

# Bakst Costumes AT THE Metropolitan Opera



An Odd and Striking Ballet Costume



Nijinski as 'The Spectre of the Rose'



Costumes of the Typical Russian Type



Of the Greek Order



Thamar Karsavina in a bewitching Dance Costume

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Conventional Bakst Conception



A Typical Bakst Creation

Unique but not Gaudy



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**The Masterpieces of This Color Master to Be Seen When the Great Ballet Russe Arrives**

LEON BAKST, Russia's master colorist, will come to America in a few weeks, a fact which, no doubt, will be hailed with delight by all who have admired the bold sweep of his brush, the glow of his color and the range and richness of his pictorial imagination in the pictures so far seen in America.

When he arrives it will not be with a few examples of his handiwork, but with an entire ballet aggregation, Serge de Diaghileff's Russian Ballet, for which he has designed the scenic backgrounds against which the dancers move, and also the wealth of costumes used. The latter especially are an essential part of the beauty and force of illusion for which this ballet is celebrated.

Who is this Bakst, who "makes his colors shout with joyous abandon, who has dramatized color, and whose every daub of pigment on canvas or costume has a deep and pregnant significance?" The city of Paris, France, claims Bakst as its own, and calls him "our incomparable." But so does Petrograd and the whole of Russia. Diaghileff, the man who founded the ballet which bears his name, might be said to have discovered Bakst. Petrograd, his birthplace, treated him rather harshly, because he had new ideas. The Russian reactionary influences made it hard for him to show his genius. But this was not so in the other centres of Europe. Serge de Diaghileff, a wealthy Russian amateur, child of a noble family, educated in the Moscow University, honored with the position of counselor at court and friend of the Empress, decided that the West should be shown the talents of the Russian Occident. At an exhibit he arranged in Paris in 1906, he showed the works of the young Russian artist, Bakst, and all Paris, startled, talked about the originality of this Russian in-

novator. But it was not until the opening of the Theatre du Chatelet in June, 1909, that he created for himself his present name through making the settings and costumes for the ballet "Cleopatra."

The charming Karsavina, the infatigable Nijinsky, the dancing master, Bolm, all of whom will come to America this year with the ballet at the Metropolitan Opera House, appeared in that production. The composer, the maître de ballet, the stage director, the designers and the mimes were all of them Russians. An artistic entity, such as had never been seen before was produced. The fame of the ballets of Diaghileff was assured, but so was Bakst's. He was acclaimed the greatest stage decorator and costumer in the world, over night.

In Paris and London, in Vienna and Monte Carlo, where this ballet and the others that Diaghileff undertook were repeated, Bakst's work and that of the dancers became a consistent and continual triumph. And so it was with his every creation. He extracted the poetry hidden in every epoch and brought those periods before us in the form of beautiful color combinations.

As one critic put it, "Emerald, indigo and geranium, the leopards' spots and the scales of the serpent, black, rose, vermilion and triumphant orange, were all shrieking to be heard, and shrieking in harmony. It was an orgy of color to the last possible tension."

The sombre magnificence of Bakst's setting and costumes for "Scheherazade," the massed color and fantastic detail of his India in "Le Dieu Bleu," the vague and vaporous beauty of his hillside for the faun, the endless opulence of his color that floods "Narcisse," and the ominous lower in which Thamar waits for his prey are his. Bakst does not end with the theatre. His color combinations are more than mere drawings or fash-

ion plates. They are intensely alive, singularly persuasive, and their value increases as they are becoming of historical importance. Even now they bring as high a price as any extant.

A fashion drawing, after its original cost to the producer of the ballet, is eagerly looked for by art lovers, and sells for about three hundred to six hundred dollars. This is a small ten by eight-inch drawing. So valuable are they, in fact, that Bakst is one of the few living artists whose drawings have been widely counterfeited and attempts made to sell them. A clever forger sold a number to an English newspaper, which published them under the title of the "Amazing Bakst." One collector in England was induced to purchase no less than a dozen of "Bakst's" water colors at a tremendous price only to find that he, too, had been the victim of the gang of forgers who try to live on the great Russian artist's name.

What Bakst's effect will be upon America none can yet tell. A renascence of color probably will set in. Already women's fashions in dress have been modeled after his work. Bakst's name can properly be classed with those of the great innovators of modern times.

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