(Niweweorce) (1987). Rosenberg's continued attention to Brown's interest in improvisation and structure surfaces here in a potent anecdote concerning Brown's discovery of the dance's movement vocabulary in a "different mental and kinesthetic state" precipitated by moving furniture around the studio (295). This designed intervention between what had become her natural way of moving and the sharp geometries and material weight of her furniture once again confronts the relationship between what always changes (the body and its movement) and what endures (the structural elements of the dance and its architecture). Although Rosenberg's descriptions of *Newark* arrive at the summation of the artistic inquiries that spurred Brown's early work, her analysis concludes with a provocation for further critical investigations of the second half of Brown's career in the dance's wake. Perhaps, given the urgent attention to Brown's work in the wake of her passing, Rosenberg's invitation will be accepted.

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Like a Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia

by Janice Ross. 2015. New Haven & London: Yale University Press. 522 pp., b/w illustrations., $40.00. ISBN: 9780300207637.
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Like a Bomb Going Off is the first English-language book on the Soviet choreographer Leonid Veniaminovich Yakobson, or, in the words of the author, "a hidden yet monumental tale of an unruly native genius" (Ross 2015, 2). As someone interested in the construction of authorship, I found the book curiously divided between the traditions of biography and the more contemporary, contextualizing approaches of this genre (see, e.g., Vidal 2003). The unlikely tale of a vastly successful Jewish ballet choreographer in the officially atheist and multiethnic, but in reality bigoted and totalitarian, Soviet Union would be riveting had Ross been more critical of her sources and of this overly dramatic post-Soviet rewriting of privileged individuals as brave dissidents actively opposing the system (e.g., Plisetskaya 2001).

Despite some thematic chapters, the tropes of biography are very much in evidence in *Like a Bomb Going Off*: for example, childhood events are represented as presaging later life, and as illustrating aesthetic choices (e.g., 76, 383). Similarly, following the main character's death and the emigration of his wife, his legacy starts to unravel (although his company still exists), and the book ends with a lament on how, despite revivals of Yakobson's work, so much of it has been lost (434). A stricter chronology might also have helped the author eliminate some of the repetition and fragmentation that now cause a sense of *déjà lu*.

Ross notes that her earlier articles on Yakobson have met with the criticism that she does not cite contemporary sources (8), obviously due in part to her lack of Russian (see 7, 502). It is laudable that she has nevertheless used some Russian books, especially Valeriy Zvezdochkin's 2007 biography *Tvorchestvo Leonida Yakobsona*, the commemorative 2010 book by Nataliya Zozulina *Teatr Leonida Yakobsona*, and Elizabeth Souritz's (1990) research in English. Ross also extensively cites the reminiscences of dancers who performed in Yakobson's works and has conducted a number of interviews.

Like a Bomb Going Off is a kind of oral history. It is strongly reliant on Ross's access to the archives of the choreographer's widow, Irina Yakobson (née Pevzner), and interviews with her. Consequently, Ross suppresses the less flattering aspects of Yakobson's person, such as his affairs with other women (e.g., 130–131, 160–161, 370), and excuses his abuse of young, female dancers (377–378) as due to his search for innovation (385). Although such sexist behavior was common in ballet companies at the time, Ross would have done well to discuss the gendered uses of power in the classroom (or at least to explain to the reader her claim that such authoritarianism fostered the dancers' "individualism"), which in turn purportedly also made Yakobson's choreography "modernist" in style (348–350).

Much of the material Ross reproduces for the reader is absolutely fascinating and would have deserved more attention, such as Irina Yakobson's observations on the financing of the Yakobson company (388), or the 1962 cartoon (280) drawing attention to Yakobson's work for the state film and television companies. In many instances, Ross misrepresents the signs of success in Yakobson's career, such as the improvements to his family's living conditions (eg, 266–7) or the public recognition of his works (see below).

Like a Bomb Going Off is insensitive to historical change, and to both the cultural specificity of and diversity within the Russian/Soviet empire,[1] perhaps because Ross's sources on Russian and Soviet history are rather too heavily reliant on popular accounts like Orlando Figes's *Natasha's Dance* (2002)—a book that is, justifiably, advertised as having "all the qualities of an epic tragedy" (frontmatter). Ross uses both Cold War–era sources (such as Swift 1968) and post-Soviet views (reminiscences by ballet dancers) with insufficient reflection on how the time of writing influences what is being said (and, importantly, what has not been said). At times, the contexts into which she places Yakobson are embarrassingly flawed.[2] In comparison, when Clare Croft (2009, 440) cites Kent Stowell's recollections of the New York City Ballet tour of the USSR, she offers, in one paragraph, a far more nuanced view of the Soviet Union than Ross manages in her work.

Like a Bomb Going Off has no proper methodological framework, not even that of oral history—a fact somewhat occluded by the long-form notes. Periodically, Ross introduces the work of scholars such as Joseph Roach (161–2), Ann Pellegrini (190–2), or Brenda Dixon Gottschild (195–6) to draw parallels between their main tenets and Yakobson's works, life, and career. These theoretical notes tend toward superficiality; nuanced scholarly arguments and complex analyses get reduced to sound bites in support of a pre-existing thesis. Most of the theories cited are not presented either accurately or in full (e.g., Taylor 2003 as cited in 423), and some citations are extracted from their context such that they miss the point of the original altogether (Winkler 2007 as cited on 294). Drawing parallels between the experiences of Soviet Jews and African Americans is particularly problematic (e.g., 195), especially in reference to a choreographer whose black characters in *Ebony Concerto* (1971) were so obviously racist stereotypes that when Alvin Ailey's dancers saw this ballet, they were, as Ross notes (196), quite dismayed. Yet, Ross excuses this dismay by quoting Ailey thanking Yakobson for "in every way very good theater"—a statement that could also be read as critique of Yakobson's form of theatrical representation masked as politeness. Similarly insensitive is the manner in which Ross discusses physical disability as tragic suffering, opposing Yakobson's dancers to the Stalinist heros who championed "disfigurement" and "mutilation" (317–8).

The upside of the book is that Ross knows how to describe ballet, even if she does not always distinguish between different performances, film documentation, and filmed versions of works. Watching the films of Yakobson's work available on the Internet lets the reader appreciate just how well she catches the distinguishing characteristics of Yakobson's style, such as the deliberate use of movements from the grotesque tradition (see Yakobson quoted 304): torsion, asymmetric lines often in combination with parallel or inward-turning feet, uncommon uses of stillness (esp. 256, 371), and exceptional holds and transitions. Alas, the Lenfilm materials of Yakobson's choreographies with which Ross begins the book (9–13) and which she later discusses in more detail (esp. 364–366, 373) could also have been used to illustrate the choreographer's influence beyond audiences who attended performances, or discussed as establishing a particular public image of the choreographer—both clearly topics for further research.

Ross's discussion of spatiality and her compositional analysis of group movements are a bit weak, as are some of the comparisons she makes to other choreographers' works (e.g., on Nijinsky's *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, 360). More could have been said of Yakobson's "choreographic recitatives" and "speaking polyphony," where individuals form a crowd that dances independent roles simultaneously (269)—such as how this relates to the work of Yakobson's idol, Mikhail Fokine. Surprisingly, Ross seems oblivious to European ballet and contemporary dance trends, although when the choreographer's widow Irina Yakobson emigrated, Rudi van Danzig is noted as recognizing her by sight and

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profusely praising her husband's work (429–30). Instead of the repetitive references to Balanchine, the work of major choreographers of the era working outside the neoclassical idiom—Frederick Ashton, for example, or Roland Petit—would have offered richer sources for comparison. Lamentably, Ross makes an attempt to connect Yakobson to so-called postmodern dance by claiming he used "chance as a compositional device" (375), followed by a description of the traditional method used in ballet, in which the choreographer chooses and develops movement phrases from dancers' improvised responses to verbal cues. Obviously, Yakobson's works "never left anything to chance in performance" (375).

Like a Bomb Going Off restages a dualistic world view that recalls Cold War rhetoric and erodes the credibility of the claims made. She sets American developments in dance as the standard against which everything else is measured: instead of analyzing Yakobson in relation to Russian and Soviet choreographic traditions, Ross's highest praise for Yakobson's work is that it "could pass for modern dance" (368; similarly, e.g., 315). Although Ross is not a formalist, she lauds *Exercise XX* (1971),[3] a short, non-narrative piece set as a glimpse into a ballet studio, as "pure and plotless movement invention" (392). This seems the closest Ross comes to defining "modernism." A virtuosic piece, *Exercise XX* includes what Yakobson called "the sixth position," an inversion of the fifth position with toes turned inward. Ross does well to criticize Fyodor Lopukhov's technical analysis of this difficult position, countering it with statements by dancers who actually had to execute it (393). This kind of detailed description of ballet movement, particularly when involving a dancer's personal experience, is definitely Ross's strength and a delight to read.

Instead of acknowledging that art works have multiple meanings, Ross insists that Yakobson built politically subversive messages into his choreography, a "truth" that "lies under" the obvious (and perfectly conformist) narratives of Yakobson's works (e.g., 239). When critics, such as American reviewers of the 1962 New York tour, fail to understand Yakobson's genius, this is due to their political bias (284–8). Throughout, Ross offers little evidence for her main claim that Yakobson's work was politically dissident,[4] and even repeatedly notes Yakobson's "avowed apoliticalness" (184, also 250). Indeed, her claim is incongruous with the fact that Yakobson was awarded the 1950 Stalin Prize in Literature and the Arts for his (thoroughly Orientalist) choreography *Shurale* (181, 355); that his *Spartacus*, which Ross rather imaginatively claims was "the seed of a popular uprising from deep within the Soviet system" (289), ran for eighteen consecutive years at the Kirov (268); and that from 1955 until his death in 1975, Yakobson held a tenure as a ballet master for this company (351). Similarly, when Ross lists examples of actual dissidents. such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (312) and the burgeoning underground arts scene in Leningrad of the 1960s and 1970s (353–4), she offers not a single name, event, or anecdote that would connect Yakobson to these artists, their work, or their aesthetic. What she represents as Yakobson, in 1972, "crossing the line into political protest" is a letter to Brezhnev (389–90) that in form and function is the traditional last measure appeal of a faithful Russian subject to the benevolent tsar informing him of the mistakes of his underlings. Yakobson's "political protest" is a letter to the President, not a call to overthrow the system.

The emphasis Ross places on Yakobson's Jewishness is almost as disproportionate as her claims of his ballets having political messages. On scant evidence, Ross creates almost a parallel between Yakobson's works and those by Solomon Mikhoels for the Moscow State Yiddish Theater (17–20, 80, 170–176). Much of Ross's discussion focuses on the few Jewish-themed works Yakobson created, especially the one work alternately known as *Jewish Wedding* or *Wedding Cortege* (1971), relatively late in his career.[5] It is more problematic that Ross considers *Jewish Wedding* an effort to "archive"[6] what she sees as "authentic" Jewish gestures and culture (225). This disregards the complex representational practices in the creation of authenticity, as well as the fact that, born and bred in St. Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad, Yakobson would have had about as much understanding of the life of shtetl Jews as George Balanchine of Georgian peasants, and his work reproduces a *stereotype*. Just as her analysis of Jewish identity actually erodes the complexities of a fragmented, diasporic ethnicity that is also a religious minority in an officially atheist state,

Ross's insistence on an anti-Semitic conspiracy against (the very privileged) Yakobson paradoxically denigrates the actual suffering of Jewish dissidents and detracts from the obstacles that professional artists— navigating the ever-changing sea of political appointments, favoritism, and corruption, especially professional artists from minority backgrounds—faced in the Soviet Union.

Ross is insensitive to Soviet local differences, especially the constant tensions between Moscow and Leningrad that are particularly visible in a long quote from Irina Yakobson (386–8), who describes an incident where local Party officials took the local artist's side against the Muscovite representative of the Ministry over and above any ethnic prejudice or aesthetic differences. Ross represents the Minister of Culture, Yekaterina Furtseva, as an anti-Semite leading a campaign of persecution against Yakobson; yet, the same Furtseva is easily persuaded to change her mind by Igor Moiseyev (390–1), whom Ross fails to note was another award-winning Jewish ballet choreographer.

Ross would have done better had she toned down her most exaggerated claims, such as that Yakobson was "attempting to rewrite the state from its core" (349) or even "claim[ing] a public space for a dissident body and nonconformist corporeality" (360). A critical reader has to ask, why is it *insufficient* for the author that Yakobson was an award-winning choreographer in the hegemonic art form in Soviet Russia? Even if his work was not that exciting to contemporary Western dance critics and scholars —for which evidence lies in this being the first biography of the man in English— Yakobson successfully navigated the changing currents of the Soviet art establishment, political appointments, favoritism, and corruption for half a century. Although he worked in a secondary company (the Kirov as opposed to the Bolshoi, a distinction Ross misses), Yakobson represents ballet's privileged position in the USSR, and the safety this art, by its very usefulness to the Soviet propaganda machine, offered its artists, including those from ethnic minorities (cf. Pinkus 1984).

I cannot but feel that, despite his faults, Leonid Yakobson deserves more: a biography illustrating his importance within the Russian/Soviet tradition, from his youthful embracing of Bolshevik radicalism to his continuation of the legacy of the so-called "new ballet" and admiration of choreographers like Fokine at a time when Silver Age art and Russian modernism were considered "counter-revolutionary." But this kind of a study would require extensive work in Russian archives, in addition to the interviews and materials from the choreographer's wife that remain Ross's main contribution in *Like a Bomb Going Off*. It would also require an understanding of Russian and Soviet ballet that would depart the main stages and delve into representations in film or the popular stage—one that would not force choreography into Western stylistic categories. As is, Ross's book changes little in the established interpretation of Yakobson's significance to Soviet ballet,[7] but hopefully it will inspire research on and around this "*enfant terrible*" of the Kirov.

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Notes

1. For example, Ross (2015, 11) misunderstands the term "*narodnost*," which is crucial for understanding the tensions between ethnicity and representations of ethnicity in Soviet Russia.

2. A case in point is Yakobson's Italian commission of 1975: instead of situating the work in the context of the Italian Communist Party's movement away from Soviet Marxist-Leninism and the simultaneous rise of the Red Brigades (likely explanations for Soviet authorities' targeting their cultural diplomacy towards Italy in the 1970s), Ross (2015, 400) references a much older "threat of a dissolution within the Eastern Bloc" following the Soviet "invasion" of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. She even speaks of Italy as "a totalitarian state" (405) decades after the fall of Mussolini.

3. Ross (448 cf. 196) quotes Irina Yakobson saying her husband showed this work to Ailey in 1970.

4. In fact, Ross's claim curiously echoes Boris Asafiev's reinterpretation of ballet as resistance to the bourgeois system (cited in Ross 2015, 31). It would help if Ross defined what she meant by "politics."

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5. Of the 180 works by Yakobson that Ross lists in the Appendix (435–453), all of six (3%) had Jewish themes (11)—as many as Spanish-themed works—and until the 1960s, his unfamiliarity with Jewish traditions is also quite evident (e.g., 61–2, 205, 210–1).

6. Of course, "archiving" in this sense contradicts Taylor's definition in *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003), making one wonder to what purpose Ross (2015, 423) cites this theory.

7. Ross's claim that Yakobson was a "modernist" has been popular for decades, as evinced by Solomon Volkov's *St. Petersburg: A Cultural History* (1995, esp. 506).

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Dramaturgy in the Making: A User's Guide for Theatre Practitioners

by Katalin Trencsényi. 2015. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. 326 pp., notes, select bibliography, index. $91.99 cloth, ISBN: 9781472576750; $29.93 paper, ISBN: 9781408155653.
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The relationship between dance and dramaturgy is not a new phenomenon, but it has received nascent attention and conversation in the United States in the past decade as evidenced through examples such as the *TDR/The Drama Review* documented collaboration between scholar Susan Manning and choreographer Reggie Wilson on Wilson's most recent work, *Moses(es)* (Manning 2015), forums such as Chicago Dancemakers' *Cultural Conversations: Dance + Dramaturgy* (May 9, 2015), and Society of Dance History Scholar's 2011 conference entitled *Dance Dramaturgy: Catalyst, Perspective, and Memory*. Despite this growing dialogue, much mystique remains in place for dance dramaturgy because of dramaturgy's origins in theater and dramatic text. How does one act as dramaturg for dance? Furthermore, does dance need a dramaturg? This latter question is one that Katalin Trencsényi attempts to answer in her book *Dramaturg in the Making: A User's Guide for Theatre Practitioners*. Although the book's primary emphasis is on theater, dance is the subject of its own section. In addition, the depth and breadth of case studies can serve a dance practitioner or scholar in thinking across a variety of contexts, from traditional to more experimental practices.

Trencsényi is a seasoned freelance dramaturg working in London. The book is foregrounded as a manual, hence its title. However, while Trencsényi generally follows the four-step process developed by dramaturg Mira Rafalowicz when describing her dramaturgical case studies, she is concerned less with defining the role of a dramaturg than in thinking about how the work of the dramaturg has functioned historically and in the present. The book employs