

– When Diaghilev presented the ballet, *Scheherazade*, at the Chatelet Theatre in Paris in May, 1910, it caused an extraordinary sensation. It was the talk of the town. And the designer, Leon Bakst, became an instant international celebrity. He became more famous than any theatre designer had ever been before or since, probably, and more influential. And his influence was not just in the theatre, it was in fashion and in interior design. It was said, that no fashionable woman in Paris between 1910 and 1914 every fashionable woman thought it was desirable to have a salon decorated as though it was a setting for an oriental orgy, as we see here. Right, good, here is Mr. Bakst on the left hand side and on the right, one of his incredibly sexy costumes for the ballet, *Scheherazade*. And there she should see these costumes also had a great impact on the Paris fashion industry. That's a very key moment in the history of Brazilian fashion. So, as I said, he was suddenly very famous. He was being discussed in newspapers around the world. This is an article from the London newspaper, "The Sketch", about Leon Bakst on the right hand side, and Diaghilev, always very canny, very sharp, was quick to make use of the fame of his designer. Up until 1910, or the first two seasons for Diaghilev, they were restricted because his star dancer, Nijinsky, who was the biggest attraction for the Russian ballet, had a contract with the Imperial Ballet in St. Petersburg. And that meant that he could only travel abroad when that ballet was closed in the early summer. So, Diaghilev, was hoping desperately to find some way to liberate Nijinsky from his contract with the Imperial Ballet. He got his opportunity late in 1910 when, Nijinsky was cast in the ballet "Giselle" and he had a new costume designed for him by Alexandre Benois. You see the traditional costume on the left hand side for a male dancer in a romantic ballet in Russia in the 19th century, where there is a discreet little frock, really, that covers up what the English tabloid newspapers would call the lunch box. But, Benois' costume exposed the front of his tights, and some people thought it was indecent and the Imperial family were informed, and there was going to be a gala performance with female members of the Imperial family. And they sent a message that Nijinsky should cover up, that he should not wear a costume that exposed so explicitly, his private parts. So immediately, Diaghilev thought, Aha, this is it. So the hapless Nijinsky was pushed out onto the stage, wearing the offending costume, and of course, immediately after the performance, he was sacked from the Imperial Ballet. And that meant, of course, now Diaghilev was free to extend the seasons of the Ballets Russes in Paris, and to take the Ballets Russes on tour to other cities, notably London.

So here is the very young, Leon Bakst. He was born in, in Grodno, Belarus in 1866, and his birth name was, Leyb Izrailevich Rosenberg, so obviously from a Jewish background, but a very assimilated one, a bourgeois one. His grandfather was a highly successful fashionable

tailor who attracted the patronage of the Imperial family and he was based in St. Petersburg. So eventually the whole family uprooted from Grodno and went to St. Petersburg. And very soon as a boy, Bakst conceived the ambition to become an artist. And it was obviously a very deeply, I think anybody, who says to me, Oh, my, my grandson, my granddaughter, they want to become an artist, musician. What shall I tell them? What shall I let them do? I always say to them, Well, they will only become an artist if they absolutely have to. And clearly Bakst had to, his family were against it, they threw away his paints. He applied to the academy in St. Petersburg and was rejected, but that didn't put him off. He still turned up to part-time classes and in 1893, he went to Paris. Paris was of course the magnet for artists from all over the world. And it was, I think I quoted to you in a recent lecture that in the 1920s, it was estimated there were 80,000 artists in Paris, most of whom would've been foreign. And so they wanted to train in Paris. It was very difficult to get access to the official École des Beaux-Arts. So most of the foreign artists who went to Paris trained at the Academy Julian at the foot of Montmartre.

Here is a picture of the Academy Julian, what date is this? Well, it must be about 1900. So probably just very shortly after when Bakst was there, Bakst attended the Academy Julian from 1893 to 1897. So he was there just after the members of the Nabis Group, Bonnard, Vuillard, Maurice Denis, that lot, Sérusier, they were all there in 1890. I think they probably would've moved on by 1893. So what kind of teaching did you get? Well, the main teaching for any artist in Paris in the 1890's was drawing from the nude, so the Academy Julian provided the models and the artists would draw or paint from the live model all day long and every now and then, the junior or other teachers would come along and would criticise and correct their work. So we have drawings, life drawings by Bakst from this period that are really disappointing. I mean, the interesting thing about them really is how uninteresting they are. These under competent drawings, I suppose, they could be by anybody. They could be by practically any of the 80,000 artists who are in Paris. Drawings like these, you can find piles of them in the flea markets of Paris.

So this is the first big point I want to make about Bakst, he could be a superlative draughtsman of the human figure, but he needed clothing to get his creative juices going, to get him really excited. Clothing that covers and at the same time reveals the body underneath and emphasises, I mean if you look at the drawing on the right hand side, which shows a woman caught in a shower of rain, you can see what it covers and what it reveals and how certain parts of the body, that fascinate him and attract him, are actually emphasised by the areas that are covered. The other thing I would say about Bakst inspiration is, that it's really all about eros. It's about the erotic sex is the great inspiration for him. These are extraordinarily voluptuous, seductive, erotic drawings and these are working drawings in a way in that he made these designs, and of course the costume makers had to

make the costumes from his drawings. But these are so much more than just working drawings, they are an end in themselves. And he takes a lot of liberties, of course, you couldn't literally have costumes like the ones you see here, in the early 1900's, you couldn't have anything quite so revealing. You couldn't have costumes where you could actually see the nipples through the materials. And the bodies also are more voluptuous. Although if you actually see photographs of dancers from the early 1900's, they're much chunkier, they're less anorexic than dancers would be today. But they weren't quite as fleshy and voluptuous as Bakst made them and I doubt, I think it's impossible that you would've had exposed hair in armpits on view, on stage. These are drawings he made for a ballet, somewhat later. Good humoured ladies. And this is 1917. And these are his version of 18th century costumes. And as you can see, he lovingly drops the neck line to expose the nipples, once again in 1917. Well, you could see nipples actually, you could see bare breasts if you went somewhere like the Folies Bergère, but you weren't going to see nipples and bare breasts on the stage of the opera house or the ballet. So you can see how he loves the female body, just loves it. He's caressing it, he's savouring the sensuality and the fleshiness of the body. These are such wonderful drawings. Of course, these days, they're absolutely priceless if they come up for sale at Christie's or Sotheby's they go for vast fortunes. And as I said, you can see that they're much, much more than just working drawings these. And it was a nice way for him to earn money, the collectors loved them and they commissioned these drawings like these from him, he could sell them on. So as I said, they're not just, and something like this, which is a really a fantasy of the Princess Badroulbador in Scheherazade, obviously this is not a practical design for a real costume on the stage of the Opera House. And here again, this is reclining nude. So I mentioned the hair in the armpit, but also he's very fascinated by pubic hair. Now that the female sex also has pubic hair, was a pretty well kept secret as far as western art was concerned, right up til the late 19th century. You probably all know that a notorious story about Raskin being so shocked on his wedding night, but he was a virgin and so was his wife. Sounds absolutely nightmarish really, how any Victorian marriage ever got consummated, I don't really know. But anyway, in the course of the wedding night, he discovered to his horror that Effie, his wife, had pubic hair. He had no such idea. He couldn't have got that idea from looking at earlier Western art. But, of course, if Raskin had been around in the 1890s, he wouldn't have had that excuse cause suddenly, especially if he'd gone to Vienna, pubic hair was everywhere. It was in your face, so many male artists were suddenly very fascinated by it and exposing it, Klimt, notoriously of course. And Klimt, was so fascinated by pubic hair that he would even paint it in on his figures that were going to be clothed. This is a painting left unfinished when he died in 1918 and you can see that the figure on the right hand side, and he's only just started to paint in the patterned skirt, which was going to cover the lower part of their body. But you can see underneath it, he's already painted in the pubic hair and pubic hair,

of course, is a very marked element of his thousands of life drawings.

So certainly you can say that Bakst was an artist who was extraordinarily motivated by the sexual impulse, but he wasn't alone. There was a lot of it about in the 1890s and early 1900's. And so what was going on, I suppose it's, you could say it was a reaction against what we think of as Victorian morality. It's also a big reaction against a 2000 year Judeo Christian tradition of attitudes to sex and nudity that was really being questioned. Of course we're all familiar with Freud. Here is Klimt again, if you visited Klimt, people who visited Klimt, it was in his studio, had a wonderful jungle like garden that was full of cats, there would be up to 20 cats and if you walked into the studio on the floor, just thrown on the floor, were hundreds and hundreds of drawings like the one you see on the right hand side. And he just made them for the joy of making them, didn't really seem to worry about their preservation. Apparently, cats tore them up and peed on them and so on. And he wore this costume, this can't think of quite the right word for it, you know, it's amok, yes an artist amok, which was very practical if you are painting, and getting paint all over the place. It was also practical because he could whip it off or lift it in a blink of an eye if he wanted to have sex with one of the models, which apparently he did very, very often. Well, Klimt is somebody I admire greatly, and I don't like to criticise him, but I imagine he could have been in a bit of trouble with the Me Too movement, there were 14 claims of paternity against him after his death, and you could say, Well, what is it that Klimt and Bakst are so preoccupied by sex. But again, it's in the air at the time. And here is Freud of course. And, Freud is, he is only one of a whole generation of doctors and, and philosophers and medical practitioners who are trying to look at the sexual impulse, the human sexual impulse much more objectively. Not thinking of the 10 Commandments and the Judeo Christian tradition.

Another artist who is enormously preoccupied with sex and the female body is Rodin. These are two drawings by, Rodin. And another factor in this, it came at just the right moment that this is the arrival of Japanese wood cut prints, which became familiar in Europe from the 1860s onwards when the Americans forced the Japanese to trade with the West. And these wood cut prints came flooding in. And I think it's interesting, how even today actually people react. Cause the Japanese, of course, are completely outside the Judeo tradition or attitudes towards sex. None of the puritanism or the inhibition that Christians and, and Jews and Muslims have about sex. And when I used to give lectures at Christie's every year over a 40 year period, every year I gave a lecture on Japanese wood cut prints. I was always fascinated, I'd put up one of these images without warning and I'd wait to see how many seconds it took for people to even take on board what they were looking at. They couldn't even grasp quite what it was. So these were absolutely revelatory to western artists. The British artist William Rothstein bought a set of these prints in Paris in the early 1890s and

he brought them back to London, but he lived at home and he was terribly anxious his mother might discover them under the bed. So he gave them to, Aubrey Beardsley and for Beardsley they were, again, an extraordinary, extraordinary revelation. Beardsley was a bit less inhibited about it. He actually framed them and hung on the wall of his Hemlock house and invited people round to tea to admire them.

Here is Beardsley on the left hand side and talking of Klimt, of course, Shiele is another artist who's very preoccupied with sex in a very non moralistic, non-Christian way. This is a self portrait of Shiele that he, apparently, he made lots of these portraits, of quite big scale watercolour portraits and he displayed them on the balcony of his flat to attract the attention of the young girls who lived in the flat opposite. And it worked actually, cause he actually married one of them. So back to Bakst and it's 1897, he's really, I suppose, formed as an artist stylistically and he goes back to St. Petersburg. And again, it's a very propitious moment. It's an exciting time when modern art is beginning in Russia and it is the time of the great collectors, Shuhukin, Morozov and Russia is opening up to the West and to new ideas. And there's a group of young artists and athletes in St. Petersburg that Bakst joins, that is initially led by Alexandre Benois who also became an important designer for Diaghilev later on. Here is a portrait by Bakst of Alexandre Benois on the right hand side, and it's a self-portrait of Leon Bakst on the left hand side. And the pair of them, cause Diaghilev was initially a kind of, hanger on of this group, or rather provincial, they regarded him as a bit of a country bumpkin. But right from the start, Diaghilev's, part of his genius was for knowing the right people, he quickly got onto the idea that Benois and his little group were the right people, so he knew that he had to like the right people or meet the right people and he had to like the right things, the fashionable things. That is a feature of Diaghilev all the way through.

So here are two more portraits by Bakst, you can see he was a good portraitist. He could have had a career as a portraitist, but his special genius, as it was, certainly for the costume designs, some of which I've shown you. So if he decided he was going to make a living as a portraitist, I certainly wouldn't be talking about him tonight. He would be a footnote rather than the main subject of a lecture. But here is a portrait on the left of Alexandre Benois. And you can see in the background, that is an 18th century portrait. Might be Catherine the Great, I suppose in a Rococo frame. So that's one of the things that young, fashionable people were interested in at the time was the 18th century. And on the right hand side, we have Bakst portrait of the very elegant, rather quizzical looking sort of Svengali figure. This is Diaghilev on the right hand side with the old nurse who brought him up. His mother died in childbirth, the old nurse who's such a typical Russian character, really in Russian history and Russian literature. So Diaghilev became the editor of a magazine called The World of Art. I'm not going to even attempt to pronounce

the Russian title of this magazine, but I think I probably mentioned in many lectures before that the 1890s is the golden age of the art magazine. The art magazine came into its own in this decade, largely through technical innovations that the colour printing, colour lithography had reached a point where you could have very attractive colour illustrations in these magazines. And also a photographic reproduction had reached a point where you could actually have images of buildings or works of art that really conveyed something. So art magazines become very important they're very influential for an image of Picasso sitting in The Four Cats Cafe in Barcelona, the magazine, it was a cafe for artists, so they had these art magazines, they would have studio, they would have Revue blanche, they might have pan, they might have (speaks French). These are the great art magazines of the 1890s and they were very important for spreading ideas, creating reputations.

Here are two images of the World of Art. And World of Art, also, as I said, these artists' reputations were promoted by these magazines and Beardsley is a fascinating case cause, Beardsley, certainly derived elements of his style from things he'd seen in the Studio magazine. His reputation was made by an article on him in Studio Magazine that was picked up then in Vienna, in Berlin. And he was, again, very much promoted by the World of Art. So that's Beardsley on the right hand side. And this is a Bakst, I think quite influenced by Beardsley on the left hand side. Another huge factor in Bakst whole career was his love of the classical world. This is a large scale oil painting that he painted of the lost city of Atlantis and you can see this archaic Greek figure at the bottom in the middle. This resulted from a trip that he made to Greece in 1905 that had a lifelong influence on him. And so many of his ballets have classical settings. This is a set he made for a ballet in 1911 called Helen of Sparta. And you can see the influence of the Mycenaean architecture, the insert there is of course the Lion Gate from Mycenae. And here are more costumes. You could see that he's been looking at Greek vase painting, it's this kind of torsion where you have a head in profile and the feet in profile very often and the torso facing towards you, which you find on Greek vases. And they're so beautiful, again, these classical images, but they're very much also of their own period. This is the kind of Belle Epoch Classicism with quite an envo and even proto art deco element.

More designs, oh, on the right hand side is a ballet design for a costume. And on the left is actually a design by Bakst for haute couture for a dress that a woman might, a fashionable woman, might actually wear. And again, he's not alone in this. There are other artists at this time, notably Franz von Stuck in Munich. This is a self portrait of Franz von Stuck in his studio in Stuck villa in Munich, which still exists. I love taking people to, it's an absolutely amazing place. Stuck was considered to be a very great artist. People, Hoffman Star for instance, in the letter to Strauss. He's always rather talks down to Strauss and he disapproving the fact

that Straus likes Klimt and he says, "Well of course, people who really know like me, we understand that the great artist is Stuck and it's not Klimt. And it Stuck's reputation, which is going to survive, not that of Klimt." Well he certainly got that one wrong in a big way. So I think nowadays most people would dismissed Stuck as second rate and rather kitschy. But actually I think Stuck's greatest achievement, for me, is the interior design of his villa, which is really extraordinary. Is another very sort of Belle Epoque Art Nouveau version of the classical world by Stuck. And again, with the Art Nouveau swirls again, that Stuck. And hey, look at the difference. I think, again, if you compare Bakst and Stuck, well Stuck doesn't come out of that comparison very well. These are are designs for a ballet called Nazis. I think that's 1911. And again, you've got a direct comparison here, Stuck on the left hand side and Bakst on the right. I'm sure Bakst would've been very, very well aware of Stuck's work and was to some extent influenced by him. Now, another major, major factor in Bakst inspiration of course is dance. And this is the heyday of Isadora Duncan, who inspired pretty well every artist in the decade or so leading up to the first World War. Mialle and Bourdelle and lots and lots of artists, I think probably Matisse as well, but this is a Bakst drawing of her, as you can see, she was chunky and voluptuous, she wasn't at all kind of build that we would expect from a dancer today, but very much the kind of figure that Bakst liked. And you can see his portrait of her on the left hand side. And she was also somebody who was fascinated by the classical world and that's what she thought she was doing. She thought that she was reviving the art of dance as it had been in ancient Greece, which meant frolicking around in night dresses. We only have literally seconds of film of Isadora Duncan dancing quite late in her career. And it's rather similar to this. And you just see this rather plump figure flash across the screen in a night dress and that's all we have of her.

But as I said, she inspired many artists, particularly Antoine Woodell, the sculptor who made the sculptural frieze decorations on the exterior of the Theatre des Champs-Élysées. I think it's one of the most beautiful theatres in the world by Auguste Perre. Its the first really modern theatre, very important theatre historically. Its where the writer spring had its first performance. It's always a joy for me to be able to see a performance in that very beautiful theatre. So that's Bourdelle on the left hand side and a photograph of Isadora on the right. Now as a counterweight to the classism, Bakst classism is not a dry form, academic form of classicism at all, it's also infused with a love of Orientalism. And this could, although as I said, he was not at all religious or orthodox as a Jew, but I think he certainly, as any Jew would have done at this period, he must have felt 'other' in inverted commas, that is, I think, part of the Jewish identity, that sense of otherness that is actually expressed very often in the synagogues of the late 19th, early 20th century, which are very often in an orientalist style. So this is the Iranian book synagogue in Berlin on the left hand side and the Budapest synagogue

on the right hand side. Two the biggest synagogues in Europe that are in very consciously orientalist star. And so of course Scheherazade is an orientalist ballet. And on the right hand side is a design for the, although it says 1929 on there, it's actually designed from 1910 for the the L'Oiseau de feu, "The Firebird".

So, Bakst, Orientalism has a tremendously wide range of sources. He's extremely eclectic, It's like he's picking from a box of assorted chocolates in his combination of different orientalist elements and he's looking, he's curious, he's looking at a huge range of art. So Bakst on the left hand side and very obvious similarities in the happening with this Persian miniature on the right hand side. Closer to home, you could, certainly from a western point of view, Russian icons are exotic and orientalist deriving from Byzantine icon tradition. And this costume design for a ballet here on the left hand side by Bakst, if you look at the stylization of the anatomy, it almost geometrized, you can see how that is something that he's taken over from the icon tradition, here again, comparison with stylization of the face, almost reduced to geometrical elements and Russian icon on the right hand side. Now one thing that he certainly didn't get from a Russian icon was the exaggeration of the breasts, the woman's breasts. I think here he's been looking at Hindu sculptures and this is a very Hindu like Bakst drawing on the left hand side, and the temple sculpture on the right hand side. Now there were two really important people in Bakst's career who provided tremendous inspiration. One was of course, Diaghilev, who you see on the left hand side. And the other was Ida Rubenstein, I don't know quite how to define what was Ida Rubenstein. She was a dancer I suppose, or sorts. She was an actress. She was an impresario to rival Diaghilev. She was born in 1883 in Kharkiv, in Ukraine into a very wealthy family. They were one of the wealthiest families in Russia. They were a merchant family, Jewish merchant family in their, I think their initial fortune was made in dealing in sugar. But both her parents died when she was very young. She was orphaned at an early age and inherited a vast sum of money. She was looked after by relatives in St. Petersburg when she began to show an artistic bent and wanted to dance in public, wanted to go on stage, they were absolutely horrified. And they actually had her put away in asylum, in an asylum. The only way she could escape from this very oppressive family was to make a marriage of convenience so that she was no longer under their control. And after that, she was able to launch her career. And then, sadly she started to learn to dance. She took lessons from Michelle for Keen, who was the first great choreographer for later for Diaghilev but you can't become a classical dancer if you start when your body is fully formed, you've got to start a lot earlier. So she was never really technically a very good dancer. She was a very beautiful woman. She had incredible charisma and allure and she had ideas, she had original ideas. So in 1908, she presented herself to the world in a ballet with music that she commissioned from Glasunov. She commissioned sets and costumes from Bakst and she commissioned the

choreography from Fokine, so in a sense, a year ahead of Diaghilev, she had already put together the team that was going to be the initial team for Diaghilev. As you see, a beautiful woman, rather an exotic beauty. Actually, I'm going to be doing a talk in August, entitled about this fantasy that goyim have, you could say, of Jewish women being sensuous, seductive, mysterious, slightly menacing and she, oh well, like Salvanna, she definitely played up to this in a big way. And you can see that in various portraits that she commissioned this one by Lagundera, on the left hand side, Jacque del Blanche, Ida Rubenstein on the left. And Romaine Brooks American artist who was briefly her lover she was certainly, at very least, bisexual. It's clear that Bakst was obsessed with her, absolutely obsessed, he was certainly in love with her. I don't think it was reciprocated. I don't think that they had an affair.

This is a costume designed for her, Salome on the left and a portrait drawing he made of her on the right. Later in life, her long term lover was Lord Moine, who's fortune, of course came from Guinness. Well he certainly was lifelong, utterly devoted in love with her. I don't know if it was reciprocated to the same degree. But after the Russian revolution, when she lost all her family fortune, she had set up in rivalry with Diaghilev presenting ballets and she commissioned very important ballets. She commissioned lots of great works of music as well. Ravel's Ballero was commissioned by her, not by Diaghilev. So he assured her after 1917, he said, "Don't worry, there's plenty of black gold to replace your Russian fortune." and he, of course, was referring to black gold was the profits from the beer industry. Back to Diaghilev, so Diaghilev profited from the reprochmel of France and Russia that had been going on since before the turn of the century. The Jewel Alliance, which was aimed against Austria and Germany. And after 1903 it becomes a triple alliance with Britain, France, and Russia. And the Ballets Russes, the bulk of its activities, of course, in the heroic period was in France and Britain. And this is the first big splash really of Diaghilev in Paris, this was 1905, He had a very successful exhibition of Russian portraits in St. Petersburg and he decided to transfer it to Paris, where again, it caused it a a lot of interest, not just for the portraits themselves, but for the imaginative way that they were displayed. And Bakst was involved in that. And he designed this garden court to display portrait busts. Portrait busts are really tricky, I think to display in a museum, if you have a row them on the shelf, it's not very interesting. But this was a very imaginative and delightful way to display the portrait bust. So that was actually Bakst' first success in Paris.

But the great moment came in May 1909, as I said in the Chatelet Theatre, the old Chatelet Theatre, Diaghilev took it over, he was working with, actually a Jewish colleague in Paris called Gabrielle Astro. They planned the whole thing down to the smallest detail. Here is the interior of that vast theatre. One of the things that they planned together, typical Diaghilev detail really, is that you can see

the horseshoe shape of this theatre and in the front of the horseshoe, on the first floor level, there were 52 seats. And they gave 52 complimentary tickets to the most beautiful women in Paris for the first night of the Ballets Russes taking great care to alternate blondes and brunettes in the 52 seats. So they wanted this to be a very spectacular occasion. They wanted the audience to look stunning as well as everything that was going on the stage. And of course it worked, it was a huge, huge success. And it made overnight stars of, Nijinsky, straight away became the most famous male dancer ever. And Nick on either side from us, Casavara, maybe not quite so famous, but a very great dancer and on the right, Anna Pavlova, who became the most famous female dancer ever. And there is a drawing by Larionov, of Diaghilev surrounded by all the dancers. But one of the most successful ballets in that first season in 1909 was Cleopatra, and this is Bakst's set. And this was really to display the talents of Ida Rubenstein. As I said, she wasn't a great dancer and her greatest successes were really in ballets where she was a mime rather than a dancer. And her greatest successes were in ballets where she didn't move very much and she had the most spectacular entrance devised for her in this ballet. She was brought on in a coffin, wound in bandages like a mummy. And so they lifted her out of the coffin and they unwound all the bandages and she stepped out and the whole audience absolutely gasped and this is what she looked like in Cleopatra. And here are costumes for, presumably, some rather more active dancers by Bakst for that ballet. Rather interesting, you see the one on the right hand side is supposed to be Syrian. And the one on the left hand side, you can see at the top it says Shweve. It's a Jewish woman. So 1909 was a huge success. 1910, there were the first, in 1909, all the ballets actually came from the repertoire of the Imperial Ballet and St. Petersburg, 1910 was the first season where there were new ballets that had been conceived and put together from scratch by Diaghilev. And two in particular were very important historically, was L'Oiseau de feu, "The Firebird" and "Scheherazade". Here are Bakst designs for "The Firebird". Firebird today, most celebrated of course by the score that Diaghilev commissioned from a completely unknown young composer called Igor Stravinsky and it was his first great success. It's one of the most brilliant pieces of talent divining that Diaghilev ever did. So this is Michel Fokine who did the choreography with Casavara, who danced the Firebird.

Again, the costumes of Bakst. So that was, I suppose with the cultural elite with the maybe that was the great ballet of 1910. But with the public at large, it was inevitably Scheherazade that caused the sensation. I have seen it a couple of times with reproductions of the original sets, it hasn't really lasted all that well, it's a kind of slightly tacky Orientalism that not everybody feels comfortable with. Certainly sexist, certainly racist, full of, you know, orientalist stereotypes. This is the final scene, there's an orgy and an orgy ends with a massacre and all the main characters are dead at the end of the performance. Here is Ida Rubenstein, who was the first Zobeide, she

was the first princess. When I saw it, I was astonished that the role of the princess was so athletic. I mean it was, you know it was incredibly virtuosic, but in fact what what happened was that in the first choreography that Fokine produced for this, she doesn't really move very much. She just goes into a series of posed plastics. It's Nijinsky who has to do all of of hard work and whirl around her. This is her headdress, which was made by Cartier, especially for her. I wonder who paid for that. She probably paid for that I would think, cuz that was obviously a rather expensive item. More pictures of Ida Rubenstein in Scheherazade and these fabulous, sexy, amazing costumes. Nijinsky as the the panther-like sexy slave, it was of course a huge success for him and this is his costume. Also very elaborate, I dunno who made that with the jewel for that? Then make Nijinsky dance for you cuz there's no film of him either, but you can sort of make him dance for you by going through these images quickly and other costumes. Now the very luxurious colour magazines, art magazines of the period, picked up these designs this is from a magazine called Comedia. You can, actually my copy of this, I did find at the flea market and I think it cost me 10 euros but that was a freak really. Cuz normally if you find these, they're, you're going to have to pay hundreds of euros for them. So here is the Bakst actual costumes and the great fashion houses like Packout, immediately picked up on it. And you can see dresses in the style of Bakst realised for Packout.

So everybody, all fashionable women are dressing as though for an orientalist orgy, this goes hand in hand with a revolution in fashion brought about by Paul Parey, where women were streamlined, they got rid of their corsets and their padding and their hourglass shape at 1900. And they developed a shape that was much more like that of a dancer. And these are Bakst drawings that are not actually theatrical costumes. These are drawings he made with a view to real woman in real life wearing these costumes, but again, very influenced by the Scheherazade Orientalism. Here is Bakst living the good life at the Lido in Venice. He's the one touching his hat. You can see Diaghilev on the right hand side and Nijinsky over on the right hand side and a painting by Bakst or Nijinsky on the beach at the leader. Two more very famous costumes for Nijinsky that Bakst designed. There is the, the spectre of the rose on the left hand side, and on the right hand side is the afternoon of the thorn. Both of these costumes in a highly original way would consist of a body stocking, and the Spectra of the Rose, he's meant to represent the perfume of a rose, something very ethereal. So it was a kind of pinkish body stocking that was covered with rose petals that were mauve and different shades of pink and red and as he whirled around the stage, it created a very beautiful iridescent effect. I think that the photographs of the actual performances don't really give you a sense of how magical that was for early audiences. This is the famous moment at the end where it was absolutely sensational end to the ballet. He's whirled, this Casanover's asleep in her chair after she's been to a ball and a young man has given her a rose and she falls asleep, clutching the rose, and

the centre of the rose materialises in the form of Nijinsky and he whirls around her, leaps out of the bedroom window, raises his legs and falls precipitously and the whole audience absolutely gasped. It was very exhausting, very athletic role. And you can see him slumped in the interval after that performance. You can spot Diaghilev in the background and he's being fanned to cool him down. And the very sensational "Afternoon of the Fawn", huge scandal, was carefully stage managed and manipulated the scandal by Diaghilev. This is Bakst backdrop. This was the first ballet choreographed by Nijinsky and it's usually considered to be the first modern ballet that breaks with the tradition of classical ballet that goes back to the 17th century and devises entirely new kinds of movement. And it was Bakst who took Nijinsky to the Louvre and showed him round the Louvre and showed him Greek art. So the poses and the movements in this ballet are based on one's found on Greek vases and Greek relief sculptures.

Designs by Bakst for costumes. The scandal, of course, was in the very last minute, so the ballet, it's not about, my mother used to think it was about Bambi and I'd say no, no, it's not about Bambi, It's about a half man, half goat who sexually harasses and lusts after some nymphs. So again, a very, very erotic ballet. Nijinsky, he's trying to grab hold of these nymphs trying to rape them really. But he doesn't succeed and they run off and one of them drops her scarf and he very slowly picks up the scarf and he lowers it himself onto it and he mimes masturbating into it. He performed pelvic jokes. That was the scandal. Audience went absolutely berserk at the end. It was a really, really major scandal. Front page scandal in Paris. So this is a poor Nijinsky going off South America, falling in love with a woman marrying her. Of course then he's disowned by Diaghilev who is his former lover and the new lover. Beautiful Leonid Masine.

But I'm running out of time. So I'm going to skip onwards cuz there are things that I really want to just, this is, he was very respected by younger avant garde artists. He and in turn, he encouraged Chagall, he was Chagall's teacher. Modigliani made this portrait of him. Picasso liked his work and liked him and made, that's a Picasso portrait of Bakst. But by 1914 he was, art and fashion had moved on very, very quickly. And so I said, Diaghilev has always had his finger on the pulse, he always wanted to be cutting edge, he always wanted to be the latest, latest thing. And so he turned away from, Bakst suddenly looked Belle Epoch Art Nouveau or a little old fashioned and he turned to a younger generation of artists, like Goncharova, who you see on the right hand side. So you've got the more delicate Belle Epoch exquisite faxed. And this tougher, more primitive kind of modernism of Goncharova. The change, Diaghilev was totally ruthless, when somebody had served their purpose, that was it. He moved on, he didn't give a shit. So he commissioned designs for the ballet "La boutique Fantastique", which is set in a doll shop in 1919. And these are the very lovely designs that Bakst produced, but Diaghilev sniffed at those and thought, No, no, that's pre-war, that's Belle Epoch, I

don't want that. So he actually jettisoned Bakst's designs and he commissioned sort of tougher, earthier, more modern designs by Durant, that you see here. I'm going to skip all of this I think, this is a big collaboration. That was another factor of course in the, the parting of the ways between Diaghilev and Bakst. That Bakst always remained loyal to Ida Rubenstein. And she broke away and she set up her own ballet company and Bakst worked for her and as far as Diaghilev was concerned that was an unforgivable sin. Their biggest success was with that this ballet, the Martin Sebastian exquisite musical score commissioned by Ida Rubenstein from Debussy. The text was from the vile you see on the left hand side. Who regarded himself as a great ladies man who was a great seducer, actually succeeded in seducing Ida Rubenstein. There's Debussy on the right hand side and there's a wonderful story about the pair of them going to visit her in their villa on the outskirts of Paris. She kept them waiting, as a diva would, and suddenly they heard screams and furniture being knocked over. So they rushed upstairs to see what was happening and she'd been attacked by her pet panther that you see her with in this picture. So moving on, this is another femme fatale he was very, very keen on was the Marquise of Casati, who was one of the richest women in Italy. And she gave the best parties. She had the palace on the Grand Canal, that's now the Guggenheim Museum you see at the bottom. And she put on fabulous parties, festivities that, you know, echoed the great festivities of the Renaissance, the rock period and Bakst worked for her producing costume designs for her.

He had one last throw, I suppose with Diaghilev 1921 in London. They put on an extremely lavish production of Sleeping Beauty and no expense was spared. You can see, these really are working drawings cuz you can see all the very detailed instructions, the people who are going to make the costumes. And they were made from the finest materials. They were fabulously beautiful these costumes, quite a lot of them exist still, they have a number of them in the Theatre Museum, part of the V&A in London here. Here are some of the original costumes but it was so expensive, this production that even though it was a great success and it sold out, it couldn't actually make any money and it effectively bankrupted the Ballets Russes and almost brought it to an end. And it certainly brought an end to the relationship with Diaghilev, between Diaghilev and Bakst, cause Bakst didn't get paid for his work. And he'd been promised to design a new Stravinsky opera, Mavra, this was his design and it's in the contract he was promised it, but then once again, Diaghilev betrayed him and he didn't use his designs. He used a modernist design by an artist called, Silgovag which you see here.

And two last little projects I'll mention right at the end of his life. There's this beautiful little theatre. I'd love to visit it. It's called the Evergreen Theatre that he designed in 1922 that's in Baltimore. And of course a set of murals on the theme of Sleeping Beauty painted between 1914 and 1922 that he painted for the

Rothschild family using members of the family as models for various figures in these murals and they still exist. You can see those. They're on display. They were painted for the Rothschild London house, but they're now on display at Woodston. And so he died relatively young in 1924. And even though as I said, he was sort of passe, he was, he'd outlived his fashionableness, he was still very famous. And you can see they did give him a good sendoff, almost like a state funeral.

And so I'm afraid I've overrun a little bit and I'm going to go straight into the questions.

Q & A and Comments

Boris Anfield, Yes, of course. I know quite a lot about him. He worked as an assistant and he did some original designs. But he, Boris Anfield actually I think, painted the famous curtain for the Sate Ballet, modernist ballet, Pahard, and there's a photograph of him working with Picasso.

This is Margaret, when I was young in the fifties, I was surprised at how normal armpit hair was in Europe women were ashamed of it in Britain. Yes, that is, I think probably in Latin countries, it's more acceptable, isn't it?

Is there any similarity in South? Yes, A distant, I could see some, but I don't think there's any influence there. They really come from different worlds. I've done a lecture on wood cut, the influence of Japanese wood cuts and it may come round again, we'll see what happens.

If Shiele were alive today and posted a picture of his male member on Facebook, he would be blocked. You are absolutely right. In fact, he'd probably be behind bars anyway for all the drawings he did of little girls.

Yes, that Amir Iscott, That is the world of art. Well, yeah, and Annette, I hope you get one as a present. I want one as a present. A wonderful sense, you're so right about how to place the picture on the page, a negative space. So I mean there are just wonderful, satisfying, independent works of art as well as being practical drawings for a specific purpose.

Wait, that's a complicated one. What is art and what is pornography? That is, oh, I'm not sure I want to get into that in an online lecture. But it's interesting, interesting thing.

Q: Are the Bakst costumes on permanent display?

A: The trouble that there might be something at the VNA where they have them. The thing is of course they're very light sensitive, so both the costumes and the drawings are light sensitive. So they're not likely to be on permanent display. They're more likely to come out for special exhibitions.

On the subject of Bakst design interiors, Evergreen House, mentioned, Yes, I did mention that. I'd love to see that. I've never been to Baltimore. National Gallery of Australia has a large collection of Bakst, that's true. I dunno how, of course, you know that he never went there.

The Ballet Russes never went to Australia. But of course Pavlova did. And the Australians claim to invent the Pavlova as as a tribute to Anna Pavlova. Thank you. Thank you for your nice comments.

Yes, the Bakst, as I mentioned, the Bakst murals of the Sleeping Beauty, those are at Woodston.

Thank you. That's it. And another very delightful and wonderful, inspiring artist for you on Wednesday. That's at Sonya Delaunay.