

PECULIARITIES OF PERFORMING TECHNIQUES OF THE 20TH CENTURY FEMALE CLASSICAL DANCE

PARTICULARITĂȚI TEHNICE DE INTERPRETARE A DANSULUI CLASIC FEMININ DIN SECOLUL XX

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This article is devoted to the problem of performing techniques of the 20th century female classical dance using examples of outstanding dancers such as A. Pavlova, M. Fonteyn, M. Plisetskaya, N. Pavlova, S. Guillem. The emphasis was placed on identifying and describing the specific performance technique of each dancer in general and the creation of an artistic image in particular. At the same time, an attempt was made to identify the main, dominant features of the performance technique of each of the named dancers. The second part of the article is devoted to a comparative analysis of the performing technique of female classical dance of famous dancers and, on this basis, to determine what changes occurred in the performing technique over a certain historical period. In this context, special attention is paid to various choreographic schools, which differ in many ways, including in relation to the performance technique of classical dance. In conclusion, it is stated that the development of female performance technique of classical dance continues in the 21st century.

Keywords: ballet, classical dance, performance technique, ballerina, dancers

Acest articol examinează particularitățile tehnicii de interpretare a dansului clasic feminin din secolul XX în baza activității artistice a celor mai remarcabile dansatoare-balerine de talie mondială – A. Pavlova, M. Plisețkaia, M. Fonteyn, S. Guillem și N. Pavlova. În prima parte a articolului s-a pus un accent distinct pe identificarea și descrierea tehnicilor proprii de interpretare a dansatoarelor, în general, precum și pe crearea unei imagini artistice specifice, în special. Totodată, s-a întreprins o încercare de a identifica trăsăturile dominante ale tehnicii de interpretare a fiecăreia dintre dansatoarele de balet menționate. În partea a doua a articolului se face o analiză comparată a tehnicii de interpretare a dansului clasic feminin de către dansatoare în scopul determinării modificărilor care au survenit în tehnica interpretării într-o anumită perioadă istorică. În acest context, o atenție deosebită se acordă școlilor coregrafice eterogene, care se deosebeau în foarte multe privințe, inclusiv în ceea ce privește tehnica de interpretare a dansului clasic feminin. La sfârșit se concluzionează că tehnica de interpretare a dansului clasic feminin se află într-o continuă dezvoltare și în secolul XXI.

Cuvinte-cheie: balet, dans clasic, tehnică de interpretare, balerină, dansatoare

Introduction

In order to understand the evolution and features of the performance technique of female classical dance of the 20th century, we will analyze the technique of performing classical ballet variations of famous ballerinas: Anna Pavlova, Margot Fonteyn, Maya Plisetskaya, Nadezhda Pavlova and Sylvie Guillem. This analysis will allow us to better understand the evolution and diversity of ballet performance in different historical periods and stylistic directions. All these dancers left a significant mark on the history of ballet, each of them brought their own unique style and technique to the performance. Let's look at their technique in more details.

Peculiarities of Famous Dancers' Performing Techniques

Anna Pavlova (1881-1931) was very fragile, thin, almost ethereal... At the beginning of the 20th century, the European stage was dominated by Italians with strong, compact legs and bodies, far from

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being airy, what contributed to the performance of virtuosic and physically difficult tricks. Anna Pavlova really did not succeed in many technical elements during her studies. She herself was well aware of this and worked very hard on her techniques. But later she became a living legend not thanks to her techniques [1].

Anna Pavlova's art changed the aesthetics of classical ballet, returned to it the airiness of the Romantic era, Talion's elongated lines and something that cannot be explained in words, but makes you listen with your whole being to what is happening on stage. It is no coincidence that some of Anna Pavlova's first striking roles in the theater were Nikiya in „La Bayadère” and Giselle in the ballet with the same name. These images are characterized by the duality inherent in the Romantic era - earthly life with forbidden impossible love and unreal, otherworldly, where there is love beyond the framework, class inequalities and prejudices.

Variation „The Dying Swan” by M. Fokine to the music of C. Saint-Saëns is her calling card and demonstrates a unique combination of emotional depth and expressiveness of movements. The movements, despite their technical complexity, are focused on conveying the emotional state of the character. There was strength, magic, sorcery in her dance [2].

Most researchers of Pavlova's work pointed out that she was distinguished by extraordinary grace and plasticity. Her movements were smooth and graceful, which allowed her to create the impression of lightness and airiness. Her physical flexibility allowed her to perform complex movements and keep them dynamic, while maintaining slender lines and elegance. In her performance, the jumps were less technically focused than some of her contemporaries. They were soft, with an emphasis on smoothness and continuity of movement.

Pavlova performed turns with great ease and stability. It was important that they did not look mechanical, but organically fit into the overall context of the choreographic number.

Her dance on pointes was excellent. Pavlova knew how to convey stability and lightness, which was especially noticeable in her solo numbers. She often used a technique that combined elements of classical and modern ballet. This allowed her to be more expressive and versatile in her interpretations.

Anna Pavlova was a master of conveying emotions through dance. Her performances were always rich in dramatic content, which allowed the audience to perceive her characters more deeply. She knew how to perfectly combine dance with acting, which allowed her to create memorable images and characters. Her performances were multi-layered and multifaceted.

She had an outstanding stage presence. Her presence on stage was so captivating that the audience could not take their eyes off her performance. Adapting roles to her physical and emotional characteristics, she created unique interpretations that matched her personal style. Her approaches and performances had a significant impact on the development of ballet, especially in the context of combining technique and emotional expressiveness. Anna Pavlova was distinguished by her elegance and grace, which made her performance especially touching and memorable [2].

Margot Fonteyn (1919-1991). Her career is closely associated with the name of Ninette de Valois. It was under her leadership that she made the main steps in her career, starting in the Vic-Wells Ballet Company, which in 1946 became the Royal Ballet of the Covent Garden Theatre. 1939 was a turning point in her career: gradually she outgrew the small comic roles with which she began her path in ballet, and began to dance leading classical parts [3]. It was after her premiere in *Swan Lake* that her great ballet fame began: critics saw that the British ballerina could also dance superbly the leading parts in Russian classical ballets: before that, it was believed that Russian classics were only available for Russians to perform.

Let's consider her performance techniques in more details. Scholars of Fonteyn's work believed that she possessed exceptional strength and flexibility, which allowed her to perform the most complex elements of ballet techniques with ease and grace. Her ability to combine strength and fluidity of movement was one of her distinctive features.

Her ability to immerse herself in the character and convey emotions through movement was outstanding. Fonteyn could turn every movement into an expressive statement, which made her interpretations especially memorable. Another of her distinctive features was the arabesque technique, where she could maintain perfect balance and elegance in this position, while maintaining her airiness and grace.

Fonteyn was known for her magnificent jumps, which combined both lightness and precision. Her jumping ability and ability to control her flight made her performances especially spectacular. Her movements were filled with plasticity and dynamics, what gave her performance a special expressiveness. She knew how to move from rapid and energetic movements to smooth and soft transitions. Fonteyn had incredible control over her body and technique, what allowed her to perform even the most complex steps with great precision and without visible strain. And yet the most phenomenal thing about her dance was the impression she made on the audience, the emotions she evoked in them. Her dance was unforgettable. It was amazingly harmonious: Fonteyn managed to combine a fairly high technical preparation and phenomenal flexibility with acting, the ability to convey the emotional state of the character, and simply unquenchable charm, she was the true „soul of the dance”. In addition, her dance was distinguished by the swiftness of rotations and tilts, and sometimes turns of the head, soft, almost speaking hands and amazing completeness of each pose. This, apparently, is the secret of universal love and veneration of her as a ballerina. And it is a pity that the recordings give us only a distant idea of the effect she made on the audience [4].

Maya Plisetskaya (1925-1998). From her first steps on stage, the individuality of her performing manner as a ballerina was evident - extraordinary expressiveness, passion, dynamics of dance. Plisetskaya's repertoire was unusually wide, but she found special colors for each role, be it a large or small role or a concert number - a choreographic miniature.

Nature awarded Plisetskaya with unique data: a long stride, a high jump, magnificent rotation, a powerful artistic temperament and an extraordinary sensitivity to music. Plisetskaya's performing manner is marked by a strong acting presentation, dynamics of movements, virtuosity, and a unique plastic expressiveness of the hands. In the part of classical heritage, the ballerina made changes in accordance with her own taste: for example, in the part of Odette, drooping hands, lowered elbows, sharp fixation of poses, and a thrown back head appeared. In Fokine's miniature „The Dying Swan”, Plisetskaya began to appear on stage with her back to the audience, with her arms writhing like snakes. Many of the innovations she discovered took root and became established on the ballet stage.

The brilliantly performed role of Kitri became a discovery in the performing arts. The classical dancer amazingly subtly combined classical dance with character dance, academic rigor with the inexhaustible energy and expressiveness of Spanish dances. Plisetskaya created her own style of performing this role, and since then it has become a generally accepted canon. This can be traced by the examples of performance of this part by other, famous ballerinas of subsequent generations [5].

Let's try to analyze her technique in more details. The first thing I would like to draw attention to is the jumps. Plisetskaya was known for her powerful and technically perfect jumps. She had exceptional strength and control, which allowed her to perform jumps with great height and dynamism. Her jumps demonstrated not only height, but also majestic lightness.

In her performance, the acrobatic elements were synchronized with classical techniques, which ensured both technical perfection and expressiveness. Plisetskaya had an outstanding ability to perform complex turns with perfect control and stability. She performed fouettés, demonstrating perfect coordination and endurance.

The ability to maintain balance in complex poses and transitions was one of her strengths. Plisetskaya demonstrated stability and confidence, what gave her performance a special elegance.

Plisetskaya paid great attention to footwork, paying attention to both precision and expressiveness of movements. Her footwork was distinguished by high purity and precision. Plisetskaya's pointe

techniques were not only technically perfect, but also refined. Her feet were often used to create softness and lightness in movement. Plisetskaya had outstanding flexibility, which allowed her to perform complex and beautiful lines, while maintaining aesthetics and technical precision. Flexibility was an important part of her performance, especially in elements such as partner and solo variations, which required a high degree of stretching.

Many authors note that Maya Plisetskaya was a master of conveying deep emotions through dance. [5] Her performance always had a significant dramatic component, which made her performances rich and multi-layered. Her ability to adapt roles to her own feelings and experiences made her performance especially lively and individual. She had outstanding stage charisma, what allowed her to be the center of attention on stage. Her powerful stage presence enhanced her expressiveness and emotional power. All this made her one of the most outstanding figures in the history of modern ballet. Her works continue to inspire and influence the development of ballet art for a long time [6].

Nadezhda Pavlova (1956) at the age of 15 became laureate of the first prize of the All-Union Competition of Ballet Masters and Ballet Dancers, and a year later won her legendary Grand Prix. Pavlova's famous *grand battement*, this luxurious step of extraordinary lightness and beauty, literally shocked the audience and the jury of the ballet competition in 1973. It can be said that the technique of the young ballerina became a step into a new dimension of classical dance. It was from that time that classical ballet strived for a greater scope in the step and big jumps. Her participation in the Bolshoi Theater tour on the American continent in 1973 forced ballet critics to recognize her as „the first representative of a new, as yet unformed and in no way qualified style, which would later be called „the style of the Bolshoi Theater of the 70s.” [7] Pavlova's „trademark” is her huge, light, seemingly unreal step. Breaking with academic traditions and at the same time declaring a new style, it resembled a fairy-tale-magic wave, like a wave of a sleeve or a blow to the palms. Pavlova's appearance becomes not only a ballet but also a social phenomenon, attracting the attention of people far from ballet.

Pavlova has outstanding flexibility, what allows her to perform complex and aesthetic lines. Her flexibility is especially noticeable in arabesques and other positions, where she achieves an impressive range of motion. Stretching is a key element of her performance. It allows Pavlova to achieve visually captivating positions and maintain them with grace and ease.

In her work, Rita Kirilova writes that Nadezhda demonstrates a high technique of jumps, which are characterized by both power and lightness. She performs jumps with excellent control and style, which gives her movement an airiness and airiness. Pavlova shows high skill in performing turns, such as fouettés and pirouettes. She has excellent control and stability, which allows her to perform complex sequences of turns with ease and precision. The aplomb in her performance is always stable and confident. She is able to maintain balance in complex positions, what emphasizes her technical maturity and confidence [8].

She pays great attention to the footwork technique. Her movements are always clear and harmonious, what makes her performance expressive and aesthetic. Pavlova's pointe work is distinguished by both technical perfection and aesthetic appeal. Her feet are used to create softness and lightness, which emphasize her mastery.

Her performance captivated with sincerity and was technically perfect at the same time. Elongated lines, a large, light step, free amplitude of movements - everything that the young ballerina possessed has become a standard for dancers of the 21st century today. Today, it is almost impossible to imagine the scale of this recognition and the audience's participation in her fate.

It should be noted that by this time, artists worthy of attention also appeared on the Moldovan ballet stage. Let's dwell on **Valentina Shchepachova**, Honored Artist of the Moldavian SSR. The ballerina, endowed with beautiful body lines, a large, light step, jump and natural rotation, led the entire repertoire of the Moldavian Ballet Theater, which was already not small at that time.

Sylvie Guillem (1965) became the youngest prima ballerina in the Paris Opera Ballet. She was the first to do the „six o'clock”, that is, to lift the leg 180 degrees, which brought a gymnastic element to ballet. It seems that her arabesques are stopped not by the obvious physical limits of the human body, but by the need to make the movement in time to the music. It often happens that the stretched ballerinas jump poorly, since the overstretched muscles do not allow them to push off the floor properly. But this is not the case with Sylvie: her jumps in „Don Quixote”, for example, are recorded on film, and these are outstanding jumps. Turning is also very easy for Guillem. She did not treat all her 32 fouettés as something especially important. And in addition to her impeccable technique, there are also her fantastic lines - no matter what pose she takes, it will be a work of art, notes the publication „No Fixed Points” [9].

Guillem has outstanding flexibility, which allows her to perform complex and impressive lines. This flexibility is especially evident in her wide and graceful positions, such as arabesques and turns. The stretching in her performance allows her to achieve not only physical heights, but also aesthetic perfection, creating harmonious and elegant lines.

She is known for her light but powerful jumps, which demonstrate both high techniques and expressiveness. She has the ability to perform jumps with grace and airiness, what gives her performance a special lightness. Acrobatic elements in her performance are often integrated with classical techniques, which make her dance visually exciting and innovative.

Guillem demonstrates exceptional mastery in performing turns. She has outstanding control and stability, which allows her to perform complex series of fouettés and other turns with great precision. Her balance is always stable and confident. She is able to maintain balance in difficult positions and transitions, which makes her performance especially elegant.

Much attention is paid to the footwork technique, which makes her movements especially expressive and precise. Her lines and foot positions are always clear and harmonious. Her work on pointe is distinguished by both technical perfection and aesthetic appeal. Guillem demonstrates softness and ease in movement, what emphasizes her ability to control even the most difficult positions.

She has outstanding stage charisma, which attracts the attention of the audience. Her presence on stage is always bright and memorable, what enhances her expressiveness. She skillfully combines technique with acting, creating multi-layered images. This is especially evident in her performance of dramatic roles.

Having set new standards for physical fitness, she, oddly enough, still remained unattainable for many decades. Everything came together here: her appearance, her physical attributes, and, most importantly, her gymnastic beginnings in her dance career, which forever changed the world's understanding of preparation for ballet training. Sylvie Guillem is a ballerina who changed the aesthetic perception of a ballerina as such. She became the standard for a classical dancer in the 21st century, both in appearance and in the quality of her performance [10]. She continues to exert a significant influence on the art of ballet, inspiring a new generation of performers with her unique style and high level of skill.

Certain Comparative Characteristics of Performing Techniques of Female Classical Dance

Having examined in detail the female techniques of five outstanding ballerinas of the 20th century, one can notice that at first glance the technical abilities and capabilities were quite high for all the artists. But each was magnificent in her time. And if we compare their performing art, without diminishing their merits and achievements, we can note the work of hands in the dance of Anna Pavlova and Maya Plisetskaya, more unrestricted, free, not very precisely fixing positions. Through their hands, the ballerinas conveyed their emotions in dance, their understanding of the image, due to their personal ballerina character. Fonteyn, judging by the few video recordings that can be found, is more restrained in her hands, more precise poetry in her dance, more verified positions. Well, Nadezhda Pavlova and

Sylvie Guillem, who set new trends in the ballet of the 21st century, worked extremely clearly, paying attention to the accuracy of executing the positions of hands, body and head. Speaking about the body, we would like to note the degree of tension in the back, shoulder blades, which is clearly visible and differs in the dance of each of the five ballerinas we are describing. In the first half of the 20th century, the ballerina's body was freer, during simple movements on the stage or in some intermediate poses, the back was given a barely noticeable rest. Perhaps due to this, the dance as a whole looked more natural and alive. Further changes in the aesthetics of perceiving the performance arts made their own adjustments to the work of the ballerina's body and not only. By the end of the 20th century, the back is kept as tense as possible, not loosening even when bending the body forward, which was previously allowed and not much importance was attached to it. Throughout the performance and being on stage, performing even simple steps or static poses, the ballerina must keep the back muscles as taut as possibly, otherwise this is already considered a mistake or a shortcoming of the dancer. And for this, they can reproach her for unprofessionalism and technical unpreparedness. It is this control over the body that makes it possible to perform even more complex dance elements, for example, to increase the number of turns in rotations, to complicate supports in duet and other dances. The execution of jumps looks more airy and unearthly, etc. In other words, this allows improving the performing technique of a ballet dancer.

Similar changes can be noted in the work of the ballerina's legs throughout the 20th century. The concept of turnout of the legs and feet evolved along with turnout itself. If at the beginning of the century, the turnout of legs in the groin depended on the natural data of the ballerina and on subsequent work on it, then at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, thanks to special gymnastic training and the development of the turnout before the start of classical ballet training, openness and abduction of the knee to shoulder level became the norm. This affected not only the aesthetic appearance of the performed elements such as arabesques, attitudes, pirouettes, but also the execution of jumps began to look different.

It is also possible to separately analyze the feet work of a 20th century ballerina. A ballet foot has always been considered something special. Put into a beautiful ballet shoe, it had to fascinate the viewer, especially when standing on the toes. After all, it was at this moment that magic happened and the ballerina seemed to fly above the stage and the viewer was always worried about the question: How is this possible? The school of classical dance paid and continues to do so quite a lot of attention to the correct work of the feet. Its correct tension, a special bend, called the „bird”, characteristic only of classical dance, timely weakening and, of course, its special location in positions - all this required a lot of work all the time that classical dance has existed. As the ballet vocabulary expanded, toes technique developed quite rapidly. Unfortunately, those videos of the early 20th century that are now available to us do not paint a complete picture of the level of mastery of toe technique of those years ballerinas. It can be assumed that rotations, for example, were performed mainly on two legs, long and steadily on the toes, and elements on one leg were not performed. But literally ten years later, the dance on the toes looked completely different almost the same as we see it now in the 21st century. If we talk about maintaining the purity of positions, then of course by the end of the 20th century much more attention was paid to this. At the beginning of the century, and a little later, a certain conventionality is read in the positions of the legs. Though, this could depend on each ballerina separately. With the arrival of Sylvie Guillem in ballet, with her gymnastic past and luxurious natural data, high insteps became fashionable. Insteps in ballet have always been valued, but there was an opinion that such feet with huge insteps are not suitable or problematic for working on the toes. And yet, the development of instep, its development was firmly entrenched in the pre-educational preparation of the feet by the end of the 20th century.

The most obvious change in the ballerina's performing art during the 20th century can be considered the height of leg lift above 90°, that is, the presence of a step. Here, even the most ignorant specta-

tor in the art of ballet will notice the difference. For a very long time, it was considered indecent to lift the legs too high. The main thing in the art of classical dance has always been grace, in women's dance - femininity and lightness. It was important to lift the leg gracefully, in accordance with the rules of performance. That is why we do not see legs higher than 120° in Anna Pavlova, Maya Plisetskaya and Margot Fonteyn. But gradually, the natural data of ballerinas evolved, and teachers did not restrain the potential of their students, and the appearance of Nadezhda Pavlova on stage with a luxurious natural step caused admiration among the audience. Well, the appearance of Guillem with her famous "six o'clock", i.e., a leg raised to 180°, made such a leg height the norm by the end of the 20th century.

Conclusion

Thus, having considered all the main aspects of female classical dance, their evolution throughout the 20th century, we can come to the conclusion that classical ballet has gained a lot, but also lost something. Looking through the eyes of the 21st century, where ballerinas look impeccable, perform technical difficulties at the highest professional level, according to the standards of the 21st century, because evolution continues. The ease, artistry - all this is present, but something elusive, indescribable, truly touching the soul has disappeared.

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