quotidian practices encumbered by "agents, interests, and contentions," in which the bodies of queer Latinos are anything but static. It is not surprising that *Performing Queer Latinidad* has won multiple awards: the Congress on Research in Dance's Outstanding Publication Award, a special citation from the Society of Dance History Scholars, a Lambda Literary Award for LGBT studies, and a Latino Studies Section of Latin American Studies Association Award for best book.

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Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia

by Christina Ezrahi. 2012. Pitt Series in Russian and Eastern European Studies. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press & Binsted, Hampshire, UK: Dance Books. 322 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $27.95.
doi:10.1017/S0149767714000448

Christina Ezrahi's book is a welcome addition to scholarship on ballet in Soviet Russia, but one that would have benefited from a sharper focus. In seven chapters, the author traces the outlines of Soviet ballet from Kshesinskaia's memoirs (1960, of which she uses the Russian *translation* of 1992) of the October Revolution to Grigorovich's iconic Soviet ballet, *Spartacus* (1968), but her original research focuses on ballet in the 1950s and 1960s. In a work named after the swans of *Swan Lake* and *The Dying Swan*, Ezrahi's professed disinterest in revivals of classical works (5) is surprising to say the least, and even the Kremlin remains distant: except for Chapters 5 and 7, Ezrahi concentrates on the Kirov, geographically remote and aesthetically distinct from the Bolshoi. Despite its title, the work does not discuss ballet and the public display of power: how, the day after Stalin's death in 1953, Lavrenti Beria's fall from grace was evident in his absence from a performance of *Swan Lake*; or how, during the coup of 1991, state television channels broadcast only reruns of this particular ballet.

Ezrahi's main thesis is that Soviet ballet companies and individual dancers managed to resist the state apparatus. She contrasts this view (5) with previous Western accounts of Soviet ballet, which she claims represent superlative individuals trapped in a reactionary system. In actuality, it is difficult to see how her account differs from that which she detracts from (especially in Chapter 6), because the book is methodologically weak. One interview of Michel Foucault (in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982) does not suffice as theoretical engagement with the notion of power. Ezrahi stumbles rather badly in her definition of this central concept (8, 103, 232–233), leading to naïve argumentation where resistance (ballet) is in ontological opposition to power (ideological apparatus). Questions of "ideological loyalty" (e.g., 87) are far more complex than Ezrahi represents—after all, Stalin loved *Swan Lake*—and power relationships are never as straightforward or stable as they are presented here. Ezrahi (273) similarly makes rather short work of both Bourdieu's (1993) sociological view and de Certeau's (1984) historical one, both of which remain extrinsic or conjectural to her argumentation (e.g., 124–6).

Ezrahi's revisionist interpretation is not supported by her archival evidence as much as by the revisionist accounts of dancers such as Natalia Makarova or Maia Plisetskaia that she cites—the stories of great individuals trapped in a reactionary system. However, to prove her point, the author has delved into the meticulous Bolshevik bureaucracy; the accounts she offers of officials' meetings and backstage wrestling for power are truly the best this work has to offer, and could even have been considerably expanded. Despite its status, Soviet ballet has not been widely researched outside of Russia, and Ezrahi's use of Russian scholars' work, reminiscences only available in Russian, and various archival sources is commendable. However, both the Introduction and the first chapter, "Survival: The Mariinsky and Bolshoi after the October Revolution," rely heavily on anecdotes (reminiscences) rather than actual research, to the extent of uncritically reproducing Yuri Slonimsky's views or directly referencing the reader to earlier, Cold War–era research (such as Swift 1968) for explanation.

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Ezrahi also reproduces some of the blind spots of Soviet doctrine, such as that only the Soviets brought about democratization of ballet's audiences. Prior to 1917, ballet was widely performed in circuses and provincial theaters, and by no means only by foreign companies, as Ezrahi (2–3) claims. Murray Frame's excellent work on the Imperial Theatres would have shown her how certain institutional structures continued and contributed to the organization of Soviet ballet (2000, esp. 153–75), and his work on theater as a *School for Citizens* (Frame 2006) would have given depth to her discussion on *kulturnost* (Ezrahi 3–4), as well as a better understanding of how the Soviet regime were heirs to the pedagogical projects of the *narodniki* (Populists) of the nineteenth century. As is, Ezrahi (22–9) fails to convince the reader of the reasons for Lunacharsky's success over Lenin's agenda in the Politburo, a feat that essentially preserved the ballet and opera companies and much of the repertory of the Imperial period. Similarly, claims about bureaucrats making crucial decisions about repertory (91–6) ring very familiar to anyone interested in the Imperial Theaters. Frankly, a reader interested in early Soviet ballet should stick with Elizaveta Surits's (e.g., Souritz 1990) extensive work on the topic.

Ezrahi's implicit formalism becomes very evident in Chapter 2, "Ideological Pressure: Classical Ballet and Soviet Cultural Politics, 1923–1936," which discusses the period of Stalin's ascendancy ending with his brutal purges and the introduction of the doctrine of Socialist Realism. Ezrahi connects this period—the heyday of Soviet avant-garde!—with the rise of Socialist Realism, a fear of virtuosity, and the rise of evening-length narrative *drambalets* about Soviet life (30–2). Ezrahi (esp. 38–40, 57–63) opposes *drambalet*—the heir of the "new ballet" of Aleksandr Gorsky and Mikhail Fokine—to her heroes of "pure dance" (!), namely Lopukhov—another "new ballet" choreographer, neatly separated from his genealogy—and all "true" renovators of Soviet ballet (such as Leonid Iakobson). Similarly, Ezrahi's representation of the early Soviet avant-garde utterly ignores how their ideals corresponded with those of the *novyi sovetskii chelovek* (new Soviet man), representing art as a "progress" toward formal abstraction.

Ezrahi thus upholds the old dichotomy of narrative versus abstract ballet and simplifies historical complexities in the epistemological nature of art dance (such as what is a work). Unsurprisingly, like for Tim Scholl (1994), Balanchine eventually emerges as the pinnacle of ballet (Ezrahi esp. 166–7). Ezrahi's formalist ideology leads her to deliberately ignore narrative elements in works like *La Bayadère* (esp. 48–9), to the extent of using Lopukhov's notion of "choreographic symphonism" to describe Petipa (esp. 116). By reducing Petipa to form and *La Bayadère* to the famous series of arabesques, Ezrahi uses Dudinskaia's refusal to stage this work (78–84) to prove her claim that ballet artists resisted the Soviet system, crediting Dudinskaia with a desire to protect Petipa's formalism from Soviet politruks. Ezrahi's other "evidence" for her main claim is of the same order.

Swans of the Kremlin should really start from Chapter 3, "Art versus Politics: The Kirov's Artistic Council, 1950s–1960s." Here, Ezrahi finally presents something of her own, discussing the bureaucratic as well as ideological obstacles to producing new works in Leningrad. Although there are some obvious simplifications,[1] the chapter is a great improvement. Ezrahi follows the detailed records of the administrative committees of the Kirov, which reveal the underbelly of the company, the constant negotiation of power backstage, and attempts to argue for ballet's aristocratic corporeality as a reason for the failure of ballets on contemporary Soviet themes. Here, she would have done well to note that the Imperial ballet had had little interest in illustrating contemporary life (the closest the Imperial repertory came to the present were the framing narratives of *The Nutcracker* and *Pharaoh's Daughter*). After claiming that Soviet companies "resisted" authorities by deliberately making poor works on contemporary themes "simply to 'fulfill the plan'" (87), she nonetheless attests that "quite a few of the most artistically innovative ballets created at the Kirov in the late 1950s and early 1960s were those that responded to the authorities' call for ballets on contemporary topics" (184)—at least if "contemporary" encompasses, say, a 1961 work on events from two decades past (130). Again, although her quotations from the artistic council of the Kirov reveal aesthetic concerns and a company unwilling to commit to a bad production, they show very little active *resistance* of any kind.

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Chapter 4, "Ballet Battles: The Kirov Ballet during Khrushchev's Thaw," begins from the ousting of Sergeev from the post of artistic director and chief choreographer, which led to the rise of Lopukhov and his choreographic symphonism. Consequently, this is the section where the author's bias for "pure dance" is at its most evident. The second half of the chapter (118–36) focuses on Yuri Grigorovich's *The Stone Flower* (1957), and as Ezrahi paraphrases the debate about "realism" and "formalism" in Soviet ballet, she does note that these were not absolute qualities but weapons in an essentially ideological debate. Nonetheless, she scolds Grigorovich for not challenging the tenets of *drambalet* (136).

"Beyond the Iron Curtain: The Bolshoi Ballet in London in 1956" reads as a separate article—a case-study of the export campaign of Soviet ballet. Here, discussion on the distinct aesthetic tradition of the Bolshoi would have been important. She notes that the heroic utopianism of the Soviet Union emphasized jumps (159), but would have done well to notice the gendering evident in this emphasis, if not the fact that already in the nineteenth century, jumps were seen as the exceptional quality of the Moscow ballet. Ezrahi details the doubts that surrounded this visit (138–48) and points to the expectation of the Western audiences that Soviet ballet would be old-fashioned (150–1) before citing laudatory reviews of *Romeo and Juliet* and less than enthusiastic ones of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (152–8). These works become the opposing cases of *drambalet*, exhibiting the impoverishment of Soviet ballet vocabulary (allegro steps and batterie) (158). Ezrahi notes that Soviet readings of British reviews diverged, and some of the criticism was taken seriously, showing that despite nationalist pride in ballet (another opinion the Soviets inherited from the Imperial period), there was a genuine willingness to keep improving ballet as an art form.

"Enfant Terrible: Leonid Iakobson and *The Bedbug*, 1962" represents Leonid Iakobson as a radical choreographer trapped in a reactionary system. Again, an analysis or at least a more detailed description of "active gesture" and "free movement" (esp. 177, 179) would have been more than welcome. The analysis of Mayakovsky's Soviet canonicity and his dislike of ballet (174–6) is weak, but she paraphrases quite well the Khrushchev crackdown on "foreign" influences on Soviet art (193–9), even if the anti-Semitism of the Soviet system is mentioned only in passing (177) and not used to explain, for example, accusations of excessive eroticism leveled against Iakobson (197). Personally, I also disliked the exaggerated pathos of the chapter, where the choreographer is "declared insane" (171) and "St. Petersburg descended into a dark age [- as -] Leningrad" (174).

The last chapter, "Choreography as Resistance: Yuri Grigorovich's *Spartacus*, 1968" begins by noting Soviet concern as to what kind of Soviet Union was being exported (201–2)—again a theme directly continuing Imperial Russian concerns (Järvinen 2008) and one that would have deserved more detailed discussion, particularly as *Spartacus* is not exactly an illustration of contemporary Soviet life. Erzahi claims that the Grigorovich version, which was the fourth iteration of Khachaturian's score (Iakobson's was the first, created for the Kirov in 1956), "transcends" the work's propagandistic "subtext" (202). Yet, what makes it evidence of *resistance* to the Soviet system is simply the fact that it survived in the repertory.

Ezrahi's attempt at setting Grigorovich's choreography in context is rather haphazard. The best part of the chapter is when she outlines the institutional problems of the Bolshoi company, serving both its own theater and the Kremlin Palace of Congresses (214–6), for which *Spartacus* was originally planned as part of the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution. In contrast, Iakobson's choreography for the Kirov is described in a mere 41 words. With Moiseev's 1958 production, the critics complaining of lack of dramatic outline and plot development—qualities Ezrahi herself has detracted from throughout the book—are suddenly correct in their assessment (206–8). Even though the list of references includes film material (307), these are rarely mentioned in either the body of the text or in the notes, with the result that the epistemology of dance remains unclear: *how* the author claims to know that, for example, a particular choreography "relied primarily on dance to express the action" or was "unusually rich in dance compared to other productions" (64).

Ezrahi focuses her discussion on Iakobson's 1962 choreography on changes in the plot (209–1), and paraphrases an interesting discussion

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on qualities expected of a hero as well as the danger of audiences preferring the corrupted villain (s) (211–2), of which a lot more could have been said. Of the three reasons given for the superiority of Grigorovich's version (216–9), two also relate to the plot (the contrast between Spartacus and Crassus; and narrative structure), the third to creating choreography without separate mime sequences—the main tenet of the "new ballet," although Ezrahi does not make this connection. Indeed, everything in the production, including cutting Khachaturian's score so as to avoid dances without "dramatic meaning" (220), seems to fit the tenets of *drambalet* that Ezrahi has thus far attacked.

In explaining the success of the work, Ezrahi has recourse to an intentionalist reading (221), although what she describes of the role of Crassus (223) reads like a collaborative effort between choreographer and a particular dancer, Marius Liepa. Supported by Liepa's (revisionist) reminiscences (224–7), the choreographer is credited with "allowing" the dancers to create their own multiplicity of meaning in their parts and ultimately a work that "allows" the audience to have their own readings of the events (227–8)—as if this kind of variety would not be inherent to performance practice or signification in general! The chapter ends (230–1) with embarrassing quotations "explaining" the lasting significance of masterworks.

At times, Ezrahi's text leaps about rather confusingly: she is aware that the October Revolution was the *second* Russian revolution of 1917 (14), but chooses to represent it as "a thunderbolt" (10) hitting the unsuspecting Imperial Theaters. She cites an article from *Pravda* (61) as something well-known to the reader, but points to its significance only after a lengthy detour (64). She skips over the 1940s in their entirety—obviously, the Second World War or the Siege of Leningrad had no import to ballet in Russia (cf. 130). Often, she does not introduce the individuals she cites or represent their position in the cultural field (to use Bourdieu's term), although she includes a short who's who of the well-known figures of Soviet ballet (241–56), as well as an appendix on ballets discussed in the body text (257–72). Here, what is said of the works is both jumbled and heterodox: *Carneval* (sic) is given all of two lines (260); *The Nutcracker* (266) three; the plot of *Swan Lake* (271–2) is included; but not that of *La Fille mal gardée* (262), where various choreographies from Aumer (1828) to Ashton (1960) are referenced instead of the work's Russian/Soviet history.

To conclude, Ezrahi's book is not "the first archival study of the Kirov and Bolshoi Ballet companies during the first fifty years of Soviet power" (4), both because it barely touches upon the Bolshoi and because its actual focus is on the 1950s and 1960s. An attempt to include both the Kirov and the Bolshoi companies, in Russia and in the West, through fifty years of changing policies and numerous coups within the Party results in weak sections that rely on anecdotes and secondary sources interspersed with more detailed original analysis of previously unused materials that would have deserved more detailed engagement. *Swans of the Kremlin* offers no theoretical or historiographical insights and uncritically accepts rather too many statements from reminiscences and older research. When the two conjoin, as with Yuri Slonimsky and Vera Krasovskaia, the author *really* should have trod with more care.

Overall, the book gives a rather straightforward view of Soviet ballet and its cultural contexts, and by sticking to formalist notions about pure dance (esp. 115), it does not engage with questions pertinent to current dance research, such as dancers' corporeality or issues of ephemerality of performance practice, revival, and ensuing resignification. Despite this bias, Ezrahi's contribution is important to dance scholarship, where Russian archival materials are rarely used, and I hope the book will inspire further critical research into the vast archives of ballet and other forms of dance in Russia.

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Note

1. Such as an emphasis on Gorsky's and Fokine's importance to *drambalet* (70), with no mention of Viacheslav Ivanov, Petipa's assistant, to whom Soviet scholars attributed *Swan Lake* (Wiley 1997, not in her bibliography).

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Carmen: A Gypsy Geography

by Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum. 2014. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. 269 pp. + 28 illustrations, bibliography, notes, index, glossary. $45.00 cloth.
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Carmen—*femme fatale*, diva, *bruja*—the name alone evokes myriad images of the eternal, unconquerable female. Whether portrayed in opera, dance, or film, in black and white or slashed with red, the legend of Carmen is both satisfying and deeply unsettling. In *Carmen: A Gypsy Biography*, Ninotchka Bennahum provides a meticulously researched feminist reading of myth, history, music, and dance, and examines the timeless appeal of Carmen, the eternal feminine principle that cannot be ruled.

The story of Carmen can be understood as a loud meditation on one woman's struggle to be free to live and love as she chooses. Or it can be read, as it is in Bennahum's handsomely illustrated volume, as myth and metaphor—a sustaining and rebellious image that originates "after the long winter of Ice Age Europe" (7) and threads through *Mozarabic* (Christian, Sephardic, and Muslim) civilization to the present day. Bennahum allows the reader to travel with her through time and geography while she examines ancient roots and modern manifestations of the symbolic Carmen. With a firm grasp of historical detail and a wide lens, the author tracks her subject from the archetypal to the theatrical, illuminating the long path that led to Prosper Mérimée's French Romantic novella, which in turn inspired Georges Bizet's masterful opera. But this arrival is in many ways just a point of departure; Bennahum demonstrates how as the Carmen image gels into a stage character, she is further elaborated, projected upon, and re-examined by artists into the twenty-first century.

In creating this historiography, Bennahum foregrounds the Gypsy. This is more difficult than it might seem. The author asks, "Is it possible to hold in the bounds of human form the past, present, and future, to carry historical memory on your back as you walk or dance through space and time?" (94). In many ways, this is the central question of the book; in tracking multiple iterations of Carmen, the author follows a nomadic route. She suggests that a people can embody their history in ways that they can never document or explain. As Ann Cooper Albright puts it, "[Thus] to understand the ways the dancing body can signify within a culture, one must engage with a variety of discourses: kinesthetic, visual, somatic, and aesthetic, as well as intellectual" (Cooper Albright 1997, 5). In deciphering the Gypsy's embodied past, Bennahum does just this, calling upon sense and sensation, and constructing a multidisciplinary arc that connects fact, feeling, and iconography.

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