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Weaponizing Ballet: An Episode in American Cold War Diplomacy

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To Mom and Dad– thank you for giving me ballet

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Introduction

Ballet in the Cultural Cold War

The inspiration for this thesis comes from my father, who danced with the New York City Ballet, or NYCB, from 1970 to 1996.[1] His 26 years as a professional dancer with NYCB allowed him to travel the globe, collecting many stories along the way that became an essential part of my childhood. My favorite of these growing up has always been his description of the trip he took to the Soviet Union with NYCB in 1972, occurring precisely ten years after the debut visit this paper reflects upon.

In particular, my father's memory of a day in Kyiv has always piqued my curiosity. While the State Department instructed the dancers to only interact with locals in official settings, my dad promptly defied this rule by befriending some boys not much younger than himself (he was only 19 at the time) in the city. He claims now that it was "difficult to stay away from the people, they were very friendly, fun, and very happy to meet an American," though I imagine people were equally drawn to him for his charm and free-spiritedness just as much as the fact that he is an American.[2] These boys ended up taking my father on a tour of the city. However, there seemed to be danger in them interacting. As my dad recalls, "they taught me to go three streets one way and four the other to meet up with them at different points without looking like we were together. They told me they could get in trouble for associating with an American."[3]

After spending the day in this fashion, my dad finally returned to the hotel, only to discover that it had been locked, making it impossible to get inside. Instead of leaving him out on

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[1] From now on I will refer to New York City Ballet by its abbreviation, NYCB.
[2] Peter Naumann, Interview, November 26, 2021.
[3] Ibid.

the streets, his new friends brought him to their home. From what he can remember, doing so seemed quite problematic, for the boys' parents gave them quite a scolding before making a place in the apartment for my father to sleep. Despite whatever danger there may have been in associating with my American father, this family's generosity saved my dad from what otherwise "would have been a difficult night out in the streets."[4] Though he cannot recall their names, he still insists today that not only did these two boys give him the best tour he had on his entire trip to the Soviet Union but also saved his life.

My father's experience is only one of many examples of the American artists going behind the Iron Curtain as part of a broader scheme in US foreign diplomacy. These endeavors were part of the Cultural Cold War, a broad term used to describe the intense cultural and scientific competition between the US and Soviet Russia during the Cold War. Culture, perhaps one of the most complex terms in the English language, encompasses all human acts that produce or create an occasion to produce meaning.[5] According to Walter Hixon, in the case of the Cultural Cold War the term culture takes on a specific meaning, referring to the educational, scientific, or artistic artifacts the two superpowers chose to display.[6] Therefore it is perhaps best to use historian Greg Barnhisel's definition: the Cultural Cold War was the "struggle for cultural prestige and influence between the Communist Soviet Union and its Eastern Bloc satellites on one side and the United States and the nations of western Europe on the other."[7]

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[4] Ibid.
[5] John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2009), 2.
[6] Walter L. Hixon, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War 1945-1961*, St. Martin's Griffin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), X.
[7] Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy*, (Columbia University Press, 2015), 2. https://doi.org/10.7312/barn16230.

Ironically, this phenomenon was only possible because American Democracy and Soviet Communism held similar cultural values, despite their feud over ideological differences. Stemming from the same humanistic values inherited in the period of Western Enlightenment, both countries had remarkable consensus on what constituted 'progress.' David Caute speaks to this similarity when he wrote:

> Both aspired to universal literacy and the highest possible standards of education from kindergarten to university. Both claimed to be opposed to racial discrimination. Both set a premium on public health-care, public hygiene, swimming pools, games fields, and increased life expectancy. Both boasted providing the better public libraries–more books for more satisfied readers. Neither would yield to the other regarding sexual equality and the advancement of women. Both capitalism and Communism promised superior provision in all such fields.[8]

Using Caute's assertion, we can understand the Cultural Cold War as a competition over these shared cultural indicators of progress. Often, the display of these indicators occurred through 'races' of similar cultural artifacts, the most notorious being the competition over technological advancement known as the Space Race. Though less discussed in many historical analyses, an equally important race occurred in the performing arts sector. Indeed both superpowers fought the Cultural Cold War through dance diplomacy, the act of sending individual artists and dance troupes abroad to serve as representatives of their nation and its ideology.[9] The most visible of these interactions was the US-Soviet ballet exchange, a series of tours beginning in 1959, in which the US sent its American ballet companies to the Soviet Union in exchange for visits from Soviet ballet companies to the US. Labeled as an attempt to encourage deténte through artistic collaboration, these companies were sent as political weapons

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[8] David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 4.
[9] Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 1-2; Hixon, *Parting the Curtain*, X.

for propaganda and psychological warfare.[10] A critical component in US strategy in the battle for cultural supremacy, government interest in ballet was at an all-time high in the years of the exchange, fundamentally changing the relationship between government and dance.

Nevertheless, American dance diplomacy in the Cold War has only recently begun to grow as a subject of serious historical consideration. The first book to explore this phenomena was Naima Prevots' *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (1998), which opened the door for more extensive scholarship on the subject. Since then, a growing number of books exploring dance in Cold War diplomacy have emerged, including David Caute's *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy in the Cold War* (2003), Catherine Gunther Kodat's *Don't Act, Just Dance: The Metapolitics of Cold War Culture* (2015), Clare Croft's *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (2015), and most recently Anne Searcy's *Ballet in the Cold War: A Soviet-American Exchange* (2020).

This thesis builds on such previous scholarship by evaluating a specific incident of pertinence in the Cultural Cold War, NYCB's debut to the Soviet Union in 1962. While many texts discuss this tour (including the ones listed above), their broader focus often limits the depth of analysis. Therefore this paper seeks to investigate this event in greater detail, using it as a case study to consider the ways the State Department and American ballet companies mutually exploited one another. Furthermore it seeks to question who truly benefited from American involvement in the ballet exchange.

Broken into four chapters, I begin this analysis by providing historical background on ballet in the US and Russia prior to the Cold War. This chapter shows the direct influence

[10] Anne Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War: A Soviet-American Exchange* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 2.

Russian ballet had on ballet in America, starting in the 19th century with the development of classical ballet in Imperial Russia. It also focuses on the relationship between government and ballet in each country into the 1950s, describing the challenges the artform faced at the start of the Cold War in each location. By providing this background, this chapter aims to show both the special relationship Soviet and American ballet had and the apparent advantage Soviet ballet had over its American counterpart, making it seem entirely implausible that the US would engage in dance diplomacy using ballet at the start of the Cold War.

In chapter two, I turn my focus to American policy in the Eisenhower Administration. Looking at the ideological and political changes throughout the 1950's, this chapter attempts to explain how ballet found itself intimately involved with foreign diplomacy by the end of the decade. Additionally, it looks closely at the three Eisenhower Administration policies associated with the formalization of the US-Soviet ballet exchange, the Emergency Fund for International Affairs, the State Department's contract with the American National Theater Academy (ANTA), and the Lacy-Zarubin Agreement, to show both the logical and purely coincidental ways ballet ended up at the heart of American foreign diplomacy.[11]

Chapter three begins a detailed discussion on the specifics of NYCB's 1962 tour, investigating the negotiations for NYCB's Soviet debut in detail. Revolving around the whims of the company's general director, Lincoln Kirstein, much of the chapter focuses on his shifting perception on the benefits of engaging the company in the State Department's cultural exportation program. Subsequently, this chapter also uncovers the complicated relationship between the State Department, ANTA, and other private individuals like the American

[11] From now on I will refer to the American National Theater Academy by its abbreviation, ANTA.

impresario Sol Hurok, using the ANTA meeting minutes housed in the University of Arkansas and New York Public Library. From this analysis, the goals for both NYCB and the State Department for sending the company behind the Iron Curtain become clear.

In chapter four, I narrate the events of the tour itself. Influenced by Anne Searcy's notions of transliteration in the ballet exchange, much of the discussion in this chapter revolves around the Soviet interpretation of NYCB. Subsequently, I go into some detail about how Khrushchev's autocracy shaped public criticism of the company and the general audience's reception. Meanwhile, this chapter also discusses the series of political and personal crises that NYCB experienced on tour and how these events shaped company members' experiences. Finally, this chapter looks at the short term aftermath of the tour for NYCB and the State Department, gauging how each group understood the tour in light of their respective aims.

Finally, I conclude this thesis with a brief discussion on what happened to American ballet and US policy following the tour. This section looks at US policy following NYCB's Soviet debut that affected American ballet, specifically the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts. In addition, this discussion goes beyond the Cold War, investigating the relationship between Cold War dance diplomacy and the success of NYCB. In my final analysis I make conclusions about the exploitation between the federal government and NYCB, who ultimately benefited more from the ballet exchange, and the lasting impact of NYCB's Soviet debut.

Chapter 1

Ballet in the United States and Russia Before the Cold War

Before investigating how the Eisenhower Administration incorporated dance diplomacy into its Cultural Cold War strategy, it is worth considering the history of ballet prior to the Cold War in the US and Russia. Ironically, the two countries share a distinct point of origin in their respective ballet histories. Yet, despite this shared point of origin, ballet in each location would develop in strikingly different political circumstances resulting in ballet's disproportionate level of prestige and governmental support in the Soviet Union compared to the US at the end of World War Two. Indeed, by the start of the Cold War Soviet ballet had achieved an international renown, making it all the more interesting that the Eisenhower Administration adopted ballet into foreign diplomacy.

While the history of ballet globally is long and rich, starting back in the courts of Louis XIV, this account shall begin with a point in time that radically changed the direction of ballet for the entire globe; the emigration of French-born dancer Marius Petipa (1818-1910) to St. Petersburg, Russia in 1847. Although ballet had been present in Russian courts since the decree of the Imperial Theater system by Catherine the Great in 1756, it was under Petipa that a distinctly Russian school of technique and repertoire emerged.[12] Petipa was only one of many dancers drawn to St. Petersburg, the "Venice of the north," because the Tsars of Russia were offering generous paychecks to dancers to fill their court while interest in the art form in Western

[12] Lynn Garafola, "Russian Ballet in the Age of Petipa," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*, ed. Marion Kant (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 152.

Europe declined.[13] Little did anyone know that the arrival of a single man would shape ballet across the world in the years to come.

At Russia's Imperial Ballet, Petipa steered the shift from the romantic to the classical era of ballet.[14] Romantic ballet, influenced by the French literary romanticism of the later eighteenth century, used soft movements to encapsulate "melancholia, spiritual ideals, and suppressed erotic desire wrought into an escapist fantsay."[15] The most prominent example of romantic ballet, *La Sylphide* (1832), encapsulates the romantic style, focusing on movement that emphasizes the mood and emotion of the story. Most famously performed by Anna Pavlova, the movements, combined with the costumery of a long skirt, bring the ethereality of her character to life.

Petipa's choreography took the emotivism of French romantic ballet and merged it with the experimental technical virtuosity of the Italian tradition of ballet. Choreographically, his ballets featured larger ensembles with more elaborate stories, and featured more non-narrative elements, such as the *grand pas de deux,* which acts as a display of the technicality of the dancers. Meanwhile, the skirts of female costumes were shortened, creating the tutu to show off their new technical skills on pointe, and the ballets became substantially longer to accommodate more changes of scenery, costumery, and technically advanced choreography.[16] These changes in production and choreographic structure defined the era of classical ballets epitomized by Petipa

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[13] Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet* (New York: Random House, 2011), 261; Garafola, "Russian Ballet in the Age of Petipa," 151.

[14] Like other art forms, ballet's romantic period was born out of Enlightenment and the French Revolution. While in the visual arts, the romantic period follows from an earlier classical tradition, ballet's romantic period comes first because the pointe shoe and movement vocabulary still used today originated in the romantic period of French visual and literary aesthetics.

[15] Homans, *Apollo's Angels,* 154.

[16] Garafola, "Russian Ballet in the Age of Petipa," 154-9.

and Lev Ivanov's joint choreographic work, perhaps the best-known ballet of all time, *Swan Lake* (1895).

In the Romanovs' court, Petipa's classical ballet thrived. By the 1890s, training became highly specialized to suit the needs of classical ballet, creating the institutional system of feeder schools for ballet companies and the pedagogies for classroom instruction that are still widely used today. During this time children from middle and upper-class families were specially selected to study at the Imperial Ballet School, while the dancers at the Imperial Theater became like members of the tsar's household. Many received gifts from the imperial family regularly, and some even engaged in affairs with the Grand Dukes. Meanwhile, watching ballet became a centerpiece of court life, with the term balletomane developed to describe the many fans of the form in Russia's upper class.[17] For these reasons, ballet became a symbol of Russian elite culture.

At the start of the twentieth century, Russian ballet dancers began to tour Western Europe, reanimating ballet audiences there. The most famous of these tour groups was Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russes, which performed across Europe from 1909 to 1929, presenting some of the greatest dancers and choreographers from the Russian Imperial Ballet. After officially cutting ties with the Imperial Theater in 1911, Ballet Russes began to produce increasingly avant-garde pieces. For instance, Ballet Russes' original choreographer, Mikhail Fokine (1880-1942), took choreographic inspiration from American dancer Isadora Duncan's expressive and anatomically natural movements in his choreography making pieces that removed themselves from the rigidity of classical ballet vocabulary.[18] Later in life, he claimed that ballet must "abandon the [classical] divertissement as a diversion from the action of the dance...that

[17] Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 13 https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1b4cx8t.9; Garafola, "Russian Ballet in the Age of Petipa," 161-3.
[18] Homans, *Apollo's Angels,* 294.

dance and pantomime must be combined…[and] the new ballet should function as a union of the arts," notions that were entirely novel at the time.[19]

Meanwhile, another choreographer for the Ballet Russes, and one of the most famous male dancers in ballet history, Vaslav Nijinsky, was a known iconoclast. Though not as prolific as Fokine, the works he made were certainly memorable. Most notably, his *Le Sacre du Printemps*, premiering in Paris in 1913, was so "primitive and non refined, seeking to negate the elements of classical ballet" that it has since become one of the most debated pieces of choreography in ballet history.[20] Accordingly, the Ballet Russes became the face of the avant-garde in ballet in the West, developing classical ballet into neoclassical ballet, which values minimalist aesthetics and abstraction over elaborate sets, costumes, narratives, and emotions.

Some of these Russian dancers and choreographers eventually immigrated to the US, making a new home for themselves stateside. According to Catherine Gunther Kodat, while "[w]ealthy Americans have always collected and commissioned artworks and acted as sustaining patrons for individual writers, painters, and composers," ballet did not immediately gain traction in the US.[21] Though visits from touring groups like the Ballet Russes became a spectacle of exoticism, finding support from some of America's upper-class, there was neither private funding nor public support for ballet as a standing institution. Whereas countries with current or former monarchical systems readily welcomed ballet as a remnant of court culture in the early

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[19] Tim Scholl, "The Ballet Avant-Garde II: The 'New' Russian and Soviet Dance in the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*, ed. Marion Kant (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 216.
[20] Thomas Forrest Kelley, "Igor Stravinsky, *Le sacre du printemps*: Thursday, May 29, 1913, 8:45PM," in *First Nights: Five Musical Premieres* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 287.
[21] Catherine Gunther Kodat, *Don't Act, Just Dance: The Metapolitics of Cold War Culture* (Rutgers University Press, 2015), 15. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1287mrj.

twentieth century, the founding principles of democracy and capitalism threatened ballet's existence in America. Indeed in this period popular political theory warned that federal support of the arts would result in the elitist control of artistic freedom and encourage frivolity, leading to tyranny.[22]

Therefore, in order to survive, many emigres adapted their art to identify more with American culture. Some took advantage of American venues for dance, such as vaudeville, variety shows, exercise classes, and theater.[23] Others found roots in opera stages, such as Adolph Bolm, who directed ballet numbers for the Chicago Opera. A former student at the Russian Imperial Ballet School, Bolm organized and performed on two tours in the US for the Ballet Russes, during the second of which he sustained a severe spinal cord injury. No longer able to dance, he decided to remain in America and instituted some of America's earliest standing organizations.[24] Though these ventures by early emigres do not often make it into historical texts on ballet history in the US, they should be recognized as the starting point of the artform in America.

Notably, some of these early dancers in America had left because of political turmoil back in Russia from the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. At the start of the new Bolshevik government, it was unclear if ballet would continue under a government subsidy similar to its patronage by the Imperial Court. Particularly, the grand aristocratic nature of classical ballet was in doubt, with the Orthodox Communists suggesting a total rejection of classical ballet

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[22] Donna M. Binkiewicz, *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 12-3.
[23] Andrea Harris, *Making Ballet American: Modernism Before and Beyond Balanchine* (Bridgeport, Connecticut: Oxford University Press, 2018), 15-7; Homans, *Apollo's Angels,* 449-51.
[24] Solomon Hurok, *S. Hurok Presents: A Memoir of the Dance World* (New York: Hermitage House, 1953) 89-91; Les Hammer, "'The Spirit of the Factory': Adolph Bolm's Post-Moderne Masterpiece." *Dance Chronicle* 20, no. 2 (1997): 191–208.

vocabulary.[25] Ideologically, it would seem unwise to continue the institutionalized patronage of the art so profoundly intertwined with Imperial culture.

However, even in the earliest years of the new Bolshevik regime, cultural diplomacy was vital to the aim for the global communist revolution. Since Russian ballet now held a stronghold in the West thanks to avant-garde troops like the Ballet Russes, it quickly became clear to Lenin and his peers that ballet must continue as an essential asset to diplomatic relations in Europe.[26] Subsequently, ballet became one of the many arts exchanged under the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, formed in 1925 to present Soviet culture to sympathizers abroad, financed and censured under the Ministry of Culture.[27]

Yet even with an apparent political reason to keep supporting ballet following the revolution, Russian companies still struggled to produce in the turbulent years following the Bolshevik take-over. In the months immediately following the revolution, dancers left in a mass exodus; the Imperial Ballet lost an estimated forty percent of its company.[28] Meanwhile, amongst the financial struggles of the new regime, heating and electricity in theaters became sparse, making rehearsals near impossible, and the New Economic Policy (NEP) cut theater subsidies, forcing dancers to work without pay for several months.[29] Nevertheless, the show would go on for those who remained; the ballet companies finding a new audience. In 1919 the adoption of the Bolshevik program for the enlightenment of the people gave free ballet tickets to the masses.

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[25] Scholl, "The Ballet Avant-Garde II," 218.
[26] Cadra Peterson McDaniel, *American–Soviet Cultural Diplomacy: The Bolshoi Ballet's American Premiere* (Blue Ridge Summit, UNITED STATES: Lexington Books, 2014), 27-8 http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bard/detail.action?docID=1913307.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin,* 14-5.
[29] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin,* 21-3. From now on I will refer to the New Economic Policy by its abbreviation, NEP.

These free performances drew in people who were financially unable to see the ballet under the Tsars, who often considered nights in the theater during this period as "an escape from the horrors of revolutionary reality."[30] Thus, while conditions became harsh for ballet dancers in the years following the revolution, ballet once again became a focal point of Russian identity through its new audience.

Meanwhile, the NEP's relaxation of cultural ideologies increased artistic experimentation in Russian ballet. Inspired by the avant-garde movement epitomized by Fokine and Nijinsky abroad, Soviet choreographers like Kasyan Goleizovsky abandoned the separation of dance and pantomime, relying on the steps alone to provide a narrative. Quite scandalous for the time, Goleizovsky preferred his pieces to be performed in as little clothing as possible so that the audience could better see the dancers' bodies in motion.[31] Meanwhile, Fyodor Lopukhov, appointed artistic director of the former Imperial Ballet in 1922, made symbolic pieces like his *Magnificence of the Universe,* frequently interpreted as both a metaphor for the state of the Soviet Republic in the NEP and as an affirmation of a higher moral power.[32] Experiments such as this established choreographic symphonism, a choreographic movement related to neoclassical ballet in which a dance's content was neither explicitly narrative nor entirely abstract. Rather these pieces can best be described as reflections on the narrative the choreographer heard in the music.

One of these 1920s experimenters in the NEP, a young man by the name of George Balanchine, would permanently change the trajectory of ballet in the US. Born in St. Petersburg on January 22, 1904, his Georgian parents, Meliton and Maria Balachivadze, christened their son

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[30] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin,* 17.
[31] Scholl, "The Ballet Avant-Garde II," 219.
[32] Scholl, "The Ballet Avant-Garde II," 221; Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War*, 102.

Georgi Melitonovitch Balachivadze. At the age of nine, his mother took him and his older sister to St. Petersburg, attempting to enroll the children into the Imperial Naval Academy and the ballet department of the Imperial Theater School, respectively. Georgi's audition for the Naval Academy was first, where he got rejected immediately because enrollment for the academy was already full. By pure luck, as the boy and his mother were waiting for his sister's ballet audition at the Imperial Theater School to finish, an official of the school suggested to his mother to let him audition with the other male candidates. Maria subsequently made her son audition, and while his sister was rejected, Georgi was offered a coveted spot at the school. At only nine years old, the future choreographer left home and began his career in ballet.[33]

Georgi Balachivadze graduated from the Leningrad State Choreographic Institute (the former Imperial Theater School) in 1921, with honors, and joined the State Academic Theater for Opera and Ballet (the former Imperial Ballet) as a member of the corps de ballet.[34] In his free time, the emerging artist gathered a group of about fifteen of his coworkers, including his first wife Tamara Geva, to perform his choreographic symphonic pieces in a series of programs titled "Evenings of the Young Ballet."[35] While the group had administrative help from Balachivadze's close friend and future ballet critic Yuri Slonimsky, the dancers did much of the behind-the-scenes work for these performances, including sewing their costumes.[36] These "Evenings of Young Ballet," similar to Kasyan Goleizovsky's shows, were considered quite

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[33] Bernard Taper, *Balanchine: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 34-5.
[34] In the 1920s, the Soviet government renamed the Imperial Theater School the Leningrad State Choreographic Institute, and the Imperial Ballet Theater became the State Academic Theater for Opera and Ballet. In 1935, the company was renamed again as the Kirov Ballet, and in 1957 the school was renamed the Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kirov became the Mariinsky Ballet but is still known abroad by its former Soviet title. From now on I will refer to these entities by their Soviet titles, the Kirov Ballet and Vaganova Academy.
[35] Balanchine married four times during the course of his life to dancers Tamara Geva, Vera Zorina, Maria Tallcheif, and Taniquil Le Clerq.
[36] Taper, *Balanchine,* 55.

scandalous. In 1923 the government forced the group to disband after a performance set to Aleksandr Blok's poetry chanted by a chorus, threatening that they would be fired from their jobs if they continued to participate in the Young Ballet.[37] However, the ending of the Young Ballet did not spell the end of opportunities for Balachivadze to choreograph. A year later, a troupe of dancers, including Balanchivadze, would be sent across the Baltic Sea to tour Europe. The young choreographer decided not to return to Russia, defecting to join the Ballet Russes as the company's newest choreographer. Upon his arrival at the company, he gave himself a new name, George Balanchine.[38]

Fig 1.1 George Balanchine and Tamara Geva dancing a pas de deux for the Young Ballet, likely to Alexander Scriabin's Etude in D-sharp minor. Published in: Bernard Taper, *Balanchine: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996) 60.

[37] Matilde Butkas, "George Balanchine," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 226.
[38] Taper, *Balanchine,* 71-3. Diaghilev suggested that Balanchine change his name to make it easier to pronounce. The young choreographer evidently took no issue with this, promptly renaming himself George Balanchine.

As the company's head choreographer, Balanchine began to make a name for himself across Western Europe with his works. Some of his earliest pieces still performed today were conceived from this period, such as *Apollo* (1928) and *Prodigal Son* (1929). Notably, *Apollo* was the first ballet Balanchine and Russian composer Igor Stravinsky collaborated on, starting a friendship that would define their careers and the future of choreographic style in the West.[39] Although the choreography of *Apollo* changed significantly from its premiere to Balanchine's death, it is still celebrated as one of the first ballets to completely redefine the relationship between music, dance, and story. In the piece, the objective of the dancers' movements is to visually encapsulate the nuances of the musical score at the expense of creating a dance devoid of narrative or metaphorical content. This profound belief that any semblance of narrative is not needed in a ballet, spearheaded by Balanchine and Stravinsky's collaboration, became emblematic of the neoclassical style of ballet for the next several decades.[40]

When Diaghilev died in 1929, the Ballet Russes collapsed. Soon after, the twenty-five-year-old Balanchine became seriously ill with tuberculosis. Though the choreographer survived this bout of illness, he never regained full strength, suffering symptoms of the infection for the remainder of his life.[41] Following his recovery, he choreographed for companies across Europe, though none of these pieces would gain the popularity of his work with the Ballet Russes. Luckily for Balanchine, his work was not lost on arguably the most important supporter of American ballet in history, Lincoln Kirstein. An American philanthropist and impresario, Kirstein approached Balanchine in London in 1933 with the offer to come to

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[39] Charles Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine: A Journey of Invention* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 29.
[40] Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine,* 115-9. Notably, Balanchine's elimination of plot from his pieces in favor of abstract works relates to the origin of ballet in the French courts, in which ballets were often made up of a series of pantomimes to express emotion but not narrative.
[41] Taper, *Balanchine,* 127.

America to help him build "a distinctly American ballet company."[42] Balanchine accepted on the condition that they first create a school, following Kirstein back to New York. The two men would go on to create one of the world's most prestigious ballet institutions, NYCB, and its feeder school, the School of American Ballet.

Balanchine's arrival in America coincided with the first time a presidential administration invested in American theater and dance. In the 1930s, as part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the Works Administration Program aided artists by giving job opportunities to the unemployed and using art to build an American cultural identity intentionally. The Works Administration Program elevated theater and dance through the Federal Theater Project, which provided funds for performances. However, this aid only lasted a couple of years. Funding from Congress ceased after the Dies Committee of 1938 deemed many of these shows subversive and anticapitalist and began to suspect choreographers and playwrights of communist activities.[43] Soon after, with World War Two in full force, any hint of future federal funding for the arts disappeared entirely, and most US members of Congress equated the Federal Theater Project with socialism.[44] For American ballet groups in their infancy, like Kirstein and Balanchine's endeavors, this meant a continued lack of financial support or audience presence to operate successfully.

As Kirstein and Balanchine struggled to build a home for ballet in the US, Stalin's crackdown on the arts and intellectuals in the 1930s brought an abrupt end to the choreographic

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[42] Butkas, "George Balanchine," 228. For more on Lincoln Kirstein refer to chapter three.
[43] Binkiewicz, *Federalizing the Muse,* 17-18. The Dies Committee was the first iteration of the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), established in 1938 by congress member Martin Dies Jr. to investigate organizations suspected of having communist or fascist ties. It did not become the more infamous standing committee until 1945.
[44] Lynn Garafola, "Dollars for Dance: Lincoln Kirstein, City Center, and the Rockefeller Foundation." *Dance Chronicle* 25, no. 1 (2002): 106. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1568180.

symphonist movement in Russia. Under Stalin's regime, the center of ballet shifted from Leningrad (the Kirov Ballet) to Moscow (the Bolshoi Ballet), and choreographic works had to abide by Stalin's prescribed ideology on art, aptly dictated by Andrei Zhdanov at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers as "Socialist realism… [which] demands of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development."[45] The result was the creation of the dramballet. The dramballet told straightforward, uplifting stories about the proletariat, using pantomime that indicated dramatic meaning so that the audience could not misinterpret the piece's content. Sometimes called tractor ballets, these pieces had the grandioseness of classical ballet but were devoid of etherealness and fantasy, portraying heroism of everyday life using Socialist realism.

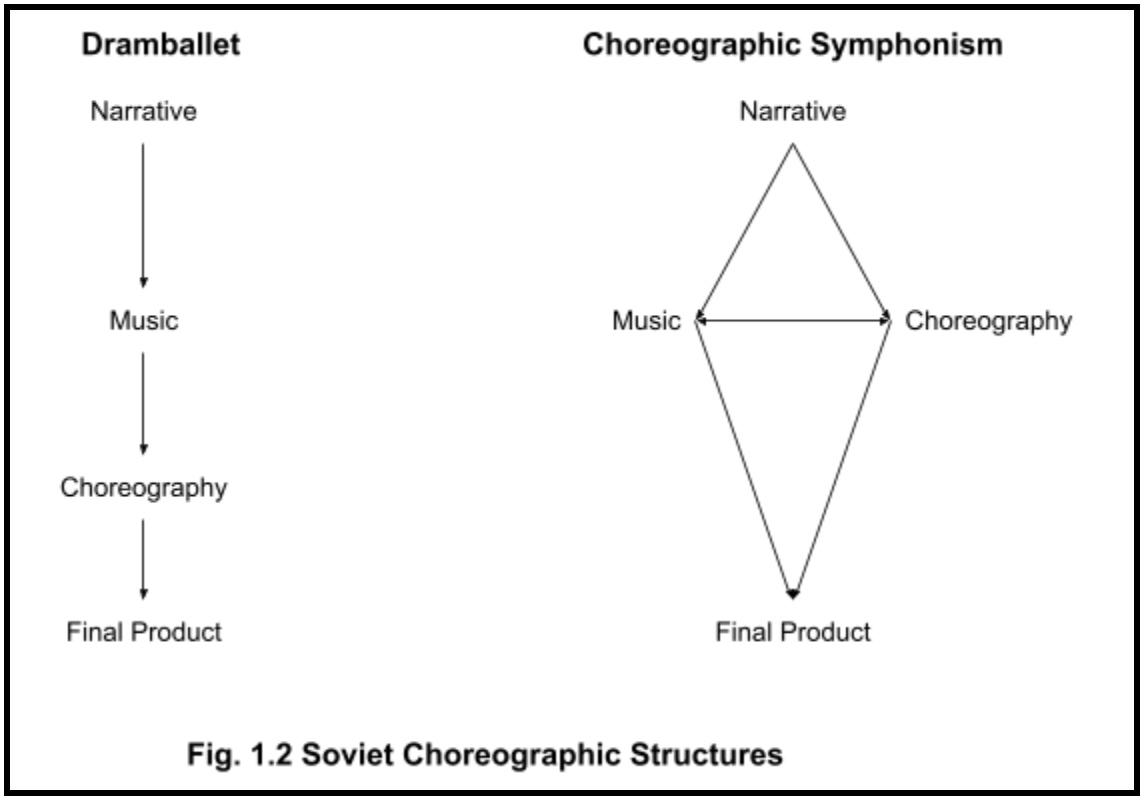

Fig. 1.2 Soviet Choreographic Structures

[45] Quoted in Homans, *Apollo's Angels,* 346.

Petipa's classical ballets also returned to the stage during Stalin's reign, thanks in significant part to Agrippa Vagonava. Born in 1879, she worked directly with Petipa and was known for her vigorous opposition to Lopoukhov's choreographic experiments in the 1920s. According to Jennifer Homans, Vagonava's conservative understanding of ballet "dovetailed with Stalin's rigid and distinctly low brow taste…she worked hard to apply the ideas of socialist realism to dance."[46] Famously, she restaged many of Petipa's works with elements of Socialist realism to make them suitable for Stalin's ideology. For instance, she restaged *Swan Lake* in 1933 as the dream of a corrupt count to account for the elements of magic central to the story and added fake blood to the costumes of dying characters to make their deaths more realistic. Meanwhile, her technique, codified in the publication *Fundamentals of the Classical Dance,* expanded and joined the concepts of dramballet to the classical repertoire by teaching students how to make every step and pantomime contain distinct, easy to understand symbols.[47]

Though dramballet may have undermined the prestige of Russian ballet for some, the codified technique of Vaganova and continued performances of the classics brought a mass following of the Soviet Ballet from all over the globe by the start of the Cold War. During the Cold War, the Soviets became the primary source of ballet's most internationally recognized technicians, such as Galina Ulanova, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Rudolf Nureyev, and Maya Plisetskaya.[48] The impressiveness of their dancers became even more amplified by the Soviet's advertisement of its ballet. For instance, in 1947 critics lauded the number of choreographers they had produced since the start of the twentieth century and described their work as

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[46] Homans, *Apollo's Angels,* 354.
[47] Homans, *Apollo's Angels,* 355-6.
[48] Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Middletown, CT. 06459, UNITED STATES: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), 12, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bard/detail.action?docID=835008.

"performances of profound substance, distinguished by integrity of conception, entirely in poetic, musical and choreographic execution," in a book on the qualities of Soviet ballet.[49] By the time of Stalin's death in 1953, the two prominent Soviet ballet companies, the Kirov and the Bolshoi, were internationally recognized as the best in the world.

However, within Soviet Russia, the death of Stalin sparked an internal debate over the future of choreographic innovation. Facing a period of choreographic stagnation in the 1950s, Soviet ballet companies and the Soviet Ministry of Culture began discussing the return to more avant-garde choreography while still presenting certain Soviet values.[50] This debate became more pronounced following Khrushchev's 1956 secret speech, distancing the new Soviet leadership from Stalin's crackdown on art, and leading to a subsequent cultural thaw in which choreographers could more openly defy Soviet socialist realism. For the Soviet ballet, this marked the beginning of an open debate on the extent to which choreographic style could evolve and still present its prescribed ideology.[51] Therefore, by the time of the Soviet-American ballet exchange, ballet in Russia had already begun to look toward aesthetics like Balanchine's neoclassicism, struggling to apply such aesthetics to their own ideological values.

Meanwhile, the end of World War Two marked a new beginning for ballet in America. Around this time, many prominent choreographic talents like George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, and Antony Tudor emerged on Broadway and other highly visible venues. In addition, an influx of highly educated Europeans in American metropolitan centers like New York City arrived thanks to the exodus of these intellects from war-torn Europe. Combining these two

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[49] Peter Gusev, "Choreographic Education in the USSR," in *The Soviet Ballet* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 39-41; George Mamontov, "Soviet Choreographers," in *The Soviet Ballet* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 62.
[50] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 84-5.
[51] Ibid.

forces generated an increase in the popularity of ballet in American cities, especially New York, highlighted by Balanchine and Kirstein's establishment of the New York City Ballet in 1948.[52] Though audiences were small in their first season, Balanchine's *Firebird* (1949), starring Maria Tallchief, launched the company into rapid success, gaining enough support through private donations to tour abroad by 1950. While funding remained a major issue, these postwar conditions finally gave American ballet a chance to make its mark on American and international audiences alike.[53]

Thus entering the 1950s, a crucial dynamic between Soviet and American ballet emerged, in which two evolutions of the same artistic background found themselves in monumentally different positions at the start of the Cold War. Soviet ballet was highly valued, but faced stagnation and choreographic debate internally, and American ballet had finally gained a significant fan base domestically but lacked the funds needed to remain in the public eye and increase prestige abroad. Perhaps lucky timing for American ballet, the Eisenhower administration marked the start of a new chapter in government involvement in the arts, helping American ballet quickly grow its prestige

[52] Homans, *Apollo's Angels,* 451-5.
[53] Connie Hochman, *In Balanchine's Classroom*, Biography, Zeitgeist Films, 2021.

Chapter 2

Dance Diplomacy in the Eisenhower Administration

Early Cold War policy in America was symptomatic of an institutionalized fear of communism. American theorists have long argued that communism opposes the principles of self-determination and liberty in the US constitution as a "theory that advocates the abolition of private ownership, all property being vested in the community, and the organization of labor for the common benefit of all members."[54] For the Wilson administration, this logic led to the first Red Scare, building the assumption that the elimination of undemocratic states was the key to world peace.[55] When World War Two came to a close after the US dropped nuclear bombs on Japan and increased Soviet spheres of interest rapidly increased in Eastern Europe, the Truman administration applied this Wilsonian sentiment as a justification for entering the Cold War. More specifically, President Truman justified the Cold War by asserting that "the stronger the voice of a people in the formulation of national policies, the less danger of aggression," implicitly stating that the very definition of communism as collective rule made Soviet Russia a hostile state.[56]

By 1947, American foreign policy fully embraced the Cold War with President Truman's call for a global crusade against communism abroad.[57] In response to this call was an unprecedented mobilization and deployment of national power through the Marshall Plan (1948),

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[54] "Communism, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed January 8, 2022, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37325.
[55] Michael A. Hunt, "Ideology in Twentieth-Century Forgein Policy," in *Ideology and U.S. Forgein Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 148.
[56] Hunt, "Ideology in Twentieth-Century Forgein Policy," 152.
[57] Eric Foner, Introduction to *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War,* by Naima Prevots, 1.

the US-sponsored program to rehabilitate economies in Western and Southern Europe, as well as greatly expanded economic influence and continued US military occupation. Meanwhile, the doctrine of containment, the policy to prevent the expansion of communism, led to US involvement in proxy wars like the Korean War (1950-1953). With the war, America established the pattern of hardline containment and democratic influence they would exert abroad in the years to come.[58]

Simultaneously to such foreign policy, the domestic policy targeting American communists and communist sympathizers known as McCarthyism (1950-1954) because of its association with former senator Joseph Mcarthy, led to the Second Red Scare. Conducted by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, or HUAC, citizens were systematically targeted.[59] Wielded by Republicans, McCarthyism targeted "the legacy of New Deal liberalism, employers against labor unions, white supremacists against black civil rights, and upholders of sexual morality and traditional gender roles against homosexuality and feminism."[60] These attacks directly affected the world of American ballet, which had traditionally been more welcoming to queerness, the liberal agenda, and even communism itself, putting the dance community in the early 1950s in a tenuous position.

One of the most well-known examples of McCarthyism targeting a member of the American dance community was the accusation of Jerome Robbins, a choreographic icon of musical theater and dance in New York City during the mid-twentieth century. Because of his former affiliation with the Communist Party USA, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

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[58] Diane B. Kunz, ed., "Introduction: The Crucial Decade," in *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Forgein Relations During the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 1–2.
[59] From now on I will refer to the House Committee on Un-American Activities by its abbreviation, HUAC.
[60] Foner, Introduction to *Dance for Export*, 1.

pressured Robbins in 1950 to name fellow artists currently or previously enrolled in the party before HUAC.[61] Though he resisted at first, Robbins' did end up naming eight artists after threats to expose his homosexuality if he continued to resist cooperation.[62]

However, as the Soviet Union became increasingly successful with its use of cultural diplomacy abroad, McCarthyism became less popular. In particular, as Walter Hixon notes, the Soviets were especially successful in using propaganda in Europe and the third world to target sore spots in American identity, namely issues of race and class, and lack of high-brow culture.[63] Subsequently, when the Senate censured McCarthy in 1954, Americans' "[a]nticommunist sentiments previously centered on accusations and prosecutions turned toward competing with the Soviet Union by improving American military and cultural achievements."[64] Suddenly 'defeating' communism no longer relied on internal accusations and containment but on using the very same people that had been accused under McCarthyism as ambassadors of American identity abroad.

An early sign of this shift toward competing with the Soviet Union using cultural diplomacy came when the Eisenhower Administration began to ramp up propaganda programs a year before McCarthy's censure with the creation of the United States Information Agency, or USIA.[65] According to the agency's first director Theodore C. Striebert its "mission [was] to show the peoples of other lands by means of communication techniques...that our objectives and policies are in harmony with and will advance their legitimate aspirations for freedom, progress

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[61] From now on I will refer to the Federal Bureau of Investigation by its abbreviation, FBI.
[62] "Jerome Robbins ~ About the Artist | American Masters | PBS," American Masters, January 27, 2009, https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/jerome-robbins-about-the-artist/1099/.
[63] Hixon, *Parting the Curtain,* 129-136. Regarding high-brow art, the Soviets made it a point to express the materiality of American work and lack of development in studies like ballet and classical music.
[64] Binkiewicz, *Federalizing the Muse* 30.
[65] From now on I will refer to the United States Information Agency by its abbreviation, USIA.

and peace."[66] At first, these 'communication techniques' were an extension of wartime information sharing programs like radio broadcasting in Western Europe. However, as time went on, the USIA turned to increasingly more subtle communication via mediums like advertisements and arts festivals, and expanded its promotion of American high arts abroad through literature.[67]

As cultural propaganda became increasingly valued in Cold War foreign policy, psychological warfare became a significant operation for the US Central Intelligence Agency, or CIA.[68] Run through the Congress of Central Freedom campaign by CIA agent Michael Josselson from 1950 to 1967, the CIA published articles in prestigious magazines, held art exhibitions and performances, and organized international conferences to show the 'American way' abroad. These endeavors were highly secretive, with artists and intellectuals hired as part of this mission often unaware that their trips abroad were funded or organized by the CIA, and the CIA itself advancing to the public that the program did not exist.[69] Its ultimate goal was to create subtle psychological warfare where "the subject moves in the direction you desire for reasons which he believes to be his own."[70] Thus a dual structure for cultural exportation emerged between the USIA's propaganda and the CIA's psychological warfare.

American ballet found itself used in both propaganda and psychological warfare campaigns in the early stages of their development. Notably, NYCB performed in "Masterpieces

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[66] Quoted in Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 13.
[67] Mathew W. Dunne, *A Cold War State Of Mind: Brainwashing and Postwar American Society* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 42; Hixon, *Parting the Curtain,* 136.
[68] From now on I will refer to the Central Intelligence Agency by its abbreviation, CIA.
[69] Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, (New York: The New Press, 2000), 1-6.
[70] Quoted in Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War,* 4.

of the Twentieth Century" in April of 1952, unofficially sponsored by the CIA.[71] Later that year, the company appeared at the Berlin Cultural Festival, part of a series of government-funded festivals to rebuild cultural affairs with Germany after World War Two, using American art as propaganda for the value of western society.[72] Though opportunities like these were irregular prior to 1954, they marked the earliest stages of the US government utilizing ballet for its political agendas.

In 1954, the administration declared the pertinence of cultural diplomacy in their Cold War strategy when President Eisenhower enacted the President's Emergency Fund for International Affairs. The fund allocated $2,592,000 to the Department of Commerce to increase US presence in international trade affairs, $2,250,000 to the State Department to put on art and sports presentations abroad, and $157,000 to the USIA to advertise these presentations.[73] The fund's goal is perhaps best expressed in Eisenhower's request for the fund to the House Committee on Appropriations. He wrote:

> I consider it essential that we take immediate and vigorous action to demonstrate the superiority of the products and cultural values of our system of free enterprise… in order to demonstrate the dedication of the United States to peace and human well-being to offset worldwide Communist propaganda charges that the United States has no culture and that its industrial production is oriented toward war.[74]

Though the fund remained underdeveloped and unstable for its duration, it nevertheless sparked an increase in cultural exportation. For its first two years, the program faced repeated

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[71] Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War,* 115; Garafola, "Dollars for Dance," 107.
[72] Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 20-1.
[73] Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 11.
[74] Letter from Dwight D. Eisenhower to House Committee on Appropriations, July 27, 1954, MC 468, Box 93, Folder 29, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

threats of spending cuts from the majority Republican Congress following the 1953 elections.[75] Counterintuitively, this tenuousness only increased private support from American philanthropic foundations like the Rockefeller and Ford foundations to expand cultural programming in the arts and sciences. These foundations, often working in close collaboration with the Congress of Central Freedom, organized much of America's early 1950s cultural demonstrations alongside the State Department and USIA.[76] Hence cultural exportation increased despite arguments in congress over the budget for cultural diplomacy.

Programming conducted by the State Department using the President's fund used third parties to organize these cultural demonstrations to keep the appearance of separation between state and American cultural enterprise. Indeed in 1954 the State Department contracted ANTA as its third party venue to organize cultural demonstrations in the performing arts. Originally, ANTA was a self-supporting tax-exempt organization established by congress in 1935 to present theater dramas during the Great Depression, to act as their administrative agent. However, in 1946 it became affiliated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization as the headquarters for the US branch of the International Theater Institute, expanding its operations to other performing arts.[77] Notably, ANTA already had a strong relationship with the State Department prior to the president's fund. For example, in 1950, 1951, and 1953 ANTA helped negotiate tours for American Ballet Theater (ABT) to perform in Latin America and Europe on behalf of the State Department.[78] Therefore it was only fitting for the

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[75] Harris, *Making Ballet American,* 177.
[76] Ibid; Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War,* 129-145.
[77] Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 37.
[78] Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 39. From now on I will refer to American Ballet Theater by its abbreviation, ABT. These tours were sponsored by the State Department in name only. ANTA financed the entirety of these trips through private donations.

State Department to contract the organization given its international standing and already formed relationship with the agency.

Dance presentations subsidized by the President's fund were subsequently planned and executed by the ANTA Dance panel, headquartered in New York City, working alongside the State Department and USIA representatives. The panel at the time was made up of some of the most famous names in American dance, including the choreographers Agnes de Mille and Doris Humphry, dance critics Emily Coleman and Walter Terry, as well as Martha Hill, the director of the Juilliard School's dance department, Lucia Chase the director of ABT, and Lincoln Kirstein, the general director of NYCB.[79] Together these individuals gave recommendations on artists to send to locations the State Department desired an American cultural presence and made contracts with dance troupes to tour the globe on behalf of the government.

From the start, the ANTA dance panel took itself very seriously, choosing groups that best suited the location and audience of the destinations that the State Department requested they send artists. For example, their first assignment under contract with the State Department was to send a company to Latin America to participate in the Inter-American Economic and Social Council in Rio de Janeiro. Believing it essential to impress on the conference members a representation of US culture that also related to a Latin American audience, the panel quickly settled on a modern dance troupe led by José Limón, a Mexican-American choreographer and dancer. Having had recent success with his choreography that combined American modern dance vocabulary with Mexican traditional dance styles, the panel believed his work best represented a vision of America as welcoming to Latin American immigrants and their culture.[80] In other

[79] For an extensive list of the ANTA dance panel members through the 1950s see: Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 147-50.
[80] Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 23-4.

words, the ANTA dance panel thought his work and background well encapsulated the American ideal of multiculturalism.

Accordingly, although ANTA had two directors of ballet companies on its panel, they did not typically insist on using ballet for many of these cultural exportation programs. Both the panel members and State Department officials feared that ballet's heritage made its claim as American too ambiguous compared to modern dance forms defined by American individuals. They also had concerns about sending ballet into the third world, where they thought target audiences might not understand the art form.[81] Though this sentiment was wrong, Latin America and the like responded incredibly well to Soviet ballet excursions, American ballet for export became reserved for European venues where the State Department was not concerned with impressing American culture on audiences but with proving that America could support high-brow aesthetics.

However, the Soviet's frequent and efficient use of ballet abroad pushed the US to use the form in more locations. In 1956 the Soviet Union developed the Gostkoncert, a subsidiary organization of the Ministry of Culture made explicitly for organizing tours abroad to increase its cultural presence. The Gostkoncert became a cornerstone of Soviet cultural diplomacy, working in tandem with All-Union Society for Cultural Relations in sending ballet all over the globe.[82] Subsequently, the same year the Gostkoncert was established, US Congress provided more funding for overseas cultural events to strengthen its international relations through the International Cultural Exchange and Trade Fair Participation Act, enacted "to provide for the

[81] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 4. Many American women like Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham pioneered modern dance. Though the art had a global following with several codified techniques by the late 1950s, its American pioneers made it a seemingly more 'authentic' part of American culture than ballet.
[82] Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 30.

promotion and strengthening of international relations through cultural and athletic exchanges and participation in international fairs and festivals."[83] In short, the Eisenhower Administration seemed to gear up its efforts to control the global stage through cultural consumption only in response to the Soviets' expanded cultural exportation.

The year 1956 also marked the beginning of haphazard attempts on either side to engage in a cultural exchange with one another. Both the Soviet Union and the US began sending cultural presentations to each other, marketed as attempts at deténte.[84] According to Anne Searcy, it was in these first attempts at a cultural exchange that the Eisenhower Administration began to seriously consider ballet as a candidate for the State Department's cultural exportation programs because "[t]he art form was always a cornerstone of Soviet cultural diplomacy, and in the United States it was associated strongly…with elevated cultural prestige."[85] It was inevitable that if they were to engage in a cultural exchange, the Soviets would want to send ballet to the US, and the US, in turn, would need to respond with its own ballet companies.

Two years later this budding cultural exchange program was formalized with the Lacy-Zarubin agreement (1958), a two-year contract that outlined the reciprocal process of exchanging art, media, science, and education between the two superpowers. US intelligence suggested that the Soviets wanted to engage in this type of diplomacy "for the purpose of obtaining as much technical and technological information as possible from the US while giving as little as possible in return."[86] Nevertheless, the Eisenhower administration saw it as a

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[83] International Cultural Exchange and Trade Fair Participation Act, Pub. L. 84-860, Stat. 70 (1956) https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-70/pdf/STATUTE-70-Pg778.pdf
[84] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 4.
[85] Ibid.
[86] "Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs to the Under Secretary of State," September 19, 1962, Charles S. Sampson and John Michael Joyce, eds. "Document 240," Vol. V, Soviet Union,

worthwhile endeavor because it allowed American culture to more freely enter the Soviet Union, hopefully influencing the Soviet people in America's favor.[87] Ultimately, both sides seemed happy with the agreement's reciprocal nature, giving them equal opportunity to infiltrate the other side with their culture, and in 1959 the agreement was renewed for an additional two years.

Despite having a formalized system for cultural exchange, negotiating these ballet exchanges was still a messy process, particularly for the Americans. While on the Soviet side the Ministry of Culture and Gostkoncert had direct control over their ballet companies, in the US the State Department and ANTA had to wrangle with the companies being privately run, often creating subsidiary agreements with them. Moreover, as a semi-private, semi-public group, ANTA itself began to stray from the methodology the State Department desired for bringing dance abroad, trying to use the program to support American dance companies financially.[88] For instance, after the panel had repeatedly tried to use the funds to subsidize dance projects not initiated by the State Department, State Department representative Max Isenbergh had to remind the panelists that they did not have absolute authority over who gets sent abroad. In this meeting he stated that their recommendations were "primarily used by the [State] Department to determine whether or not an artist or artistic group is of the quality to warrant sending abroad. After that the State Department makes its own decisions."[89] Though the State Department still had authority over ANTA, the friction between these two groups became increasingly evident.

Foreign Relations of the United States 1961–1963 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1998) https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v05/d240.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 5n22.

[89] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, December 17, 1959, (S)*MGZMD 49, Box 46, Folder 3396, American Ballet Theater Records, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Meanwhile, the State Department had even less control over the private impresarios, who took it upon themselves to negotiate tours outside the parameters of the Lacy-Zarubin agreement. While several such impresarios involved themselves in the exchange, by far the most important to ballet was Sol Hurok. Little is known about Hurok's life before immigrating to the US in 1906, other than that his birth name was Solomon Izrailevich Gurkov and that his family was of Ukrainian Jewish descent residing in Pagar. Most sources give his date of birth as April 9, 1888, though Hurok often claimed he was born later, typically dating himself five years younger.[90] Hurok moved to the States as one of the 153,748 Jews who sought asylum from the 1905 pogroms by the "Black Hundreds" proto-fascist group, though he frequently cited boredom of small-town life in Pagar as his reason for leaving. Naturalized as a US citizen in 1914, Hurok was penniless, taking odd jobs, including arranging performances for labor organizations.[91] Serendipitously his management work blossomed into a profitable business, where Hurok became one of the most desirable impresarios for performing artists in the world.

For most of his career as an impresario, Hurok dedicated his time bringing Russia's performing arts scene to the US. As early as the 1920s, Hurok had already begun negotiations with the Soviet Ministry of Culture, organizing American tours for Russian artists. In 1930, he struck a deal with the Ministry of Culture, giving him a monopoly right to engage Soviet artists for appearance in the US. During this time, he also managed W. de Basil's the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, a company formed after the death of Diaghilev to continue the legacy of the original Ballet Russes.[92] Though the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo collapsed during World War

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[90] Harlow Robinson, *The Last Impresario: The Life, Times, and Legacy of Sol Hurok* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 9.
[91] Robinson, *The Last Impresario,* 13-4.
[92] Hurok, *S. Hurok Presents*, 107-121. Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo changed its name multiple times during the 1930s. For simplicity's sake I refer to it only under the name that is now most famous.

Two, Hurok continued to support the idea of bringing Russian dancers to America and became one of the first voices to advocate for Soviet-American exchange long before the Lacy-Zarubin agreement was signed.[93] However, this dream did not come to fruition for some time since making negotiations with the Russians during Stalin's regime was nearly impossible. Therefore when Stalin died in 1953, the impresario became one of the first to engage the Ministry of Culture about the possibility of bringing Russian ballet, specifically the Bolshoi, to the US.

When the Lacy-Zarubin agreement was signed, Hurok did not step aside from negotiating privately with the Soviet Union. Rather, he often undermined the agreement by conducting private negotiations with the Ministry of Culture to bring troupes to America before the State Department had time to make an offer on their terms. Because of these agreements between Hurok and the Ministry of Culture, the State Department frequently found itself forced into contracting groups to go abroad to meet the equal exchange agreement that it had not prepared to send. Indeed that is exactly how the ballet exchange between the US and Soviet Union started, with Hurok arranging for the Bolshoi Ballet to come to the US in 1959 without first consulting the State Department if ballet was a negotiable instrument to use in the agreement.[94] Scrambling, ANTA and the State Department ultimately sent ABT to the Soviet Union in 1960 as the counter-program to the Bolshoi's 1959 tour organized by Hurok. With these first two tours, the ballet exchange formally began.

While the Bolshoi had remarkable success in the US, ABT had mixed results. Financially, the US lost money in this first exchange. According to a memo in 1961 on the success of the 1960 cultural exchange programs, ABT did not earn a profit in the Soviet Union whereas the

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[93] Harlow Robinson, "Hurok and Gostkoncert" (Dancing the Cold War: An International Symposium, Columbia University: Columbia University Press, 2017), 25.
[94] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 6.

Bolshoi made a profit thanks to high ticket prices at their venues.[95] Meanwhile, though Soviet audiences lauded the company's renditions of Petipa's works like *Swan Lake,* with Khrushchev attending ABT's final performance in the USSR, State Department officials felt that the international composition of ABT's company made them seem not American enough, marring the success.[96] Nevertheless, that ABT completed the tour without any major issues or extreme negative responses from Soviet audiences proved that bringing ballet behind the Iron Curtain was possible, inspiring the US government to continue the program. They were hopeful that the continued presence of American ballet behind the Iron Curtain would dispel Soviet propaganda that the US did not value high arts and ideologically subvert the Soviet people.

Hence by 1960, ballet found itself in a radically different relationship with the federal government than it had at the start of the Cold War. Before the Cold War, the federal government largely ignored that ballet. But as Cold War politics shifted to the use of propaganda and psychological warfare, ballet became involved in covert operations to turn foreign nations toward democratic values. With the President's Emergency Fund for International Affairs and the contract between the State Department and ANTA, ballet became increasingly involved in persuading Western Europe that America had a high-brow taste. The Soviet Union's dominance in ballet all over the globe amplified competition between the two superpowers, coalescing with the signing of the Lacy-Zarubin agreement, which opened the door to a formalized direct

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[95] Memo of Conversation, Coombs and Dr. Rainink, November 1, 1961, MC 468, Box 50, Folder 75 Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas; Bolshoi Ballet Program, 1959, *T-Mss 2012-070, Box 2, Folder 1, Helen L. Brown administrative files, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.The memo does not mention a specific figure for financial loss from the exchanges, nor have I found such figures elsewhere. We do know that tickets for the Bolshoi Ballet's appearance in 1959 were quite expensive for the time, with matinee tickets to see the company at the Metropolitan Opera House selling at up to $15.00.

[96] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 68-9.

exchange of ballet between the superpowers. Though Sol Hurok ultimately spurred on the first ballet exchange under the Lacy-Zarubin agreement, it nevertheless became the catalyst to continue the ballet exchange into the Kennedy Administration.

Chapter 3

Lincoln Kirstein vs. the State Department: Negotiating the 1962 Ballet Exchange

When Sol Hurok contracted the Bolshoi Ballet to appear in the US in 1959, the State Department's first choice to send in exchange was NYCB. There were several reasons the State Department saw NYCB as the best choice. First, the company had recently become more popular with the hiring of star dancers, like the former ABT dancer Maria Tallchief, and by expanding its audience through television programming of Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* (1954). Second, they saw Balanchine's choreography as representative of American high art and had great success previously using the company as a political tool in Europe.[97] Furthermore, given the company's participation in dance diplomacy throughout the 1950s, the State Department saw NYCB as an obvious candidate to go behind the Iron Curtain and a willing participant. Surely then, it came as a shock to the State Department when the general director of NYCB, Lincoln Kirstein, refused to bring the company to the Soviet Union for the 1960 exchange. Thus, in order to talk about the 1962 exchange, it is necessary first to go back and consider Lincoln Kirstein's motives for involving NYCB in dance diplomacy in the 1950s, and what led to his refusal to take the company to the Soviet Union in 1960.

Lincoln Edward Kirstein was born May 4, 1907, in Rochester, New York, to Louis and Rose Kirstein. Thanks to his parents' wealth, Kirstein grew up in extravagant neighborhoods in Rochester and later Boston. His mother, Rose, was part of the Stein family, one of Rochester's wealthiest and most prominent Jewish families at the time. Meanwhile his father, Louis, a son of

[97] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 49.

poor German immigrants, became successful through a series of investments and as president of Filene's department stores in 1912.[98] Many labeled Kirstein as "hypersensitive" in his youth, and he struggled academically because of his emotional outbursts. Nevertheless, he received an above-average education, attending some of the country's most prestigious schools. After flunking out of the elite Exeter Academy, his parents sent him to the Berkshire School, where he met future artists like George Platt Lynes, before getting his degree at Harvard. It took Kirstein three tries to pass the Harvard entrance exams, and once admitted, he averaged around a D+ in his classes.[99] His mental health likely contributed to these poor grades; Kirstein began to suffer from manic and depressive episodes in college, diagnosed as bipolar disorder late in his life. As Kirstein's biographer Martin Duberman effectively discusses throughout his book, Kirstein also struggled with his sexuality, spending much of his life closeted, which seemed to cause him much distress.

Kirstein first began experimenting with philanthropic ventures in art and literature during his time at Harvard. He and classmate Varian Fry founded the literary quarterly dedicated to bolstering creative writing among Harvard students and alumni titled *The Hound and Horn* after the college's official literary magazine, *The Harvard Advocate,* refused to let Kirstein join its editorial board. The quarterly grew to become one of the most thought-provoking literary magazines of the 1930s.[100] He also created the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art during this time, which from 1929 to 1936, served as an ongoing program of avant-garde art installations. Its first show titled "Americans," became the first of many attempts by Kirstein to place

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[98] Martin Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 1-6.
[99] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 16-58.
[100] Eugene R. Gaddis, "An Imperial American," Harvard Magazine, September 1, 2007, https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2007/09/an-imperial-american.html.

significance on American art in global artistic trends.[101] His showing caught the attention of the founders of the Museum of Modern Art, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Lillie P. Bliss, and Mary Quin Sullivan, inspiring their exhibition plans. Indeed the museum's trustees named Kirstein to their Junior Advisory Committee at only twenty-one years old for his work in the Society. After graduating in 1930, Kirstein moved to New York City to begin his new role at the museum while also continuing *The Hound and Horn* and the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art from his new home.

In college, Kirstein also began writing critical reviews on ballet. In the summer of 1929, after finishing his junior year at Harvard, he took a two-month trip around Europe, intending to make new contacts with patrons abroad that could advance the Harvard Society. A fan of dance since he first saw the Ballet Russes perform as a child, he spent much of this trip seeing various ballet companies perform. It is on this trip Kistein became exposed to Balanchine's choreography for the first time. An instant fan, he described Balanchine's work in an essay he wrote for the *Hound and Horn* as follows: "his dances had the spareness, the lack of decoration… leading out of mere ingenuity into a revivified, purer, cleaner classicism…just as Stravinsky's music transcended Delibes and Tchaikovsky…so Balanchine has transcended Petipa."[102] From that point on, he became an advocate of Balanchine's neoclassicism, writing several critiques on how American dance should take lessons from Balanchine's choreographic style.

After moving to New York, his critiques evolved into a series of socialist manifestos on the need for a distinctly American ballet company. Like many intellectuals of New York City's art and literary circle in the early 1930s, Kirstein identified with increasingly leftist politics,

[101] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 63.
[102] Quoted in Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 65.

though he never labeled himself a Communist and frequently changed his stance on depression-era economic policies. Nevertheless, he had written enough left-wing articles and attended enough meetings with the 1932 Communist Party candidate for president, William Z. Foster, to warrant the FBI opening a file on him.[103] Ultimately Kirstein believed that an American ballet company could further the movement by identifying as a "proletarian" art form, instead of an esoteric one. Using minimalist aesthetics, like those found in Balanchine's work, his vision of an American ballet would not possess the grandiose or effeminate qualities American audiences tended to see in classical ballet. Instead, he envisioned ballet in America containing distinctly masculine and 'western' qualities, separating itself from its historical and cultural ties and encapsulating working-class Americans' values. Kirstein most aptly described such principles in the conclusion of his 1935 book, *Dance: A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing:*

> The developed classic ballet [in America] is a powerful modern weapon articulated by its amplification of ancient language…It has a superior realism to any remounting of historic incident– the visual actuality of physical impact. And it has the only valid romanticism possible– the presentation of a human being in an heightened, *super*-human capability, a poetic standard for every man and woman's ideal capacity…As Russia is a collective expression of Asia and the East, so is America a collective expression of Europe and the West.[104]

Though at times paradoxical, his argument ultimately convinced his inner circle to finance his bringing Balanchine to America in 1933.[105] Soon after Balanchine arrived in New York, Kirstein developed the American Ballet (1935), a ballet company co-directed by Balanchine, and the Ballet Caravan (1936), a touring dance company dedicated to

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[103] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 118-9.
[104] Lincoln Kirstein, *Dance: A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935), 327. Italics are Kirstein's.
[105] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein,* 64.

commissioning ballets with American themes created solely by American artists. Though critical to the development of the more successful NYCB established in 1948, these companies folded financially in a matter of a few years, in part because of the Dies Committee's investigations in 1938. The very language of a "people's art" that Kirstein used to gain support for bringing Balanchine to America was now flagged by the committee as communist propaganda, while the concept of a touring "caravan" was deemed a dangerous instrument for spreading communism.[106] His ballet companies represented the ideological opposite of American values for the Dies Committee, thus deeming his vision of an American ballet subversive in the eyes of the US government.

Moreover, Kirstein had also underestimated the extent to which American audiences watched ballet precisely because it was foreign. As Kirstein was trying to sell this American ballet, Sol Hurok grew American audiences for Russian ballet with W. de Basil's the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo. Across the US, the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo performed Petipa's classics, works by Fokine, and even a couple of Balanchine works, marketing itself as an authentic representation of Imperial Russian culture. Notably absent from their repertoire were works made in the Soviet Union during the NEP period, suggesting the company wanted to refrain from making any direct ties to the Soviets. Instead, advertisements for the company focused on the 'baby ballerinas' Irina Baronova, Tatiana Riabouchinska, and Tamara Toumanova, described as the epitome of the great Russian ballet training.[107] It turned out that Hurok's the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo did better in box offices than Kirstein's companies,

[106] Harris, *Making Ballet American,* 76-77.
[107] Hurok, *S. Hurok Presents*, 107-121. The 'baby ballerinas' were labeled as such because they started their professional careers at 14 and 12, respectively. They hailed from a community of Russians exiled in the 1917 revolution in Paris, training under the former Russian Imperial ballerina Olga Iosifovna Preobrajenska.

with Kirstein failing to expand his own companies' bookings because he frequently lost theater spaces to Hurok.[108] This feud over theater space began a long-standing rivalry between the two men, and Kirstein ultimately failed to win over any significant following with his American socialist ballet vision.

Though Kirstein would create subsequent companies in the early and late 1940s, with a gap period during the time in which he served in World War Two as a private first class (1943-1945), none stuck until the creation of the Ballet Society in 1946, renamed NYCB in 1948 when it acquired the City Center Theater as its main performance venue. The sudden success of NYCB comes from both the appeal of Balanchine's choreography for New York City's rapidly growing intellectual audience following the war and Kirstein's ability to market the company in the context of the emerging Cold War discourse. As American politics became increasingly conservative in the post-war years with McCarthy's campaign against domestic communism, Kirstein's public argument for an American ballet shifted, though he still retained his now long-standing left-wing views in private discourse. Instead of focusing on how American ballet could be 'for the people,' Kirstein focused on branding Balanchine's recent choreographic success in New York City as proof that Western democracy and capitalism create the environments necessary for cultural innovation.[109]

This new pro-democratic argument became the central branding message of the company for the next decade. Following NYCB's first international appearance in London in 1950, Kirstein decided to develop a new publicity program for the company around this message, telling his Board of Directors that the company would now "be built up as a civic company, a

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[108] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 347.
[109] Harris, *Making Ballet American,* 157-60; Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 450.

national cultural manifestation and agency of international goodwill."[110] From this point on, Kirstein advertised the company as emblematic of the heights art can achieve if given the absolute freedom a democracy provides. According to Catherine Gunther Kodat, it was no coincidence that Kirstein made this sudden shift. She states that his argument aligned ballet with the federal government's political needs when it came to foreign diplomacy while simultaneously tapping into the postwar American psyche of exceptionalism, helping NYCB become the preferred candidate by the State Department for sending abroad in the years to come.[111]

However, to prove that American ballet had eclipsed its Russian heritage because of its democratic, capitalist settings, Kirstein needed two things; approval of NYCB from European audiences, the long time competition ground for presenting a nation's ballet, and enough money for the company to perform domestically and abroad year-round. While thus far NYCB had been met with success wherever it went, the company still struggled with the costs of operation to keep the City Center running, significantly impacting their ability to do any extensive touring domestically or abroad. In fact the situation became so dire in May of 1952 that Kirstein wrote to company manager Betty Cage that he feared he would have to "raid" the budget for NYCB's feeder school, the School of American Ballet, to keep the lights on in the city Center.[112] In these times of financial stress and the need for international rapport, Kirstein sought investment from outside organizations to keep NYCB going.

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[110] "Agenda: Meeting between the Chairman of the Executive Committee, New York City Center of Music and Drama, and Director, New York City Ballet," August 27, 1950, (S) *MGZMD 97, Box 2, Folder 26, Lincoln Kirstein Papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
[111] Kodat, *Don't Act, Just Dance,* 25-32.
[112] Letter from Lincoln Kirstein to Betty Cage, June 12, 1952, (S) *MGZMD 97, Box 10, Folder 171, Lincoln Kirstein Papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Thus when Nicholas Nabokov, Secretary-General of the International Secretariat of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and longtime friend of Balanchine, contacted NYCB about the opportunity to perform in the international festival "Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century" in 1952, the company was quick to sign on to the opportunity.[113] Though this trip ultimately did little to solve the company's financial problems– the City Center's financial director had advised Kirstein that they would likely have to cancel NYCB's fall season that year while they were at the festival– it put the company on the State Department's radar for future endeavors. Not long after the start of the "Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century," the State Department asked Kirstein if the company would be willing to attend the Berlin Cultural Festival later in the year. Hoping that the festival would bring in an additional $20,000 for the company to use to secure future seasons at the City Center, Kirstein agreed.[114]

Though audiences at the Berlin Cultural festival overwhelmingly supported NYCB, further securing their prestige abroad, the trip sowed first seeds of distrust between Balanchine and the State Department. In his years since moving to the US, Balanchine had become quite the Americanophile, regularly sporting cowboy attire, making references to the newest Hollywood movies, and repeatedly expressing his allegiance to America in public. Nevertheless, he found the State Department's handling of the company in 1952 entirely inappropriate. In particular, it deeply offended Balanchine that organizers for the trip used a cargo plane with makeshift seating and little heat to transport his dancers.[115] He became weary of dealing with the State Department

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[113] Nicholas Nabokov was a Russian-born composer who worked in Europe while Balanchine choreographed with the Ballet Russes. Both men became US citizens in the 1930s and remained in contact.
[114] Harris, *Making Ballet American,* 173.
[115] Letter from Betty Cage to Lincoln Kirstein, September 1, 1952 (S) *MGZMD 97, Box 10, Folder 171, Lincoln Kirstein Papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

from that point on because he believed they did not know how to properly care for the needs of his ballet company.

On the other hand, the audience reception from these excursions gave Kirstein enough reason to believe that government sponsorship was a viable solution to the company's financial stresses and need for prestige abroad. Subsequently, he joined the ANTA dance panel in 1954, becoming one of the central organizers for State Department-sponsored dance tours abroad. By the end of the decade, the company had become one of the most well-traveled in the world, making multiple appearances in Western Europe and the Far East, all funded by the US government.

Fig. 3.1 NYCB's Government Sponsored Tours in the 1950s

Year	Reason Abroad	Destinations Visited	Federal Agency Involved
1952	Masterpieces of the 20th Century & Berlin Cultural Festivals	Barcelona, Paris, Florence, Lausanne, Zurich, The Hague, London, Edinburgh, and Berlin.	CIA / State Department
1953	European Tour	Venice, Como, Naples, Rome, Florence, Trieste, Bologna, Genoa, Munich, Stuttgart, and Brussels.	State Department
1955	European Tour	Monte Carlo, Marseilles, Lyons, Florence, Rome, Bordeaux, Lisbon, Paris, Lausanne, Zurich, Stuttgart, and Amsterdam.	State Department
1956	European Tour	Salzburg, Vienna, Zurich, Venice, Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, Brussels, Antwerp, Paris, Cologne, Copenhagen, and Stockholm.	State Department
1958	Far East Tour	Japan, the Philippines, and Australia.	State Department

Thus given Kirstein's motives for NYCB's high involvement in cultural diplomacy leading up to the Lacy-Zarubin Agreement, it seems odd at first glance that he refused to bring the company to the Soviet Union. Suppose one considers Anne Searcy's assertion that Kirstein became involved in ANTA both for NYCB's personal gain and because of a sense of patriotic duty; it becomes even more strange to think that Kirstein suddenly just changed his mind.[116] Nevertheless, looking more closely at the ANTA dance panel meeting minutes, one finds Kirstein's faith in the benefit of ballet diplomacy for NYCB (and American ballet more broadly) had all but disappeared by the end of the 1950s, providing a logical explanation for his rejection.

As early as 1955, the first signs of Kirstein's disgruntlement with the State Department appeared. During this year, Kirstein seems to become increasingly annoyed at the State Department for interrupting NYCB's domestic seasons. For example, in the meeting minutes from November 17, 1955, Kirstein shared that the South American tour by NYCB star dancers Maria Tallchief and Andre Eglevisky that the State Department insisted upon had "greatly hurt the box office."[117] Unfortunately, Kirstein does not supply a reason for why the removal of these two stars hurt the company's finances, nor did I find any evidence to support his claim. If we believe this statement is true, a reasonable guess for this loss at the box office is that a significant fan base for these two stars did not buy tickets that season because of their absence. Nevertheless this instance shows the start of Kirstein voicing a negative reaction to the State Department's program.

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[116] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 100. Searcy suggests that Kirstein and Balanchine decided to involve NYCB in State Department sponsored tours because they both felt a patriotic duty. In the case of Balanchine, this assertion certainly seems true. However, in my opinion, patriotism was likely only a secondary factor for Kirstein.

[117] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, November 17, 1955, (S)*MGZMD 49, Box 46, Folder 3384, American Ballet Theater Records, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Meanwhile, it is also important to note that Kirstein could not vote on any ANTA organized NYCB trips after 1955. After the initial contract between ANTA and the State Department became known, criticism quickly arose from dance critics, the most notable being John Martin of the *New York Times.* He and others argued that the contract gave those who represented dance companies on the panel an unfair advantage in receiving the President's emergency funds.[118] In response, the panelists drafted an agreement in 1956 that "members having close professional ties with a specific organization and/or artist refrain from voting when a subject affecting their interests is proposed."[119] However, this agreement seems to have been more of a facade to quell critics of ANTA's operations than a real commitment. If Kirstein could not vote on sending NYCB abroad, he was still actively involved in planning these trips.

Nevertheless, only a year later one finds Kirstein questioning the value of the diplomatic tours at all. In NYCB's 1956 tour of Europe, the company suffered a personal tragedy when principal dancer and Balanchine's fourth wife, Tanaquil Le Clerq, contracted polio, becoming paralyzed waist down for the remainder of her life. Perhaps reflecting on this tragedy, Kirstein lamented in an ANTA meeting in November of that year that the State Department-sponsored tours were too long and strenuous for the dancers. He stated that ANTA and the State Department should shorten these tours even if "Washington…feels these strenuous tours are worth every effort from the wonderful results obtained."[120] Later in the same meeting, he claimed that the tours do not even meet the true 'wonderful results' the State Department claimed

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[118] Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 43-4.
[119] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, October 18, 1956, (S)*MGZMD 49, Box 46, Folder 3384, American Ballet Theater Records, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. The word "professional" was omitted in the final draft of the agreement.
[120] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, November 15, 1956, (S)*MGZMD 49, Box 46, Folder 3384, American Ballet Theater Records, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

because of major underfunding compared to the Soviets. Kirstein goes on to suggest that with the current funding by the State Department it was impossible to compete with the Russians because they have "so many more technicians, stage hands, lighting equipment, etcetera, and that they make a fantastic showing in comparison to the United States."[121] These statements suggest that Kirstein had begun to lose faith in the State Department's ability to adequately finance these tours or organize them in a manner that satisfactorily protected the dancers.

Despite Kirstein's growing frustrations, the company still participated in the State Department's program, departing for an extended Far East tour of Japan, Australia, and the Philippines in 1958. Another success toward Kirstein's goal of creating respect for American ballet, the trip solidified NYCB's international renown. The Japanese critics labeled the company as second only to the Soviet Union's Bolshoi and Kirov ballets, affirming the position held by most dance critics at the time.[122] Meanwhile, for Kirstein personally, the trip was life-changing, sparking his fascination with Japanese culture. Subsequently he would spend the rest of his life organizing cultural exchanges between performing artists in the US and Japan.[123]

Nevertheless, the tour was another failure financially. Notably, the details of the tour were left to the Japanese managers who had paid the guarantee for the trip. Kirstein felt that the theater the managers booked for their first destination in Japan was a "'criminal disaster' –meaning it hadn't enough space for even elementary scenery and special effects, and its footlights were neon tubes."[124] In the end, the trip was disastrously underfunded, with the State Department unable (or perhaps just unwilling) to cover any of the unexpected expenses on the trip that the company

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[121] Ibid.
[122] Letter from Sumio Kam'bayashi to Lincoln Kirstein, April 4, 1958, (S) *MGZMD 97, Box 6, Folder 114, Lincoln Kirstein Papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
[123] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 542.
[124] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 527.

could not afford thanks to a down year in the box office in 1957, and NYCB returned with debt and multiple injured dancers.[125]

Planning for NYCB's Far East tour coincided with the signing of the Lacy-Zarubin Agreement. Indeed shortly before the signing, discussions about a possible Soviet-American exchange arose between the State Department and ANTA. Kirstein insinuated that he would let the company go behind the Iron Curtain if specifically asked by the State Department. In that meeting, Kirstein offered the company to tour the Soviet Union "if useful to the State Department."[126] However, when the State Department officially asked him to bring NYCB to the Soviet Union later that year, Kirstein revoked his initial offer. Though Kirstein may have already begun to grow frustrated with the planning for the Far East tour, it seems that the final straw that finally broke Kirstein's trust in using the State Department for the company's benefit was the Department's unrelenting favoritism toward music over dance for cultural export.

In an ANTA meeting on September 25th, 1958, Kirstein and his fellow panelists asked the State Department how much more funding they should expect to receive for future dance diplomacy programs. As part of the State Department representative's response, he explained to Kirstein and the other ANTA panelists that "[m]usic will continue to dominate the money spent and projects sent. Dance is second in both these areas."[127] This seems to have struck a chord with Kirstein, who rejected the State Department's offer for NYCB to go to the Soviet Union later in the same meeting stating his anger that the government would not better fund dance.[128]

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[125] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, September 17, 1957, (S)*MGZMD 49, Box 46, Folder 3388, American Ballet Theater Records, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
[126] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, January 16, 1958, (S)*MGZMD 49, Box 46, Folder 3388, American Ballet Theater Records, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
[127] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, September 25, 1958, (S)*MGZMD 49, Box 46, Folder 3388, American Ballet Theater Records, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
[128] Ibid.

Ultimately in January of 1960, under the auspices that his presence as acting director of NYCB was a conflict of interest, Kirstein resigned from the panel and effectively removed NYCB from American dance diplomacy.

Kirstein's frustration about the lack of funding for their dance programs compared to music was a shared sentiment with the rest of the panel. In general, the panelists believed that the State Department did not understand, nor care to learn, the complexities of maintaining an exportation program of American dance. In their eyes, success abroad could only come if dance gained enough support from the government to become financially independent. For example, Kirstein pointedly noted in the same 1958 ANTA meeting on behalf of the panelists to the State Department, "it is hard for any company to exist in the United States," with the current lack of federal support for the art.[129] Putting music ahead of dance served as proof to ANTA members that the State Department did not honestly care about the longevity of dance in America but only the short-term gain of exploiting dance in the Cultural Cold War.

Several panelists also wished for the State Department to take a less active role in organizing the tours. Since the signing of the Lacy-Zarubin Agreement, and more so after Kennedy took office, the government had increasingly encroached on ANTA's responsibilities. To the panelists, this more hands-on approach did not benefit the outcome of the tours since the State Department representatives were not experts in the arts. To them, the government took too much control of something they did not understand.[130] In other words, they believed that if American ballet was ever to surpass its Soviet counterpart in the Cultural Cold War, the

[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

government should spend more money on the program and less time directing the panel they hired as experts in the field.

To the State Department, these arguments surely seemed ludicrous. They had no responsibility to dance's domestic affairs, for that was never the purpose of involving themselves with dance. In response to Kirstein's concerns about funding American dance, State Department representative Max Isenberg reminded them that "this program was not organized to give broad, liberal support of the arts at home."[131] Meanwhile, ANTA's many attempts to use the funds more broadly throughout the 1950s had led to arguably justified supervision of them by the State Department. Indeed, in the Kennedy administration, problems with subsidiaries like ANTA led to the restructuring of the cultural diplomacy process. By 1962 Kennedy had begun restructuring the entire field of international education and cultural relations to consolidate power in the executive branch, stating the following:

> [T]his whole field is urgently in need of imaginative policy development, unification and vigorous direction. These activities are presently scattered among many agencies of the Federal Government. Only by centering responsibility for leadership and direction at an appropriate place in the governmental structure can we hope to achieve the required results.[132]

In part, Kennedy's restructuring may have been a response to the decrease in cultural exportation in 1960-1961. In the case of dance specifically, this dry spell probably had something to do with the building disagreements between ANTA and the State Department. Undoubtedly, the spring of 1960 was troubled, with the now notorious U-2 spy plane incident occurring in May, worsening tension between Khrushchev and Eisenhower. Nevertheless, the incident did not

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[131] Ibid.

[132] "Minutes of a Meeting of the United States Advisory Commission on International Educational and Cultural Affairs," April 5-6, 1962, Kristin L. Ahlberg and Charles V. Hawley, eds., "Document 75," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. VI, Public Diplomacy, 1961–1963, 1917-1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1917-72PubDipv06/d75.

result in any substantial reduction in cultural exchange as planned under the Lacy-Zarubin agreement, with ABT still getting approved to tour the Soviet Union in September of that year by the Ministry of Culture.[133] Rather, the lack of cultural exportation on the part of the US started later in November, with the State Department no longer sponsoring any foreign appearances of dance companies, even though at the same time the Soviets sent seven dance troupes and five individual artists to Western Europe, Latin America, and across Asia. [134]

This is not to say that there was a sudden void of American dance abroad. On the contrary, smaller dance troupes continued to tour without the assistance of the State Department across Western Europe.[135] Kirstein, too, tried to join this wave of American touring without help from the federal government, planning a second tour of Japan to take place at the end of 1961. However, these plans quickly disintegrated when he realized that taking a company of such a large size as NYCB was not feasible without outside aid.[136] Around this point in time, Kirstein began talks with the chief of the State Department's cultural presentations division, Heath Bowman, on potentially sending NYCB to the USSR.[137]

Soon after these talks began, Kirstein announced in January of 1961 that NYCB would indeed go to the Soviet Union as part of the ballet exchange. It is not entirely clear exactly when and why Kirstein changed his mind about taking NYCB to the Soviet Union. His most acclaimed

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[133] Leland Windreich, "Cold War Exchange: American Ballet Companies in the USSR," *Ballet Review* 37, no. 2 (2009): 58; Hixon, *Parting the Curtain,* 222.
[134] Letter from Lillian Moore to Max Isenberg, November 21, 1961, MC 468, Box 50, Folder 75, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[135] For example, ANTA dance panel meeting minutes from May 18, 1961, note that Jerome Robbins' Ballets: USA was currently touring Western Europe without money from the President's emergency fund at the time of the meeting. See: ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, May 18, 1961, MC 468, Box 101, Folder 17, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[136] Since becoming NYCB in 1948, the company had rapidly expanded the number of dancers it had. The company likely had over 50 dancers by this point, which was incredibly large for an American ballet company, but small compared to the likes of the Bolshoi and Kirov.
[137] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 539-43.

biographer Martin Dubermen does not discuss it, while Anne Searcy merely describes the change as an 'about-face' of opinion. However, the evidence we have about Kirstein and Heath Bowman's talks in the ANTA meeting minutes suggests that Kirstein's apparent change of heart was part of some negotiation to allocate funds for NYCB to participate in another non-USSR tour, likely to Japan. For example, the meeting minutes from the ANTA dance panel on March 16, 1961, state:

> [Kirstein has] announced that they are interested in a tour to Russia…Mr. Bowman again suggested a Latin American tour to Mr. Kirstein, but he was not interested… They are planning to go to Manila on May 1st for three weeks, Japan for six, and then Hong Kong and Singapore. They would also like to go to the satellites and Moscow. [138]

Perhaps then, his about-face was at least in part a compromise to secure his wish for another visit to Japan by agreeing to a tour in Russia. If his two options for securing the Japan trip were between visiting Latin America and the Soviet Union, he likely chose the latter because of NYCB's history of failure to impress Latin American audiences. When Balanchine and the Ballet Caravan took his choreography to Latin America in 1941 for a 'goodwill' trip sponsored by the Rockefellers, the tour amassed large box office deficits because South American audiences considered Balanchine's choreography not glamorous enough for ballet.[139] Given the two options, Kirstein likely considered the Soviet Union the better choice.

Members of the ANTA dance panel were not satisfied with such an agreement, worried about the potential for failure in sending ballet to the Soviet Union. Since the start of the ballet exchange, panelists worried that American ballet would not meet Russian standards and subsequently fail to impress or inspire the Soviet people, best exemplified by a panelist's remark

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[138] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, March 16, 1961, MC 468, Box 101, Folder 17, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[139] Taper, *Balanchine,* 197; Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 19.

during negotiations for ABT's 1960 tour that "[b]ringing a ballet company to Russia is like bringing a report card. It is of greater import than just having the company there."[140] Though ABT had proved that the Soviets would not outright reject American ballet, this hesitancy continued, with ANTA proposing the touring troupe Ballets: USA as their candidate to go behind the Iron Curtain if the State Department insisted that American ballet must return to the USSR. Though the group consisted of ballet dancers, its repertoire by Jerome Robbins relied heavily on lighthearted, jazzy, and flashier fare that showed American ballet without becoming directly comparable to the extremely high-brow Russian classics. Furthermore, because Robbins frequently choreographed on NYCB, the panelists argued that sending his performing group was equivalent to NYCB, without the hassle of organizing a trip for a large company and dealing with the fact that George Balanchine was a defector of the Soviet Union.[141] Therefore, panelists felt it was a no-brainer to send Ballets: USA as it shared NYCB's repertory, was smaller in size, less expensive, and would bypass the concern of what to do with Balanchine, while presenting ballet in a manner more centered on American popular culture.

The panelists did not get their way, with the State Department and Gostkoncert refusing to use Ballets: USA in the exchange. The Gostkoncert rejected the troupe because of its use of jazz, a sentiment in line with the Soviet's general policy of oppression toward jazz music under Khruschev. Therefore, it seemed to the State Department that Ballets: USA was entirely unusable in the Soviet Union for the foreseeable future.[142] Subsequently, ANTA acquiesced to the State Department, and they agreed to make a formal recommendation on behalf of NYCB as the best

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[140] Quoted in Clare Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 43.
[141] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, March 16, 1961.
[142] Stacey Prickett, "'Taking America's Story to the World': Touring Jerome Robbins's Ballets: U.S.A. During the Cold War," *Dance Research Journal* 52, no. 2 (2020): 12.

candidate for the exchange. Notably, Japan dropped out of all discussion at this point, presumably no longer a consideration by any party. On May 18, 1961, NYCB would be offered to the Ministry of Culture as the company to tour the Soviet Union in the following ballet exchange.

However in June 1961, the ballet exchange almost collapsed, and planning for the tour was halted. That month the twenty-three-year-old soloist with the Kirov Ballet, Rudolf Nureyev, defected from the Soviet Union. The incident was widely publicized due to Nureyev's global acclaim as one of the best male dancers of the century, making the front pages of major evening papers in London and Paris right alongside reporting on the Kennedy-Khrushchev summit in Vienna.[143] The Soviet Ministry of Culture and Gostkoncert were undoubtedly embarrassed, and subsequently, negotiations became complicated with increased demands by both parties. Most important of which was the fact that the Soviets now insisted on intensified presence from the Soviet Committee for State Security, otherwise known as the KGB, for the cultural groups they brought to the US, alarming the State Department that the Soviet government may be using tours as an opportunity to steal American intelligence.[144] Luckily by the end of July, such tensions had simmered down with Andrei Gromyko, the current Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, extending an offer to the American Secretary of State Dean Rusk to further develop the exchange program for the 1962-1963 agreement period.[145]

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[143] Caute, *The Dancer Defects,* 486.
[144] Robinson, *The Last Impresario,* 390. From now on I will refer to the Soviet Committee for State Security by the abbreviation KGB.
[145] "Memorandum of Conversation," July 27, 1961, Charles S. Sampson and John Michael Joyce, eds., "Document 108," vol. Volume V, Soviet Union, Foreign Relations of the United States 1961–1963 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1998), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v05/d108.

Thus on March 8th of 1962, the exchange agreement for the 1962-1963 period was signed. Section four of the agreement, the section pertaining to all performing arts exchanges, included the exchange of NYCB for the Bolshoi Ballet.[146] All that was left was for ANTA to work out NYCB's contract details and finance the event. However, there was another problem. Balanchine and Kirstein had demurred from their previous offer, now claiming that they would only go to the USSR if additional demands were met. Concerned by the rumors about the significant undernourishment ABT dancers experienced in the Soviet Union in 1960, Balanchine insisted that the company would not spend more than six weeks in the Soviet Union.[147] He also had reservations about going into the USSR as a Soviet defect, especially after the increased tension because of Nureyev's recent defection. Thus Balanchine said he would only go if the State Department gave him "a Marine guard and a diplomatic passport."[148]

Meanwhile, the two directors also claimed that NYCB would only visit the Soviet Union if it were part of a more extensive European tour. In April of 1962, Balanchine announced this in a meeting with the State Department, saying that "the only reason the company would accept the Russian tour would be as a means of getting to the major capital cities of Europe."[149] This statement was likely one from the heart. By 1962 Blalnchine had been a US citizen for twenty-two years and was openly hostile to the Soviet system, making it known that he had no interest in returning to the Soviet Union, stating in 1956, "I don't ever want to see Russia again."[150] To Balanchine, there was absolutely no benefit to returning unless he also got to return

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[146] Memorandum to Max Isenberg from Guy E. Coriden, March 8, 1962, MC 468, Box 50, Folder 75, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[147] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, April 17, 1962, MC 468, Box 101, Folder 17, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[148] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 550.
[149] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, April 17, 1962.
[150] Quoted in Caute, *The Dancer Defects,* 491.

to the cities of Europe, who had watched him grow and develop as a choreographer since his defection in 1924. Again, likely having abandoned any hope for a second tour to Japan, Kirstein sided with Blanchine's wish to revisit Europe as an absolute necessity.

One possibility for these sudden demands is that Kirstein and Balanchine now had the upper hand in the negotiations. Following the official signing of the exchange agreement, the State Department now had to follow through with sending a large ballet company to the Soviet Union to maintain relations with the Soviet Ministry of Culture and Gostkoncert. Furthermore, because Balanchine had refused to work with Nureyev after his defection, these Soviet agencies were all the more eager for NYCB, making it unwise for the State Department to go back on their offer with NYCB if they wanted to avoid political tension.[151] Therefore, the State Department could not outright reject any new demands Kirstein and Balanchine made because if Kirstein refused to take the company once behind the Iron Curtain, there could be significant fallout diplomatically between the two nations.

The State Department settled Balanchine's first two demands quickly. They compromised on seven weeks in the Soviet Union and promised Balanchine arrangements for him to have diplomatic immunity as protection against any incidents during his visit.[152] However, the question of a European portion of the tour was more difficult. Unsurprisingly, the State Department was incredibly reluctant to give out the approximately $80,000 in estimated funds to accomplish such a tour.[153] Consequently, they claimed that they could not promise total funding for the European portion of the tour and that Kirstein should secure his own funding for the

[151] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 550.
[152] Rachel Marcy, "Dancers and Diplomats: New York City Ballet in Moscow, October 1962—The Appendix," September 9, 2014. In the end the company spent seven and a half weeks in the Soviet Union.
[153] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 101.

venture. Kirstein attempted to do this, amassing $20,000 by mid-April for the tour, but this was not nearly enough to cover the estimated budget.[154] Therefore, only months before the company's planned arrival, it was still entirely unclear if NYCB would go to the Soviet Union.

Ultimately, Sol Hurok financed the missing funds for NYCB. He donated to the company over $25,000, on an agreement that any profits NYCB earned while in Europe go to ANTA and not NYCB.[155] On the surface, this move seemed out of character for the impresario who had been feuding with Lincoln Kirstein since the 1930s. However, Hurok feared that if the NYCB tour in the Soviet Union fell through, the Soviets would no longer send the Bolshoi to the US, meaning a financial and reputational loss for himself.[156] Thus, by financing the European leg of NYCB's tour, he ensured that he would have the Bolshoi in the US once again.

With Hurok's aid in financing the European portion of the tour, plans for NYCB's Soviet debut became finalized. NYCB would leave for Western Europe in the summer of 1962, Hamburg, Berlin, Zurich, Stuttgart, Cologne, Frankfurt, Vienna, for six weeks, followed by a seven and half week stint in the Soviet Union with *New York Times* dance critic John Martin reporting on the tour.[157] While in the Soviet Union, the company would be accompanied by officials from the Gostkoncert and American attache Hans Tuch to ensure productions went smoothly. In exchange, the Bolshoi Ballet would embark on a three-month tour of the US and Canada starting in September of 1962, stopping in New York, Los Angeles, Cleveland, San

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[154] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, April 17, 1962.
[155] "1962 Agreement between ICES of ANTA and New York City Ballet," n.d., MC 468, Box 73, Folder 77, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[156] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, April 17, 1962; ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, June 19, 1962, MC 468, Box 101, Folder 17, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[157] The State Department did not hire John Martin to report on the trip. It is unclear if Martin came on his own volition, through the *New York Times*, or was hired by Kirstein or even Hurok.

Francisco, Washington, Detroit, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston. In the US, the Bolshoi would be placed in the care of Sol Hurok and a handful of KGB agents.

Each side would present their greatest hits in addition to new choreography. For the Bolshoi Ballet, this meant presenting some of Petipa's full-length classical ballets like *Swan Lake, Giselle* (1842), and *La Bayadere* (1877), and turn of the century pieces like Fokine's *Chopiniana* (1909). Hoping to better relate to American culture, they also brought along Aram Khachaturian's *Spartacus* (1956), a balletic reimagination of the recent Hollywood blockbuster hit by Stanley Kubrick of the same name.[158] With these works, the Soviet Union hoped to reassert itself to American audiences as the leader of ballet, thus the leader of the high art cultural world.

Similarly, the State Department hoped that NYCB would impress upon Soviet audiences the strength of the recently emerged American ballet scene. Though ABT had already presented the core values of American ballet in their Soviet debut in 1960, their tour had been a washout compared to the significant success the Bolshoi saw in the US in 1959. Accordingly, for the State Department the stakes were even higher with this second attempt at making an impression in the Soviet Union, hoping that Balanchine's dominance in the American ballet scene as the epitome of American "highbrow theatrical tastes" would make a more lasting impression on Soviet audiences than ABT did.[159] Subsequently, the State Department became more involved than ever before in the choreographic choices ANTA made for the company.

However, ANTA and the State Department had to contend with many factors in making these choices. First, there was the issue of logistics. For obvious reasons, the panel and State

[158] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 71-5.
[159] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 75.

Department agreed that the company could not take along any ballets that involved children, eliminating two of Balanchine's full-length hits, *The Nutcracker* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1962). They both also believed it essential that the repertoire reflect NYCB's American aesthetics and not Balanchine's Russian heritage, eliminating his reproductions of the Russian classics like *Firebird* and *Swan Lake* (1951).[160]

They also had to contend with the Gostkoncert's opinion on which ballets were morally acceptable for Soviet audiences. After Andrei Gromyko and Dean Rusk officially signed off on the exchange agreement, two Gostkoncert officials flew to the US to weigh in on an acceptable repertoire for the company to bring to the USSR. Though ANTA and the State Department were concerned that Balanchine's abstraction would not be accessible to Soviet audiences, eliminating *Episodes* (1959) for its dissonant score and avant-garde nature, the Gostkoncert officials approved Balanchine's equally abstract work *Agon* (1957).[161] Instead, the officials rejected pieces with particularly explicit themes of sex and violence, such as Balanchine's *Orpheus* (1948) and Jerome Robbins *The Cage* (1951).[162] Ultimately, the Gostkoncert approved a five program repertoire for the company to perform in the Soviet Union designed by ANTA and the State Department to showcase the wide array of narrative and non-narrative work NYCB performed.[163]

With the repertoire set, negotiations for the tour finally concluded. Finally securing NYCB in the Soviet Union for the State Department was surely an insurmountable win. They finally had the opportunity to showcase the company they believed best represented American

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[160] Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats*, 45.
[161] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, June 19, 1962.
[162] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 109.
[163] ANTA Dance Panel Meeting Minutes, June 19, 1962; Clare Croft, "Ballet Nations: The New York City Ballet's 1962 US State Department-Sponsored Tour of the Soviet Union," *Theatre Journal* 61, no. 3 (2009): 428. For the list of ballets brought on the tour see footnote 172.

values to the Soviet Union. As another step in the overall Cultural Cold War, they hoped that the presence of Balanchine and his company in the USSR would inspire Soviet audiences and artists, convincing them that the West was superior in the arts and inspiring them to rebel against the Soviet regime. In NYCB, the State Department thus saw an opportunity to weaponize ballet and bring down communism. But for Kirstein, Balanchine, and NYCB, this trip was simply another opportunity to capitalize on the Cold War for the company's benefit. Ultimately, they agreed to go to the Soviet Union as a means to return to Europe and hopefully increase the company's global audience and prestige abroad.

Chapter 4

New York City Ballet's Soviet Debut

On October 6th, 1962, the members of the New York City Ballet landed on the Moscow tarmac. Three nights later, the company made its debut performance in the Soviet Union on the grand Bolshoi Theater stage– the first American dance company to ever receive such an honor.[164] The theater, built in 1856, was a historical treasure and one of the few buildings in Moscow still standing that preserved the luxuriousness of the Tsars, with its decadent curtains draped in red and gold velvet and enormous size; the stage alone was about three times the size of the stage NYCB performed on back in New York.[165] On this anticipated opening night, the entire theater sold out in advance. Several seats belonged to diplomats whose presence, as Lincoln Kirstein described it, was "required by protocol, not by passion, the hardest audience in the world to melt."[166] The remainder of the audience was no easier to woo. John Martin of the New York Times wrote, "[t]he Russian audience is an altogether honest one. It applauds furiously when it is moved to do so, and it sits in absolute silence when it is not so moved."[167] Performing four ballets, *Serenade* (1935)*, Interplay* (1945)*, Agon* (1957)*,* and *Western Symphony* (1954)*,* the company was put to the task of winning this critical crowd over with their 'American' spirit, setting the mood for the entirety of the tour.

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[164] Taper, *Balanchine*, 279.
[165] Typescript titled "Cultural Confrontation," n.d., *MGZMD 97, Box. 11, Folder 177, Lincoln Kirstein Papers, ca. 1914-1991, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
[166] Quoted in Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein*, 551. That night on the Soviet side, the audience included the foreign minister, minister of culture, and other lower-level dignitaries. Notably, Khrushchev was not in attendance.
[167] John Martin Special to The New York Times, "Ballet: Visit to Bolshoi: New York City Troupe Opens 8-Week Soviet Tour at Moscow Theater," New York Times, 1962.

The company faced significant challenges in its debut evening. First, the dancers were exhausted by their roundabout journey to the Soviet Union. They had already spent six weeks touring the metropolitan centers of Western Europe before they arrived in Moscow. During this earlier portion of the tour, company members suffered multiple injuries, including some of NYCB's star dancers. Principal dancer Jacques d'Amboise got hit by a car in Hamburg, breaking some of his ribs, and Melissa Hayden had gone to the hospital for back problems. Second, some feared that the Soviet audience would dislike the program set for opening night; three of the four works lacked scenery or props, none possessed any distinct narrative, and one, *Agon,* was set to an atonal score and performed in practice clothes, something Soviet audiences had never experienced before. Nevertheless, most remained optimistic, with dance critic Allen Hughes writing that if their "luck in the Soviet Union is as good as in Europe, the tour will have been a grand success, if not an untroubled one."[168]

Fig. 4.1 The audience of opening night in the Bolshoi Theater. Published in Francisco Moncion, "The Friday Report: Letters from NYC Ballet Abroad.," *Dance Magazine*, December 1962, 20.

[168] Allen Hughes, "Americans in Moscow: New York City Ballet Begins Soviet Tour," *New York Times*, 1962, sec. Arts & Leisure.

In the end the evening was indeed a success, though not because of luck alone. With the conclusion of the first ballet, *Serenade,* NYCB seemed doomed to fail as the audience sat "perplexed and fairly indifferent."[169] Nonetheless, as the evening progressed, the dynamic in the theater began to change. With the pas de deux from *Agon,* the third ballet of the evening, a glimmer of enthusiasm could be felt from the audience. By the time the curtain fell on the final ballet of the night, *Western Symphony,* "Mr. Balanchine was at the center of the greatest ovation."[170] The diplomats acted tepidly, and the critics the following day expressed neutral reviews, but for anyone who was there that night, it felt like something extraordinary had just occurred.[171] The night was over, and it had been won.

Opening night in Moscow set the tone for the entire tour. Throughout NYCB's journey across the Soviet Union the troupe's successes were complicated by political forces that shaped both the company's understanding of the Soviet Union, and Soviet understanding of NYCB. Rather than account for the entire tour narratively, this chapter teases out various points of inquiry that define these relationships and ultimately asks "was the tour a success?" By asking this question one begins to uncover evidence for who benefited more from a Cold War dance exchange program, the State Department or NYCB.

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NYCB was one of the largest foreign performing arts companies to perform in the Soviet Union during the Cold War, consisting of approximately ninety persons total including sixty-two dancers (the youngest of whom were only fifteen years old), three orchestral conductors, the company's stage crew, electricians, wardrobe personnel, a company doctor, a chaperone for the

[169] Martin, "Ballet: Visit to Bolshoi."
[170] Ibid.
[171] Jacques d'Amboise, "Quentin Keynes," in *I Was a Dancer* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 238-9.

younger dancers, along with company administrator Betty Cage, *New York Times* dance critic John Martin, company directors Lincoln Kirstein and George Balanchine, and various State Department personnel. Upon arrival, Gostkoncert representatives and an orchestra of 60 Soviet musicians accompanied the troupe around the Soviet Union.[172] The tour consisted of performances in Moscow, Leningrad, Kyiv, Tbilisi, and Baku over seven and half weeks, "selling" Balanchine's brand of American ballet."[173] They spent the most time in Moscow, performing for three weeks in both the Bolshoi Theater and Kremlin Palace of Congresses, followed by ten days in Leningrad and a week at each of the remaining destinations.

Fig 4.2 New York City Ballet dancers and staff in the Soviet Union, 1962. Published in Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Middletown, CT. 06459, UNITED STATES: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), 84-5.

The company performed a broad repertoire consisting of eighteen ballets divided into five programs. Sixteen of the eighteen ballets were choreographed by George Balanchine, the remaining two by Jerome Robbins, with Robbins' *Interplay* being the only piece previously

[172] Typescript titled "Cultural Confrontation."
[173] Hughes, "Americans in Moscow."

performed in the Soviet Union by ABT in 1960. The ballets performed were stylistically diverse, ranging from story ballets to thematic and nationalistic pieces to entirely abstract work.[174]

One would imagine that the ballets that retained a distinct narrative would have been easiest for Soviet audiences to digest. The pieces *Prodigal Son* (1929)*, La Sonnambula* (1946)*, La Valse* (1951)*,* and the pas de deux from *Midsummer Night's Dream* all presented clear narratives, while other works like *Serenade* displayed a sense of narrative without directly presenting a plot in the dancing. As part of a full-length narrative work based on a Shakespeare play and choreographically similar to classical ballets in construction, *Midsummer Night's Dream* might seem likely to earn favor from Soviet audiences. Ironically, the pas de deux was not originally in the programs brought to the Soviet Union; it was only after a few nights of lukewarm reactions in Moscow that Balanchine approached Jacques d'Amboise, asking if he felt comfortable doing the ballet to a piano accompaniment. By a stroke of luck, d'Amboise carried around the orchestra scores to the ballet, and so it was performed with full orchestration later that week.[175]

However, the one ballet to most clearly and immediately capture favor from audiences and press alike contained no narrative at all; *Symphony in C* (1947). Set to Georges Bizet's symphony, the piece is divided into four movements. Balanchine's choreography preserves thematic material from each movement, transposing into the next with the addition of more

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[174] The complete list of ballets NYCB performed in the USSR is as follows: Jerome Robbins' *Fanfare*, and *Interplay*, George Balanchine's *Serenade, Western Symphony, Agon, Episodes, Prodigal Son, La Sonnambula, La Valse, Symphony in C, Donizetti Variations, Scotch Symphony, Allegro Brillante, Apollo, Raymonda Variations, Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux*, and the pas de deux from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The original programs decided by the Gostkoncert and ANTA did not include *Prodigal Son, Episodes,* and the pas de deux from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. ANTA added *Prodigal Son* to complete one of the programs shortly before the company departed for Europe, and Balanchine added *Episodes* and the pas de deux from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* after the company arrived in the Soviet Union.

[175] d'Amboise, "Quentin Keynes," 241.

dancers to match Bizet's introduction of new instruments, a choreographic technique reminiscent of choreographic symphonist practices in the 1920s.[176] While this use of music to guide the choreography sits in opposition to dramballet, the way the piece builds intensity that is eclipsed in its grand finale parallels Petipa's choreographic style. Furthermore, by being set to Bizet, part of a canon of composers including Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky, seen as appropriate for Soviet ballet aesthetics, made the work more publicly acceptable.[177] These factors made the ballet easily recognizable and politically safe to enjoy.

It is no surprise then that the public reviews on *Symphony in C* were the most positive of Balanchine as a choreographer. John Martin went so far as to claim that the ballet was the sole factor in turning audiences from cordial to raving in Moscow. In his reporting he wrote about the premiere of *Symphony in C* at the Kremlin Palace of Congresses, asserting that before this premiere the audience was still 'adjusting' to "repertory made up entirely of dancing shaped along musical lines and without drama or spectacle."[178] Ultimately, "the point at which the tide of understanding turned occurred... [was] with the presentation of the Bizet "Symphony in C," and "the Bizet work brought forth not only applause throughout and repeated curtain calls at the end but also the rhythmic cries of "Bal-an-chine" until the choreographer was forced to come forward."[179] Meanwhile, Bernard Taper, Balanchine's biographer, asserted:

> Nearly all Russian critics who saw it agreed that *Symphony in C* was sheer joy– "a life-affirming" ballet, as Golovashenko hailed it, "a true festival of dancing...agile and light, diversified and wonderfully harmonious." Even Petipa, wrote one, could not have invented such a breathtaking display of classical choreography as Balanchine had done in this work.[180]

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[176] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War*, 105.
[177] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 120.
[178] John Martin, Special to The New York Times, "New York City Ballet Is Success in Soviet Union: Unit Wins Respect in Moscow Despite Slow Beginning– Balanchine Invited Back," *New York Times*, 1962.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Taper, *Balanchine,* 280-1.

Another favorite with Soviet audiences was *Western Symphony.* Set to American folk tunes by Hershey Kay, the ballet explores a romanticized vision of the American West. Balanchine uses traditional ballet vocabulary in the piece, "but he infused them with the formations and gestures of American folk dancing."[181] While the ballet has no storyline, dance historian Andrea Harris argues that it constructs a deliberate historical narrative about the genealogy of Western classism, using parody that "playfully defied the boundaries of both history and narrative."[182] In other words, despite its glaring nationalism, the ballet's comedic portrayal of the Wild West made it palatable to even the most devout followers of Soviet communism. It carved out a space where its nationalism could be interpreted as a mockery of capitalist society through its tongue-in-cheek approach to representing the American West.[183] This ambiguity of pro-Americanism versus comedy appealed to an audience interested in American culture but unable to support said culture publicly.

Furthermore, ABT's tour to the Soviet Union had already set a precedent for themes of the Wild West in ballet as an appropriate choice for Soviet audiences. When ABT presented Agnes de Mille's *Rodeo* (1942)*,* another western ballet, the piece received favorable reviews from the Soviets. Unlike *Western Symphony,* this ballet contains a story about a cowgirl's struggle for love in the Wild West set in a partially comedic, partially critical tone. Despite this main difference, the two share many stylistic elements to convince the State Department that *Western Symphony* would be received similarly to *Rodeo*.[184] This assumption proved correct in

[181] "Western Symphony | New York City Ballet," accessed October 12, 2021, https://www.nycballet.com/discover/ballet-repertory/western-symphony/.
[182] Harris, *Making Ballet American*, 149.
[183] Harris, *Making Ballet American,* 153.
[184] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 59; 111.

terms of audience response. During a recorded performance for Soviet television, the audience can be heard applauding rhythmically to the female lead's solo, a sign of admiration in Russian dance culture.[185]

However, reviews of *Western Symphony* did not express the same admiration for the work that audiences did. For instance, the Russian ballet critic Anna Illupina described the piece in the English newspaper publication *Moscow News* as simple choreography to an unsophisticated tune, in which its "vulgarity eclipsed its humor and classical foundation," likely in reference to the fact that the ballet features couples hanging off one another is a saloon setting, suggesting drunkenness and sexual intimacy.[186] She claims that audience applause to the performance was deduced to "the customary hospitality of our audiences," meaning that the positive audience reception of the piece was exemplary of Soviet courtesy and not a sign of actual enjoyment.[187]

It is essential to consider that Illupina's dismissal of the ballet as 'vulgar' does not extend to criticizing the company as a whole. In this manner, Illupina's review is illustrative of the general tendencies of reviewing pieces of the tour in the Soviet press. Soviet dance critics mainly were positive in their review of the troupe, especially in their comments on individual dancers. In particular, the male dancers were subject to great fanfare, especially principal dancers Arthur Mitchell and Edward Villella. The former was often greeted on stage with cries of "Meet-shell" from audience members, and the latter begged by Soviet audiences to do encores of his variations.[188] The women in the company also received compliments. For instance, Illupina's

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[185] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 123.
[186] Anna Illupina, "New York City Ballet: Two Programs in Moscow," *Moscow News*, October 20, 1962.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Francisco Moncion, "The Friday Report: Letters from NYC Ballet Abroad," *Dance Magazine*, December 1962, 72; Richard Buckle, "To Russia: October-November 1962," in *George Balanchine, Ballet Master: A Biography*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1988), 235.

review described Melissa Hayden as spirited with beautiful lines and Suki Schorer "as small and graceful as our Katya Maksimova, who is being so gratefully admired now by the Americans."[189] Such unanimous approval of the dancers themselves was not surprising. NYCB came to the Soviet Union with many of its most famous performers to date; stars in their prime on the trip included Jacques d'Amboise, Melissa Hayden, Allegra Kent, Patricia McBride, Edward Villella, Violette Verdi, Arthur Mitchell, and others. Two rising stars, Kay Mazzo and Susan Farrell were also present.

In general Soviet art critics also spoke kindly of the company's repertoire, though with two distinctive caveats. The first common objection was an insistence that some of Balanchine's choreography displayed problematic behavior. In particular, ballets like *Western Symphony* that displayed provocations of sex and alcholhol use were deemed morally problematic in the press. The second was the frequent claim that Balanchine's work only translated the superficial features of a score, failing to consider the emotional and intellectual content of the music, especially in his non-narrative work. Indeed looking at the reviews collectively, one can more or less divide them by if their strongest objection is to morals or abstraction.[190] The former, led by dancer and critic Mikhail Gabovich's work in *Sovetskaya Kultura* (Soviet Culture), considered Balanchine's vivid embodiment of the music in his choreography a form of understandable content but was hesitant to approve of the connotations they saw in this content, particularly sexuality.[191] The latter, the most extreme being Rostislav Zakharov in *Vechernyaya Moskva* (Evening Moscow), emphasized their objection to the lack of narrative content in Balanchine's work, which negated

[189] Illupina, "New York City Ballet."
[190] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 117-119.
[191] Ibid.

any appreciation of Balanchine's innovations in ballet.[192] Despite these two distinct camps for reasons to reject the company's repertoire, the reviews otherwise largely shared the same opinions about the company.

The fact that we see this consistency across reviews by various critics proves that the Soviet censorship system played a large part in creating these reviews. The formation of a censorship apparatus in government was instituted in the early years of the Soviet Union, evolving with each First Secretary of the Communist Party. In Khrushchev's cultural thaw, the main arm of Soviet censorship of the press, the Main Administration of Literature and Publishing, otherwise known as Glavit, experienced a shrinking authority.[193] Nevertheless, this diminishing power of Glavit did not result in an expansion of freedom of speech within the press. Instead, the top-down chain of censorship went through other organs such as the Ministry of Culture and even the editors themselves through self-censorship.[194] In this way, the censorship process became less formalized yet still omnipotent in the 1960s.

In 2011 Elizabeth Souritz, dance historian and one of the Soviet reviewers of the 1962 NYCB tour, confirmed that censorship played a critical role in the publication of critiques about the tour in her article titled "Balanchine in Russia." She writes that the guidelines of an acceptable review were never explicitly given to her or others through a political body. Instead, the official newspaper of the Communist Party *Pravda's* publication on the debut performance of NYCB in the Soviet Union set a precedent for acceptable review language of the troupe for other writers. According to Souritz, *Pravda's* review language set the following pattern:

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[192] Elizabeth Souritz, "Balanchine in Russia," *Ballet Review* 39, no. 1 (2011): 54.
[193] Samantha Sherry, "The Soviet Censorship System," in *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance*: *Censoring Translation in the the Stalin and Khrushchev Soviet Era* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 47, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt16r0h9j.7.
[194] Ibid.

> [Y]ou had to remember that they were official guests. At the same time there was the Soviet ideology to be taken into consideration. You had to impress upon the reader that here was something not as good as our own product...[Y]ou could praise the dancers, even say that the choreographer was skillful in imagining movements, especially if you stressed that he has been brought up "in the great Russian tradition," but you should criticize him for adhering to the plotless kind of ballet.[195]

Notably, in her reflection of the piece she wrote in the Soviet journal *Teatr* about NYCB, she claims that most of the statements she made criticizing the company were beliefs she genuinely held at that time. Her experience suggests that for most dance critics in the Soviet Union in 1962, Soviet ideology imbued art critique so heavily that they genuinely believed "that really was the way they thought" about the company.[196] It was only in the late 1980s, when Balanchine ballets began to be danced by Russia's own companies that Souritz came to embrace Balanchine's choreography.[197] From this personal example, one sees how these formulaic reviews on the company presented a prescribed attitude toward the troupe as part of diplomatic exchange achieved through self-censorship and reveal the indoctrinating qualities censorship had on art critics at the time.

Within this formula for reviewing NYCB, three ballets stand out for the way critics described them. The first was *Symphony in C,* which critics heralded as a unanimous success for reasons already described earlier in this chapter. The other two were Balanchine's most avant-garde pieces brought on the tour, *Agon* and *Episodes,* which the Soviet Press utterly rejected. Set to serialist scores, featuring 'geometric' movement, and performing in practice clothes made these pieces far removed from the grandness of classical ballet or heroics of dramballet. The American Embassy, aware of the difference between these two pieces and the

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[195] Souritz, "Balanchine in Russia," 53.
[196] Souritz, "Balanchine in Russia," 54-5.
[197] Ibid.

ballets that frequented the Bolshoi Theater and the Mariinsky, marketed both works by de-emphasizing their abstractionism. For instance, *Agon* was described simply as 'difficult' in a Russian language souvenir booklet, and Stravinsky's score was related to seventeenth-century music rather than highlighting the serial composition.[198]

Despite the embassy's strategic marketing of these two ballets, the press reviewed these two works most harshly out of the entire repertoire. Reviewers observed that these pieces were cold and devoid of emotion, impressive only in their ability to handle complex serialist scores. For instance, dance critic Boris L'vov-Anokhin described *Agon* as "the audacious 'fission of an atomic nucleus' in dance… not art if we take that to be the expression of living human emotions."[199] Meanwhile, in a review of Episodes, critic and historian Natalia Roslavleva said, "even in the atomic age, the subject of art will be man," suggesting the inhuman unemotionaly nature of the piece made it not true art.[200]

In all likelihood, these more extreme attacks on *Agon* and *Episodes* likely relate to Khrushchev's general distaste for abstraction and American art. On December 1, 1962, the first secretary attended the *30 Years of the Moscow Artists' Union* art exhibition at the Moscow Central Exhibition Hall. The day is now infamous for the leader's rant on the abysmal 'filth' and 'sexual deviance' of the works not in the social realist style. He furthermore ranted about his distaste for American-based music and dance style, claiming "[w]hen I hear jazz, it's like gas on the stomach," and "these new dances which are so fashionable…are completely improper."[201]

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[198] New York City Ballet, *Souvenir Program, Soviet Union, 1962,* (Moscow, 1962), Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
[199] Quoted in Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War*, 120.
[200] Quoted in Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War*, 121.
[201] "Remarks at Exhibition of 'Thirty Years of Moscow Art,' December 1, 1962," *Encounter,* April 1963, Reprint, in *Khrushchev and the Arts: The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964,* eds. Priscilla Johnson and Leopold Labedz, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1965), 102.

Though this incident now known as the Manege Affair occurred after NYCB's visit, these statements help explain two things. First, this expressed distaste explains why the premier never saw a single performance by the NYCB while they visited the Soviet Union, choosing instead to watch American Opera star Jerome Hines perform on October 23.[202] Second, Khrushchev's assertion at the exhibition that "[m]y opinion is the same as the people" fundamentally dictated the beliefs of the press.[203] His assertion clarifies that he was *the* Soviet art critic, and therefore his judgment represented the people's judgment. Taking these facts into account, it becomes clear that a favorable review of Balanchine's most abstract productions on tour was out of the question. After all, if Khrushchev's taste represents the taste of all, and he refused even to see the company perform, then it was ideologically impossible to speak too favorably about NYCB, particularly its most avant-garde works.

The only part of these two ballets not dismissed outright in the press was the pas de deux in *Agon.* Lincoln Kirstein surmised about a decade after the tour that this exception emerged from a reading of the pas de deux "as a metaphor of inequality in American society" that displayed the submission of the enslaved male to the tyranny of his white mistress.[204] While Balanchine denied any metaphorical meanings in his works, this is an interpretation that dance scholars like Sally Banes have adopted, arguing that Mitchel's manipulation of his partner's body and vice versa offers a forbidden eroticism between Mitchel as a black man and his partner, a

[202] William F. Scott, "The Face of Moscow in the Missile Crisis," *Studies in Intelligence* 10, no. Spring (1966): 32-3.
[203] Quoted in Susan Emily Reid, "In the Name of the People: The Manege Affair Revisited," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6, no. 4 (2005): 674, https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2005.0058.
[204] Lincoln Kirstein, *Movement & Metaphor: Four Centuries of Ballet* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 242.

white woman.[205] Perhaps then Soviets were interested in the piece as a lense into the classism and racism of American society.

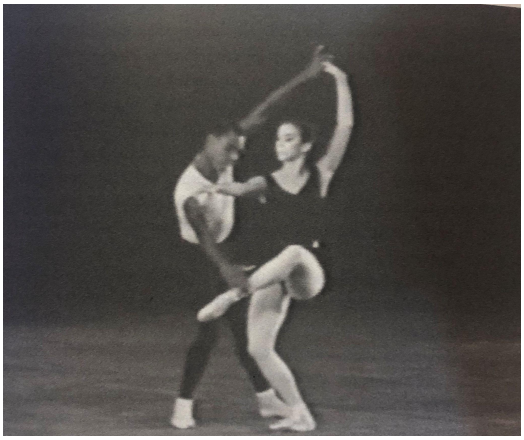

Fig. 4.3 Allegra Kent and Arthur Mitchell in the pas de deux from *Agon* in Moscow, 1962. Published in Anne Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War: A Soviet-American Exchange* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 122.

Though I have not found any explicit evidence that the Soviets understood the pas de deux in this way, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Soviet interest in Mitchell as an artist played a role in the response. For instance, compliments of the pas de deux in critics' reviews primarily focused on their admiration for Arthur Mitchell in this role. In one particularly pertinent example, L'vov-Anokhin praises Mitchell's ability to achieve "the laborious thinking out of form...extremely strained and complex, but at the same time natural and therefore excellent" in an otherwise scathing review of the ballet.[206] Meanwhile, Mitchell himself admitted in an interview in 2012 reflecting on the tour that Soviet audiences seemed excited to watch him

[205] Sally Banes, "Modern Ballet: Agon," in *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 194–214. Banes' analysis looks at the original duo for which the pas de deux in Agon was made for; Arthur Mitchell and Diana Adams. However, in the Soviet Union, Allegra Kent performed the female role. Both Ms. Adams and Ms. Kent are caucasian.
[206] Quoted in Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War*, 121.

because "they had never seen a black man dancing ballet" before.[207] Such comments suggest that Soviet audiences may have found the piece interesting because of some juxtaposition of their interest in Mitchell as a man of color and as an incredibly talented artist.

While the highly abstractionist aesthetics of *Agon* and *Episodes* were rejected in an official capacity, in reality Soviet audiences had a range of opinions about *Agon* and *Episodes*. As Solomon Volkov remembered:

> Older people rejected it: 'The Americans aren't dancing; they're solving algebra problems with their feet.' But the young saw in Balanchine's productions the heights that cultural avant-garde could have reached if it had not been crushed by Soviet authorities. Leningrad's aspiring musicians, writers, and dancers were inspired.[208]

This statement brings two points about Soviet dance and cultural politics to light. First, considering Volkov's assertion against the backdrop of censorship that plagued reviews of the company tour, one is reminded of the bifurcation between the official government-sanctioned representation of Soviet artistic taste and the unpublicized opinions of the people. While Kruschev's government remained traditional in terms of artistic value, by 1962, it was clear that Soviet people, on the whole, were trending towards the experimental. Unorthodox poetry readings were drawing in crowds in the thousands, and in February of 1962, the art critic Mikhail Alpatov went so far as to write a public review defending abstraction in Soviet painting.[209] Therefore, in Volkov's assertion here, one finds the evidence that, in other arts and literature, the

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[207] Quoted in Nancy Reynolds, "When Balanchine Went Home," Dance Magazine, August 1, 2012, https://www.dancemagazine.com/when_balanchine_went_home-2306896549.html.
[208] Quoted in Yale Richmond, "Performing Arts," in *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 125.
[209] Priscilla Johnson, "The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964" in *Khrushchev and the Arts: The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964*, edited by Priscilla Johnson and Leopold Labedz, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1965), 1-5.

general population may have been more open to Balanchine's abstraction than the Soviet press would lead one to believe.

Second, Volkov's assertion suggests that these avant-garde pieces represented a future of artistic innovation in ballet that Soviet youth found pleasurable and inspirational. By the mid-1950s, Russian ballet was facing choreographic stagnation. Subsequently, the Ministry of Culture urged companies like the Kirov and Bolshoi to create new works that emphasized communist values and attracted youth, breaking with the dramballet style.[210] As Pierre Bourdieu has observed, stylistic breaks in culture often lead to the rediscovery of abandoned artistic trends, which in the case of the Soviet Union meant a return to choreographic symphonism, a style in which the choreography was determinant of the music rather than the ballet's plot.[211] Accordingly, new Soviet productions began utilizing music the same way Balanchine had done at the start of his choreographic career, matching musical themes with designated movement vocabularies.

While Balanchine experimented with using this music movement relationship to pursue the abstract, Soviet choreographic symphonists in the 1950s and 1960s had to retain narrative in their work to accommodate the values prescribed to ballet by the Ministry of Culture. In other words, Soviet choreography could never go beyond a partial renewal of choreographic symphonism and experiment with Balanchine's level of abstractionism because they were restrained by the need to present pro-communist narratives in their work, but could use Balanchine's aesthetics to inspire narrative pieces.[212] Perhaps this is why Suki Schorer recalled in

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[210] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin*, 107-8.
[211] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 58; Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin,* 111-3.
[212] Anne Searcy, "Ballet in the Cold War: The New York City Ballet's 1962 Tour of the Soviet Union," lecture, NYU Jordan Center for the advanced study of Russia, February 27, 2021,

conversation with me that it was not "just Balanchine's choreography that the Russians enjoyed... it was seeing their technique used in new, different ways than what they were used to, that connection made us familiar [to them]."[213] In this manner, these two ballets effectively sold American ballet to a generation of young dancers and choreographers, meeting the State Department's aspiration for the trip to demonstrate American cultural achievements in a manner that influences political attitudes and actions.

Certainly, if one relied only on John Martin's reporting of the trip, it would seem that every performance had this sort of effect on the Soviet people. At each destination, the dance critic purports a newfound understanding of American ballet from audiences. In Moscow, he wrote, "[t]he whole final series at the Bolshoi has been marked not only by enthusiasm but also by a large measure of fresh and welcoming understanding of [Balanchine's] new aspect of the ballet art."[214] In Leningrad, the audience was "warmly responsive from beginning to end," and that "it is fair to believe the choreography in Leningrad will never quite be the same again" after seeing NYCB perform.[215] Success in Kyiv exceeded both the Russian cities right from the start, with its audience "although largely official in character, quite evidently enjoyed immensely. It was, indeed, by far the most enthusiastic first night, outdoing even Leningrad in that respect."[216]

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZy52UVZk3. One such example is Igor Belsky's *Leningrad Symphony* (1961). The ballet uses Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony to create movements eerily reminiscent of Balanchine's *Symphony in C*. However, unlike the plotless *Symphony in C*, this piece narrates in its movements the tale of idyllic Soviet life being shattered by invading Nazis in World War Two and the heroism of Soviet survival of the War. Such a morally imbued tale set in choreographic symphonic style is representative of the limits choreographers in the late Khrushchev era faced in making works that satisfied both the need to move away from the dramballet but still present communism in a positive light.

[213] Suki Schroer, Interview, October 25, 2021.

[214] John Martin, Special to The New York Times, "Ballet: Adieu to Moscow New York City Troupe Ends 3-Week Run With Bolshoi Theater Performance," *New York Times*, 1962.

[215] John Martin, Special to The New York Times, "Ballet: Leningrad Visit," *New York Times*, 1962; John Martin, Special to The New York Times, "City Ballet Ends Leningrad Stand: New Yorkers Won Ovations After Each Performance," *New York Times*, 1962.

[216] John Martin, Special to The New York Times, "Ballet: Americans in Kiev: Ukrainians Give City Ballet a Spirited Welcome in a Charming Opera House," *New York Times*, 1962.

Moreover, in Tbilisi, the audience was also wildly receptive to Balanchine as a fellow Georgian, offering "prolonged cheering" with each performance.[217] From such receptiveness, as told by Martin, it seems overwhelmingly clear that the company had effectively proved the validity and superiority of the American Ballet.

However, the success of the dancers and repertoire aside, Balanchine's attitude during the tour became an immediate problem for Soviet US relations. When a Russian radio interviewer welcomed Balanchine to the home of classical ballet, he responded, "Russia is the home of romantic ballet. The home of classic ballet is now in America."[218] Balanchine is a notoriously difficult personality to understand, as he never kept any writings explaining his philosophies, and rarely did he ever expand on his statements verbally after the fact. Perhaps he was likening his development of ballet in America to Petipa's evolution of ballet in Tsarist Russia. Such an assertion would suggest that Balanchine was also comparing the Soviet Union to France during Petipa's most prolific period as a nation in a state of artistic decline.

Balanchine's abrasiveness to the Soviet Union was continuous for the duration of the tour. Notably, he refused to cooperate with the Ministry of Culture functionaries. The functionaries had advised Balanchine not to repeat *Episodes* after its initial debut, stating that first, the Gostkoncert had not approved the ballet, and second, the ballet was not suitable for Soviet audiences as they may "consider it inappropriate...they would not understand and therefore not appreciate it."[219] According to handler Hans Tuch who was present during the

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[217] John Martin, Special to The New York Times, "Ballet: New York City Troupe in Tiflis: Company Continuing Soviet Union Tour Cheers Greet Dancers and Balanchine," *New York Times*, 1962.
[218] Quoted in Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats,* 61. This now-famous line has variations depending on whose account and translation one uses. The version quoted here in Croft appears to be the most popular.
[219] Hans N. Tuch, "Washington 1961-1965," in *Arias, Cabalettas, and Foreign Affairs: A Public Diplomat's Quasi-Musical Memoir* (Washington: New Academia, 2008), 85.

interaction, Balanchine calmly retorted in Russian, "[expletive] your experts."[220] Surprisingly, Tuch does not elaborate on any political consequences the moment may have had in his memoir, instead debating if the functionaries were right about the ballet.

Meanwhile, the choreographer also frequently told Soviet reporters that his ballets were superior to those performed in Russia because they better addressed the beauty of dance through abstraction. When asked about his purpose in taking NYCB to Moscow, Balanchine said he wanted to "acquaint Soviet viewers with the distinctive features of American dance, with our quests and our discoveries. After all, art...should always live and grow," implying that communism was to blame for the lack of innovation in Russian ballet in recent years.[221] Again, though Tuch mentions Balanchine's hostility toward the press he does not elaborate on what consequences it had. This nonchalance about Balanchine's outbursts from Tuch and other accounts of diplomats present during the tour begs the question: was Balanchine's rejection of the Soviet Union beneficial to the tour's political objective of selling American high art?

It is well established that the company dancers were obliged to remain apolitical in appearance, but it is unclear what expectations the State Department had for Balanchine.[222] His statements in the press may have been interpreted as beneficial for the State Department, for his frequent assertions about his success in America offered proof that choreographers thrived in the very capitalist society Soviet press so often dismissed as incapable of producing quality culture. Furthermore, his status as an Americanohile kept the Soviet press from justifying the company's

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[220] Ibid.
[221] Quoted in Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 110.
[222] "Agreement between the International Cultural Exchange Service of American National Theatre and Academy and New York City Ballet," June 12, 1962, New York City Ballet Archives, New York. The contract Agreement between ANTA and NYCB instructs dancers to write down and flush any political sentiments they had down the toilet in their hotel rooms to avoid any appearance of taking a viewpoint on US Russian relations, but there is no mention of this applying to Balanchine.

success because Balanchine was born in Russia, though the press circled the problem by indicating that his years of study in the Mariinsky are what gave Balanchine the tools to become a choreographer. Indeed, Russian reviewers felt the need to address Balanchine's statements in their commentary, indicating that they were "an integral component of Balanchine's appearance in the Soviet Union."[223] Thus there must have been at least some fear within the Soviet Union's political bodies that Balanchine's public persona was effectively causing doubt about the purported superiority of Russian ballet.

Although Balanchine was combative toward the press and Soviet officials, this severe distaste for the Soviets seemed to soften for fellow artists. NYCB had daily company classes taught by Balanchine in Moscow and Leningrad at the Bolshoi and Kirov schools. Russian teachers and students often watched and took notes during these classes, even recording the classes for future analysis in some instances.[224] In these more intimate moments, Balanchine was by all accounts cordial. He seemed to genuinely want to teach his methodologies on ballet to them. He was equally cordial when meeting with his former classmates from his youth in Leningrad, though d'Amboise remembers Balanchine admitting later that he "had to be nice" when discussing their choreography, implying that he was not a fan of their work.[225]

The choreographer was also appreciative of his newfound fans in Russia. In Leningrad, he orchestrated a free performance for the artists of the city, in which Balanchine made a speech to artists saying, "in troubling times which we may share in time to come, try to think of us as we are tonight; we'll try to think of you as you are tonight!"[226] This statement encapsulates the

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[223] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 119.
[224] Taper, *Balanchine,* 282.
[225] d'Amboise, "Quentin Keynes," 246.
[226] Lincoln Kirstein, "October 1962: Moscow," in *The New York City Ballet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 169.

humility and respect Balanchine undoubtedly had for the artist community he had left behind so long ago. His actions suggest that he felt compassion for his fellow artists' circumstances and genuinely wanted to influence their lives for the better.

Fig 4.4 Left: New York City Ballet dancers take company class in a rehearsal hall in Leningrad. The hall is part of the former Imperial Theater School, where Balanchine studied ballet as a child. Right: Balanchine talking with teachers of the Vaganova Academy in Leningrad. Published in Bernard Taper, *Balanchine: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 285; 287.

Nevertheless, the strain of being in Russia proved to be too much to handle for Balanchine. Returning to Russia met a return to the family Balanchine left behind when he defected in 1924, his brother Andrei. Andrei had become a successful composer in the intervening years, a point that proved to create a strain in the brothers' relationship after some forty-three years apart. They were aware of each other's lives via their dance choreography and music composition successes, respectively, but they never corresponded during their separation. When they reconnected, Andrei wanted his brother to create a ballet to one of his scores, but Balanchine did not like the music. As a result, the discussions over this matter caused their

relationship to become increasingly precarious to the point that Balanchine no longer wanted to see Andrei.[227]

Balanchine also feared being in Russia as a defector. Although part of the conditions for the 1962 tour stipulated Balanchine's guaranteed safety, the choreographer often spoke to his companions of a feeling of 'being watched,' and often dreamed of being captured by the KGB.[228] According to principal dancer Patricia Neary, Balanchine "couldn't sleep at night; he told me the phone would ring at four o'clock in the morning, and the radio would go on suddenly. He got thinner and thinner."[229] Though the presence of surveillance that he felt was likely real, the contract with the International Cultural Exchange Service of American National Theater and Academy mentions that participants should expect that their hotel rooms are bugged; it is unlikely that he faced any real danger.[230] There is no substantial evidence to suggest that the KGB had any intention to kidnap and retain Balanchine, especially when doing so would be a clear break of the contract between the two foreign powers putting the Bolshoi Ballet, which was touring the US simultaneously to NYCB's tour, in danger.

Nevertheless, these confounding factors lead the choreographer to spiral into a depression early in the tour. From opening night, d'Amboise noted in his diary that Balanchine seemed depressed.[231] Moreover, the success of winning over Leningrad audiences, which many observers have considered one of the most outstanding achievements of his career, Balanchine insisted

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[227] Taper, *Balanchine,* 278-9; 288-9.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Francis Mason, ed., *I Remember Balanchine: Recollections of the Ballet Master by Those Who Knew Him*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 464.
[230] "Agreement between the International Cultural Exchange Service of American National Theatre and Academy and New York City Ballet."
[231] d'Amboise, "Quentin Keynes," 239.

meant nothing to him.[232] Ultimately because of his rapidly deteriorating mental health, NYCB administrator Betty Cage made the arrangements to fly Balanchine back to New York for a week's respite before joining the tour at the end of their engagement in Kyiv. According to Tuch, "when Balanchine had to return briefly to New York, the company practically fell apart. Everything went wrong during the performances…[but] the minute Balanchine came back, everything returned to near-perfection."[233] However, this is likely an exaggeration, for I have found no mention of the company struggling significantly during Balanchine's absence in other accounts from individuals on tour.

While the troupe's ability to stay composed through the breakdown and departure of their artistic leader already speaks volumes to its tenacity, what is all the more remarkable is how little chaos ensued amidst the Cuban Missile Crisis. On October 18th, Edward Villella broke the company contract because he was "literally forced" to repeat his solo in *Donizetti Variations* by an audience so enamored that they refused to stop applauding until he danced once more. That same evening, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko denied the existence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, and the embassy informed Kirstein and Cage of the potential immediate danger the company now faced.[234] Subsequently, they began working on a plan of escape from the Kremlin guard. Ironically, they were more or less psychologically prepared for the crisis thanks to a game the two played leading up to the tour they titled "Disaster," in which one would pose a what-if scenario, and the other would have a limited time to pose a solution.[235]

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[232] Taper, *Balanchine,* 288.
[233] Tuch, "Washington 1961-1965," 85.
[234] Moncion, "The Friday Report: Letters from NYC Ballet Abroad," 72; Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 492.
[235] Typescript titled "Cultural Confrontation."

Ultimately, Cage and Kirstein formulated three plans that they shared with some senior members of the company. Plan A was to charter a plane if the embassy warned of oncoming terror, plan B to use the tour bus to take the dancers to the US embassy and wait out there, and plan C was to do nothing. Some years later, Betty Cage elaborated to d'Amboise, "the Bolshoi Ballet company is touring America. They care about their dancers. Maybe our state department will too, then we'll get traded."[236] In actuality, plans A and B were nothing but a wish. Rocky Staples, the troupe's cultural attache, informed Kirstein that the embassy had no authority or responsibility for the company in the event of a crisis. Likely, the embassy could not assist because they were also stranded during those intense thirteen days. When the crisis started, almost all American diplomats and their families had been restricted to Moscow by Soviet authorities. Subsequently, information regarding the crisis became confusing and restricted; messages from the US government to the embassy were delayed, and press coverage of the crisis inside Moscow was heavily censored.[237] Ironically, some reported that "the most talked-about event in Moscow during the week of the crisis was the opening of the New York City Ballet," not US-Soviet relations.[238]

Despite the lack of information and general terror amongst members in the embassy, Cage, and Kirstein all maintained a united front for the company, ensuring their safety. The embassy, in particular, became a source of guidance and comfort, providing bulletins updating the dancers on world events and forwarding letters from their families. During the crisis, the embassy was the one to warn the dancers and staff not to go out on October 27th because of a

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[236] Ibid; d'Amboise, "Quentin Keynes," 244-5.
[237] Hans N Tuch and G Lewis Schmidt, "Interview with Hans N. Tuch" (August 4, 1989), https://www.loc.gov/item/mfdipbib001194/; Scott, "The Face of Moscow in the Missile Crisis," 31.
[238] Scott, "The Face of Moscow in the Missile Crisis," 32.

government-planned protest that was to take place outside the embassy. According to Kirstein, the event was "not wildly impressive."[239] Ultimately, the protest dissipated quickly and peacefully, and the Cuban Missile Crisis had little effect on the company.

Indeed there were only two instances on the tour in which the dancers found themselves in any real danger. The first instance revolved around one of the company's younger members, Kay Mazzo, during the Cuban Missile Crisis. During one of the protests against the US embassy, Ms. Mazzo was burned by a protester putting out a cigarette on her arm as she left the embassy. In an interview with historian Clare Croft, Mazzo claimed that, in retrospect, the incident was not a big deal, but that at the time, it seriously scared her and her friends.[240] The second occurred after the Cuban Missile Crisis had settled down. Dancer Shawn O'Brien found himself in trouble when Soviet police took him into custody for the use of a video camera in a public park in Kyiv. He was eventually released, though Hans Tuch was appalled that it took such a long time for the Soviet police to notify US authorities of his arrest.[241] Taken into custody in the early morning, the dancer had gone missing without a trace, causing him to miss his performance that evening. He was only released with his confiscated materials after he and Tuch convinced his captors that the films he took were purely artistic quandaries.[242] Once he returned, O'Brien took the liberty to recount the questioning he received and how the police had ransacked his hotel room, looking for evidence of a conspiracy. For Lincoln Kirstein, the incident led him to decide to leave the tour early, meaning that once again, the company found itself without one of its key leaders for a

[239] Typescript titled "Cultural Confrontation."
[240] Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats,* 51. It is unclear if this incident occurred at the October 27th protest or at one of the many other protests that occurred in front of the embassy for the duration of the Cuban Missile Crisis.
[241] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 113.
[242] d'Amboise, "Quentin Keynes," 253-4.

portion of the tour.[243] Despite these dangerous incidents and lack of leadership, the tour continued without missing a single performance.

The ballet dancers of NYCB were uniquely well equipped to handle the pressures of dancing in enemy territory at the height of the Cold War. Their lifestyles made them accustomed to tuning out the stressors beyond ballet; daily rehearsals for hours on end allowed little time to experience the world events unfolding around them. After years of dedicated training, their focus was on themselves, not the political agendas around them.[244] To this end, it explains why the dancers who have recorded their experiences on the 1962 tour seem to remember issues pertaining to their physical bodies in much more detail than the political climate in the Soviet Union. In interviews with company members who participated in the 1962 tour, they freely speak of the conditions of the hotels they stayed in, the food they ate, and the injuries they retained but have little to say about the Cuban Missile Crisis or even politics at all. For instance, Robert Moriano, who was only sixteen at the time of the tour, remembers Tbilisi, not for the relationship locals seemed to have with Soviet politics but because it was where he learned to shave, while Carol Sumner's most prominent memory of the tour was her discovery of Spam as a cure for what the dancers called "Moscow tummy."[245] In my own interview with Suki Schroer, Ms. Schroer could not recall if she ever felt scared being in the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis but remembered Hans Tuch as the man who gave the dancers peanut butter.[246] These memories all attest that the dancers were much more concerned about their performances than the status of global affairs.

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[243] Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein,* 553.
[244] Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats,* 51-3.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Suki Schorer, Interview; Tuch, "Washington 1961-1965," 85-6. According to Tuch, the dancers referred to him as Mr. Peanut Butter because he often stole jars of the ingredient from the US embassy to give to the dancers.

Interestingly, for both NYCB dancers and Soviet dancers, the tour was a sight of collaboration, not competition. Several NYCB dancers have recalled that seeing Russian ballet classes emphasized the origins of their technique and culture; they saw in the classroom how Balanchine's style was an evolutionary branch of Russian classism and felt a personal connection to the disciplinary structures of the Russian classroom that Balanchine and other Russian emigres emulated in their training.[247] In other words, Russia gave the American dancers a sense of history and belonging in their artform not easily felt elsewhere, building their confidence as professionals. Conversely, for Soviet dancers seeing Balanchine's classes of heightened physical extremes helped them reinterpret their repertoire. For example, Valery Panov, former Kirov ballet star and Soviet dissenter, recalls that after the tour, "the New York style would come to my mind every time I wanted to work out a choreographic pattern."[248] Subsequently, the ordeal led to newfound discoveries about their dance practice on either side.

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After months abroad, the troupe eventually returned in December of 1962, everyone seemingly ecstatic to finally be out of the Soviet Union. For some, the trip's ending meant finally being able to reconnect with their families. At the airport, Allegra Kent finally reunited with her young daughter, grateful that, as her husband put it, "she still knows who she is."[249] Others thought only of catching up on sleep; others found themselves humbled and speechless at the swarm of ballet fans awaiting them at the airport. However, there was little time for the dancers to escape the pressures of performing. The company went straight to their preparations for the

[247] Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats,* 57-9.
[248] Quoted in Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats,* 64.
[249] Quoted in Milton Bracker, "City Ballet Back from Soviet Trip: Balanchine Calls Reception 'Absolutely Amazing' They Stood and Screamed Struck by a Trolley," *New York Times*, 1962.

annual *The Nutcracker* performance season, and after a brief convalescence, Balanchine would additionally choreograph two new works for the company's next spring season.[250]

For the management of NYCB, the tour left them disillusioned with the USSR. Kirstein, who still held on to socialist values, expressed a profound disappointment with the visit. He insisted that the Russian people "don't want to be liberated...they want to be left alone, to stew in their own...national neurosis."[251] Furthermore, he wrote in a letter to one of his confidants about the tour, "[w]e have not recovered yet and I don't think Balanchine ever will; it corroborated his worst fears and it shattered my greatest hopes."[252] The two men were both, though for very different reasons, heartbroken.

Nevertheless, despite whatever personal disappointments they had about the visit, it became clear that the trip benefited the company in the months following their return. In 1963 the Ford Foundation, one of the CIA's 'funding covers' for the psychological warfare mission, gave the company a grant of $2,500,000, to be paid over ten years, and the School of American Ballet $2,425,000 for an equal term, the largest sum ever dedicated to dance from a single source.[253] That year, the company also performed for President Kennedy's Second Anniversary Inaugural Salute, which helped jumpstart a boom in its popularity. Presumably, with the help of these grants and increased patronage from their connection to Kennedy, in 1966, NYCB officially moved from the City Center Theater to the newer and larger New York State Theater, where subscriptions to the theater significantly increased audience attendance. Thus, in the

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[250] Taper, *Balanchine,* 289.
[251] Quoted in Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein,* 554.
[252] Correspondence from Lincoln Kirstein to the Richies, *MGZMD 97, Box. 20, Folder 347, Lincoln Kirstein Papers, ca. 1914-1991, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
[253] Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War,* 135; "New York City Ballet Chronology | New York City Ballet," Accessed February 2, 2022. https://www.nycballet.com/discover/our-history/new-york-city-ballet-chronology/.

1960s, NYCB seemed to finally achieve the goals Kirstein had set for international renown and support at home and became in the eyes of many the premier ballet company in the US and perhaps the world.

Such sudden financial assistance and recognition by the federal government was undoubtedly related to the State Department's perceived success in NYCB's Soviet Debut, for the State Department found the tour to be a resounding success in the effort to beat the Soviets in ballet in the Cultural Cold War. Indeed from the reporting they received on the ground in the Soviet Union, NYCB's appearance had sparked tangible changes in Soviet art, with Hans Tuch noting in a memorandum "that the New York City Ballet deserves official recognition for its contribution to the US objectives of the exchange program."[254] Meanwhile, in January of 1963, attache Rocky Staples wrote that NYCB had started a transformation in the Soviet Union:

> [A] tremendous struggle...began shortly after [NYCB's] departure between the party ideologues [sic], headed by K[hruschev] himself, and the creative intelligentsia...There have been writers, painters, poets, and theater and film people who have had the guts to stand up and say that art must have freedom to experiment or it will die.[255]

To what extent Staples and Tuch's assertions were accurate is unclear. Following the tour, it certainly seems the Soviet government had some concern about the effect NYCB had on the status of Soviet ballet. For instance, in 1963, the Ministry of Culture held the All-Union Choreographic Conference to discuss the USSR's possibility of falling behind the West in ballet. Out of this conference came an increased dialogue between the Bolshoi, Kirov, and the Ministry of Culture on ways to innovate the art form, furthering "the very practice of debate at the heart of

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[254] Quoted in Prevots, *Dance for Export*, 87.
[255] Correspondence from Rocky Staples to Lincoln Kirstein, 12 January 1963, *MGZMD 97, Box. 11, Folder 177, Lincoln Kirstein Papers, ca. 1914-1991, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

[Khruschev's] thaw."[256] By recognizing Balanchine's choreography as an extension of Russian ballet traditions, artists gained leverage in the debate between dramballet and choreographic symphonism, aiding in the renegotiation process between art and Soviet realism that ultimately allowed for more flexibility in Soviet ballet choreography in the later Khrushchev years.

Nevertheless, these post NYCB intervention ballet experiments did not challenge the core definition of Soviet ballet, a content-rich art that narrates ideologically appropriate stories in a drama-rich style, in the radical way Rocky Staples suggested. Instead, following the Manege Affair, there was "a series of meetings between the artistic intelligentsia and the Central Committee Ideological Commission [that] reasserted party control over the arts along with the central principles of Socialist Realism, *partiinost'* and *narodnost'*."[257] Subsequently, ballet at the end of Khrushchev's power defined itself as a form that challenged the dramballet style and pushed the limits of choreographic symphonism but still retained explicit representations of Soviet values.

Thus while the State Department may not have accurately understood the Soviet response to NYCB's Soviet debut, it seemed for now that both sides benefited from the excursion. Remarkably NYCB remained unscathed through the Cuban Missile Crisis, and though its directors found the USSR disappointing for personal reasons in the year that followed, the company saw an exponential increase in its popularity and financial aid. Conversely, for the State Department, the most positive reviews of the company and choreographic trends following the tour showed that NYCB had done its job to prove to the Soviets the quality of American ballet and impress upon them the supposed superiority of democracy for artistic innovation.

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[256] Searcy, *Ballet In The Cold War,* 127.
[257] Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin,* 136.

Conclusion

Mission Success? American Ballet and Politics After 1962

1963, the year following NYCB's Soviet debut, marked a critical turning point in the relationship between dance and the federal government in the US. On October 23rd of that year, President Kennedy addressed the graduating class of Amherst College with a speech now understood as the epitome of his administration's attitude toward the arts. He said:

> If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him. We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is the truth…In free society art is not a weapon and it does not belong to the spheres of polemic ideology…. [In] democratic society… the highest duty of the writer, the composer, the artist is to remain true to himself…In serving his vision of the truth, the artist best serves his nation… I look forward to an America which will reward achievement in the arts as we reward achievement in business or statecraft.[258]

These words were an extension of the Eisenhower Administration's belief in the arts as a tool to fight in the Cultural Cold War. Expanding on this belief, Kennedy here offered a vision of America where the federal government supports art because it serves the nation not as just a form of propaganda but as the very marker of American success against the Soviets. In the truest sense, it is an argument built out of American exceptionalism made for the sentiment of the Cultural Cold War, and it is in this that we see the logic behind the creation of one of the most important acts of congress for the arts, the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts, or NEA.[259]

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[258] John F. Kennedy, *Remarks at Amherst College Upon Receiving an Honorary Degree, 26 October 1963*, White House Audio Recordings, 1961-1963, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHA/1963/JFKWHA-234-003/JFKWHA-234-003.

[259] From now on I will refer to the National Endowment for the Arts by its abbreviation, NEA.

Indeed the thought of an endowment may have been in Kennedy's mind as he gave this speech. In May of 1963, August Heckscher, Kennedy's special consultant on the arts, submitted the "The Arts and National Government" report to congress. The report outlined an increased demand for the arts by the American people and paid homage to Kennedy's belief in art as the utmost symbol of the free world. Its findings led to the establishment of the President's Advisory Council on the Arts, the direct predecessor of the current National Council on the Arts– the current advisory board for the NEA.[260] With the advisory council established, Kennedy's time of office became increasingly interested in arts and diplomacy until his assassination in November of 1963.

The death of Kennedy only strengthened congress' focus on the creation of the NEA, signaling an opportunity for those like Senator Javits, who had long been proponents of funding the arts. Subsequently, in January of 1965, both the house and the senate introduced bills calling for a National Humanities Foundation.[261] With both pieces of legislation gaining a significant following, congress established the NEA later that year. Though the NEA began modestly, it grew exponentially. Its budget increased tenfold from 1970 to 1975 from $8.3 million to $80 million and reached almost $149 million by 1979.[262] American ballet companies benefited significantly, with the NEA giving over $284 million in grants to dance companies from its

[260] Mark Bauerlein, and Ellen Grantham, *National Endowment for the Arts: A History, 1965-2008.* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2009): 7-9.
[261] For more on the House and Senate legislation see: Livingston Biddle, *Our Government and the Arts: A Perspective from the Inside* (New York: ACA Books, 1988) 62-7.
[262] Homans, *Apollo's Angels,* 454.

inception through 2018.[263] NYCB alone received over $2 million from the NEA during the remainder of the Cold War.[264]

Nevertheless, as government intervention to support the arts increased in the years following NCYB's Soviet debut, the ballet exchange rapidly deteriorated. With Kennedy's efforts to consolidate the entire cultural diplomacy program and the growing frustrations between the State Department and ANTA, it was decided in 1963 not to renew the contract between ANTA and the State Department.[265] From that point on, the State Department directly handled the entire process of organizing dance tours for export. After the ending of ANTA's involvement in cultural diplomacy, the ballet exchange became increasingly deformalized due to Sol Hurok's death in 1974, and the direct trade of Soviet companies for American ones became increasingly sparse. Indeed, the last official Soviet-American ballet exchange occurred in 1972, two years before the impresario's death, with NYCB's return to the Soviet Union, the tour that my father participated in.[266]

Indeed my father's trip to the Soviet Union in 1972 marked the beginning of the end for American dance diplomacy in the Cold War. Though dance diplomacy continued until the end of the Cold War, the use of ballet after 1972 became minimal. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the USIA became integrated into the State Department, and budgets were drastically cut as part of a broader governmental restructuring act known as the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998.[267] Dance would not be sponsored again by the State Department until

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[263] "Facts & Figures," National Endowment for the Arts, accessed March 6, 2022, https://www.arts.gov/about/facts-and-figures
[264] "New York City Ballet Chronology | New York City Ballet."
[265] Prevots, *Dance for Export,* 132-5.
[266] Leland Windreich, "Cold War Exchange," 68.
[267] Cynthia P. Schneider, "Culture Communicates: US Diplomacy That Works," *Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael,"* Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, no. 94 (September 2004): 12-13.

2003 when the Bush administration sent American dance choreographers to various Middle Eastern countries to foster Westernized arts education. Though dance diplomacy has made a return via American conflicts with the Middle East, these endeavors have been sparse and according to Clare Croft, do not adequately meet the challenges of twenty-first century foreign diplomacy by continuing the "war of ideas" model of diplomacy that underpinned the Cultural Cold War.[268]

The collapse of dance diplomacy had a reverberating effect on American ballet. Thanks to the federal investment in the arts in the 1960s, companies like NYCB finally found themselves with a solid financial footing. This was perhaps the golden age of American ballet– a time when companies like NYCB were recognized as some of the best in the world and had the financial support to prove it, hiring more dancers, putting on more performances, and touring all over the world. But when dance diplomacy disappeared from American politics, American ballet companies struggled to maintain the size and level of performance it swelled to during the height of the Cold War. In the case of NYCB, despite receiving many NEA grants and support from groups like the Ford Foundation, the company today finds itself in a financial deficit.[269] Moreover, with its original directors, George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein, now long gone (Balanchine passed in 1983 and Kirstein in 1996), the Cold War-era audience aging, and a recent series of scandals about sexual harassment and violence in the company, the future for NYCB seems grim.[270] Without a doubt, Kirstein would shudder at the company's current state.

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[268] Clare Croft, "Dance Returns to American Cultural Diplomacy: The U.S. State Department's 2003 Dance Residency Program and Its After Effects," *Dance Research Journal* 45, no. 1 (April 2013): 36.
[269] "Annual Reports | New York City Ballet," accessed April 10, 2022, https://www.nycballet.com/about-us/annual-reports.
[270] NYCB has had a long history of sexual harassment by male dancers and choreographers toward women in the company, including allegations of Balanchine himself acting inappropriately with female dancers. More recently, the company faced a significant scandal when Peter Martins, who took over as artistic director after Balanchine's death,

Therefore it is hard to say if either side truly benefited from their exploitation of one another. In this study, we saw that as propaganda and psychological warfare became central to foreign policy in the Eisenhower Administration, the CIA and State Department used American ballet to prove the country's ability to cultivate high art and attempt to destabilize Soviet ideology. Conversely, Lincoln Kirstein let these agencies use NYCB to increase the company's prestige abroad and secure the company financially. In this manner, both sides opted to send NYCB to the Soviet Union in 1962 to benefit their respective agendas.

In the end, neither of these objectives were met. Though the State Department perceived changes in choreographic trends and meetings between the Ministry of Culture and choreographers as evidence that NYCB had greatly affected the Soviets, they misunderstood that Soviet ballet was already in a transformative process by the time of Balanchine's arrival and that Balanchine's choreography was implicitly tied to Russian ballet history. Meanwhile, though NYCB thrived in the decade following its debut, its dependence on the Cold War has made it difficult for the company to function on the same level since dance fell out of importance in American diplomacy. Thus while ballet's deep entanglement in Cold War diplomacy conflated its importance and allowed the art form to prosper, ballet in America never gained the cultural status of its Russian counterpart.

However, one would be wrong to believe that NCYB's Soviet Debut had no long-term benefits. Indeed the event led to an unintended consequence that remains to this day; the

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resigned in 2018 after accusations emerged that he had physically and emotionally harassed dancers in the company. Later that year, the company faced a secondary scandal in which a student from the School of American Ballet, the feeder school for NYCB, made it known that a male dancer in the company had spread explicit photography of her and other female dancers to his co-workers. For more on NYCB and sexual harassment cases, see: Joan Acocella, "What Went Wrong at New York City Ballet," *The New Yorker*, February 11, 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/02/18/what-went-wrong-at-new-york-city-ballet.

collaboration of American and Russian ballet companies. Balanchine's reunion with his former contemporaries at the Vaganova Academy sparked a newfound kinship between the groups. At the company's second appearance in 1972, the directors of the Bolshoi approached Balanchine about setting some of his ballets on their dancers.[271] Though this plan never came to fruition, NYCB, the Bolshoi, and Kirov Ballets continued to communicate with one another. In 1988 principal dancers from the Bolshoi, Nina Ananiashvili and Andris Liepa, came to the US to perform as guest artists with NYCB. For the first time in history, an American and Russian company had exchanged dancers in collaboration with one another.[272]

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, this relationship only continued to grow. On the Russian side, the Kirov and Bolshoi Ballets received the rights to perform many of Balanchine's works. In the case of the Kirov, Balanchine's choreography today represents much of their standard repertoire.[273] Conversely, NYCB and other American ballet companies have increasingly relied on Russian-based choreographers to create new pieces for their companies. The most recent example of such a case is the success of dancer and choreographer Alexei Ratmasky, who trained at the Bolshoi in the 1980s before turning to make ballets for both Western and former Soviet ballet companies. He has created an extensive collection of works specifically for NYCB, described by critics as the opening of new genres for ballet and the hope for twenty-first century ballet after the death of George Balanchine in 1983.[274] Though such

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[271] Windreich, "Cold War Exchange: American Ballet Companies in the USSR.," 67.
[272] Tim Scholl, "Traces: What Cultural Exchange Left Behind" (Dancing the Cold War: An International Symposium, Columbia University: Columbia University Press, 2017), 47.
[273] Homans, *Apollo's Angels,* 543.
[274] For example see: Alastair Macaulay,"A Choreographer Leaps Ever Higher: Alexei Ratmansky's Recent Pieces Open Up New Genres," *New York Times,* Jul 03, 2016. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/choreographer-leaps-ever-higher/docview/2310679716/se-2?accountid=31516.

cross-collaboration has recently come to a halt since Russia invaded Ukraine, there has yet to be any evidence to suggest that the companies will not continue to share repertoire and choreographers in the future.

Perhaps then, the lesson from the ballet exchange is that the performing arts are invaluable in détente by encouraging collaboration. In the case of NYCB's Soviet debut, we see a moment in which, although the two nations were at extreme odds with one another, artists in these two countries came together despite the hostility of the Cuban Missile crisis. Although ballet cannot stop a war nor radically change a nation's governmental ideology, NYCB's Soviet debut suggests that ballet can and should be used as a political weapon to foster communication and collaboration between hostile nations.

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