



Ballet

Composer of the Week



Ballet is a type of dance. Ballet dancers have special training and learn steps that have been used for hundreds of years.

A ballet tells a story through the medium of dance and mime only.

The person who devises the dances and steps is called a **choreographer**.



Ballet is nearly always performed to especially composed music. This music needs to be very descriptive, so as to help tell the story.

Can you remember a composer who wrote some famous ballets?



Tchaikovsky

Ballet began in Italy in 15th Century.

The word ballet derives from the Italian **ballo** which means dance.

It spread to France where it became very popular, especially at the court of **King Louis XIV**.

The king was a good dancer and at the age of 15 appeared as **Apollo** – the Sun God- in a ballet composed by **Jean Baptiste Lully**, **Ballet Royal de la Nuit**. (the royal dance of the Night). As a result people called him **The Sun King**.

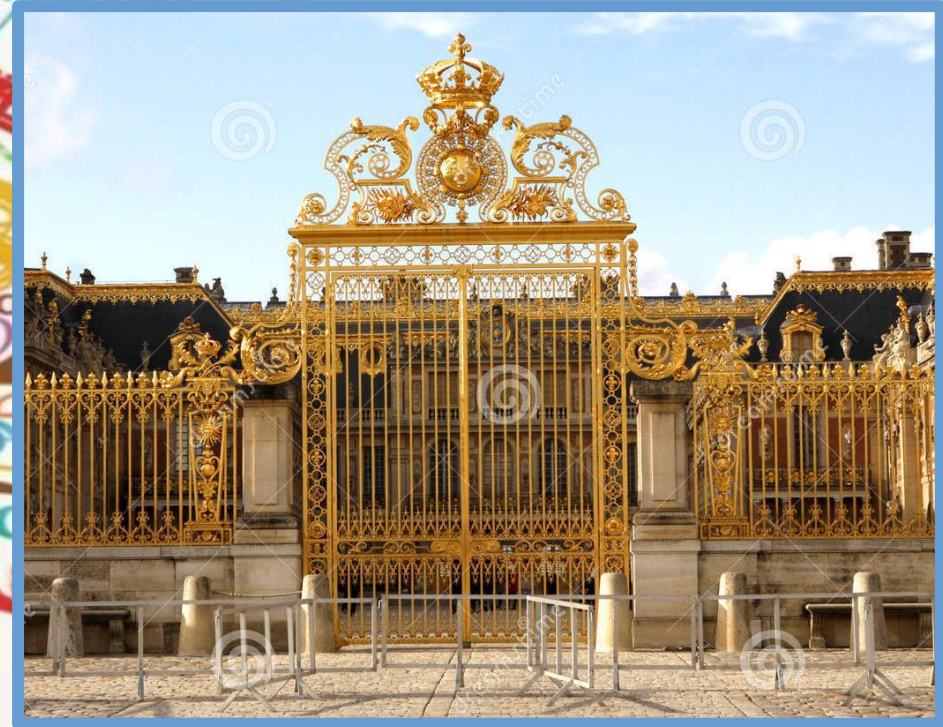


Listen to the music composed by
Jean-Baptiste Lully.

Jean-Baptiste Lully
BALLET ROYAL de LA NUIT



At Louis XIV's palace, on the outskirts of Paris, – **The Palace of Versailles** – you can still see many symbols of **the Sun King** both inside and outside.



The first ballet companies were formed at this time and the instructions for dancing were written down. This is why most ballet steps have French names.

Plié

To perform a plié, you bend your knees, or squat.



Pirouette

A pirouette is simply a turn.



Jeté

A jeté is a quick extension and lift of one leg to the front, back, or side.



Giselle is a famous French ballet written by **Adolphe Adam** in 1841.

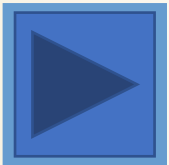
He is also famous for composing a Christmas Carol we know well –

O Holy Night.



Another famous French ballet composer is **Léo Delibes**.

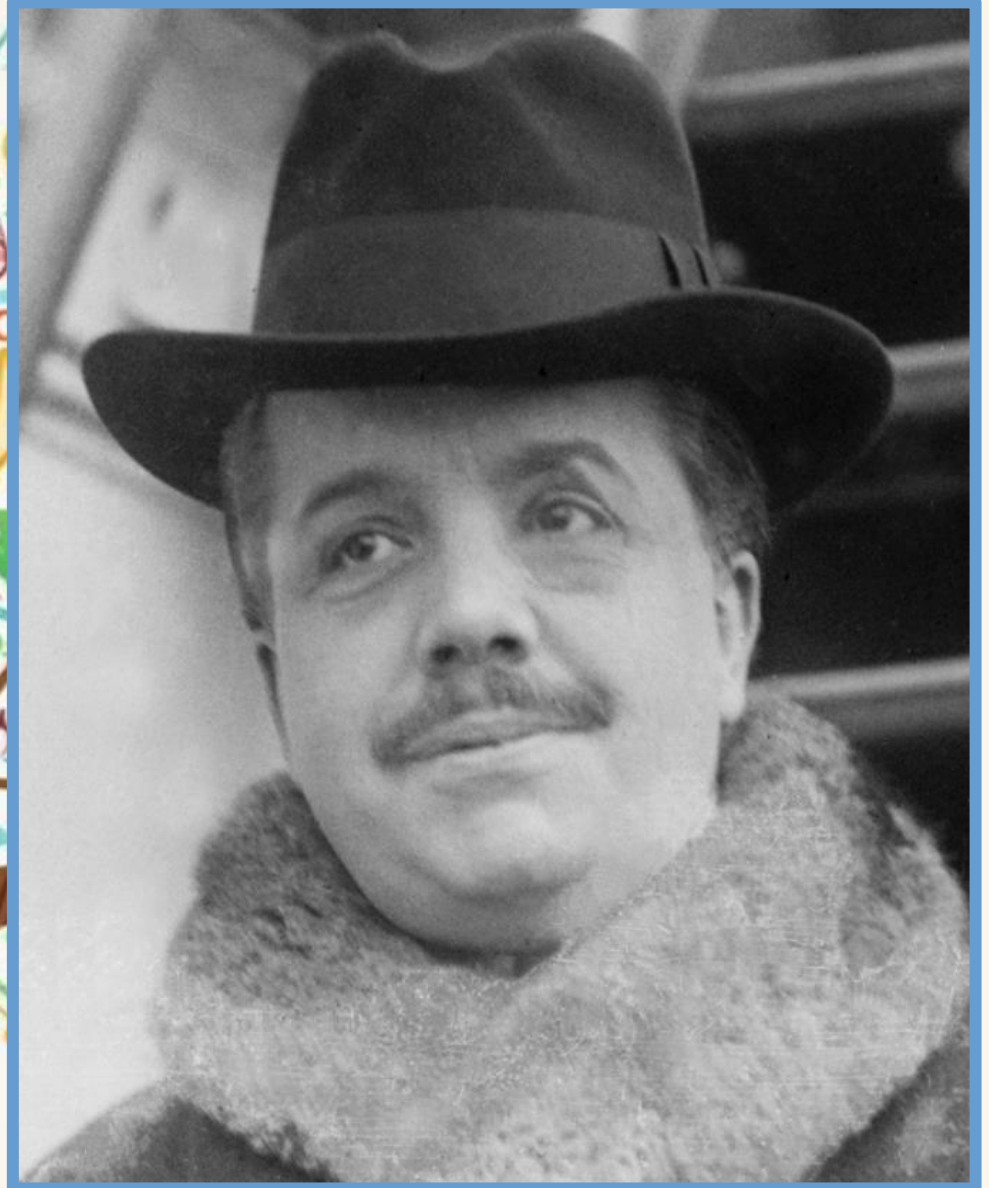
His most famous ballet ***Coppélia***, written in 1870, is about a life-like, dancing doll.



Ballet spread to other countries and became very popular in Russia.

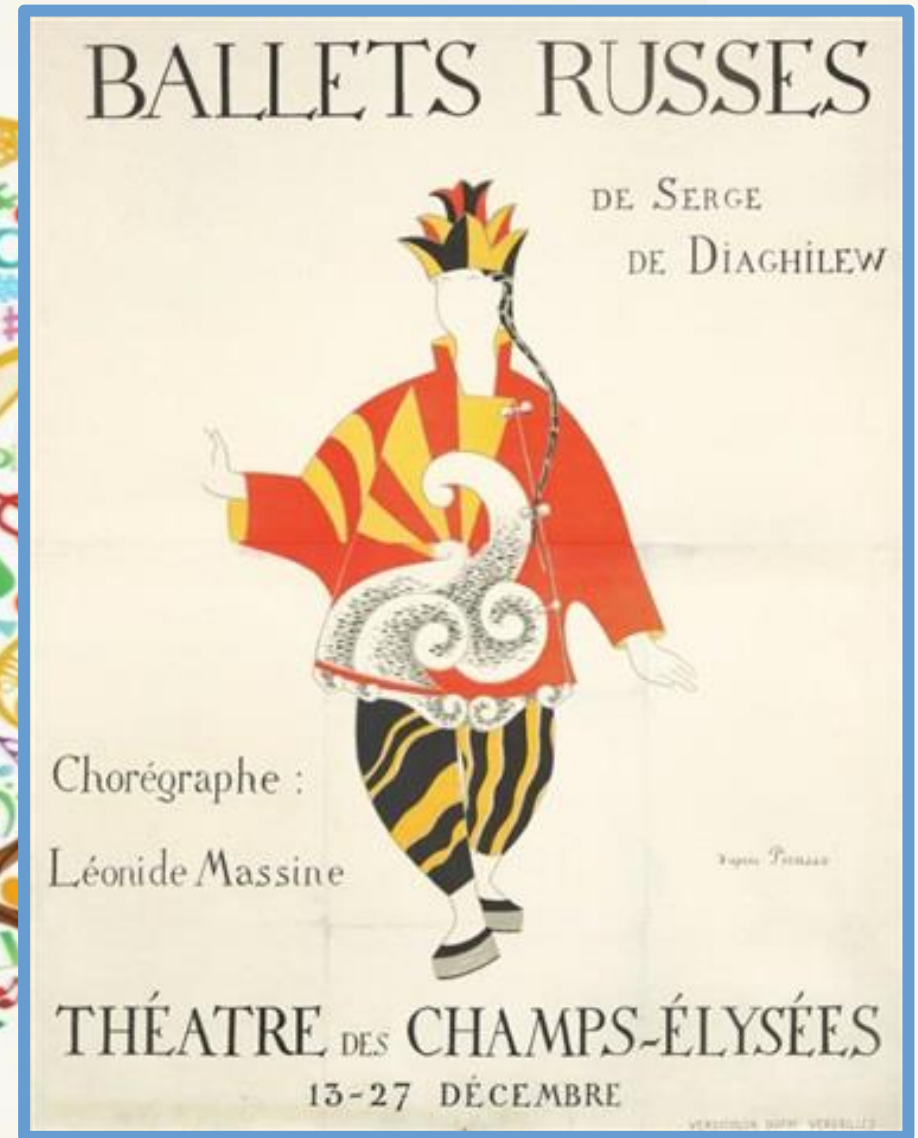
Russian ballet was more athletic than the classical French style.

The **Ballets Russes** was founded by **Sergei Diaghilev**, in Paris, at the beginning of 20th Century in 1909.



Diaghilev wanted to use the most talented artistic people of the time.

The composers **Igor Stravinsky, Claude Debussy, Sergei Prokofiev, Erik Satie and Maurice Ravel**, wrote ballets for the company while the artists **Picasso, Matisse and Kandinsky** designed sets and costumes, as well as **Leon Bakst and Coco Chanel**.



Picasso

The composer **Igor Stravinsky** wrote several ballets for Diaghilev.

The first was called **The Firebird**.

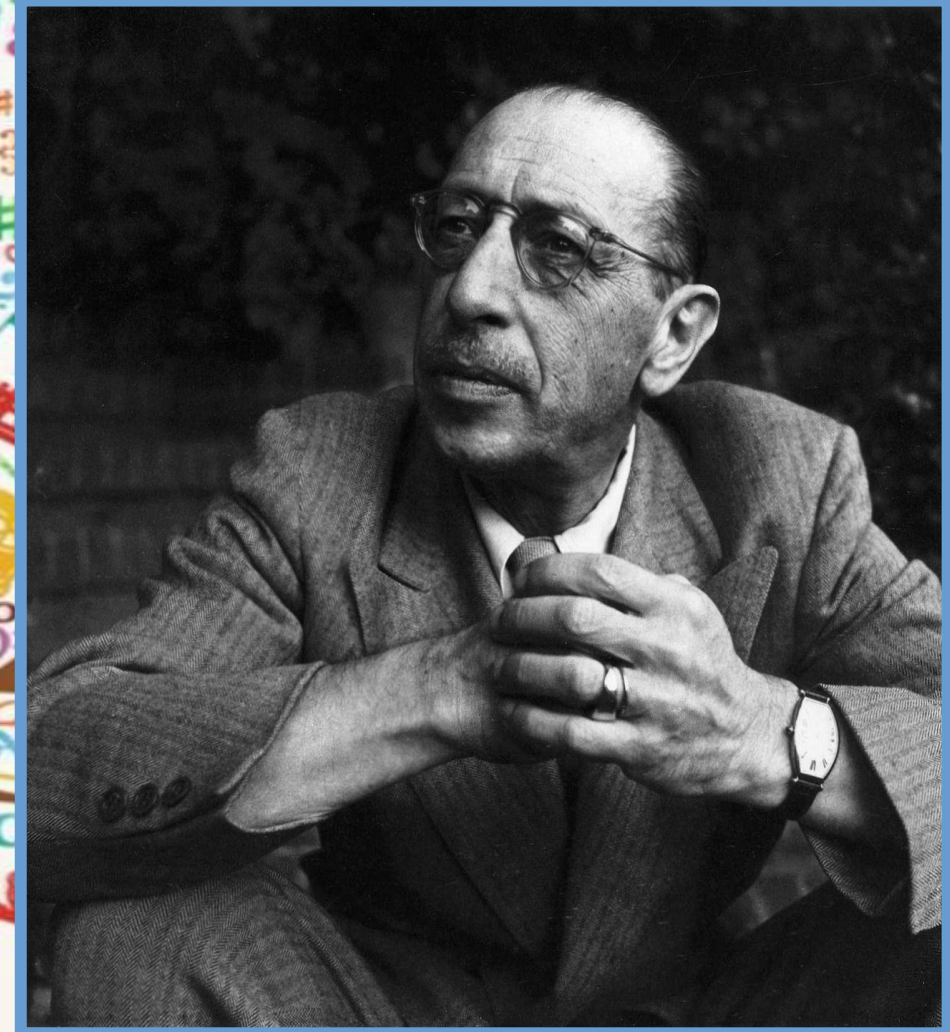
That's another name for the Phoenix – the bird of fire made famous in the Harry Potter books.



In 1913 **Stravinsky** wrote his most famous ballet, **Sacre du Printemps – The Rite of Spring**.

At the first performance the audience began shouting, fighting and rioting. **Stravinsky's** use of instruments, complex rhythms, harmonies and the savage nature of the work meant that the music was different to anything that had been heard before.

Imagine that happening today!



Many composers have used the plays of **Shakespeare** for their pieces and the Russian composer **Sergei Prokofiev** was no exception.

He composed his ballet **Romeo and Juliet** in 1935.

The Dance of the Knights (or Montagues and Capulets) is very famous.

Do you recognise it?





THE APPRENTICE

Different styles of Ballet developed in countries such as France, Italy, Russia and England. Ballet has always been popular in Britain.

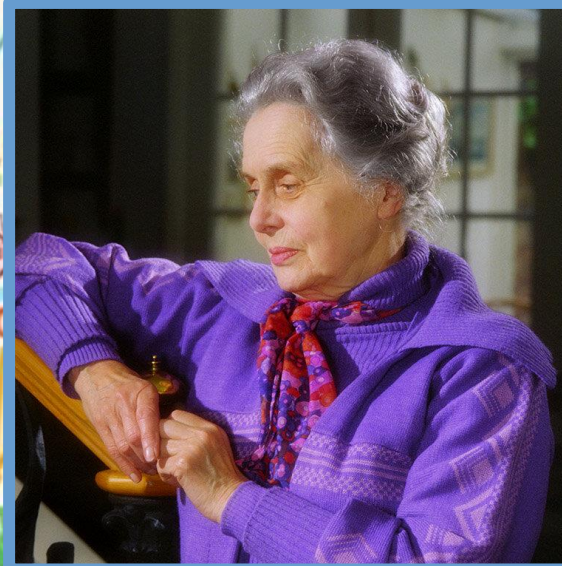
The Royal Academy of Dance (founded in 1920) brought all these different styles and rules together and today, it is the largest ballet teaching organisation in the world.

ROYAL ACADEMY OF
DANCE

In 1926 **Dame Marie Rambert** founded the first ballet company in the country called the **Ballet Club**. It is known today as **Rambert Dance Company**.



Dame Ninette de Valois was a dancer with the **Ballet Russes**, and founded the **Royal Ballet** in 1930.

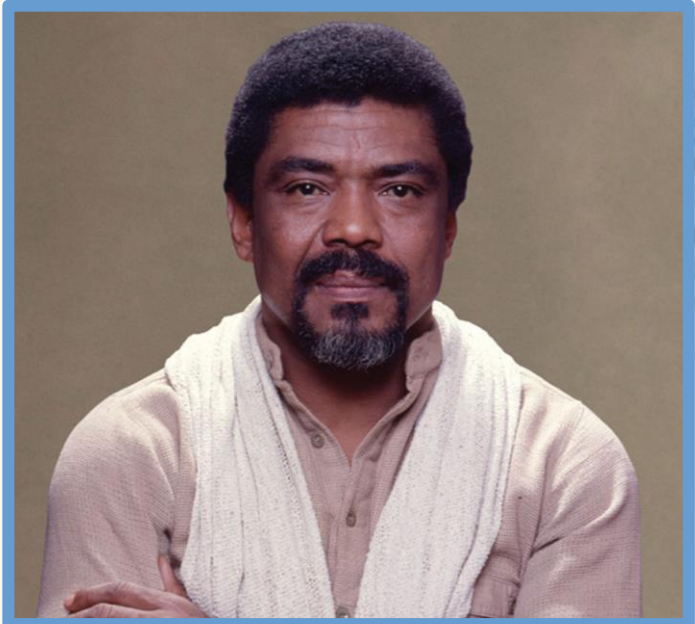


ROYAL
BALLET



Some modern ballets do not use especially composed music. The American **choreographer**, **Alvin Ailey**, used **Spirituals**, **Gospel Music** and **Blues** for his 1960 work **Revelations** which is based on his own African American and Christian upbringing.

This is the spiritual **Sinnerman**.



Kaija Saariaho's ballet **Maa** (Earth) was composed in 1991. The composer is from Finland and, like most modern ballets, **Maa** does not have a story. The music is dreamlike and evocative, it takes us on journeys, crossing the water to new and exciting worlds.



The music combines live instrumental playing with pre-prepared electronic tracks. It has seven **movements** (parts), is written for seven musicians and was originally meant for seven dancers.

This is No.6 **Fall** and is written for solo harp.





THE HARDER YOU
WORK FOR
SOMETHING, THE
GREATER YOU'LL
FEEL WHEN YOU
ACHIEVE IT.

SARAH LAMB
Principal, The Royal Ballet

BLOCH