

# NIJINSKY'S ADVENT ACCOMPLISHED WITH DUE ECLAT

"Caruso of the Ballet" Attracts Large Audiences to the Metropolitan and Awakens Considerable Enthusiasm—An Amazing Display of Agility—"Thamar," in Its Initial New York Performance, Proves Chiefly Remarkable for Its Colorful Bakst Pictures

**B**USINESS of high importance was transacted by Diaghileff's dancers both afternoon and evening at the Metropolitan Opera House on Wednesday of last week. At the matinée the largest and most expectant audience attracted by the ballet up to date turned out to see Nijinsky, who, having disposed of sordid financial issues with results satisfactory to his exalted artistic dignity, allowed lovers of the dance to behold the operation of his fabled greatness. Now the primary complaint levied against the ballet since its first appearance in America has been the lack of stars of the first magnitude. Nijinsky at last supplies that deficiency. He is the Caruso of the company, if you will, the idol to be worshipped by a public which desires to concentrate its affections on an individual, not feed them piecemeal to an ensemble, however deserving. Thursday afternoon's gathering revelled in the joy of acclaiming a personality and the auditorium reverberated with sounds and vibrated with emotions that have not disturbed its atmosphere since Caruso went away three weeks ago.

Nijinsky appeared first in the "Spectre of the Rose," later in the title part of "Petrouchka." A burst of applause followed his bound through the open window in the visualized version of the "Invitation to the Dance," and gasps accompanied some of his following evolutions. And when the piece ended and he appeared before the curtain an ovation of which Caruso might have been proud was his reward. He came out fifteen times, to be exact, and in addition to sounds of gladness got flowers and wreaths.

Nijinsky is unquestionably an amazing dancer. He is said to have been nervous last week, partly because of the naturally disquieting effect of a début, partly because he had not danced in a long time. Later performances will, therefore, probably present him in a more favorable light. But he revealed in his first dance his great technical facility, the agility of a deer, an exceptionally subtle rhythmic sense, great vitality and suave bodily grace. His far-reaching leaps as he entered the window and circled about the room and his volant exit were calculated to stir even the phlegmatic. The rest of the dance impressed one somewhat less and at moments Mr. Nijinsky seemed a trifle heavy—a condition conceivably due to temporary causes. Yet, if possibly a shade more airy of motion than the warmly remembered Michael Mordkin, it may be questioned whether he will exert so lasting an effect, wanting as he does the bold virility of the latter. Except for his legs, which are as palpably muscular as those of an athlete, Nijinsky's appearance, bearing and manner disturb by a most unprepossessing effemi-



Photo by White, N. Y.

Scene from "Les Sylphides" As Produced by the Diaghileff Ballet Russe. Although This Ballet Is of the Traditional and Conventional Type and Remote from the Ultra-Modernism of Some of Its Companion Ballets, It Is Noticeable That It Invariably Attracts a Major Share of the Popular Interest.

nacy—an element as forcibly apparent in the airs and graces with which he acknowledged the favor of the audience as in his evolutions.

### In "Petrouchka"

In "Petrouchka" Nijinsky executed some of the business of the part differently from his predecessor, Mr. Massin, but without any perceptible improvement in consequence. Indeed, he lacked the mechanical rigidity of gesture and motion whereby Mr. Massin so perfectly carries out the marionette illusion. And the whole impersonation fell in its way below the artistic level attained by Mr. Bolm as the Moor.

The other works given at the matinée were "Scheherazade" and "Prince Igor." The scheduled order had to be reversed on account of the accident which befell Flora Revalles just before the performance began. Opening a letter handed to her in her dressing room she received in her eyes a cloud of powder and straightway fainted. Coming to she insisted that the stuff was poison sent, most probably, by a German spy. "In Russia," she declared, "there is a method of poisoning persons in that way. I thought surely it was some kind of black-hand letter when I read that this man, whom I do not know of, was related to

a German prince. Anyway, I'm glad I didn't breathe any of the powder or I'm sure I'd be quite dead by now." The man referred to was one "Prince A. A. von Zeil," who sent a note with the powder to the effect that he was de-

contemporary chief of police in Philadelphia.

Another theory, however, was advanced by the friends of Nijinsky, who hinted darkly that the whole affair was engineered by the dancer to detract attention from the débutant.

### First Performance of "Thamar"

In the evening took place the initial New York performance of "Thamar." Boston got the first American view of it about two months ago and liked it. Last week's audience took it politely, but declined to lose its head over it. Pictorially the piece is without question the most gorgeous thing Diaghileff's people have thus far exhibited; but the plot and music scarcely suffice to raise a ripple of interest. However, it barely plays over fifteen minutes, so there is no danger of boredom, particularly as the eye feasts on Bakst in the very fullness of his colorful splendor. In nothing else has he attained such ideal correspondence of scenic character and order of attire. The color scheme is deep, dark red, relieved with green and old gold, and the forms, proportions and perspectives stir the imagination like visions out of the Arabian Nights. The abode of *Thamar*, Queen of "Georgia" (there is really such a place somewhere in the Caucasus), is a sort of funnel-shaped chamber of stupendous height (the sense of altitude being marvelously conveyed), walled with great red tiles, both square and round, save at the rear, where a great gray-green panel rises up, slashed with one broad, zigzagging streak of gold. A curtained portal at the right gives views of snow-covered peaks, while in a remote corner a secret door opens upon a foaming cataract. On a couch by the wide entrance reclines *Thamar* in the posture of *Amneris* and waving a scarf at some unseen individual in the distance, like *Isolde*. A knight comes in and is received amorously. He is given to drink, after which he dances madly, sometimes with *Thamar* and sometimes alone, while the queen's guards and female attendants and slaves rush, whirl and eddy in labyrinthine mazes. Then



Warslav Nijinsky, Principal Dancer of the Diaghileff Ballet As He Appears in "Scheherazade"

scended from Napoleon and that his family tree had borne such fruit as the wife of Peter the Great, a certain German Prince Maximilian von Zeil and a

## CHRISTINE MILLER

### CONTRALTO

N. Y. TRIBUNE, H. E. Krehbiel—"She sang with beautiful voice and an ever-increasing sincerity of manner, gave real pleasure and excited genuine admiration for her art, which has nothing mean or ignoble about it. \*\* Miss Miller has the requisite emotional and vocal material." (Nov. 24, 1915.)

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