

[Poster], **Ballets Russes de Diaghilew Paris**: 1939. Advertising poster for the 1939 exhibition **BALLETS RUSSES DE DIAGHILEW 1909 A 1929** Musée des Art Decoratifs. Palais Du Louvre. Pavillon de Marsan. Exposition organisee par Serge Lifar. Mars a Juin 1939. Lithographic poster on paper, printed in color with lettering and full margins. Signed "Jean Cocteau" in the stone, lower right. Sheet size: 61" x 34"; mounted on silk, rolled. Fine copy.



Our 1939 poster was reworked from the original lithograph of 1911 to advertise this, the first major exhibition concerning Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes. In 1911, Bakst persuaded Diaghilev to commission Cocteau to design two posters, one featuring Nijinsky and the other Karsavina in their costumes for *Le Spectre de la Rose*, which had its first performance that year during the season in Monte Carlo. The Karsavina poster shows her in her costume as the young girl in the ballet, “standing on point, her hands crossed in front of her, her eyes closed facing to the left side of the image” (V&A’s poster 1913. S.563-1980). A fascinating note comes from the late Alexander Schouvaloff, who suggests that in this poster: “Cocteau mischievously made Karsavina uncannily resemble himself.”

Serge Lifar in 1939, ten years after Diaghilev’s death, organized a huge retrospective exhibition about the Ballets Russes which opened on 27 March 1939 at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. This was the first significant celebration of Diaghilev after his death. 532 objects were assembled under the patronage of the Prince of Monaco and the Ministry of National Education, including costume drawings, engravings, gouaches; eleven décors and backcloths; 28 sculptures, as well as, books, playbills, scores and letters.(Veroli. P.118).

The popularity of the exhibition caused its dates to be extended to 1 July (as is advertised on our poster). In addition, there several two galas organized by Lifar during the exhibition, the first on 8 June where extracts from *Le Train Bleu*, *Les Biches*, *Le Matelots* and *La Chatte* were staged, with Lifar dancing along with Nicholas Efimov and Vera Nemchinova. Another gala took place on 28 June. This was a benefit for Vaslav Nijinsky who had been in a mental institution for some time. A final benefit gala was organized by the Union des écrivains et journalistes russe de Paris, which featured Lifar, Nemtchinova, and pupils from the school of Matilda Kshchessinskahya, Olga Preobrazhenskaii, Vera Trefilova and others.

Refs: Schouvaloff, Alexander. *The Art of Ballets Russes*. 1997 ; Veroli, Patrizia. Serge Lifar as a Dance Historian and the Myth of Russian Dance in "Zarubezhnaia Rossiia" (Russia Abroad) 1930-1940. In *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*. Vol. 32, No. 2 (WINTER 2014), pp. 105-143.

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