Searching for Nijinsky's *Sacre*

MILLICENT HODSON

When Seiji Ozawa recently conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra in *Le Sacre du Printemps* (Carnegie Hall, December 13, 1979), the audience saw something of the legendary premiere of 1913. Ozawa looked like a Nijinsky dancer—knees bent, toes turned in, his body leaning into the ostinati that shape the music, his arms swinging out from the core of the rhythm until they seemed to touch the tympani. He was conducting, of course, not dancing; but for some members of the audience his movements suddenly evoked photographs, sketches, and written accounts that survive from the original production.

Nijinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* is a mystery. The few remaining documents connected with the ballet are considered relics of a lost masterpiece. *Le Sacre* is celebrated as the harbinger of modern dance, the work that broke the ground of twentieth-century choreography. The ballet released tremendous energy; then it disappeared. Five performances at the Champs-Elysées in Paris beginning May 29, 1913, three at the Drury Lane in London beginning July 11 in the same year, and that was all. For decades dancers and scholars have assumed that reconstruction of the ballet was impossible. A year ago I realized that the last possible moment to recover it had come. Participants from the original production still survive. While crucial documents may surface in the future, nothing can bring back the experience of the artists who lived the event.

Le Sacre climaxed the pre-war period of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. It was an innovation the company itself could hardly bear. Stravinsky's polyrhythmic music with constant time changes and dissonant chords was difficult enough. But Nijinsky's choreography caused mutiny in the corps. The dancers did not abandon their ballet technique for Nijinsky's "primitive" steps without a struggle. Such verbal descriptions of the dance as do exist reveal in Nijinsky a remarkable sense of design. He seems to have liberated the energy inherent in rhythm, color, and line. Imagine, for example, the end of Part I—women in scarlet dresses, their dark braids flying, "run wildly round the stage in a great circle," racing "to the notes of the main theme."[1] Inside and against their fiery circle run men in white robes "ceaselessly splitting up into tiny groups," their smaller circles swinging "in threefold counterpoint."[2] "The people dance passionately on the earth," the libretto says, "sanctifying it and becoming one with it."[3] To see these swirling circles of red and white against the vibrant green décor, and the dancers pulling at the polyrhythms to release their force—an audience today would *still* be astonished.

The premiere of the ballet was a *succès de scandale*. Parisians were incited to riot by the strange tension of the dancing and the stark contrasts of the décor and music. Stravinsky's score came as a shock, and even still it has power to excite, amaze, and break old habits of hearing. *Le Sacre du Printemps* brought people to their feet, hissing or hushing, fighting for or against the event on the stage. One elegant lady, armed with a hat pin, went straight for the throat of Jean Cocteau,

avant-garde poet and partisan, soon to be a collaborator with the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev, so the story goes, pleaded for order and got pelted with fruit. Nijinsky backstage kept shouting counts in Russian while Pierre Monteaux—"nerveless as a crocodile" according to Stravinsky—never faltered for an instant as he led the musicians through the melée.[4]

The *Sacre* premiere literally became a legend overnight. Succeeding performances in Paris and London were relatively calm so that talk of the first night became part of the experience of the ballet itself. In an interview after the London premiere, Nijinsky was quoted as thanking the English public for its serious interest. The immediate mythologizing of his ballet did not seem to affect the choreographer, except that the Paris premiere became, even for him, the criterion of response:

> There was no ridicule of the ballet on Friday and there was great applause. People who say that the piece was hissed cannot know what real hissing is. But the newspapers seem to have been much less sympathetic than the audience. I am accused of a "crime against grace," among other things.[5]

Le Sacre du Printemps was also a mystery in the ritual sense. It originated in a dream of Stravinsky's about an ancient Slavic rite.[6] He saw a young woman, encircled by wise old men, dancing herself to death to awaken the spring. Stravinsky recounted the dream to Nicholas Roerich, a painter and archeologist who had traveled throughout Russia collecting artifacts, deciphering signs, seeking out the ancestral gods. Roerich made a number of expeditions with his friend Princess Tenisheva whose estate, Talashkino, became the center of the Slavic arts movement in the first decade of the century.[7] Stravinsky and Roerich met there in 1911 to conceive the ballet based on his dream. They created a scenario with a ritual structure. It opens with an old witch who divines the action of the ballet, predicting its games and ceremonies. An elderly sage consecrates these actions with a solemn kiss of the earth. During the mystic dances of the young women, one among them falls into trance. A game of fate confirms her as the Chosen Virgin. In a convulsive dance of possession she sacrifices herself to the god of spring, Yarilo, ancient spirit of light and creativity.[8]

Nicholas Roerich is remembered as the designer of the brilliantly colored costumes and sets of *Le Sacre*. But his more fundamental role was as the archivist, scenarist, and spiritual advisor of the project. Stravinsky acknowledged his debt to Roerich by dedicating the score to him. Recent conversations with Nijinsky's relatives have clarified Roerich's profound influence on the choreographer.[9] What Nijinsky absorbed from Roerich must be explored if the spirit of the original *Sacre* is to be preserved. In a public address twenty years later, Roerich suggested that the audience of the ballet premiere had undergone a ritual experience:

> I remember how during the first performance in Paris, in 1913, the entire audience whistled and roared so that nothing could even be heard. Who knows, perhaps at this very moment they were enjoying themselves with the same emotions of primitive people. But this savage primitiveness had nothing in common with the refined primitiveness of our ancestors, for whom rhythm . . . symbol, and refinement of gesture were great and sacred concepts.[10]

The statement indicates something of his respect for archaic culture and the authenticity he must have urged upon his collaborators. Whether Roerich discussed ritual sources of dance with Nijinsky—and whether these ideas were integrated into the choreography—may never be known. But it is possible to know what Roerich studied in the period prior to his work on *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Research into his knowledge of Slavic ritual may disclose ground patterns, gestures, and even steps that ultimately turn up in Nijinsky's dance.

The year after Nijinsky's *Sacre* performances Europe was at war; civilization was reduced to its raw elements. Young men who had defended the ballet at the Champs-Elysées—young men throughout Europe—

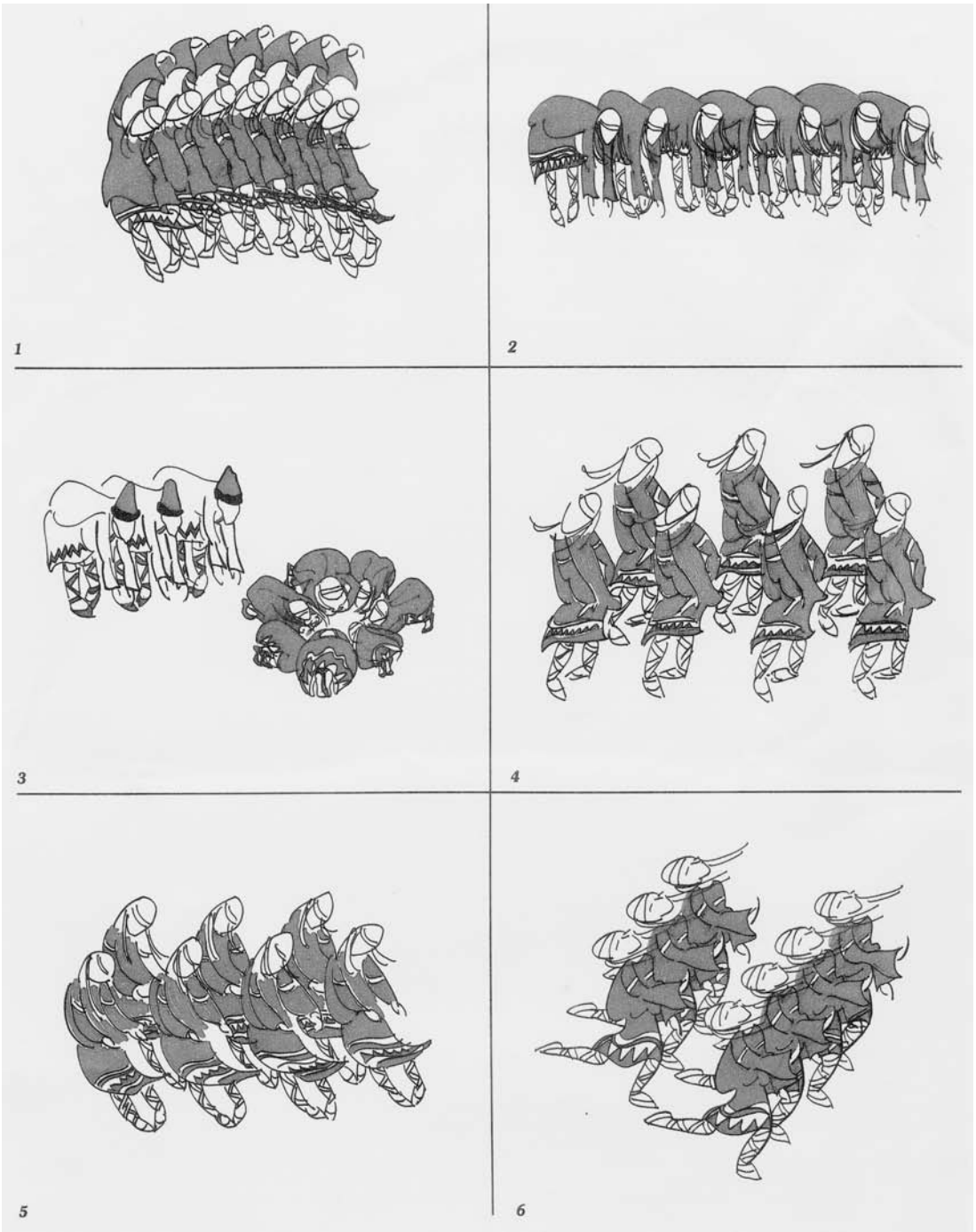
lay dead in the trenches. Nijinsky's last public appearance (in St. Moritz in 1919) would be an elegy which he improvised for them.[11] During the war, the dancer and his recent bride, the Hungarian Romola de Pulsky, were interned as prisoners of war in Budapest. On a journey to Russia they had stopped in Budapest to visit Romola's family; the war broke out and they were detained. Isolated from the theater and a company of dancers, Nijinsky experimented with his choreography. He began developing a system of movement notation which, through a curious twist of fate, brought about his release from Hungary. Officials grew suspicious of his work, thinking that the symbols on his movement charts were code for military secrets. After days of investigation, however, they recognized the truth and the chief of police, impressed by the genius of Nijinsky's system, befriended him. By the fall of 1915 this man arranged to get Nijinsky and his wife transferred out of Budapest, with a stopover in Vienna which served as an escape route. From there, with the intervention of the Austrian emperor, the king of Spain, and eventually the Pope, the Nijinskys left for New York to lead the first American tour (1916) of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.[12]

After the war Diaghilev decided to revive *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Nijinsky's marriage to Romola in the meantime led to a personal and finally a professional split with Diaghilev. What had probably been a nervous breakdown in 1914 evolved into a chronic condition diagnosed by 1919 as schizophrenia. Within seven years of its creation in 1913, Nijinsky's choreography for *Le Sacre* was given up for lost. No one seemed to remember the steps, although members of the original cast were still performing with the Ballets Russes. Perhaps the initial difficulty of learning the dance made them want to forget it; they had resisted Nijinsky and his assistant, Marie Rambert, every step of the way. So for the 1920 season Diaghilev commissioned a new version of the choreography from Nijinsky's successor, Leonide Massine (premiered at Champs-Elysées, December 15). Thus began a new controversy—the question of "les deux Sacres," the two *Sacres*. The early rejection by the press had put Nijinsky's version out of the repertoire. A second version by the Ballets Russes doomed the first to oblivion. Stravinsky's shifting allegiances between the two versions is a fascinating story in itself, chronicled by Robert Craft in his review of Lincoln Kirstein's *Nijinsky Dancing*.[13] Kirstein championed Nijinsky as choreographer, and Craft, taking up the challenge, called for a reconstruction of *Le Sacre*, based on promptbook scores by Stravinsky and Rambert.

From my work thus far I am convinced that the task of reconstruction can and must be accomplished. Book after book retells the fabulous tale of the Paris premiere, proclaiming Nijinsky's *Sacre* the seminal work of the century. If it really is the parent of contemporary dance, then the relics must not only be preserved but seen in the theatrical context to which they belong. The choreography is still a mystery, to be solved like an intricate puzzle, piece by piece. This challenge has led me on many adventures. The results of my search I am organizing into a book of drawings which transpose all movement clues into figures and groups (see figure 3). The book collates information from interviews, scores, and newly discovered as well as familiar verbal and visual sources. Ultimately I hope to use it as a production handbook, working with dancers to restage the ballet. With a certain amount of the reconstruction in rough draft, I went last spring to the Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation. The director, Parmenia Migel Ekstrom, encouraged my efforts and provided letters of reference for the first of my adventures searching for Nijinsky's *Sacre*.

I. Marie Rambert: The Revelation of Nijinsky's Postures (London, April 1979)

My journey to London to see Rambert was a return to the source. London is the city where the early rehearsals of the ballet took place. The only surviving interviews with Nijinsky about *Le Sacre* are from the English press during that time and after the London premiere. Marie Rambert, an expert on Dalcroze Eurythmics, had been hired by Diaghilev to help Nijinsky



3. Reconstruction drawings by Millicent Hodson of the following dances from *Le Sacre du Printemps:* transition from "Ritual of Abduction" to "Spring Rounds," "Spring Rounds," "Spring Rounds," "Games of the Rival Tribes," "Dance of the Earth," "Dance of the Earth." Based on information from the Valentine Gross materials (Theatre Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum), *The Rite of Spring Sketches, 1911–1913* (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1969), and a synthesis of accounts from the time of the Paris premiere. Copyright © Millicent Hodson.

break down the complicated counts of the score as they set the work on the dancers. A performer as well in the original production, Rambert survived an ordeal unprecedented in ballet history. Rambert was midwife to the production, Nijinsky's friend, confidante, and his first line of defense against the infuriated ballet-trained corps. Rambert, of course, went on to create her own company and to shape, quite literally, the future of ballet in Britain. A dancer influenced by Isadora Duncan, she persevered in her loyalty to Nijinsky's *Sacre,* honoring it still as her somewhat contradictory initiation into the ballet world and praising it always as the best of many versions of the dance.

During the interview, Rambert and I saw together a film of the Massine version which I had brought with me to refresh her memory and to stimulate thoughts about the differences in "les deux Sacres." While watching the film, which was silent, she shook her head and stood up. With the delicate grandeur of her ninety years, she began to demonstrate Nijinsky's grounded posture, *singing* Stravinsky for bars on end—an extraordinary accomplishment in itself. More emphatically than indicated in her biography *Quicksilver*,[14] Rambert stressed to me the discipline of the distinctive posture in Nijinsky's *Sacre*:

> The foundation of the choreography was the turned-in position. And bent. A questioning. And fists—not strong, not showing strength, just not opened yet. . . . That's what he called "kuluchiki." It is a diminutive—fistikins. That was one of the poses, and you had to *dance* in that pose. When you had to jump with the feet like this [demonstrating], turning in, the position was difficult to keep, and it came from terribly difficult rhythms which you had to remember. It was a torture. Why do you make me remember it all?

She continued, nonetheless, showing how this focus on posture characterized Nijinsky as a choreographer:

> You see, Nijinsky tied one *hand and foot* by giving a very difficult basic position for a ballet . . . for *Faune* . . . the body was like this. [She moved in the hieratic, two-dimensional posture of the dance.] You had to learn to walk with your feet straight, the body sideways and the head turned. The arms had to move from that position. For *Sacre* we had a hundred rehearsals, not less. And for *Faune*, each time we did it we had to have extra rehearsals.[15]

Watching Rambert I began to understand—the *Sacre* posture concentrated energy earthward, literally gathering force from its low center of gravity as do postures in Kung Fu and other martial arts. The experience of changing mood through posture is a classic technique in acting, and altering consciousness through posture is a yogic concept. Nijinsky's posture for *Le Sacre,* which had so agonized the dancers, was no mere stylization but a means of channeling physical and psychic energy. This revelation put into another dimension what I knew of his method of composing—postural meditations, like Isadora Duncan's standing positions, as a way to generate movement.

Rambert suggested that the integrity of design in Nijinsky's choreography derived from body posture, extending first through the arm, hand, and head gestures, and then through the groupings of dancers and patterns in space. While Rambert described his choreography in terms of form, Nijinsky described it, during early rehearsal, in terms of energy forces:

> *Le Sacre* . . . will prove a strangely interesting work. It is really the soul of nature expressed by movement to music. It is really the life of the stones and the trees. There are no human beings in it. It will be danced only by the corps de ballet, for it is a thing of concrete masses, not of individual effects.[16]

In addition to the scores that Rambert and Stravinsky marked with entrance cues and actions, plus the verified existence of other marked scores, there are rumored to be notations of the dance in Nijinsky's own system.[17] A conversation on this subject, just prior to

Nijinsky's final appearance in 1919, has been recorded by Maurice Sondoz:

> What I want to do is write down the dance, gesture by gesture. I have invented symbols to represent the dancers. The note on the stave represents their head, their gestures are indicated by stylized attitudes. I have transcribed the *Sacre* and intend to transcribe all of the. . . . And in ten, twenty, a hundred years, they will be able to dance these ballets as they dance them today.[18]

Nijinsky made a movement score for his *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* (Théâtre du Châtelet, May 29, 1912), which he notated in Budapest from August to September 1915, and dedicated to his wife. Madame Nijinsky subsequently gave it to the Manuscript Division of the British Museum, where it is available for study. A movement score for *Le Sacre* may one day emerge, but apart from that miracle, it is possible that letters or journals from lesser-known members of the Ballets Russes may contain clues to the choreography. Rambert recalled that in the corps "everybody was going about with a little notebook trying to learn the timing." The difficulty of the dance makes it all the more likely that participants kept notes for themselves, complained to their families, or, one hopes, confided to someone how beautiful it was.

II. Le Sacre Hieroglyphs: Unpublished Sketches by Valentine Gross (London, April 1979)

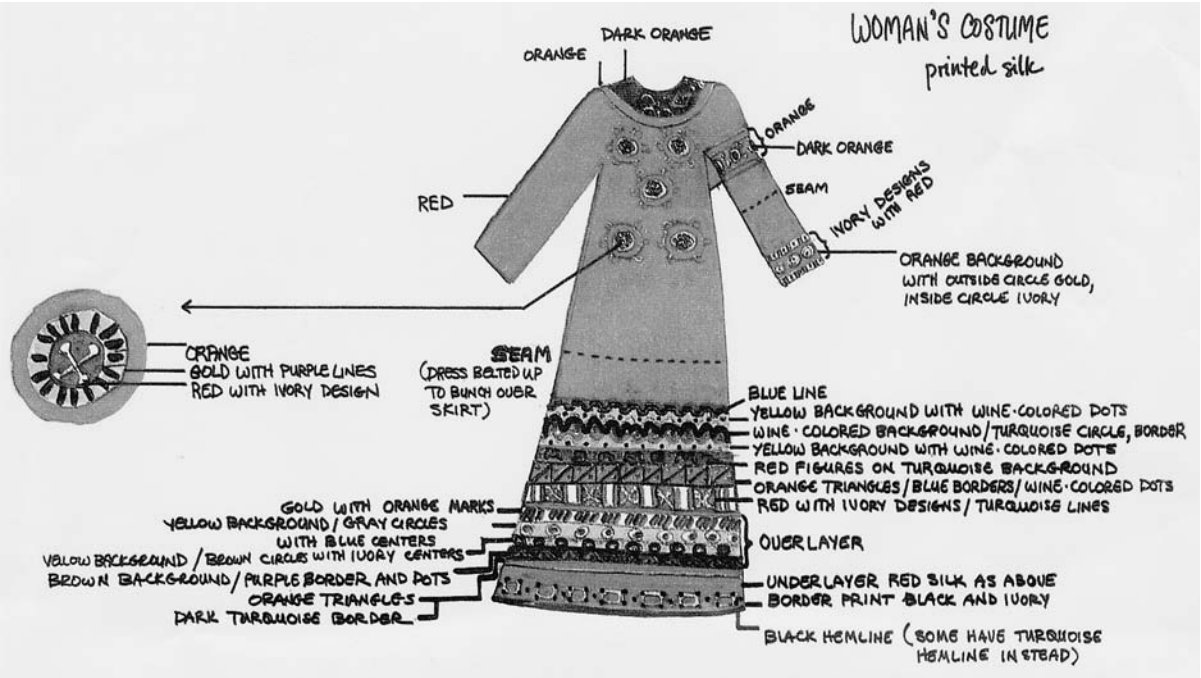
While in London my adventures continued as I tried to locate documents reputedly housed in the London Theatre Museum. After repeated proof that no such place existed, I prevailed again upon Rambert's assistant, John Webley, who had already set up the interview, rewired plugs for the occasion, and posed questions to Rambert that did not occur to me. Through Webley's hunches I found myself in the closed Theatre Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum. "Sometime in the '80s," I was assured by Jennifer Aylmer, the assistant curator, "a Theatre Museum *will* open at Covent Garden." The primary object of my search was a notebook of crayon sketches made by the French artist Valentine Gross during the last night (June 3, 1913) of *Le Sacre* in Paris.[19] More than sketches, they are really notations and provide a kind of hieroglyphic record of various sections of the dance. Quick, abbreviated renderings of movement, they have an internal consistency that makes it possible to read from one to the next.[20] According to Rambert, they are accurate in their groupings, direction, and line. The hieroglyphs gave me raw material for drawing major blocks of choreography. (See figure 4.)

As I traced the hieroglyphs, Jennifer Aylmer appeared at the door, half-hidden by an enormous bundle of garments. "The costumes," she announced, hanging them around the room. I stood up in amazement, realizing that, even though I knew better, I had always thought of *Le Sacre* in the black-and-white of photographs from a 1913 issue of *Comoedia*. Hundreds of colors were painted on the women's silk dresses and the men's white flannel robes—magenta, ochre, turquoise, golds, and greens. The staff kept piling up treasures, bringing them up from the basement, or down from the mezzanine; clipping files, letters, the journal of Valentine Gross, her pastels and pencil drawings. (See figures 4 and 5.) Jennifer Aylmer was gracious to open the closed doors of a collection in storage, but she went beyond the call of both duty and courtesy with her help and interest. The Victoria and Albert treasures multiplied the possibilities of my reconstruction work.

III. Choreographics: Work-in-Progress (New York, Summer 1979)

Back in New York I synthesized some of the new information into the first set of *Sacre* drawings for the handbook. Dame Marie Rambert—was it impossible to thank her for the interview, to acknowledge her revelation?—had agreed to look over my drawings when they were ready, to correct them. "Oh yes, yes," she

4. "Augurs of Spring—Dance of the Maidens." (1) An example of the hieroglyphic sketches Valentine Gross made while watching *Le Sacre* in 1913; (2) and (3) more finished drawings of the same movements, which is the first entrance of the maidens in the ballet; (4) a published version of the drawing identifying it with the music cue for the entrance—two measures before 27. A series of such drawings with music cues appeared in *Montjoie!* in May 1913. The drawing is reprinted in *Rannie Balety Stravinskogo/Stravinsky's Early Ballets*, by I. Ya. Vershinina (Moscow, 1967), 135.



5. Sketch of one of Roerich's costumes for the original production, copied by Millicent Hodson, Theatre Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum. Copyright © Millicent Hodson.

exclaimed, balancing a plié with the back of a chair, "I will correct." At an exhibit entitled "Choreographics" I showed the *Sacre* series among other of my dance drawings in the loft of the Taller Latino-americano. From the exhibit and a lecture the same month at the College of New Rochelle came a number of leads, among them the names of musicians from the Paris premiere.

IV. The Unexpected (New York, Summer and Fall, 1979)

On a summer Sunday I was walking peacefully in the theater district when a *Variety* headline stopped me short:

> LONDON SOTHEBY TO AUCTION
> UNABRIDGED NIJINSKY DIARY;
> PROMO ANGLES FOR TWO PICS

"The unabridged diary," I raced through the text, "will go to the highest bidder . . . remarkable document, written in Russian. . . . Included are 15 pages of dance notation with 10 pages of diagrams."[21] When Colin Franklin, a book collector from Oxfordshire, bought the *Diary*, he soon received a letter from the Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation inquiring about future publication of the manuscript and describing the *Sacre* reconstruction project. By return mail, in a generous and unforgettable gesture, Mr. Franklin sent xerographed copies of excerpts from the *Diary*. Given the mention in the material of all the other Nijinsky ballets, *Le Sacre du Printemps* was conspicuous by its absence, suggesting that if documentation does exist, it must be in a notebook of its own. In the introduction to the excerpts sent by Mr. Franklin there is reference to another notebook, one that was not included in the three Romola Nijinsky gave to her literary agents shortly before her death in 1978:

> The fourth, discovered in 1934, was filled with (Nijinsky's) notes toward a system of choreography;

it is said to exist in an institution but nobody quite knows its whereabouts.[22]

Beyond this notebook, the *Diary*, and the score of *Faune*, all of which were done in the period after the marriage, it is intriguing to remember Cocteau's description of Nijinsky at work during his residence with Diaghilev: "At the Hotel Crillon . . . he would put on a bath wrap, pull the hood over his head and make notes for his choreographies."[23] If such notes as these were left with Diaghilev during the 1913 South American tour that became Nijinsky's ill-fated honeymoon, they may yet turn up, perhaps in Paris.

V. Louis Speyer: *Le Sacre* from the Orchestra (Boston, November 1979)

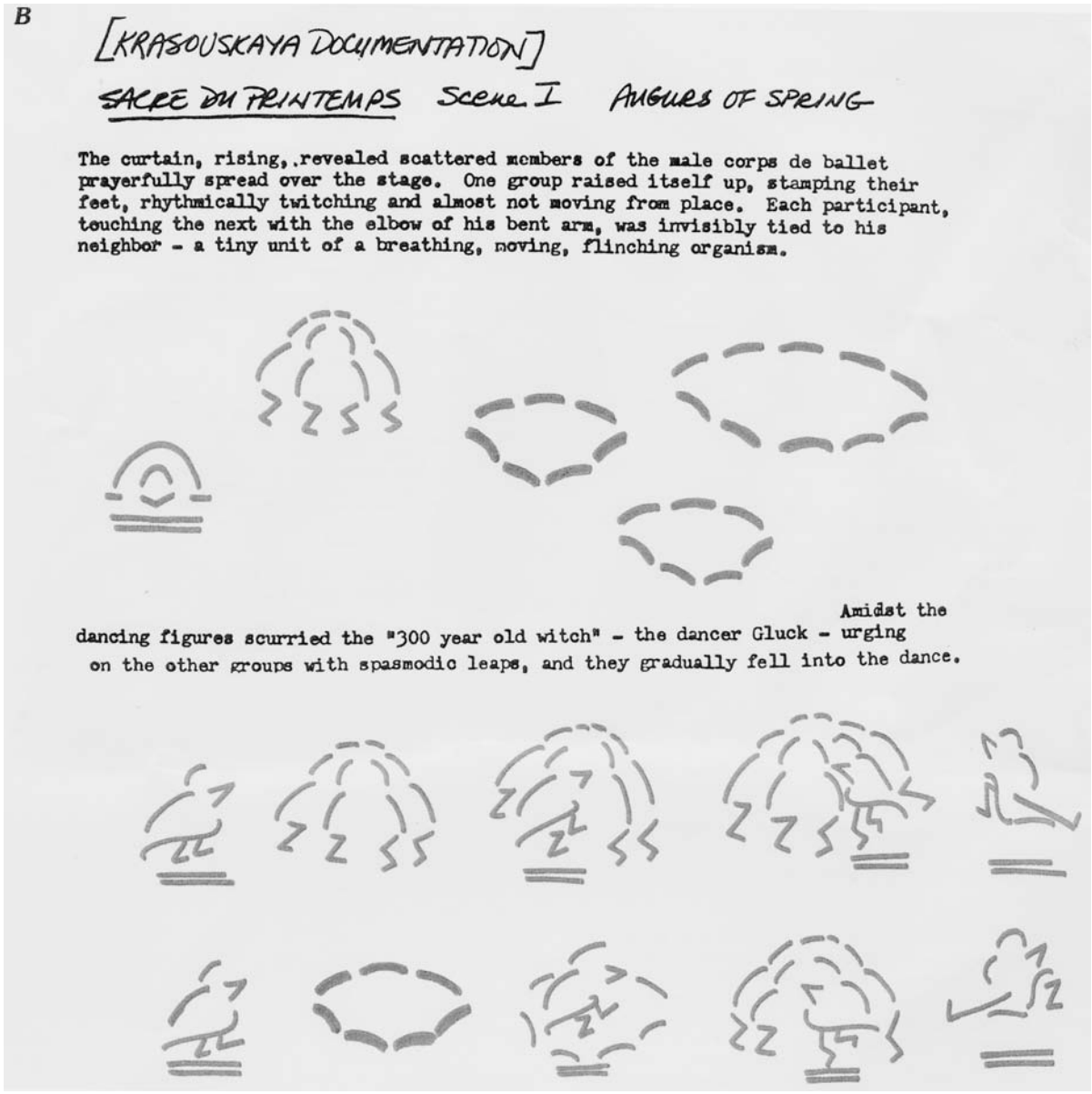
"An oboist from the Paris premiere is alive and living in Boston," announced a friend on the phone. "But what can he tell you," she asked cautiously, her daughter being a concert oboist, "wasn't his back to the stage?" I immediately took a train to Boston's Back Bay and soon was climbing the steps to Louis Speyer's home. "I played for Isadora Duncan and Nijinsky," he told me, "and never saw a step." We discussed the wisdom of gamelon orchestras in Bali, flanking the *sides* of the performance space. Nevertheless, Louis Speyer told animated stories, with especially vivid portraits of Monteux. Since he had recently written down his "Reminiscences" in a short manuscript of that title, he shared them with me, in such cameos as follow:

> Stravinsky and Monteux in contrast made an interesting pair, Igor nervous, Pierre calm and master of the situation. . . . When Monteaux asked a question, the composer explained using his cane to beat out the difficult rhythms. No matter how complicated these became, Monteux smiled and accepted the explanation. For the bassoonist, at the beginning of the ballet, there was a surprise—the register was so high that the player had to devise radically new fingerings . . . the instrument sounded more like a "saxophone."[24]

Mr. Speyer thoughtfully, rather gallantly, gave me the manuscript and told me to sleep with it under my pillow, on the hope, I suppose, that a dream would recover the *Sacre* that neither of us saw.

VI. Treasures from the Russian (New York, November 1979)

Research at the Dance Collection and other branches of The New York Public Library enabled me, by this point, to account for most of the known documents about *Le Sacre* in English and French. The time had come to recover the Russian accounts. Susan Cook Summer of the Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation guided me through materials there and at the Slavic Division of the NYPL. She translated not only from periodicals and dance books—such as the major history of Krassovskaya—but also from ethnological texts [see figure 6]. Among the discoveries was an account of divination procedures which led me back to English, back to Roerich, to learn that he and Stravinsky had inscribed beams of the house at Talashkino with their first ideas for *Le Sacre*.[25] In addition to wondering whether documents were preserved in the Soviet Union, I needed to know whether any mention was made of ritual sources of choreography. In a coincidence of perfect timing, we located a recent paper by Richard Taruskin, professor of musicology at Columbia University, entitled "Russian Folk Melodies in the *Rite of Spring*." The paper demonstrates how certain parts of Stravinsky's score can be identified with music from Slavic rituals. Specific melodies in the sections called "Spring Rounds," "Dance of the Earth," and "Ritual Action of the Ancestors" are recognizable as ancient chants, some of which were performed with movement. Dance chants of this sort had the purpose of collective conjuring, "to facilitate," for example, "the quick awakening of nature."[26] Discoveries of ceremonial movements associated with



6."Augurs of Spring—Dance of the Maidens." Notation of floor patterns from an extensive reconstruction notebook by Millicent Hodson, based in part on documentation by Vera Krassovskaya, *Russkii Baletnyi Teatr Nachalaxx Veka/The Russian Ballet Theatre at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Leningrad, 1971), 426, from passages translated by Susan Cook Summer, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation, New York. The double line signifies the witch in motion. During composition of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, Stravinsky wrote in a letter to Roerich: "The picture of the old woman in a squirrel fur sticks in my mind. She is constantly before my eyes as I compose the 'Divination with Twigs': I see her running in front of the group, stopping them sometimes, and interrupting the rhythmic flow. I am convinced that the action must be danced and not pantomimed, which is why I have connected—a smooth jointure with which I am very pleased—the 'Dance of the Maidens' and the 'Divination with Twigs.'" (September 26, 1911, published in the appendix, *The Rite of Spring Sketches, 1911–1913*), 30. Copyright © Millicent Hodson.

Stravinsky's score may be the synapse to what Roerich gave Nijinsky.

VII. Nijinsky's Relatives (Los Angeles and San Francisco, December 1979)

During a conversation last spring with John Webley at the Ballet Rambert, I stated my interest, among the current versions of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, in the choreography by Glen Tetley. "Well then, why don't you tell him yourself?" Webley said, opening the door to the next room. As if by magic, Glen Tetley began to tell me his own engrossing adventures with *Le Sacre* (American Ballet Theatre; the actual premiere, however, was with the Bavarian State Opera Ballet, Munich, April 1974). He also spoke of history, modern dance, and Nijinsky's work with his sister Bronislava. "They called what they did New Dance," he explained. "You must go to Los Angeles and talk with Bronislava's daughter." Irina Nijinska traveled and taught with her mother for years. She has preserved the rare journals and choreography notebooks that Bronislava wrote throughout her long life. These writings comprise much of the text in the biography that Irina Nijinska is now completing about her mother.[27] When I went to Los Angeles, we spoke at length about Bronislava's school in Kiev where she developed ideas discovered in Nijinsky's *Sacre* and other dances. Bronislava worked in secret with Nijinsky on his first experiments for *Le Sacre*, especially on the Dance of the Chosen Virgin. As Bronislava told the story, Nijinsky would sit or stand for a time, meditating on the movement. Then he would go to the center of the floor, take a posture, and begin to dance. Bronislava watched him silently, then as soon as he stopped, she repeated everything so that none of his steps would get lost. As they progressed, developing the trance-like movements of the solo, he had her visualize the skies in Roerich's paintings while she danced. It would be a disservice in a short space to summarize the knowledge Irina Nijinska communicates with such ardent passion and factual detail. Suffice it to say that I came to understand the reconstruction of *Le Sacre* to be one step in the rediscovery of Nijinsky's technique. It is not so much a dance technique as a technique of making dances, a creative method that generates from posture a unique vocabulary of movement for every new dance.

My adventures to date concluded appropriately with Nijinsky's daughter, Kyra—dancer, musician, painter, poet, and mystic. She was kind enough to see me at her home in San Francisco, even though it was Christmas afternoon. She makes you feel Nijinsky's spirit and hear the creative plea of his *Diary*. "I want to dance, to draw, to play the piano, to write verses, I want to love everybody. That is the object of my life."[28] Kyra Nijinsky sends out waves of artistic energy. She sang and danced and brought out her favorite paintings—madonnas, mystical roses, Nijinsky as the god of the dance. Her blues and greens, solid and intense, catch light like icons from touches of gold and silver leaf. Standing in her kitchen, looking at her work, I remembered a letter Stravinsky kept. Nijinsky wrote him, ecstatic with creativity:

> I know what *Le Sacre du Printemps* will be when everything is as we both want it. For some it will open new horizons, huge horizons flooded with different rays of sun. People will see new and different colors and different lines, all different, unexpected, and beautiful. . . .[29]

Notes

1. The description combines accounts by a London critic, *The Times*, July 27, 1913, and W. A. Propert, *The Russian Ballet in Western Europe, 1909–1920* (London: John Lane, Bodley Head, 1921), 81. The *Times* review is conveniently reprinted in Nesta MacDonald, *Diaghilev Observed* (New York: Dance Horizons; London: Dance Books), 103.

2. Ibid.

3. From Stravinsky's translation of the libretto, repro-

duced in Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), 75.

4. Richard Buckle provides a wonderful composite of many different accounts in his definitive biography, *Nijinsky* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971, now an Avon paperback), 299–302.

5. From a review in the *Daily Mail*, London, July 12, 1913, quoted in MacDonald, *Diaghilev Observed,* 100.

6. The dream is described in the context of Stravinsky's working process on *Le Sacre* in Robert Craft, "*The Rite of Spring*: Genesis of a Masterpiece," a lecture from 1966 which was later published in *The Rite of Spring Sketches 1911–1913* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1969), xvi.

7. John E. Bowlt, "Two Russian Maecanases, Savva Mamontov and Princess Tenisheva," *Apollo* (London, December 1973), 444–453. More needs to be known about the work Roerich and Tenisheva did together. Roerich himself began the documentation in *Talachkino, L'Art Décoratif des ateliers de la princesse Tenichef* (St. Petersburg, 1906).

8. From Stravinsky's translation of the libretto and two versions of the scenario by Roerich in Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents,* 75–76; my synthesis of the scenario also reflects reports by contemporary critics.

9. Conversations with Irina Nijinska and family, Los Angeles, December 17–18, 1979.

10. Nicholas Roerich, "Sacre," address at the Wannamaker Auditorium, under the auspices of the League of Composers, 1930, an event surely given in conjunction with the League's sponsorship of the American premiere of *Le Sacre* as a ballet. Roerich once again did the décor as he had in 1920 when Diaghilev revived the work, commissioning new choreography by Leonide Massine, who presented his version again for the 1930 production, with Martha Graham in the solo role of the Chosen Virgin (New York, Metropolitan Opera House, April 23). The address is published in Nicholas Roerich, *The Realm of Light* (New York: New Era Library, 1931), 185–191.

11. The Suvretta House concert (January 19, 1919, St. Moritz, Switzerland) is documented by Buckle, *Nijinsky,* 406–408, from the points of view of Nijinsky, his wife Romola, and a stranger, Maurice Sandoz, who later wote an essay about it. The event, with its opening confrontation of the audience and its improvised but ritualistic protest against war, is the prototype of a whole genre of anti-war performances in the United States and Europe during the Vietnam war, which is not to say that Nijinsky's elegy was sufficiently known about to serve as a model. The account by Sandoz, useful for its detail on gesture, is published in his *Diaghilev-Nijinsky and Other Vignettes* (New York: Kamin, 1956), 41–47.

12. Buckle, *Nijinsky,* 348–349, and Romola Nijinsky's own version in her *Nijinsky* (London: Gollancz, 1933), 226–239.

13. Robert Craft, "Nijinsky and 'Le Sacre,'" *New York Review of Books*, April 15, 1976, 39. Kirstin's book was published in New York by Alfred A. Knopf in 1975.

14. The interview with Dame Marie Rambert took place at her home in London on April 20, 1979. Her recollections in *Quicksilver* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1972), include a number of references to *Le Sacre*.

15. *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, music by Claude Debussy, décor by Leon Bakst, Paris, Théâtre du Châtelet, May 29, 1912.

16. From an interview in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, February 15, 1915, quoted in MacDonald, *Diaghilev Observed*, 90.

17. Some of the rumors about the existence of Nijinsky notations derive from a project by Madame Legat, the wife of Nicolas Legat, one of Nijinsky's teachers. Mme. Legat wanted to make Nijinsky's system available to the public. Her lecture on the subject was reviewed by *Dance and Dancers* (London, August 1956, 35 and 37): "Although Madame Legat has Madame Romola Nijinsky's permission to consult the original manuscripts, her knowledge is not based on these but on a poor French translation." The reviewer seems not to have doubted the existence of all the reputed manuscripts; "it is interesting to learn that Nijinsky wrote down all his own ballets by this system as well as *Les Sylphides* and *Petrushka*."

18. Maurice Sandoz, *Diaghilev-Nijinsky and Other Vignettes*, 39.

19. Valentine Gross dated the sketches and reflected on them in her handwritten *Journal* (Theatre Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum); "La seconde fois que j'assistai au *Sacre du Printemps*, le 3 juin, j'emportai come d'habitude avec moi un petit carnet et des bouts de crayons bleus. Dans la demi obscurité de la salle je pris de notes filiformes, sténographiées à ma manière de la danse et de la musique. Quelques unes sont devenues indéchiffrables dans ces centames de lignes en mouvement sue les poussières des sous. Pour moi, les unes évoquant les autres, les dances de ce ballet y sont vivantes et je ne peux extendre la musique sans voir presque malgré moi ce que j'ai vu." Translation: "The second time that I saw *Le Sacre du Printemps*, June 3 [1913], I took with me, as usual, a little sketchbook and stubs of blue crayon. In the semi-darkness of the theater, I took rough, stenographic notes, in my style, of the dance and music. Some of them became indecipherable among the

hundreds of lines in motion on top of the debris of those underneath. For me, each one evoking the others, the dances of this ballet are alive among them, and I cannot hear the music without seeing, almost in spite of myself, what I saw then."

20. The pages of the notebook are loose, so the original sequence is not intact. Some of the sketches reappear as more finished pencil drawings which Gross identified with bars of music (see figure 4). The rest of the sketches can, through cross-referencing with verbal accounts and other sources, be identified by sections of the ballet.

21. *Variety*, New York, July 4, 1979.

22. Introduction to *Diary* excerpts, no author cited, 6.

23. Jean Cocteau, "On Diaghilev and Nijinsky," *The Difficulty of Being* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1957; first American edition, trans. Elizabeth Sprigge, New York: Corward-McCass, 1967), 45.

24. Louis Speyer, "Reminiscences," unpublished manuscript, written April 1979, in Brookline, Mass.; the manuscript is on file at the Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation, New York.

25. Nicholas Roerich, "Sacre," 186.

26. Quoted by Taruskin from *Melodika kalendarnyx peser* (Leningrad, 1975), 78–81, on page 22 of his paper, "(various accounts) bear witness to the magic function of the movements, the incessant movements of the springtime songs, whose purpose was to facilitate the quick awakening of nature—the growth of grass, the opening up of the rivers, the flight of birds, and so on. . . . These descriptions make clear *the connection between the performance of the spring invocations and some form of action*" [italics original to Taruskin's source].

27. Madame Nijinska's memoir is *Bronislava Nijinska, Early Memoirs,* trans. and ed. Irina Nijinska and Jean Rawlinson, with intro. by and in consultation with Anna Kisselgoff (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981).

28. *The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky*, ed. Romola Nijinsky (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1936; paperback edition, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 186.

29. Quoted in Craft, "Nijinsky and 'Le Sacre.'" In conclusion I wish to acknowledge Prof. VèVè Clark for documents sent from the University of California, Berkeley.