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Frankie Dytor

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Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Decadent Historicism on Stage: Trans History and Alexander Sacharoff's Renaissance Dances

Frankie Dytor

University of Cambridge

In June 1910, Alexander Sacharoff made his debut performance at the Odeon in Munich. It was a small but well-attended event, mainly populated by the city's artists and creatives, some of whom had already seen versions of the performance at private gatherings. The dancer, who had first trained as an artist at the prestigious Académie Julien in Paris, stepped forward onto the stage, draped in a long piece of silk. Accompanied by the sounds of Palestrina and Orlando di Lasso, Sacharoff dropped the fabric and performed a series of dance studies in ecclesiastical robes inspired by the 'Meistern der italienischen Frührenaissance' [Masters of the Italian early Renaissance].¹ The performances caused uproar. Some observers were wildly enthusiastic about the show, standing up to clap and cheer.² Others were disgusted, describing the dancer as a 'leidenden Hermaphroditen' [ailing hermaphrodite].³ For these latter spectators, Sacharoff epitomized a move towards degeneracy and decadence that signalled the slow decline of traditional, masculine values. A male dancer performing alone on stage was a rare sight. A male dancer in make-up using languid motions and dressed in highly ornamental costume raised problematic questions about the fixity of gender and racial order.

This article is interested in the uses of the Renaissance in Sacharoff's performances. Borrowing the phrase 'decadent historicism' from Joseph Bristow, I examine the role historical and art historical references played in the reception of Sacharoff's work.⁴ Bristow describes decadent historicism as a concern with historical authority and an interest in 'perverse personas from the past', offering gender non-conforming writers the possibility of articulating queer and trans selfhoods.⁵ This article looks at the Renaissance as a site of historical authority for one trans figure from the past, following the precedent of Dominic Janes' *Prefiguring Oscar Wilde* (2016) in

reasserting the significance of visual production in the fashioning of queer and trans identities, whilst moving beyond Janes' study in asserting their plurality of expression.⁶ The article asks how and why the Italian Renaissance served as a historical 'locale' for the expression of genders outside of the binary paradigm.⁷ If this has been partially established for decadent and aesthetic texts, most notably for Walter Pater's seminal work *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), the afterlife of this decadent reinvention of the Renaissance remains unclear.⁸ I am interested in how the idea of a decadent Renaissance offered both critics and proponents of Sacharoff's performance a structuring framework around which to express their discontent and pleasure with the dancer, in ways that testify to the tacit acknowledgement of trans life in the period. In this, the article follows the work of Yvonne Ivory's monograph *The Homosexual Revival of Renaissance Style* (2009), Patricia Pulham's work on the use of artwork analogies to articulate non-conforming sexualities, and Will Fisher's article on the sexual politics of Renaissance historiography.⁹ As Fisher explains in relation to constructions of queer identity in nineteenth-century Britain, 'allusions' to historic male homoeroticism provided a crucial means for the expression of non-normative sexualities. This article reconsiders Fisher's work on the making of the queer Renaissance through two re-adjustments: it shifts focus from sexuality to gender, and it places emphasis on the performing body as its own form of textual practice.

In 1913, three years after his debut, Sacharoff met the dancer Clotilde von Derp, a German-born aristocrat who had been favourably received into Munich's cultural circles a few years previously.¹⁰ The pair began performing together and eventually married in 1919, probably to assuage the doubts of the conservative press in the United States, where they were due to start touring. From a critical perspective, the partnership was a success, since with the introduction of von Derp's dances – including a number of Renaissance-inspired performances such as *Frühlingspoem* [*Spring Poem*] (1917), *Danse Sainte* [*Holy Dance*] (1921), and *Danse de la Joie d'un Mystère du XV^e siècle* [*Dance of Joy from a Fifteenth-Century Mystery*] (1936) – the hostility faced by Sacharoff in the pre-war years abated.¹¹ Most importantly here, the shock of Sacharoff's performances seems

to have diminished following his partnership with von Derp. Even if his performances still incited claims about gender transgression, these were largely limited to issues of style on stage, with little to say about the state of gender relations more broadly. Indeed, gender ambiguity even became an enjoyable conceit for many spectators, and the luxury of Sacharoff's performances appeared as merely eccentric, rather than threatening, in comparison with the minimal productions of leading practitioners like Mary Wigman and Rudolf Laban or the bombastic experiments of Weimar cabaret culture.¹²

This article builds on the work of performance scholars such as Patrizia Veroli, Claudia Jeschke, Rainer Stamm and Frank-Manuel Peter who have re-established the significance of Sacharoff and von Derp for the history of modern dance.¹³ Despite their popularity in Germany and France, particularly in the interwar years during which they were championed by leading critics such as Émile Vuillermoz, with appearances in high fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, Sacharoff and von Derp quickly faded from view.¹⁴ Lucia Ruprecht has pointed to the 'untimeliness of their aesthetic', using this anachronism to resituate Sacharoff's 'gestural drag' as a key part of his queer performance.¹⁵ Ruprecht focuses on Sacharoff's Baroque performances while I direct attention to his understudied Renaissance works, though like Ruprecht I am similarly interested in uses of the past that troubled the gender order and created affective performances in which it appeared as if the past was embodied in the dancer. I am particularly interested in the forms of historical knowledge engendered by this embodiment, and how this might productively help us to think through questions of 'trans*historicity' that have preoccupied trans studies.¹⁶ The first half of the article is concerned with locating a Renaissance in criticism, suggesting that this Renaissance, a product of decadent thought from the end of the nineteenth century, offered a historical locale of non-conformity. The second half of the article moves to the murkier territory of historical experience, considering the trans-human possibilities generated by Sacharoff's historicism. I suggest that Sacharoff's work not only speaks to the archival body theorized by performance studies, but also offers an alternative paradigm for a more expansive understanding of historical

genders, that centres performance as an important site for negotiating gender. Ultimately, I argue, this underlines the centrality of material pasts and historical styles for transgendered embodiment in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁷

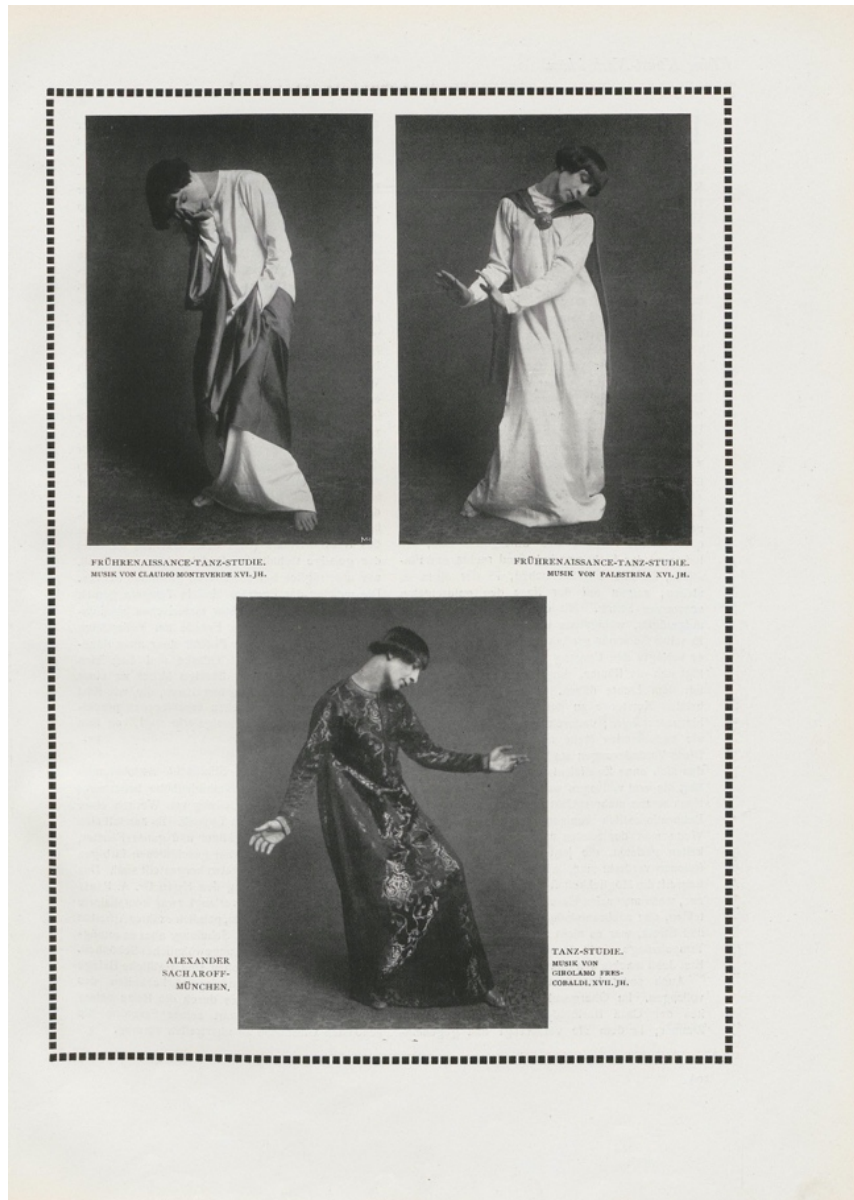


Fig. 1: Hans Hoffmann, *Frührenaissance-Tanz-Studie* [Early Renaissance Dance Study], photograph, 1912. From Gerhard Amunsen, 'Alexander Sacharoff und sein Tanz', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration: illustr. Monatshefte für modern Malerei, Plastik, Architektur, Wohnungskultur u. künstlerisches Frauen-Arbeiten*, 30 (1912), 204–05 (p. 205). ©Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg.



Fig. 2: Gilbert René, *Alexandre Sakharoff dans Visione del Quattrocento* [*Alexander Sacharoff in 'Vision of the Fifteenth Century'*], photograph, from *Clotilde & Alexandre Sakharoff* (Brunoff: Paris, 1922).
 ©Fonds médiathèque du Centre nationale de la danse.

The Renaissance as historical locale

A cross-examination of programmes held at the Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln [German Dance Archive Cologne], studio photographs, and contemporary descriptions, suggests that Sacharoff's Renaissance dances preceding his partnership with von Derp can be roughly split into two groups: *Tanzstudien nach den Meistern der italienischen Frührenaissance* [*Dance Studies after the Masters of the Early Italian Renaissance*], with music by Palestrina, Orlando di Lasso and Claudio Monteverdi, and *Tanz im Stile 'Renaissance'* [*Dance in the 'Renaissance' Style*] with music by Girolamo Frescobaldi (fig. 1).¹⁸

Both made use of heavy, highly brocaded costume, a feature that would be brought into sharper focus with the introduction of *Visione del Quattrocento* (fig. 2), which predominated in programmes from 1921.¹⁹ As Jeschke has shown, however, in the case of these Renaissance dances, it is difficult to precisely map the photographs against specific titles and musical scores, with the net result that Sacharoff's Renaissance works will be considered together as a group.²⁰



Fig. 3: Isadora Duncan in 'Primavera' ['Spring'], Paris, 1900, photographic negative. Jerome Robbins, Dance Collection, New York Public Library.

Sacharoff was not the only dancer to make use of Renaissance artworks in the early decades of the twentieth century. As Gabriele Brandstetter has shown, pre-eminent performers such as Isadora Duncan and Vaslav Nijinsky looked to the Florentine cantorias of Luca della Robbia, whilst Duncan also centred Botticelli's *Primavera* in a number of dances such as *Florentine Spring*

(1900) (fig. 3), and in writings including *Der Tanz der Zukunft* (1903), translated and popularized as *The Dance of the Future*.²¹ Ann Daly has argued that Duncan relied on strategies of cultural and intellectual exclusion, such as the comparison with antiquity and the Renaissance, in order to distinguish her work from dancehall culture.²² *The Dance* places the Italian Renaissance within a gestural genealogy that begins with the ancient Greeks, ending with the provocative claim that the dancer of the future would surpass all ancient dancers, ‘more beautiful than the Egyptian, than the Greek, than the early Italian’.²³ The Italian Renaissance, in other words, was suggested to be another antiquity, using Donatello’s *Cupid* as an example of the perfect interconnection between form and movement. Likewise, in Duncan’s dance school in Grünewald, Berlin, copies of Donatello and Luca della Robbia were placed alongside antique ones in the teaching rooms.²⁴ Sacharoff’s presentation of the Renaissance was evidently a far cry from Duncan’s, which had been carefully legitimated through a series of publications that allied the forms of the Renaissance with the emergent culture of *Lebensreform* [life reform]. Duncan placed stress on the natural and healthy body, using depictions of children and women to imagine a reproductive future of dance. This fertile Renaissance of cherubs and nymphs was nowhere to be found in Sacharoff’s dance, which instead raised questions of ornamentality and artifice for almost all spectators. Hans Brandenburg, one of Munich’s pre-eminent cultural critics, still remembered the shock of Sacharoff’s debut many decades later,

der Tänzer schritt langsam und feierlich in Gewändern der Frührenaissance, sogar in dem eines Mönches, der betend die Hände zusammen, einen Lilienstrauß im Arme [...] ich nur ein narzißhaftes Ephebentum und einen widerwärtigen Feminismus zu sehen meinte

[the dancer stepped forward slowly and majestically in fine clothing from the early Renaissance, and even in a monk’s habit with his hands folded together in prayer and a bouquet of lilies in his arms [...] I felt I was only witnessing the cavorting of a narcissistic ephebe and a disgusting show of femininity].²⁵

Brandenburg’s commentary points to an interconnected anxiety between forms of the Renaissance and a feminization of the male body. This had been raised from the outset of Sacharoff’s career through Brandenburg’s important publication *Der moderne Tanz* [*Modern Dance*]

(1913), which ran into several editions. Comparing the ostensibly similar referential framework of Sacharoff and Duncan – by then established as the pioneer of modern dance – Brandenburg suggested that whilst Duncan’s reworking of antiquity and the Renaissance was nothing more than harmless intellectual dilettantism, Sacharoff’s dance was, revoltingly, a ‘Schauspieler für die Decadenz-Witterer!’ [spectacle for those sniffing out decadence!]²⁶ Although Sacharoff’s antique-inspired dances, such as that depicted on the cover of the Folkwang Museum programme, suggested an increasingly familiar athletic and muscular rhetoric, even the Greek works were tempered by the unexpected application of white powder across the arms, legs, and face.²⁷ The Renaissance dances took this ornamentation of the body one step further, obstructing the body underneath so entirely that, as one commentator observed, Sacharoff appeared to be ‘emprisonné’ [imprisoned] under the weight of the fabric.²⁸ Through his highly elaborate costuming, Sacharoff called attention to the surface of the body, thus inviting the troubling thought that the male body might be decorative, a status typically reserved for feminized and colonized subjects.²⁹ A number of commentators explained this through anti-Semitic reference to Sacharoff’s Jewish heritage, confusingly pointing to the presence of Roman Catholic ecclesiastical robes as proof of Jewish effeminacy and archaism, whilst also repeating a by-then common trope of decadent Catholicism.³⁰ Several observers turned to a longer tradition of decadent revisionism to articulate their discomfort, in particular through reference to the work of British artist Aubrey Beardsley. Alfred Lichtwark complained about ‘[Sacharoff], der mich lebhaft an die kranke Kunst Aubrey Beardsleys erinnerte’ [Sacharoff, who reminded me of an incantation of Aubrey Beardsley’s sick art], whilst the critic Rudolf von Delius suggested his dances were like ‘Rokoko-Illustrationen Beardsleys’ [Rococo illustrations by Beardsley].³¹ The allusion to Beardsley is suggestive of the entanglement between decadence and the Renaissance by this period in Germany. Sacharoff’s page-boy haircut, predating the fashionable *Bubikopf* style of the 1920s, was more like a reincarnation of the Renaissance of Beardsley in images such as *Sandro Botticelli* (1893).³² It was precisely this decadent iteration of the Renaissance that German theorists of cultural decline fixated on. In *Entartung*

[*Degeneration*] (1892), for instance, Max Nordau counted amongst the symptoms of degeneration women who wore their hair ‘nach der Mode des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts, wie man sie bei Gentile Bellini, bei Botticelli, bei Mantegna an den Köpfen von Pagen und jungen Rittern dargestellt sieht’ [after the fashion of the fifteenth century, such as one sees depicted on the pages and young knights of Gentile Bellini, Botticelli and Mantegna].³³ In a similar manner documented in contemporary Russia by Sasha Dovzhyk, the reference to Beardsley at once formed a model of decadent masculinity at the same time as it rejected it.³⁴

In 1922, Sacharoff wrote that he had learnt from two masters: The Louvre and Sarah Bernhardt.³⁵ The turn to the museum was a common feature of many accounts of modern dance.³⁶ The reference to Bernhardt, however, offers a new route through which to place Sacharoff’s gender variance, and one that highlights the centrality of material historicism in the fashioning of queer and trans selfhoods. Bernhardt, an icon of late nineteenth-century theatre, had achieved notoriety for her *en travesti* performances.³⁷ While this was already an established practice well before Bernhardt, it became something of a signature look for the actor not only through her celebrated appearances as Hamlet among others, but also as a sculptor in trousers posing in her studio. A number of Bernhardt’s *en travesti* performances took place within a Renaissance framework, such as the Pre-Raphaelite *Pelleas and Mélisande* (1905) or the sixteenth-century Florentine setting of *Lorenzaccio* (1896), in which Bernhardt appeared in brocaded doublets and, in the case of *Le Passant* (1869) and *Jeanne d’Arc* (1890), page-boy outfits. Bernhardt set the stage for a wave of cross-dressing through Renaissance pageantry, from Olive Custance in Britain through to Natalie Barney in France. In Germany, likewise, the page-boy was a popular *en travesti* role by the first decade of the twentieth century: Rita Sacchetto, for instance, with whom Sacharoff toured with after his debut in Munich, adopted Renaissance costume and page-boy outfits for her infamous *Tanzbilder*.³⁸ Critics, Brandenburg reported, found an inversion played out in their double dance, as ‘der weibliche Part männlich und der männliche weiblich wirken’ [the feminine part seemed masculine and the masculine feminine].³⁹

Despite evidence that Renaissance cross-dressing imagined a new gender order on stage, Sacharoff's attraction to Bernhardt has been limply justified through his homosexuality. This error relies on a misreading of queer theory, documented by a number of trans scholars, which positions gender non-conformity as a simple descriptor of sexuality.⁴⁰ Consider, for instance, the claim by Veroli, whose pioneering work has otherwise uncovered much of the Sacharoff archive, that the dancer was drawn to Bernhardt 'for her introduction of a masculine, albeit effeminate, character [...] to which the homosexual Sacharoff felt a strong psychical and psychological attraction'.⁴¹ Recent work has uncovered a more complex picture for the intricately entangled histories of gender and sexuality at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴² The German 'invention of homosexuality', for instance, is now understood to be bound up with attempts to articulate a more expansive gender order, with a clutch of related terms that enfolded both sexuality and gender identity such as *Dritte Geschlecht* [third sex] and *sexuelle Zwischenstufen* [intermediate sexual types].⁴³ Little attention, however, has been paid to performance's capacity to embody such types, beyond a queer (cis-normative) modernist paradigm.⁴⁴

Sacharoff, in fact, had outlined his own theory of the sexes in dance in a commentary accompanying his second public performance:

Es scheint mir nämlich, dass für den Tanz als reine und eigene Kunst weder der reife Mann noch das Weib vorzüglich geeignet sind, sondern der Jüngling als ein Wesen, das noch zwischen den beiden steht und noch gleichsam die Möglichkeiten der beiden Geschlechter in sich vereinigt.

[It appears to me, namely, that for the dance to be a pure and individual art neither the mature man nor the woman is especially suited, but rather the adolescent as a being that still stands between both and combines in himself the possibility of both sexes].⁴⁵

Sacharoff's description of dual sexuality nominally refers to antiquity in order to justify and historicize its claim, a move familiar both to sexual reform campaigners and dancers in the period.⁴⁶ Critics added their own terms to describe Sacharoff's gendered identity, such as 'Zweigeschlechtikeit' [roughly 'bisexuality', or what we would now call intersexuality] or 'Doppelgeschlechtsgefühle' [roughly 'feeling of double sex'].⁴⁷ In German-speaking nations,

bisexuality was a live topic, stemming from the twin discoveries in the nineteenth century of belated sexual determination in foetal development, and the prevalence of neuter sexes in a number of species.⁴⁸ Theories of the mind were likewise increasingly turning towards an acceptance of bisexuality in infantile development.⁴⁹ Otto Weininger famously promoted a theory of bisexuality in his widely read text *Geschlecht und Charakter* [*Sex and Character*] (1903), reworking previous sexological theories of the three sexes (male, female, intermediate) by suggesting that sex was a spectrum.⁵⁰ This was in turn echoed by Magnus Hirschfeld, who introduced the term ‘Transvestite’ in 1910 and published a text the same year on the subject.⁵¹ Whilst I am not uncomplicatedly placing Sacharoff within a history of self-identified ‘transvestites’ in Wilhelmine Germany, I would like to enlarge discussion on the third sex and androgyne raised by Sacharoff’s texts and performances to include a consideration of trans embodiment, that is a gendered self at odds with its biopolitical setting, undoing the experiential and visible markers of normative sex.⁵²

Sacharoff importantly formed his early dances as part of the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* [New Artist’s Association, Munich], an avant-garde group consisting of artists including Wassily Kandinsky, Marianne Werefkin, and Alexej von Jawlensky. Sacharoff was used as a model for several portraits, which show the dancer with the whitened face and elongated features that many critics noted to be a particularly disconcerting aspect of the dancer’s appearance. Jawlensky’s portrait ambiguously genders Sacharoff’s body, curving at the breast, in a dress with contemporary ruching and neckline, whitened face and kohl rimmed eyes (fig. 4). Sacharoff, who Veroli reports as having ‘cross-dressed’ for parties in Schwabing, wore women’s dresses and posed as a woman in a number of Werefkin’s paintings, such as *Sacharoff in Frauenkleiden* [*Sacharoff in Women’s Clothes*] (1909) and *The Dancer Alexander Sacharoff* (1909) (fig. 5).⁵³ Ivory has shown how gender non-conformity was a lived reality for many artists and creatives in Munich at the time, and a number of publications explored the theme of the *Dritte Geschlecht* or the androgyne, such as Stanisław Przybyszewski’s *Androgyne* (1906) or Aimée Duc’s *Sind es Frauen? Roman Über das Dritte Geschlecht* [*Are they Women? A Novel Concerning the Third Sex*] (1901).⁵⁴ Sacharoff’s circle was generally interested

in the double-soul (a variation on bisexuality) and discussed contemporary ideas on the androgyne, a figure that has been often been relegated as a cipher for queer sexuality.⁵⁵ Werefkin, for instance, explained that ‘I am neither man nor woman – I am I.’⁵⁶ Sketches from this time suggest how closely Sacharoff matched Werefkin’s ideal type of the androgyne, as his face appears multiple times to stand in for *the* image of the androgyne.⁵⁷ Sacharoff’s performances embodied such alternate gender orders on stage. Stepping through a series of slow poses, sometimes holding flowers such as lilies, Sacharoff’s dance brought to life the dream of the androgyne painted by Werefkin.



Fig. 4: Alexej Jawlensky, *Portrait of the Dancer Alexander Sacharoff*, 1909. Oil on paper
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau, Munich.



Fig. 5: Marianne von Werefkin, *The Dancer Alexander Sacharoff*, c. 1909. Tempera on board. Fondazione Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona, Switzerland.

The city was, however, politically and culturally dominated by conservative Roman Catholic factions in the grip of what John Fout has called ‘the male gender crisis’.⁵⁸ Edward Ross Dickinson has aptly shown the ramifications of this for performers.⁵⁹ Critics were certainly quick to link Sacharoff’s performances to a broader culture of gender upheaval. In 1910 the national newspaper *Münchener Neuste Nachrichten* melodramatically cried for its readers to ‘Furcht für uns’ [fear for us] as it decried Sacharoff’s dance – including its costuming ‘im Gewander der Frührenaissance’ [in garments of the early Renaissance] – to be symptomatic of a decaying culture and ‘Weltschmerz’ [world weariness] that threatened to undermine and even overthrow masculinity.⁶⁰ One writer wondered whether this ‘Dualismus’ [dualism] was ‘wie Mißtrauen gegen

das andere Geschlecht, ist es wie Furcht vor sich selber' [like a mistrust towards the other sex, is it like a fear towards oneself], whilst the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* grumbled again two years later that Sacharoff's performances provoked 'das Verlangen nach einer Kultur des männlichen Tanzes' [the longing for a culture of masculine dance].⁶¹ The report even included the apparently authoritative observation of a female spectator that 'er tanzt hübsch wie eine Dame' [he dances prettily like a woman].⁶² Sacharoff evidently provoked considerable anxiety in critics.⁶³ In many ways, their anxiety replays the crisis set out by Weininger in *Geschlecht und Charakter*, by pitting male against the female, and, in a number of instances, pure German culture against Jewish dissolution.⁶⁴ The agency afforded these pre-war performances is striking. Friedrich Huebner, in an especially overwrought text, worried in 1914 that Sacharoff 'öffnet die Schleusentore des Anarchischen' [opens the flood gates of anarchism] since he seemed to destroy the boundaries between the sexes in his dance, a move which implicated the viewer just as much as the performer.⁶⁵ For Huebner, performance was a confrontation: with oneself, with gender and all of its 'Maskierungen' [disguises].⁶⁶ As we shall see, this notion of confrontation would be revised through the artwork analogy, as Sacharoff's dances were seen to elicit an uncomfortable form of historical experience. Writing in the *Neue Hamburger Zeitung* in 1912, Anton Linder described that watching Sacharoff was like seeing the contents of the Musée Gustave Moreau come to life, a museum which contained an important collection of early Italian art in addition to works of symbolist artists.⁶⁷ Linder's comment, furthermore, points to the transhuman possibilities raised by Sacharoff's performances.

Historical experience

The turn to the Renaissance was, in other words, instrumental in shaping a form of historical experience that many spectators experienced as an uncanny blurring of the human-artwork boundary. Rather than just posing as copies of Renaissance works, Sacharoff appeared to bring these artworks to life. Karl Wirth remembered a performance in 1911:

It was captivating to watch his appearance on stage, dressed in a long, flowing brocaded Renaissance costume, just standing here for a while in spellbound immobile repose, until his body, as if slowly awakening, would begin to move, to stir and turn, and his arms would lift and unfold in gestures of dance-like trance. It was like a conjuring magic spell that evoked sensations as if a statue of icon-like image of immaterial beauty had been awakened to life.⁶⁸

Building on the work of Marion Thain, who has highlighted the significance of embodied cognition in decadent poetics, this section of the article maps the ways in which critics read Sacharoff's dancing body as a site of embodied history.⁶⁹ For the performances, costume was key to the transhistorical experience of the observer, as Sacharoff explained that 'ainsi le spectateur se trouve être immédiatement transporté dans l'atmosphère de chaque danse' [thus the spectator finds themselves to be immediately transported into the atmosphere of each dance].⁷⁰ In the same way, documented by Timothy Campbell, costuming offered historical engagement in the form of 'remnancy', a material hotline to the past that bypassed issues of authenticity and authority.⁷¹ Even a hostile critic such as Brandenburg recognized this significance of costume, 'ein schweres barockes Brokatgewand ist ihm eine Welt für sich' [a heavy baroque brocaded robe is a world in itself].⁷² This necessarily placed primacy on sensory feeling, as Sacharoff explained in the unpublished article, 'How I arrange my dances':

Now, I should like to say a few words concerning style and period. Learn all about the periods, see all the pictures you can and then – forget them and try and imagine you are living in one of these periods. If it be desired to depict a dance of a certain period, one should strive to create the right atmosphere of that epoch – the main object is not which steps you do, but that in the mind of your audience, you conjure up a living person of a particular age, with all its details, its mannerisms and even its thoughts.⁷³

Sacharoff's performance practice, therefore, although informed by sustained periods of research, was on the surface less concerned with accurate historical reconstruction than with crafting the elusive impression of a period, in which the dancer acted as a kind of magician 'conjur[ing]' up a living version of the past. While critics struggled to place the precise monument or artwork evoked by Sacharoff's dance, sketchbooks and photographic reproductions of artworks held at the DTK and Lenbachhaus museum in Munich testify to his close engagement with individual works of

art.⁷⁴ Sacharoff's process instead ran close to aestheticist approaches to history in which, as Carolyn Williams has shown, the past could become legible through historicist intervention.⁷⁵

This had important precedent in the kinaesthetic experiments conducted by Sacharoff during his early years in Munich, in which Kandinsky would paint a watercolour, the composer Thomas Hartmann (who composed several works for Sacharoff's dances) would translate the artwork into music, whilst Sacharoff finally converted the composition into a performance piece.⁷⁶ This transformation of substance suggests a model of appreciation akin to the form of embodied cognition described by Thain, which 'argues not only that mind is materially brain-based, but its functions take place across the whole body'.⁷⁷ Sacharoff expanded on this process of translation in an article late in his career, 'Réflexions sur la danse et la musique' [Reflections on dance and music], in which he pointed to two singular moments of historical experience that defined his subsequent practice.⁷⁸ The first moment was in front of Botticelli's *Primavera*, in which he lost control of his formal capacities and heard sound: 'Jusqu'à ce moment, je n'avais pas la moindre conscience que ce qui provoquait mon extase était de la peinture. Quelle étrange mélodie m'avait transpercé le cœur...?' [Until that moment, I didn't have the least idea that that which had caused my ecstasy was painting. What strange melody had transported my heart...?]⁷⁹ The second was on travelling to Rome and entering the Forum, when he had the experience of venturing into the ancient world: 'J'éprouvai une émotion qui ressemblait à un vertige [...]. Tout le parfum, tout le sens du monde ancien avaient pénétré dans mon cœur en un clin d'œil et comme un dard aiguisé' [I experienced an emotion which was like vertigo [...]. All the perfume, all the meaning of the ancient world had penetrated my heart in the blink of an eye, like a sharpened sting].⁸⁰ Sacharoff's encounter with artworks and monuments of the past took place at an affective level, reliant on the communication of non-verbal knowledge through sensorial means.⁸¹ This primacy placed on the individual and their capacity for determining the form and significance of this knowledge has clear affinities to the work of trans scholarship.⁸² Nevertheless, it also disturbingly relied on the presumption that non-white subjects were unconsciously more generative of historical knowledge

than their white counterparts, a point clearly demonstrated in Sacharoff's description of 'the ways of women in the East [...] simple steps and movements which however reveal the culture of thousands of years'.⁸³ Harnessed correctly by the dancer, individual movements could distil a historical period into single poses, as the dancer slowly moved in the 'dance-like trance' as suggested by Wirth.⁸⁴

Not all spectators were enthusiastic, however. Linder, for instance, after listing all the artworks evoked by Sacharoff's performances – 'Giotto, Cimabue, Taddeo, Gaddi, Piero della Francesca, Perugino, Francia, Bianchi [...] Jan van Eyck, Roger van der Weyden, Hugo van der Goes' – concluded that his dance was 'nur wie Museumskunst [...] Sie [...] läßt kalt' [mere museum art [...] it leaves one cold].⁸⁵ Nevertheless, his description of Sacharoff's performance in the *Curiohause* made such extensive use of the artwork analogy it is hard to take his claim at face value:

Man sah einen terrakotabraunen Orpheus [...] einen pompejanisch-roten Dionysospriester [...]. Ein bleichgeschminktes Gesichtsoval [...] ließ an die Jünglingsköpfe aus Athen (Akropolis) oder aus Herculaneum denken. Im ersten Augenblick fiel mir der Hermaphrodit des Louvremuseums ein. Diese Impression hielt als Gesamt-Eindruck an.

[One saw a terracotta Orpheus [...] a Pompeian-red priest of Dionysus [...]. A pale made up oval face [...] makes one think of the young boys' heads from Athens or from Herculaneum. In the first moment I thought of the Hermaphrodite of the Louvre Museum. This impression remained the total impression].⁸⁶

As mistrustful as Linder is of this 'mageren Jünglinge' [emaciated young man], the analogies suggest an appreciation, even if a furtive one, of the dancer.⁸⁷ The same year Thomas Mann published *Der Tod in Venedig* [*Death in Venice*] (1912) in which the illicit beauty of the youthful Tadzio is likewise referenced in terms between nature and art, as he 'erinnerte an griechische Bildwerke aus edelster Zeit' [reminded one of Greek artworks from the most noble time].⁸⁸ A similar logic is apparent in Karl Osthaus' praise of Sacharoff the year previously, when 'sein schönes Profil von scharf orientalischem Schnitt, gleich dem eines praxitelischen Epheben' [his beautiful profile of sharply oriental features, seems like that of an Ephebe of Praxiteles].⁸⁹ As Rainer Stamm has shown, Osthaus revered Sacharoff as if a living artwork, or, as Karl Wirth described it, 'lebendige Plastik' [living sculpture].⁹⁰ As founder of the Museum Folkwang in Hagen,

Osthaus' perception of Sacharoff in particular highlights the found affinities between artworks and dancers in the period.

Antiquity, like the Renaissance, could also be invoked to code gender non-conformity, here through the reference to the 'Hermaphrodite' in Lindner's description and the 'Ephebe of Praxiteles' by Osthaus.⁹¹ Following Sacharoff's partnership with von Derp, many felt that this hermaphroditism, or bisexuality, had found embodied reality, summed up in the suggestion that 'these dancers combine the beauty of the male body with inconspicuous and simple female characteristics'.⁹² Despite programmes consisting largely of separate dances, critics increasingly presented the dancers as an indissoluble union following their marriage in 1919; French newspapers in particular stressed the poetics of this, with claims such as 'ces deux êtres s'incorporent alors en un seul' [these two beings then blend into one], turning Sacharoff's theory of embodiment into an aesthetic problem ('phénomène d'hermaphroditisme esthétique' [phenomenon of aesthetic hermaphroditism]).⁹³ Many additionally felt that von Derp suffered from the partnership, describing in racialized terms how her natural grace had been 'contaminé' [contaminated] by the 'préciosité' [preciousness] of Sacharoff.⁹⁴ Whilst von Derp's cross-dressing was understood to be part of her artistic conceit, merely an 'élégant travesti' [elegant travesty] in the words of Vuillermoz, Sacharoff's cross-dressing was not just performative masquerade for these critics, since he 'n'est jamais homme tout à fait' [is never entirely a man].⁹⁵ Such comments, despite their pejorative intentions, signal an implicit recognition of transgendered embodiment on and beyond the stage.

Ruprecht has shown how accusations of effeminacy and preciousness again came to the fore with the introduction of Sacharoff's Baroque dances, *Pavane Royale* (also known as *Au Temps du Grand Siècle*) in 1919 (fig. 6).⁹⁶ She points to the sense of untimeliness raised by a number of critics, or more particularly their discomfort at seeing the past rendered material in the historicizing performance: 'he came to Berlin to show us that for being fully up-to-date, we are far too little decadent and hermaphrodite'.⁹⁷ Critics such as Rudolf von Delius and Brandenburg stressed

Sacharoff's subjective interpretation of the period, the former claiming a dandy-like irony, the latter that the Baroque was 'niemals Historie' [never history] for the performer, but something experienced or lived.⁹⁸ These descriptions run close to the discussions of *Stimmung* (loosely translated as atmosphere) popular in Munich's phenomenological circles at the time.⁹⁹ More particularly, they suggest a form of historical intervention based on an empathetic engagement with the past; or, as Ruprecht describes it, a re-enactment rather than reconstruction of the Baroque.



Fig. 6: Alexander Sacharoff, 'Pavane Royale/Au Temps du Grand Siècle', photograph, n.d., from the music scrapbook of Sophie Braslau.
Jerome Robbins, Dance Collection, New York Public Library.

German and French critics certainly suggested that watching Sacharoff on stage was like witnessing the recovery of a past age. In 1924 Edmond Locard explained this in relation to both *Visione del Quattrocento* and *Au Temps du Grand Roi*, ‘il tend à exprimer par des attitudes le sens général d’une époque ou d’une psychologie’ [by these poses, he seeks to express the general sense of an epoch or of a psychology].¹⁰⁰ Sacharoff appeared to be able to evoke the spirit of the past with tangible reality, as in *Les Visions de la Renaissance* ‘où le grand style de Bach est rendu presque visible par ces marches’ [where the grand style of Bach is made almost visible by these steps].¹⁰¹ Another critic, accompanying an image of Sacharoff in ecclesiastical costuming, likewise characterized the dance as ‘ein lebensvolle Bild der Renaissance’ [an animated image of the Renaissance].¹⁰² In a pamphlet dating from 1926, one author wrote that the appearance of historical veracity was so convincing that the couple even appeared to break the boundary between human and artwork:

Ils ressemblent ainsi à des figures accomplies, détachées d’un tableau, d’une fresque [...]. Voici passer un bel ange, une Madone, des jeunes filles enlacées sur un fond d’église gothique, de palais florentins ou de bois d’oranges; voici la Niké de Délos, le page du XV^{me} siècle.

[They thus resemble finished works, detached from a tableau, from a fresco, from a bas-relief [...]. Here passes a beautiful angel, a Madonna, entwined girls from the back of a gothic church, Florentine palaces or a wood of orange trees; here is the Nike of Delos, the page from the fifteenth century].¹⁰³

Sacharoff, it seemed, not only troubled the boundaries between sexes, but overstepped the human-object boundary, and even questioned the status of singular personhood through his partnership with von Derp. Such critics engaged with Sacharoff’s performances on an affective level, as if they could feel slippages in time and selfhood as they watched Sacharoff on stage. The artwork comparison offered a stable ground on which to articulate this sensation, whether it be a troubling transgression of established gender norms or a pleasurable surpassing of the boundaries of the human. Historicity, in this sense, was conceived as experiential and corporeal. Decadent historicism as conceived by Sacharoff and his critics opened up a capacity of the body to be an archive, drawing the viewer into a frequently disconcerting confrontation with the living past.

This archival body not only helps us to address the strange histories of embodied knowledge present in performance practice at the beginning of the twentieth century but offers a route through which to situate trans histories in relation to historical style. The example of Sacharoff helps us to recognize the historical contingency of trans expression, allowing us to historicize the forms of its expression at the same time as pointing to its existence beyond a legal, medical or psychiatric framework. Sacharoff did not turn to these latter institutions for self-identity; he found instead personal and social recognition through the cultural imaginary of the Renaissance, a locale heavy with the cultural accretion of previous decades. This decadent Renaissance offered both Sacharoff and his critics a route through which to articulate an embodied and situated knowledge of gender beyond the binary. By paying attention to the forms of self-knowledge engendered in performance, we can conceptualize a form of historical personhood centred around an individual's capacity to self-determine, whilst remaining aware of its necessary conjunction with historically situated forms of cultural legibility. Sacharoff therefore offers a starting point through which to uncover trans histories of the decadent Renaissance.

¹ F.[riedrich] M.[öhl], 'Tanzabend Alexander Sacharoff', *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 4 June 1910, p. 2, Deutsches Tanzarchiv (DTK)-TIS-83; N. N., 'Tanzabend der Sacharoff', *Münchener Zeitung*, 6 June 1910, p. 4, DTK-TIS-83. See also account by Hans Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1921), p. 124. In addition to the Renaissance dances, Sacharoff danced a set of antique works to the compositions of Thomas von Hartmann. My thanks to the archivists at the DTK, the Lenbachhaus, the New York Public Library, and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) for their assistance in navigating the collections. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

² For instance, in a diary entry on 21 June 1910: 'Abends fahren wir zum Tanzabend von Alexander Sacharoff [...] Das ist ja die Personifikation von Kunst!' [In the evening we went to the dance recital of Alexander Sacharoff [...] Truly the personification of art!]. Grete Gulbransson, *Der grüne Vogel des Äthers. Tagebücher*, vol. 1, ed. by Ulrike Lang, (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 1998), p. 307. See also the reactions in Hans Brandenburg, *München leuchtete: Jugenderinnerungen* (Munich: Herbert Neuner, 1953), p. 433.

³ F. M., 'Tanzabend', p. 2.

⁴ Joseph Bristow, 'Decadent Historicism', *Volupté: Interdisciplinary Journal of Decadence Studies*, 3.1 (2020), 1–27.

⁵ Bristow, p. 4.

⁶ Dominic Janes, *Prefiguring Oscar Wilde: Queer Fashioning and British Caricature, 1750-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). See also Dustin Friedman, *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2019), esp. p. 6.

⁷ For use of 'locale' see Janes, p. 93, p. 208, and pp. 223–24.

⁸ For the German-specific notion of 'Renaissancismus' see Gerd Uekermann, *Renaissancismus und Fin-de-Siècle* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), especially pp. 3–41 and pp. 127–73. On Pater see Hilary Fraser, 'British Decadence and Renaissance Italy', in *Decadence: A Literary History*, ed. by Alex Murray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 47–64. For an example on the afterlife of decadence see Kristin Mahoney, *Literature and the Politics of Post-Victorian Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

- ⁹ Yvonne Ivory, *The Homosexual Revival of Renaissance Style, 1850-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Patricia Pulham, *The Sculptural Body in Victorian Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020); and Will Fisher, 'The Sexual Politics of Victorian Historiographical Writing about the "Renaissance"', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 14.1 (2008), 41–67.
- ¹⁰ For an overview of their career together, see Nina Hümpfel, 'Die Sacharoffs', in *Ausdruckstanz: Eine mitteleuropäische Bewegung der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 1992), pp. 377–82.
- ¹¹ An unpublished manuscript makes it clear that Sacharoff's choreography for von Derp's spring dance was based on Botticelli's treatment of the same subject: as in 'Alexander Sacharoff: Clotilde', in *Die Sacharoffs: Zwei Tänzer aus dem Umkreis des Blauen Reiters*, ed. by Frank-Manuel Peter and Rainer Stamm (Cologne: Wienand, 2002), pp. 153–55 (p. 153).
- ¹² For an overview of development of *Ausdruckstanz*, see *Jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer: Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland zwischen 1900 und 1945*, ed. by Hedwig Müller and Patricia Stöckmann (Giessen: Anabas, 1993). On Weimar dance culture see Kate Elswit, *Watching Weimar Dance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and Yvonne Hardt, *Politische Körper: Ausdruckstanz, Choreographien des Protests und die Arbeiterkulturbewegung in der Weimarer Republik* (Münster: Lit, 2004).
- ¹³ See Patrizia Veroli, *Clotilde e Alexandre Sakharoff, un mito della danza fra teatro e avanguardie artistiche* (Bologna: Bora, 1991); Claudia Jeschke, 'Anverwandlungen und Übergänge – Die Sacharoffs', in *Kaleidoskope des Tanzes. Tanz & Archiv: Forschungsreisen* (Munich: epodium, 2017), pp. 58–75; and *Die Sacharoffs*, ed. by Peter and Stamm.
- ¹⁴ For instance, Émile Vuillermoz, *Clotilde et Alexandre Sakharoff* (Lausanne: Éditions Centrales, 1933), and J. L., 'Clotilde et Alexandre Sakharoff viennent de donner à Paris avec succès', *Vogue*, 1 March 1928, p. 27.
- ¹⁵ Lucia Ruprecht, 'Gestural Drag', in *Gestural Imaginaries: Dance and Cultural Theory in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 169–92. See also the concept of temporal drag in Elisabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), esp. pp. 61–65.
- ¹⁶ See the special issue of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* on this subject, which uses the asterix to hinge 'trans' and 'historicity' together at the same time as opening a space for its interrogation: in particular Leah DeVun and Zeb Tortici, 'Trans, Time and History' and M. W. Bychowski et al., 'Trans*historicity: A Roundtable Discussion', *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 5 (2018), 518–39 and 658–85.
- ¹⁷ See especially Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) and Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Re-enactment* (London: Routledge, 2011).
- ¹⁸ On 24 March 1911, Sacharoff performed 'Zwei Tanzstudien nach den Meistern der italienischen Frührenaissance. Musik von Palestrina u. Orlando di Lasso' and 'Tanzstudie nach den Meistern der italienischen Frührenaissance. Musik von Cl. Monteverdi' at Museum Folkwang, Haagen. The next year, on 26 March 1912, he performed 'Drei Tanzstudien nach dem Meistern der Italienischen Frührenaissance. Palestrina, Orlando di Lasso, Cl. Monteverdi' and 'Tanz im Stile "Renaissance". Frescobaldi' at the same location. Deutsches Tanzarchiv DTK-TIS-83.
- ¹⁹ This had appeared in various forms from the outset of Sacharoff's career. A 1913 photograph by the Gilbert René studio depicts Sacharoff in 'Vision aus dem 15. Jahrhundert': see Stamm, 'Alexander Sacharoff - Bildende Kunst und Tanz', in *Die Sacharoffs*, ed. by Peter and Stamm, pp. 11–45 (pp. 42–43). Stamm, 'Alexander Sacharoff - Bildende Kunst und Tanz', pp. 42–43. In 1917, 'Vision de Renaissance' appears on a programme for a performance in Basel, then as 'Vision von der Renaissance' in 1919 for another performance in Basel, then in Paris in 1921 finally as 'Visione del Quattrocento', appearing in this form regularly until the 1930s.
- ²⁰ Jeschke and Rainer Krenstetter, 'Intermedialitäten. Alexander Sacharoff in Bild und Bewegung', in *Tanzfotografie: Historiografische Reflexionen der Moderne*, ed. by Tessa Jahn, Eike Wittrock and Isa Wortelkamp (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2016), pp. 124–25. This is reflected in the Sacharoffs' writings, for instance Clotilde's grouping of the sacred dances: 'il y a ainsi des danse saintes [...] *La Mort de Saint Sébastien*, dans *Visione del Quattrocento*': Clotilde von Derp, 'Ce que la danse est pour nous' in *Conferencia*, 33.16 (1938), 220. Deutsches Tanzarchiv DTK-TIS-83.
- ²¹ Isadora Duncan, *Der Tanz der Zukunft* (Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs, 1903), and Gabriele Brandstetter, 'Dance in the Museum', in *Poetics of Dance: Body, Image, and Space in the Historical Avant-Garde*, trans. by Elena Polzer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 32–65. On Botticelli in Duncan, see Ann Daly, *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America* (Wesleyan ed. Middletown Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), pp. 92–96.
- ²² Daly, 'Isadora Duncan and the Distinction of Dance', *American Studies*, 35.1 (1994), 5–23; and Daly, 'Isadora Duncan's Dance Theory', *Dance Research Journal*, 26.2 (1994), 24–31.
- ²³ Isadora Duncan, *The Dance* [1903] (Berkeley: University of California, 1989), p. 21.
- ²⁴ Duncan, *My Life* [1927] (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013), pp. 150–51. See also *Isadora & Elizabeth Duncan in Deutschland*, ed. by Frank-Manuel Peter (Cologne: Wienand, 2000).
- ²⁵ Brandenburg, *München leuchtete*, p. 433; as cited and translated in Stamm, 'Alexander Sacharoff - Bildende Kunst und Tanz', p. 28.
- ²⁶ Brandenburg, *Der moderne Tanz* (Munich, 1913), <https://www.sk-kultur.de/tanz/sacharoff/seiten/text_3.html> [accessed 14 December 2021]. This is repeated in later revised editions, such as Brandenburg, *Der moderne Tanz* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1921), p. 150.
- ²⁷ Brandenburg, *Der moderne Tanz*, p. 150.

- ²⁸ '[E]mprisonné dans sa robe trop lourde' [imprisoned in his overly heavily robe]. Vuillemoz, *Clotilde et Alexandre Sakharoff*, p. 60.
- ²⁹ See especially Sander Gilman, 'Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine, and Literature', *Critical Inquiry*, 12.1 (1985), 204–42, and Robin Mitchell, *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2020).
- ³⁰ On anti-Semitism in reception of Sacharoff, particularly prevalent in the criticism of Brandenburg, see Ross Dickinson, 'Blood and Make-Believe: Race, Identity and Performance', *Dancing in the Blood: Modern Dance and European Culture on the Eve of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108164573>> [accessed 14 December 2021]. On the idea of Jewish decadence see Jonathan Freedman, *The Jewish Decadence: Jews and the Aesthetics of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021). On the idea of Catholic decadence see Martin Lockerd, *Decadent Catholicism and the Making of Modernism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).
- ³¹ Alfred Lichtwark, letter dated 24 May 1913, as cited in Stamm, 'Alexander Sacharoff - Bildende Kunst und Tanz', p. 35; Rudolf von Delius, 'Alexander Sacharoff (1913)', in *Mary Wigman* (Dresden: Reissner, 1925), p. 16.
- ³² On this see Jeremy Melius, 'Art History and the Invention of Botticelli' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of California, 2010), pp. 143–46.
- ³³ Max Nordau, *Entartung* [1892] (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), p. 19. See Hans-Peter Söder, 'Disease and Health as Contexts of Modernity: Max Nordau as a Critic of fin-de-siècle Modernism', *German Studies Review*, 14.3 (1991), 473–87, and Florian Krobb, 'Die Kunst der Väter tödtet das Leben der Enkel': Decadence and Crisis in Fin-de-Siècle German and Austrian Discourse', *New Literary History*, 35.4 (2004), 547–62.
- ³⁴ Sasha Dovzhyk, 'Beardsley Men in Early Twentieth-Century Russia: Modernising Decadent Masculinity', *Modernist Cultures*, 16.2 (2021), 191–215.
- ³⁵ 'Sarah Bernhardt et le Musée Louvre ont été mes premier maîtres'. Alexander Sacharoff, 'Mes Maîtres', in *Clotilde et Alexandre Sakharoff* (Paris: Brunoff, 1922), n.p.
- ³⁶ This was an important feature of Duncan's career from the outset: 'To dance as I dance [...] you must have studied the art galleries of the Old World': as quoted in 'Philosophy in the Dance', *New York Times*, 17 April 1898, p. 14. For a discussion of the significance of museal dance see Brandstetter, *Poetics of Dance*, pp. 32–87.
- ³⁷ Lenard R. Berlanstein, 'Breeches and Breaches: Cross-Dress Theater and the Culture of Gender Ambiguity in Modern France', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 38.2 (1996), 338–68, and Carol Ockman, 'Was She Magnificent?', in *Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama*, ed. by Ockman and Kenneth E. Silver (London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 23–74 (pp. 39–51).
- ³⁸ 'Rita Sacchetto und Alexander Sacharoff', *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 June 1912, p. 553. On Sacchetto see Mary Simonson, 'Dancing Pictures: Rita Sacchetto's *Tanz-Bilder*' in *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 106–33.
- ³⁹ Brandenburg, *Der moderne Tanz*, pp. 147–48.
- ⁴⁰ On this, see Susan Stryker, 'Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin', *GLQ*, 10.2 (2004), 212–15 and Caél M. Keegan, 'Against Queer Theory', *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 7.3 (2020), 349–43.
- ⁴¹ Patrizia Veroli, 'Alexander Sacharoff as Symbolist Dancer', *Experiment*, 2.1 (1996), 48–49.
- ⁴² Heike Bauer, for instance, has charted the 'making of a gendered sexual theory'. Heike Bauer, 'Theorizing Female Inversion: Sexology, Discipline and Gender at the Fin de Siècle', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 18.1 (2009), 84–102 (p. 85). See also Emily Rutherford's summary of this turn in 'Review of Female Husbands: A Trans History, by Jen Manion', *The English Historical Review* (2021), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/ceab221>> [accessed 14 December 2021].
- ⁴³ See Robert Beachy, 'The German Invention of Homosexuality', *The Journal of Modern History*, 82.4 (2010), 801–38; Gert Hekma, 'A Female Soul in a Male Body: Sexual Inversion as Gender Inversion in Nineteenth-Century Sexology', in *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), pp. 213–40; and Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).
- ⁴⁴ On the latter, see especially Penny Farfan, *Performing Queer Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- ⁴⁵ Alexander Sacharoff, 'Bemerkungen über den Tanz', Concert Programme, Munich, 21 June 1910, <https://www.sk-kultur.de/tanz/sacharoff/seiten/text_1.html> [accessed 14 December 2021].
- ⁴⁶ On sexual reformers turning to antiquity see for instance Havelock Ellis and J. A. Symonds, *Conträre Geschlechtsgefühl* (Leipzig: Georg H. Wigand Verlag, 1896). On antiquity and dance see *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World: Responses to Greek and Roman Dance*, ed. by Fiona Macintosh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), and Samuel Dorf, *Performing Antiquity: Ancient Greek Music and Dance from Paris to Delphi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
- ⁴⁷ Hans Brandenburg, 'Alexander Sacharoff (1913)', <https://www.sk-kultur.de/tanz/sacharoff/seiten/text_3.html> [accessed 14 December 2021] and Francis Markus Huebner, 'Alexander Sacharoff', *Phoebus: Monatschrift für Ästhetik und Kritik des Theaters*, 1.3 (1914), 101–04, <https://www.sk-kultur.de/tanz/sacharoff/seiten/text_4.html> [accessed 14 December 2021]. See Jules Gill-Peterson's discussion of the 'slippery diagnostic matrix that attempted to manage the relations that linked homosexuality, sexual inversion,

hermaphroditism, and transvestism'. Jules Gill-Peterson, *Histories of the Transgender Child* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), p. 60.

⁴⁸ See Ross Brooks, 'Transforming Sexuality: The Medical Sources of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-95) and the Origins of the Theory of Bisexuality', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 67.2 (2012), 176–216.

⁴⁹ Most famously Sigmund Freud's description of primary bisexuality in *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905): see Esther Rapoport, 'Bisexuality in Psychoanalytic Theory: Interpreting the Resistance', *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9.3-4 (2009), 279–95. Sutton has shown that the 'transvestite case' emerged as a central site for the competing scientific legitimation of psychoanalysis and sexology in this period. Katie Sutton, 'The Case of the Transvestite', *Sex Between Body and Mind: Psychoanalysis and Sexology in the German-speaking World, 1890s-1930s* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), pp. 173-201.

⁵⁰ Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 22–26.

⁵¹ Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Transvestiten: eine Untersuchung über den erotischen Verkleidungstrieb mit umfangreichem casuistischen und historischen Material* (1910). See also Hirschfeld's anonymously published text *Was Soll das Volk vom dritten Geschlecht wissen?* (1901) as well as his *Berlins Dritte Geschlecht* (1904). On the early history of trans legal and social recognition in Germany see Sutton, "'We too deserve a place in the sun': The Politics of Transvestite Identity in Weimar Germany", *German Studies Review*, 35.2 (2012), 335–54.

⁵² The term 'embodiment' holds a central place in trans studies. See especially Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Hil Malatino, 'Nomad Science', *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1.1-2 (2014), 138–40; and Eliza Steinbock, *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment, and the Aesthetics of Change* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

⁵³ Veroli, 'Mirror and the Hieroglyph', in *Die Sacharoffs*, ed. by Peter and Stamm, pp. 169–217 (p. 190); 'als Modell saß ihm oft der Tänzer Sacharoff, den er zu diesem Zweck als Frau und Spanierin mit Fächer und Mantilla verkleidete' [the dancer Sacharoff sat often for him as a model, dressed for this purpose as a woman and as a Spanish girl with fans and mantilla]. Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke, *Erinnerungen an August Macke* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1987), pp. 140–41.

⁵⁴ Yvonne Ivory, 'Gertrud Eysoldt and the Persistence of Decadence on the German Avant-Garde Stage', *Volupté: Interdisciplinary Journal of Decadence Studies*, 2.1 (2019), 16–38. On the latter text's reworking of German sexual categories, see Claudia Breger, 'Feminine Masculinities: Scientific and Literary Representations of "Female Inversion" at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 14.1-2 (2005), 76–106.

⁵⁵ See Marina Dmitrieva, 'Transcending Gender: Cross-Dressing as a Performative Practice of Women Artists of the Avant-Garde', in *Marianne Werefkin and the Women Artists in Her Circle*, ed. by Tanja Malycheva and Isabel Wünsche (Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 123–36; and Natalia Budanova, 'Utopian Sex: the metamorphosis of androgynous imagery in Russian art of the pre- and post-revolutionary period', in *Utopian Reality: Reconstructing Culture in Revolutionary Russia and Beyond*, ed. by Christina Lodder, Maria Kokkri and Maria Mileeva (Brill: Leiden, 2013), pp. 25–41.

⁵⁶ As in Shulamith Behr, 'Performing the Wom/Man: The "Interplay" between Marianne Werefkin and Else Lasker-Schüler', in *Marianne Werefkin and the Women Artists in Her Circle*, ed. by Malycheva and Wünsche, pp. 92–105 (p. 99). See also Behr, 'The Dynamics of Gendered and Artistic Identity and Creativity', in *German Expressionism: Der Blaue Reiter and its Legacies*, ed. by Dorothy Price (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 34–50 (pp. 39–40).

⁵⁷ See reproduction of sketches in Behr, 'Veiling Venus: Gender and Painterly Abstraction in Early German Modernism', in *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality*, ed. by Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 126–42 (pp. 138–41).

⁵⁸ John C. Fout, 'Sexual Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Male Gender Crisis, Moral Purity, and Homophobia', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2.3 (1992), 388–421. See also Peter Jalevich, 'Munich as Cultural Center: Politics and the Arts', in *Kandinsky in Munich, 1896-1944* (New York: Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1982), pp. 17–26.

⁵⁹ Edward Ross Dickinson, "'Must we dance naked?": Art, Beauty, and Law in Munich and Paris, 1911–1913', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 20.1 (2011), 95–131.

⁶⁰ A. M., 'Tanzabend Alexander Sacharoff', *Münchener Neuste Nachrichten*, 4 June 2010, p. 2.

⁶¹ Huebner, 'Alexander Sacharoff', <https://www.sk-kultur.de/tanz/sacharoff/seiten/text_4.html> [accessed 14 December 2021]; *Münchener Neuste Nachrichten*, 2 July 1912. Deutsches Tanzarchiv DTK-TIS-83.

⁶² Huebner, 'Alexander Sacharoff'.

⁶³ Many had never even seen a male solo dancer before: see Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1995), esp. pp. 11–15.

⁶⁴ On this see Christine Achinger, 'Allegories of Destruction: "Woman" and "the Jew" in Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*', *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*, 88.2 (2013), 121–49.

⁶⁵ Huebner, 'Alexander Sacharoff'.

⁶⁶ 'Tanzaufritte besuchen heißt, sich dem Geschlecht gegenüberzustellen' [Attending dance performances means confronting gender]. Huebner, 'Alexander Sacharoff'.

⁶⁷ Anton Linder, 'Der tanzende Russe', *Neue Hamburger Zeitung*, 1 April 1912, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Karl Wirth, *Autobiography of Ideas*, ed. by Roland Jaeger (Berlin, 1997), pp. 48–49, as cited and translated in Stamm, p. 32.

- ⁶⁹ Marion Thain, 'Arthur Symons's Impressionist Epistemology: Decadence and Embodied Cognition', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 63.1 (2020), 48–72.
- ⁷⁰ Sacharoff, 'Quelques mots sur le costume', Concert Programme, Lausanne, 1926, p. 1. Deutsches Tanzarchiv DTK-TIS-83.
- ⁷¹ Timothy Campbell, *Historical Style: Fashion and the New Mode of History 1740-1830* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 281.
- ⁷² Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*, pp. 151–52.
- ⁷³ Sacharoff, 'How I arrange my dances', undated manuscript, after 1920s, p. 4. Deutsches Tanzarchiv DTK-TIS.83.
- ⁷⁴ See, for instance, reproductions of sketchbooks with notations transposing Renaissance artworks into dance in Stamm, 'Alexander Sacharoff – Bildende Kunst und Tanz', pp. 14–15.
- ⁷⁵ Carolyn Williams, *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), esp. pp. 68–72. This is evocative of Raphael Samuel's claim that 'aesthetes rather than historians are responsible for constituting our notions of "period"'. Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 41.
- ⁷⁶ Arnold Schoenberg, *Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents*, ed. by Jelena Hahl-Koch, trans. by John C. Crawford (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 149. Kandinsky uses Sacharoff as his exemplar for the modern dancer: Wassily Kandinsky, *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche: Ein Beitrag zur Analyse der malerischen Elemente* (Munich: Bauhaus Bücher, 1928), p. 94.
- ⁷⁷ Thain, p. 56.
- ⁷⁸ Sacharoff, *Réflexions sur la Danse et la Musique* (Buenos Aires, 1943). Deutsches Tanzarchiv DTK-TIS-83.
- ⁷⁹ Sacharoff, *Réflexions*, p. 40.
- ⁸⁰ Sacharoff, *Réflexions*, p. 41.
- ⁸¹ This is typically decadent. See Catherine Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), and Jane Desmarais and Alice Condé, 'Introduction', in *Decadence and the Senses*, ed. by Jane Desmarais and Alice Condé (Cambridge: Legenda, 2017), p. 1.
- ⁸² For conceptualization of trans agency as distinct to other theorizations of agency, see Troy Kilgannon, 'Arts of Survival: Alternative Historiographies of Trans Agency' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2021), esp. pp. 16–18.
- ⁸³ Sacharoff, 'How I arrange my dances', p. 3. For development of this notion of 'racial capital' see Kyla Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), esp. p. 12.
- ⁸⁴ On Sacharoff's choreography and extant notation, see Rose Breuss, Julia Mach, and Ursula Brandstätter, 'Auf den Spuren der Pavane Royale von Alexander Sacharoff', in *Klänge in Bewegung: Spurensuchen in Choreografie und Performance*, ed. by Sabine Karoß and Stephanie Schroedter (Bielefeld: transcript-Verlag, 2017), pp. 45–64. See also reconstructions of individual dances by Jeschke in Stella Tinsberg's documentary film *Poeten des Tanzes – Die Sacharoffs* (2012), <<https://tanzfonds.de/en/project/documentation-2012/sacharoff-research-project/>> [accessed 14 December 2021]. Veroli describes *Visione del Quattrocento* as 'a slow walk, or rather slide, around the stage, a series of poses': Veroli, 'The Mirror and the Hieroglyph' p. 186.
- ⁸⁵ Anton Linder, 'Der tanzende Russe', *Neue Hamburger Zeitung*, 1 April 1912, pp. 1–2 (p. 2).
- ⁸⁶ Linder, 'Der tanzende Russe', p. 2.
- ⁸⁷ It therefore repeats a key decadent trope of the 'erotic experience in and with artifice'. Kostas Boyiopoulos, *The Decadent Image: The Poetry of Wilde, Symons, and Dowson* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p. 4; see also Sara Ahmed's twinning of disgust and desire in Sara Ahmed, 'The Performativity of Disgust', in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 81–100.
- ⁸⁸ Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* (Berlin: Fischer, 1922), p. 58.
- ⁸⁹ Karl Ernst Osthaus, *Hagener Zeitung*, 22 March 1911, cited in Osthaus, *Reden und Schriften*, ed. by Rainer Stamm (Cologne: König, 2002), p. 153. On the contemporary concern with race, nation and ethnicity in criticism see Ross Dickinson, 'Race and Aesthetics', in *Dancing in the Blood*, pp. 117–59.
- ⁹⁰ As cited in Stamm, p. 34. This idea of the dancer as 'lebende' [living] artwork had wider resonances: see Claudia Rieger, "'Lebende Bilder" und "Bewegte Plastik": Rita Sacchetto', in *Ausdruckstanz*, pp. 367–76.
- ⁹¹ On antiquity and the androgyne see Catriona MacLeod, *Embodying Ambiguity: Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998).
- ⁹² As cited and translated in Horst Koegler, 'A Single Being and a Single Soul with Two Bodies; Alexander and Clotilde Sacharoff and the Pre-World War I Munich Avant-Garde', *Dance Chronicle*, 26.2 (2003), 253–59 (p. 257).
- ⁹³ Legrand-Chabrier, 'Pour un Music-Hall d'Art', *Choses de théâtre: Cahiers mensuels de notes, d'études et de recherches théâtrales*, 10 (1921), 627–30 (p. 629).
- ⁹⁴ André Levinson, 'Théâtre des Champs-Élysées: Les Galas Sakharoff', *Comoedia*, 26 April 1924, p. 1.
- ⁹⁵ Vuillermoz, p. 34; Levinson, p. 1.
- ⁹⁶ Lucia Ruprecht, 'Gestural Drag', in *Gestural Imaginaries: Dance and Cultural Theory in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
- ⁹⁷ Hans Erasmus Fischer, 'Tänze um Mitternacht, Gloria Palast Berlin' (unknown), October 1928, as cited and trans. in *Gestural Imaginaries*, p. 173. This derivative formulation has strangely persisted: Karl Toepfer, for instance, describes 'Golliwog's Cakewalk' (1916) as 'virtually a transvestite performance' with little further explanation. Karl Toepfer,

Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture 1910-1935 (London: University of California Press, 1997), p. 222.

⁹⁸ Brandenburg, 'Alexander Sacharoff (1913)'.

⁹⁹ Gerhard Thonhauser, 'Beyond Mood and Atmosphere: a Conceptual History of the Term *Stimmung*', *Philosophia*, 49 (2021), 1247–65.

¹⁰⁰ Edmond Locard, 'Echo d'une Soirée Sakharoff à Lyon', *Unique Soirée de Danse Donnée par Clotilde et Alexandre Sakharoff*, Concert Programme, Opéra Royal Flamand, 1924. Deutsches Tanzarchiv DTK-TIS-83.

¹⁰¹ Concert Programme, Grand Théâtre de Lausanne, 1923. Deutsches Tanzarchiv DTK-TIS-83. Others saw this as a return to the true origins of dance, a popular theme at the time: 'la rénovation de l'art de la danse, en remontant à ses véritable sources, l'antiquité grecque, la Renaissance italienne, le Quattrocento' [the renovation of the art of dance, going back to its true sources: Greek antiquity, the Italian Renaissance, the fifteenth century]: 'Les Sakharoff, danseurs russes', 1922, newspaper clipping in Recueil factice de programmes de représentations données par Alexandre et Clotilde Sakharoff, 1921-1936. BnF, 8-RO-12755.

¹⁰² E. Hirschfeld, 'Die Sacharoffs Clotilde und Alexander', n.d. Deutsches Tanzarchiv DTK-TIS-83.

¹⁰³ L. Florentin, *Clotilde et Alexandre Sakharoff* (Lausanne, 1926), n.p. Deutsches Tanzarchiv DTK-TIS-83.