of Bakhchisarai, was not situated in St. Petersburg.

Three features are present in all four works. The first is that the main protagonist is male. This is not to say that the female roles are not significant because without them there would be no story to tell, but the majority of the Pushkin’s tales, and therefore the ballets, are presented from the male perspective. This is highly unusual in romantic and
classical ballet where the female role usually dominates. This particular feature sets the works of Pushkin apart from the librettos of most ballets.

Secondly, in all four works, the woman serves as a tragic figure. In *The Bronze Horseman* Parasha drowns, but could have been saved if she had left with Eugene. Maria and Zarema are both kidnap victims and die because of Girey’s actions in *The Bronze Horseman*. Liza is used by Herman for his own personal gain in *The Queen of Spades* and Onegin belittles Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*. However Pushkin’s characters remain flesh and blood. He does not return them from the dead (although Herman believes he sees the countess after her death) and exact revenge in the style of *Giselle*. Also, he avoids the melodramatic by not allowing Liza and Tatyana to retaliate against their respective villains. Instead he punishes these men in a different way by playing with their minds and emotions.

The third shared characteristic occurs because in each case a woman causes the central character to lose his reason, if only temporarily. Eugene is the main character in *The Bronze Horseman*; Girey in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*; Herman in *The Queen of Spades*; and, Onegin in *Eugene Onegin*. At some point in their respective stories, they act anti-heroically. Eugene goes mad from grief and blames Peter the Great for his plight; Girey murders Vatslav and sentences Zarema to death; Herman misuses the trusting Liza, frightens an old woman to death and goes insane; and, Onegin belittles and humiliates a young provincial girl for declaring her honest affection, and, most horrifically, kills his friend in a duel. These are not noble princes rescuing damsels in distress from classical ballets as in *The Sleeping Beauty*. Nor are they the anti-heroes employed in the Romantic ballets to further the female roles’ stories. They are decidedly not the kind of heroes that Soviet leaders wanted represented in Socialist art. These are real men with real flaws that cause their own downfalls. However, something about these defective individuals appealed to the great genius of such men as Tchaikovsky, Zakharov, Petit and Cranko. It attracted them because Pushkin inspired them to create a new genre for opera and ultimately dance; the psychological drama.

The main protagonists of these four ballets share a common characteristic, a varying degree of mental illness. This trait provides the central character with a more interesting psychological profile than a conventional hero and aids its transfer from print
to stage. The richness of this character drawing allows the artist to expand the drama from mere plot development to psychological study. With the right musical accompaniment and choreographic styling, a masterpiece results.

For almost two centuries, Pushkin has been referred to as expressing what was best about Russian culture. The Pushkin cult, which was firmly established by the fiftieth anniversary of the poet’s death in 1887, was one that equated Pushkin with grace, harmony, light, balance, clarity and reason. His legend and writings were so firmly ingrained in the Russian psyche by the time of the Revolution that the Bolsheviks did not even attempt to condemn him for being aristocratic.

Madness was not associated with Pushkin because he decried chaos and praised harmony. He wanted reforms but associated challenging of authority with madness because of the effect it would have on his society. Despite his preference for order, though, he was one of the first to explore madness in Russian literature. While most of Pushkin’s work did not feature madness:

…with the possible exception of Cervantes, this is true of almost every major European writer. It is difficult to write an extended piece about madness, and even harder to write several works in the same vein. Madness occupies only a small part of the opus of the Greek tragedians and Shakespeare; on the other hand, in many of their finest works it plays a crucial role. We need only think of the Oresteia, Ajax, The Bacchants, Macbeth, Hamlet, and King Lear. By comparison, the quantity and quality of Pushkin’s work in which madness figures prominently is remarkable (Rosenshield 2003, viii).

The earliest of the works discussed here, The Fountain of Bakhchisarai (1824), is the most lyrical and contains the least amount of mental illness. However, insanity is present in the work. Girey loses his reason over Maria, and then, in an act of desperation sentences his former lover to death. When he returns to his senses, her death does not release him from his unhappiness.

Pushkin studied the Greek tragedies and was aware of the social comments contained in them. In Greek tragedy, madness is usually associated with violence and it makes no difference if it is temporary or permanent. Regardless, the act of violence would be punished:

The violence arising out of madness always elicits condign punishment. In Greek tragedy and myth, the greatest punishment for those who commit
violent acts when temporarily insane is subsequent sanity—when the mad recover their wits and face the humiliation and horror of what they have done…(Rosenshield 2003, 12)

Girey suffers from depression because of losing Maria and from the horror of his own actions. His insanity was temporary, but his punishment was lengthy.

The other works (The Bronze Horseman, The Queen of Spades, and Eugene Onegin) were all written in the early 1830s and illustrate Pushkin’s continuing fascination and preoccupation with mental illness. The madness in Eugene Onegin is similar to that found in The Fountain of Bakhchisarai. Onegin’s boredom drives him to flirt with his best friend’s fiancée resulting in a duel between the two. The friend, Lensky, is sufficiently angry to face Onegin, a superior shot. Onegin could have merely wounded Lensky but, in what can only be explained as a fit of insanity, killed his friend over a woman in which he had no interest. Like Girey, Onegin was only temporarily insane, but had to face the punishment for his actions for the duration of his life.

In the case of The Bronze Horseman and The Queen of Spades the illness manifests into full madness. Eugene goes mad when he cannot rescue Parasha and blames her death on Peter’s arrogance and folly. He vents his anger and anguish on an inanimate object and is then terrified at the subject he has attacked. By blaming the tsar, he has committed an act of rebellion and is unable to recover his sanity (Rosenshield 2003, 12). Pushkin uses Eugene’s madness to exemplify the dangers of challenging authority, while at the same time illustrating the plight of the working man under imperial rule. It is interesting that the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi Ballets during the same year (1949) produced new ballets based on The Bronze Horseman and that each presented a different interpretation of the story. Furthermore, it is equally interesting, though not surprising, that the imperialist (Bolshoi) version became the standard for the ballet while it remained in Russian/Soviet repertoire. The Soviets would object to the term imperial, but Stalin and the Soviet state would require that the interpretation support the concept of absolute power for the government at the expense of the individual.

Similarly, Herman in The Queen of Spades is driven mad by the ghost of the countess and slips into irreversible insanity. He is punished for his treatment of Liza, the countess’s death and his single-minded interest in cards to the exclusion of all else.
Pushkin’s theme here is both romantic and nationalistic. In the first case, where the cause of the individual is championed, “Romantic psychoanalysis, in valorizing Germann’s mad choice of the queen, emphasizes the risks the individual may need to take to escape from an alienating environment given over to conformity and material aggrandizement” (Rosenshield 2003, 61). With the second case, which emphasizes nationalism, Pushkin reminds us that without authority chaos ensues and jeopardizes the future of the nation:

Germann’s madness—the deprivation of language and sexual life, the foreclosure of the symbolic—may reflect the author’s desire to prevent Germann’s entry into the symbolic order, to counter, at least imaginatively, his fears regarding the role of the Germanns in Russia’s future (Rosenshield 2003, 61).

Herman’s situation is symbolic for all the protagonists in these four works. Their individualist acts endanger society and cause personal insanity, even if only temporarily. Herman is also representative of what Pushkin fears; that men like Herman and Onegin (and by extension himself) will become distanced, bored with society and not initiate change, or participate in the advancement of mankind.

Pushkin rarely returned to the theme of madness after 1833. However, the four works he completed prior to that time, and examined here, offered artists opportunities to investigate psychologically complex individuals and present interesting characters on stage. The prominence of the male character and the inclusion of madness made the works unique and caught the attention of composers and choreographers alike.

*Eugene Onegin* must be revisited for a secondary purpose which is central to this argument. Pushkin profoundly affected the development of Russian ballet. Based on what we know about Pushkin’s life this is not surprising. Pushkin was impressed by the ballet and knowledgeable about it.

One aspect of *Eugene Onegin* is particularly enlightening. Pushkin, through Onegin, writes about daily life and the activities of the early 1800s. He includes a vast amount of detail, which makes the work easy to visualize. He tells us that Onegin is very familiar with social dancing and acknowledged as a fine dancer:

Now my Onegin, keen as brandy,
Went forth, in dress—a London dandy,
His hair cut in the latest mode;
He dined, he danced, he fenced, he rode.
In French he could converse politely,
As well as write; and how he bowed!
In the mazurka, twas allowed,
No partner ever was so sprightly (Yarmolinsky 1936, 113)

Within the confines of eight lines we have sufficient information to enable us to visualize how Onegin appeared and what his interests were. In the following passage we discover why he attends the ballet:

Glass after glass is drained in drenching
The hot fat cutlets; you would say
They’ve raised a thirst there is no quenching.
But now it’s time for the ballet.
The theatre’s wicked legislator,
Who unto every fascinator
In turn his fickle flattery brings,
And boasts the freedom of the wings,
Onegin flies to taste the blisses
And breathe the free air of stage,
To praise the dancer now the rage,
Or greet a luckless Phedre with hisses,
Or call the actress he preferred
Just for the sake of being heard (Yarmolinsky 1936, 118).

According to the author, Onegin attends the ballet for two reasons. First, he wants to be entertained and transported from reality by the stage. The second is to applaud the dancer that has been chosen for the night’s honors. This passage clearly illustrates the behavior of the “left-flank” of the audience that so tried Didelot’s patience (see Chapter Four). The leader of the group will pick a dancer to be praised for the evening, no matter how fine, or not, the performance and indicate another dancer for ridicule. Onegin tells us that he may call out a name “just for the sake of being heard” (Yarmolinsky 1936, 118). Through this passage we learn that attending the ballet is not necessarily about watching the performance, but about being involved socially:

A young Petersburg gentleman, such as Pushkin or his creature Eugene, would not be drawn to the ballet merely to sit in the audience and appreciate the technique of the dancers on stage. It was fashionable for young men to cross the audience/backstage/offstage boundaries socially and erotically, visiting ballerinas backstage or in their quarters, hovering around the younger dancers, occasionally “protecting” those who had finished their course of training (Bethea 1993, 16).
This passage makes it easy to understand why Didelot found the “left-flank” so disturbing. It would be difficult to keep discipline and project a level of professionalism with these activities occurring in the theatre.

Pushkin brings more reality to the work by his further comments on the ballet. He was enchanted by the Russian dancer, Istomina, and admitted that he pursued her for a time (Bethea 1993, 17). Didelot was enchanted with her as well and used her in several ballets including the 1823 version of The Prisoner of the Caucasus. At the same time that Didelot featured Istomina in his ballets, Pushkin glorified her in Eugene Onegin. In the scene where Onegin is traveling to the theatre to see Istomina dance, the story becomes almost autobiographical. Pushkin in reality and Onegin in fiction, both dine then travel by horse-drawn cab to the theatre to see their “Russian Terpsichore” dance. What is different about the two men is that Onegin is bored and Pushkin is not. For Pushkin, Istomina is at once his friend, inspiration, character in his novel and Terpsichore. Unlike Onegin, he arrives on time to experience again the magic of the Russian Terpsichore. Onegin, arriving late, misses the enchantment of Istomina’s performance:

Impatient clapping from the top balcony,
Then the curtain rustles and rises.
Dazzling, half-ethereal,
Obedient to the enchanted music,
Surrounded by a throng of nymphs,
Stands Istomina; she touches
The floor with one foot,
Moves the other in a slow circle,
And suddenly leaps, and suddenly flies,
Flies like down on the breath of Aeolous;
Now bends at the waist, then bends again
And beats one small swift foot upon the other.
Everyone applauds. Onegin enters,
Treads on toes as he finds his place,
Trains his double lorgnette upon the boxes
(...)
Then he turned away—and yawned,
And states: “It’s time for a change:
I’ve seen enough ballet,
And even Didelot begins to bore me” (Schmidt 1989, 4)

This implies that Pushkin’s character, Onegin, had he arrived on time might have found the inspiration he needed to shake his lethargy. Deprived of his muse, he is doomed to
melancholy. Clearly Pushkin recognizes the importance of dance as one source of his inspiration and a solution for fulfillment.

Through *Eugene Onegin* Pushkin not only immortalizes Didelot and Istomina, he creates Russia’s own Terpsichore:

Enchanted land! There like a lampion
that king of the satiric scene,
Fonvizin sparkled, freedom’s champion,
and the derivative Knyazhnin:
there Ozerov shared the unwilling
tribute of tears, applause shrilling,
with young Semyonova; and there
our friend Katenin brought to bear
once more Corneille’s majestic story;
there caustic Shakhovskoy came in with comedies of swarm and din;
there Didelot crowned himself with glory:
there, where the coulisse entrance went,
that’s where my years of youth were spent.

My goddesses! Where are you banished?
lend ears to my lugubrious tone:
have other maidens, since you vanished,
taken your place, though not your throne?
your chorus, is it dead for ever?
Russia’s Terpsichore, shall never
again I see your soulful flight?
shall my sad gaze no more alight
on features known, but to that dreary,
that alien scene must I now turn
my disillusioned glass, and yearn,
bored with hilarity, and weary,
and yawn in silence at the stage
as I recall a bygone age? (Pushkin 1978, 20).

The two excerpts from *Eugene Onegin* when taken together make it clear that at least in Pushkin’s eyes, Istomina was the personification of the Russian Terpsichore.

What is significant about this passage is that through it we not only see what Istomina is capable of doing, but what Didelot as a choreographer demanded of her. The language that is used is also interesting. In the original, the appropriate French ballet terms are used such as *pirouette, entrechat*, etc. This is a clear indication that Pushkin has an understanding of ballet and readily applied it to his prose. This further supports the argument that although Pushkin had an influence on ballet, the influence was mutual.
When Onegin leaves St. Petersburg and is no longer able to attend ballet performances he begins to regret his late arrival and lethargy. He muses about the dancers:

Ah, I will never be able to forget
Two tiny feet! I am sad and cold now
But still I remember them, and in dreams
They still disturb me (Schmidt 1989, 5).

Pushkin, through Onegin, relates that he misses the ballet, not only for its social properties, but for its essential elements. He misses the dancers’ feet and their ability:

When will you lose remembrance of them?
Where go, you madman, to forget?
Ah, little feet, how I did love them!
Now on what flowers are they set?
In Orient luxury once cherished,
The trace you left has long since perished
From Northern snows: you loved to tread
Upon voluptuous rugs instead.
It was for you that I neglected
The call of fame, for you forgot
My country, and an exile’s lot—
All thoughts, but those of you, rejected
Brief as your footprint on the grass
The happiness of youth must pass (Yarmolinsky 1936, 125).

Onegin, away from ballet performances (and Pushkin perpetually exiled), continues to fantasize about feet and their ability, apparently preferring a dancer’s feet to characters from antiquity:

Diana’s bosom, Flora’s cheek
Are charming, dear friends!
But something within me makes me choose
Terpsichore’s enchanting feet! (Schmidt 1989, 5)

He continues to reminisce and tells us how much he longs to see his preferred dancers again:

I remember once, beside the sea—
How I envied all the waves
That ran in turbulent succession
To fall with love before her feet!
How I wished then like those waves
To press my lips against those feet! (Schmidt 1989, 5)
Finally, however, Onegin cautions that one should not become too involved with the dancers, perhaps reminding the reader of the fate of Istomina’s admirer, Sheremetev, who died as a result of a duel between her admirers (see note five):

Again my imagination burns,
Again that touch
Kindles the blood in my weary heart
Again my longing, again my love…
But enough praise for haughty beauties
From my babbling lyre;
They are not worth the passions
Or the songs they inspire
The words and glances of these charmers
Are as deceptive as their tiny feet. (Schmidt 1989, 5)

With this passage Onegin, given his dejected state of mind, is also warning that women in general are deceptive and not worthy of the passions and songs they inspire. This foreshadows the death of his friend, Lensky, who dies as the result of a duel over a woman, as well as Pushkin’s own death, also as a result of a duel over a woman.

For Pushkin and Onegin, well trained feet become a fixation and topic for discussion. Pushkin used a lorgnette at performances and was able to view the dancers’ feet quite well. His focus on one part of the dancer’s anatomy (feet) explains why dancers were often praised part by part, and step by step. Dancers during Pushkin’s lifetime were examined for every theatrical and personal aspect: they were exposed on stage, both at a long distance and a short one and they were at once revered and ridiculed. Dancers made the rest of society uncomfortable because “they move in the air over our heads, and we marvel at them for that, and love them for it. When a dancer rises into the air, he bears us heavy mortals on his back; when a dancer spins through space, she draws us stumbled-footed humans after her” (Schmidt 1989, 6). From Pushkin’s observations we discern that ballet is a two-way street; dance influencing the viewer, and the viewer’s preferences influencing the dancer or choreographer. Choreography, as we have seen, is shaped by the atmosphere and current events surrounding the creation of a ballet.

Certainly, Pushkin’s comments on the ballet are some of his most often quoted verses (Lifar 1954, 66). This may be attributed to the fact that Pushkin’s prose and ballet’s inherent rhythm compliment each other. In other words, instead of Pushkin’s
prose inspiring dance, it is dance that inspired the prose. Dance is not included in Pushkin’s work as a mere diversion. It is a critical element of the work, one that he uses as a lens to find rhythm and pattern:

For Pushkin that lens is indeed magical – magiceskij kristal, he calls it; a crystal ball where he conjures up that other vision beyond ordinary sight: the poet’s vision, his perception of dance as one of the possibilities of poetry. To watch the abstraction of the dancer’s art is to be made aware of the pattern, or rhythm, of abstraction, of an image elsewhere – all summoned from the very presence of flesh, from the too physical presence of arms, of legs, of hands, of feet. The dancer as she moves becomes for us who watch the possibility of perfection, of immutability; of a world eternal (Schmidt 1989, 6).

Therefore dance, in particular Istomina’s dancing, is part of Pushkin’s poetic inspiration. Pushkin emphasizes this point because as the story of Eugene Onegin progresses, ballet is no longer mentioned. This mirrors Onegin’s increasing unhappiness and loss of inspiration. By the time Tatyana attends the ballet in Moscow in Chapter VII, Pushkin no longer feels the need to describe who is dancing or what is being seen (Bethea 1993). This detachment furthers Pushkin’s storyline, but also reflects Pushkin’s personal situation. Pushkin took seven years to write Eugene Onegin, with most of the time spent in exile. Pushkin’s light-hearted days of attending the ballet were over and, although he was inspired by it, he was no longer au courant concerning the particulars.

Pushkin participated in social dancing, studied ballet and understood music. He attended ballet performances and appreciated the art. He studied foreign languages and read extensively. He was also a keen observer and incorporated realism into his poetry that made his works accessible to readers (or listeners) of all social levels. By combining his understanding of literature, language, music and rhythm and incorporating realism, he created poetry that transferred well to other genres including music and ballet. Furthermore, Pushkin understood the human psyche and was able to transform his knowledge into remarkable characters. These characters, with all of their human flaws and virtues (including madness) translate to stage well as evidenced by the productions of The Bronze Horseman, The Fountain of Bakhchisarai, The Queen of Spades, and Eugene Onegin. The Fountain of Bakhchisarai may be a peculiarly nationalistic piece that, as of yet, has not been exported to the West, but both The Queen of Spades and Eugene Onegin
are well-established international pieces. As Pushkin’s works become more familiar to Western readers and choreographers his inspiring voice may result in new ballets.
Notes for Chapter Six

1 Herman is also spelled Hermann and Germann in some translations.

2 The Maryinsky (Kirov) Ballet has many Petit ballets included in its repertoire, but at present The Queen of Spades is not.

3 Cranko’s Onegin has been performed in St. Petersburg, but it is not currently listed as part of the Maryinsky (Kirov) Ballet’s repertoire.

4 Ballet has fallen on hard financial times in Russia since the demise of the Soviet Union. Ballet in Russia and the Soviet Union had always enjoyed generous imperial and state support. The new capitalist Russia is forcing ballet dancers and choreographers to be inventive. Splinter groups from the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi ballets (as well as others) have come together to form international tours. The United States is a popular touring destination.

5 Istomina’s life off stage resembled a soap opera. Pushkin and his contemporaries were quite taken with her and she had many suitors. In 1817 she lived with an officer named Sheremetev who was very jealous. One of her admirers, Griboyedov, invited her to have “tea” after a performance and meet his friend, Count Zavadovsky, who was madly in love with her. She left in a special theatre carriage, but Sheremetev followed her. Sheremetev’s best friend, Yakubovich, a fellow officer and renowned duelist, convinced him to challenge Griboyedov to a duel. Yakubovich challenged Count Zavadovsky, thus making it a double duel. The duel between Sheremetev and Zavadovsky took place on November 12, 1817. Sheremetev shot first, shooting Zavadovsky in the collar. Zavadovsky then shot Sheremetev in the chest, who died the next day. The other duel was delayed for two years and finally took place in Tiflis. Yakubovich was a crack shot and hit Griboyedov in the hand, thus ending the duel without another death. Istomina continued dancing and enjoyed the height of her career in the 1820s and 30s. She retired, became fat and enjoyed the life of a celebrity (Schmidt 1989, 4-5).

6 All of the English translations that I refer to translate the French as well as the Russian, thus we are unable to observe how Pushkin used the correct terminology.
CONCLUSION

Although the path to creating a unique Russian ballet began with the solid base established by the imperial government in the late 1700s, Pushkin’s influence cannot be underestimated. Russia’s ballet history began almost a century later than that of many Western European countries including, most notably, France and England. Russia may have been a late-comer in the development of a national ballet, but the strength and longevity of Russian/Soviet ballet has prevailed and rivals that of any Western European country.

Part of the reason that Russian ballet has remained viable is because it developed under different circumstances than its Western counterparts. It developed later, which allowed for faster crystallization of the institution and less time for significant change. It also developed, for the most part, under one form of government; absolute. Under the tsars the ballet was enthusiastically supported by the imperial family thus providing great prestige and, most importantly, critical funding not found elsewhere in democratic Europe. This did not change with the Soviets. Soviet leadership supported the ballet and it benefited from the centralized economy as a state-run institution. It also developed differently because, despite the influx of foreign dancers and ballet masters, Russia was an isolated country. This isolation was not only of distance, but of ideology, language, and culture. Russia borrowed what it wanted from the West, but filtered what it assimilated through a Russian cultural lens. Ballet was at first a foreign import, but it transformed into something specifically Russian. This transformation was significantly enhanced by Pushkin.

Pushkin was conscious of the fact that Russia was behind in literature and therefore, the arts in general:

To be Russia’s national poet, as Dante was for Italy, Shakespeare for England, and Goethe for Germany, and thereby to prevail over a serious backwardness in the most important sphere of her spiritual existence—such was the historically due task that confronted Pushkin and that acknowledged, as task well worthy of the titanic poets of the Renaissance, but even more complex and difficult than theirs…Pushkin had to start from scratch in order to create—at an advanced European level contemporary to him, but already many centuries ahead of Shakespeare
and especially of Dante—a Russian national literature that had no experience analogous, whether in generally historical or literary terms to that of Western Europe and which, until the beginning of the 18th century, had been isolated from foreign experience (Blagoy 1979, 16-17).

The task facing Pushkin was daunting. He recognized that Russia lacked a national literature. He also acknowledged that with the high standard of his writing he would be regarded as a father of Russian literature. He wanted it to be a worthy literature and began working in earnest toward that end:

As early as during the period of his exile in the South—on the threshold of creative maturity—Pushkin had realized how vitally important and urgently necessary it was for him to raise himself and thus Russian literature to the level of the most advanced contemporary trends of his own times “to reach the intellectual level of the age” (Blagoy 1979, 18).

Pushkin was a patron of the arts and knew that what he was seeing was imported. He enjoyed Italian opera, as well as foreign musicians and dancers. However, the nationalism fostered by the Napoleonic War was not lost on Pushkin and he desired the creation of a national cultural identity:

The living communion, sometimes across the centuries, with the great writers on Pushkin’s part was not so much a history of their influences (the common assumption), as that of the ability to enter into their creative worlds, an ability that was so important and necessary for the real creation of a Russian national culture and the Russian national literature of which Pushkin was the progenitor (Blagoy 1979, 20).

Not only did Pushkin study languages and literature, he also studied music and dance. He appreciated the subtleties of the genres and incorporated aspects of them into his work. He chose to make his poetry rhythmic and lyrical. He chose to avoid the Church Slavonic and French as his medium, and to work with the more difficult nascent Russian language. He chose his own culture as subject matter. Unlike Shakespeare, who placed many of his most famous plays in other countries, Pushkin chose to tell Russian stories about Russian people. He was instrumental in creating a self-consciously Russian artistic tradition.

The popularization of the *romances* at the time Pushkin was writing helped with his cause. Much of Russia was illiterate, but by using the Russian vernacular and by setting Pushkin’s words to music, all levels of society could appreciate his poetry. Amateur composers were comfortable with Pushkin’s themes and poetic musicality and
began the process toward professional compositions. This emerging profession experimented with Pushkin’s works and, while some were more successful than others, began to create a body of Russian music reflecting Russian themes. Glinka became recognized as the father of Russian opera for his successful treatment of Pushkin’s *Russlan and Ludmilla* and other composers eventually followed suit, particularly Mussorgsky with his *Boris Godunov*, Rimsky-Korsakov with *The Tale of the Tsar Saltan* and *The Golden Cockerel*, and of course Tchaikovsky with *The Queen of Spades* and *Eugene Onegin*. All of these operas enjoy continued success in Russia and *Boris Godunov* and *Eugene Onegin* are in the repertoires of most of the major opera houses worldwide. Pushkin had helped establish a Russian opera that was being imported by other countries.

Russian ballet gained momentum under Didelot’s tutelage and Pushkin’s influence in the 1820s. Didelot established high training standards and experimented with works based on Pushkin. He created acclaimed ballets to Pushkin’s *Russlan and Ludmilla* and *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* starring Pushkin’s beloved Istomina. Pushkin confirmed his appreciation of Didelot and Istomina in his *Eugene Onegin*, thus in effect informing the world that Russia did indeed have very fine ballet institutions. Didelot would have been known already in Western ballet circles. By including Istomina, Pushkin elevated the status of the Russian dancer and alerted Europe to the fact that talent existed in Russia. This is important because visiting Russia was not easy and foreigners were unaware of the high level of dance occurring in Russia. Through *Eugene Onegin* Pushkin was advising the West that Russian culture, in both literature and dance, was on the rise.

Didelot’s standards remained in place during the rest of the century and were built upon by other ballet masters, in particular Petipa. Petipa took the Russian ballet to new heights with the production of his Tchaikovsky ballets and by the early 1900s Russia dominated the ballet world in terms of both its technical ability and choreographic material. The defections caused by the *Ballets Russes* and 1917 Revolution stripped Russian ballet of much of its talent. However, the institutions soon developed new talent to fill the void and ballet continued under Soviet domination. The isolation enforced by the Soviet regime and the constraints applied by Socialist Realism, meant that Russian
ballet developed in a closed system. Outside influences were minimal and, therefore, Russia was able to develop its own unique style and characteristics.

In this regard Pushkin and Russian ballet are similar. Pushkin could not leave the country and, although he read foreign literature, he had not experienced Western life. He emulated Western writers, but made his work Russian by writing about what he knew personally. He retold Russian fairy tales and historical events and through works like *Eugene Onegin* expressed what life was like in Russia during his lifetime. He was confined to Russia, yet produced excellent work without outside intervention, with the exception of his own readings.

Similarly, Russian ballet eventually developed on its own. Russian ballet was greatly influenced by its foreign ballet masters, dancers and choreographers. However, when they departed after the Revolution, Russian ballet was left alone and isolated by the iron hand of the Soviet regime. Russian ballet, once almost entirely foreign, became uniquely Russian. The dancers, ballet masters, choreographers, composers and audiences were almost exclusively Russian. Because of the difficult dictates of Socialist Realism and the Soviet leadership’s emphasis on national roots, choreographers again turned to Pushkin for inspiration and were not disappointed. Many Pushkin-based works were created, including *The Bronze Horseman*, but it was Pushkin and Zakharov’s *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* that became the masterpiece that best represents Russia’s unique ballet tradition. *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* is uniquely Russian because of the predominant role of the male, Girey, a Russian subject (despite his Tatar heritage). Its location is inside Russia and the ballet reflects the nationalistic attitudes of the time including the imperialistic annexing of land. The music and choreography are by Russians. The choreographer, Zakharov, in particular makes *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* Russian by the special choreographic inventions he incorporated into the work. He included spectacular lifts, a plastic style for Maria and a dynamic one for Zarema, and dramatic roles for all three, Girey, Maria and Zarema. He used the men as a *corps de ballet* in act four and broke new ground for male choreography by employing the *khovorod* patterns. *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* laid the foundation for Lavrovsky’s highly acclaimed masterpiece and the most important Russian/Soviet work, *Romeo and Juliet*. 
Later works include *The Queen of Spades* and *Eugene Onegin*. These works, because they were created outside of Russia, expose non-Russian artists to Russian themes. Pushkin not only helped create a Russian culture, he is partly responsible for its export.

The four works examined, *The Bronze Horseman*, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, *The Queen of Spades*, and *Eugene Onegin* share three main characteristics that enabled them to be successfully presented on stage as ballets. The first is that the main character was male (Eugene, Girey, Herman, and Onegin, respectively). This is a departure from ballet convention, where the dominant character is generally female, and allowed choreographers to treat the subject matter differently by presenting the story from a male perspective. The male as the central figure changed the dramatic aspects of the production and allowed for more male choreography. In the case of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* the choreographer, Zakharov, was able to incorporate a male *corps de ballet*, which is highly unusual.

The second characteristic centers on the fact that the women in the four ballets were tragic figures. Parasha drowns in *The Bronze Horseman*; both Maria and Zarema are kidnap victims and die because of Girey in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*; Liza is deceived by Herman and complicit in the countess’s death in *The Queen of Spades* (she commits suicide in the operatic version); and, Tatyana is scorned and humiliated by an older and more sophisticated Onegin. Conventional ballet often includes a tragic female figure, but Pushkin’s libretto and the choreographers’ treatment of the subject matter departed from typical ballet conventions. Specifically, the women (Parasha, Maria and Zarema) do not return as ethereal or immortal beings as is the case with the tragic women of *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*, although the countess does haunt Herman. Pushkin, however, treats this as a foreshadowing of Herman’s insanity as much as an apparition because she does not return as a supernatural being. Also, Pushkin avoids the melodramatic by not allowing Liza and Tatyana to exact revenge. Instead he punishes the men by permitting them to slip into insanity (Herman) or perpetual melancholy (Onegin).

The final shared characteristic is that of madness. Each of the male protagonists experienced a degree of madness, at least temporarily. Through this madness Pushkin provided the choreographer with a psychological motivation that enriched the character’s
portrayal and added a dimension of realism to the work. Eugene in *The Bronze Horseman* becomes completely insane because of the loss of Parasha and Herman loses his mind in *The Queen of Spades* because of his obsession with cards and a guilty conscience. Girey experiences temporary insanity when he falls in love with Maria and loses her in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* and Onegin’s madness occurs when he kills his best friend, Lensky, in a pointless duel.

Pushkin’s psychological portrayal of these characters and the manner in which he relates their particular stories were vital to their transference to stage. Pushkin provided enough insight to the characters’ psyches, colorful locations, and realistic situations to entice both a composer and a choreographer to attempt to transform the written work to another genre. With the exception of *The Bronze Horseman*, this transference was highly successful.

Pushkin not only established a national literature for Russia, he was a significant force in the development of Russian music, particularly opera, and Russian ballet. His craft was writing, but his understanding of music and ballet influenced his work and is reflected through his stories and their musical telling. Perhaps Janko Larvin expressed Pushkin’s role best:

> All this is only a further proof that Pushkin can be looked upon not only as a great poet and author but also as one of those cultural forces the vitality of which is bound to “live and move eternally,” as Belinsky said. It was through him that Russian literature received its focus and at the same time that direction in which the soul of his nation can look for its true image and self-expression. The whole of Russian literature after Pushkin has been above all a process of this kind, and some of its results have been so striking as to astonish the world (Larvin 1948, 212-213).

Certainly Pushkin was a force that both shaped and reflected Russian culture. His works informed music, opera and ballet, and were a significant influence in the development of a uniquely Russian ballet genre. Pushkin was the catalyst for creating a new Russian cultural tradition that included ballet. His contribution to the evolution of Russian ballet is significant, particularly because the Russian ballet, through the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi Ballet institutions, is considered one of the finest in the world. Pushkin never left Russia, but his works are appreciated far beyond Russia’s borders. Pushkin, through the mounting of ballets based on his works outside of Russia, is an exporter of Russian
culture. Fortunately, his works are an excellent representation of the best of Russian literature.


Kathryn Cashin received a Bachelor of Arts in Business and Russian and a Master of Arts in Slavic and East European Studies from Florida State University. She serves as resident choreographer for The Tallahassee Ballet and choreographs extensively. In addition she has served as president of FSU’s Friends of Dance and the Junior League of Tallahassee and was a board member with the Florida Dance Association for numerous years. She currently serves on the Leadership Council of FSU’s College of Arts and Sciences and on the Florida Committee for the National Museum of Women in the Arts.