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MOVEMENT IN STILLNESS - BARBARA G HAINES

"A PRACTICE - BASED INTERPRETATION OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE RITE OF SPRING. A SPECIAL PURPOSE TO TURN THE LEGEND OF BALLET BY VASLAV NIJINSKY BACK INTO AN ARTIFACT - TO HONOR THE MASTER OF MODERNISM IN CHOREOGRAPHY. A JOURNEY THROUGH FELT THAT TRANSLATES THE STORY; A JOURNEY THAT FINDS RITUAL RHYTHM WITHIN TANGLING WOOLS; A JOURNEY THAT CAN INDUCE ON THE PHYSIC STATES THE NATURE OF THE DANCE."



I grew up in Budapest in Hungary, and moved to the United States eighteen years ago, where I live in Point Clear, on the Eastern shore of

Mobile Bay, Alabama. I have dedicated fifteen years to theatre as a professional ballerina, and I am presently pursuing a post-graduate diploma in Choreology at the Royal Academy of Dance, London, England.

Currently, I teach as an adjunct professor of dance, which allows me to travel around the world, often to remote locations. These journeys allow me to continue my research of Nijinsky's avant-garde choreography, and ultimately answer the open question: what is the meaning of this choreography?

With my background in classical ballet, my obsession with felt surfaced only a few years ago when I realized the uncommon aspect of having costumes presented from such a

different material. I attended workshops for various felt techniques but I consider myself a self-taught artist. Working in a contemporary adaptation of an ancient method helps me to bring fluidity to the materials, rather like a chaotic choreography with divine levels of underlying harmony.

My inspiration behind the use of wool came from Vaslav Nijinsky's Rite of Spring, as it was an unusual feature to have costumes designed from such material. I work primarily with natural substances, i.e., wool, plant fibers, and natural dyes, to express the "Architectural Stillness" that Nijinsky created as a new plastic range to develop modern ballet for later scholars. These materials give shape not only to my work physically, but also to its meaning. Movement means more when we experience the other end of the spectrum, which is stillness. Stillness can allow something to be what it is, and have it speak for itself. Our modern world is based on a global network information exchange using

graphic forms or written communication. There are three main types of communication, i.e., spoken, gestural (sign language), and graphic. Graphic communication is the only form of communication that is capable of transmitting, translating, and preserving a message. My dance anthropology research has introduced me to all kinds of people and communities with whom I would not otherwise have had the opportunity to engage. I feel lucky to hear a thousand years of stories that reflect cultures and beliefs, which helps me to see beyond the pure material and further understand the mythological meanings in Nijinsky's contemporary settings. We can see a young virgin maiden who represents the "Chosen One" in Nijinsky's Le Sacre du Printemps (Image 1). Notice a compacted and inverted posture, with contoured positions of the head and arms while the body moves beneath to an irregular rhythm. The signature phrase of Sacrificial Dance uses a rich and deep structural technique where the ribs are

washed into a third dimension seamlessly.

In 2018, I had a rare opportunity and enormous privilege to visit a significant spiritual site within the Kakadu Rainforest, at East Alligator River, near to Arnhem Land, Australia. Here, the Australian Aborigines use iconographic signs and symbols to record their hidden myths and legends, and the laws that they follow. These symbols and signs are a visual language and, depending on the geometric formation in which they are danced, they translate stories. Further into my journey, the Tiwi Aborigines on Bathurst Island - for whom language of figurative dream dancing differs from the Aborigines of the mainland - gave me another piece of this vast puzzle of clues.

In 2019, I was invited to participate in a Felt Symposium organized by Péter Rózsa at his Virágoskút Inn, in Hortobágy, Hungary. As you enter the Inn, you can view Sándor Makoldi's paintings decorating its ceiling. During the workshop, Mihály Vetró, artistic director of the Hungarian Traditional Folk-Art School of Nádudvar, explained Makoldi's sacred paintings to us in reference to the mythological folk belief of zodiac signs. A letter dated January 1913 from Stravinsky to Nicolas Roerich, the costume designer, documents the fact that Nijinsky would not start to ensemble choreography until he had seen the costumes in front of him. The symbolic meanings inherent within these harmonic shapes found in the wool costumes and architectural platform

of the ballet subsequently take us to another level of clarity. Astronomical function has not been taken into consideration in any scholarly work yet. However, the essential connections between the astral mythical frameworks throughout the ballet's platforms, in relation to its figurative steps striving for completeness, helped me to decode the meaning of Nijinsky's choreography. This further assisted me to see Jeux (Image 2) which was the first ballet to address modern sexuality, and the first performed in modern dress. My intention was to capture an Edwardian Englishness to a fine degree, recalling the luminous evening in pre-World War I London where the ballet was conceived. Using a traditional Turkmen layout with added textured surface, I was able to create an amplified, sculpted density. This allowed me to bring the refined characteristics to a noticeable softness, to shape the feather-like balletic movements.

It is no secret to say that I am fascinated with the development of Nijinsky's modern mind, and the evolution of his creativity as seen throughout his chronological ballets. I wanted to explore how the dynamics of the wool could transform the invisible information of stillness in motion that we can observe in his dominant style. A ballet with no dancing, only movement in plastic attitude, is what we see in his choreography of An Afternoon of the Faun (Image 3). This piece is staged by two-dimensional images that evoke the art of Greek antiquity. In portraying the Faun, Nijinsky breaks the boundaries of

one's personal limitations, being extraverted and erotic. Everything is super-angular and flatter than the 360-degree volume that symbolizes Nijinsky's Rite of Spring ballet. Utilizing traditional felt with a twist to sculpt the Faun's shape is the best way to communicate its style and animal realism. On the opposite side, the Nymph's Hellenistic folds of drapery bring an artistic revolution through the amplified condition that further morphs into a manipulated fluidity.

A portion of my felted works is concerned with merging movements of real-life tribal dancers through the texture of dance, the rhythm of wool and my interpretation of hidden thoughts in Nijinsky's ballets.

As a collaborator, I will continue to work at breaking the historical boundaries between art, dance, and design by understanding the culture around the materials and the ways in which they can navigate us to see the forgotten relationships within various types of art.

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IMAGES
1) Chosen One - Le Sacre du Printemps.
2) Jeux. 3) Afternoon of the Faun.

PHOTO CREDIT: BARBARA G HAINES
All frames are custom made by James Kidd, wood master.