

Prince Igor / designed by R.B. Sutcliffe.

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PRINCE IGOR

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Produced at Theatre du Chatelet, Paris, May 19th, 1909

A young Polovtsian Girl	<i>Sophia Fedorova</i>
A Polovtsian Woman	<i>Helen Smirnova</i>
A Polovtsian Chief	<i>Adolph Bolm</i>

Ballet in 1 Act

Music	<i>Alexander Borodine</i>
Choreography	<i>Michel Fokine</i>

It seems incredible at first glance that the man responsible for the gently mocking choreography of *Le Carnaval* could produce the wild and tempestuous Polovtsian dances from *Prince Igor*, yet this is, perhaps, the most obviously brilliant of Fokine's creations.

The scene is set in the camp of a fierce warrior chief where his followers and their women are grouped about their tents. The aspect is rugged and wild, well matched to the searing tempestuous music of Borodine. To the accompaniment of dirge-like chant the chief's favourite, dressed in vivid scarlet with a string of pearls entwined in her long dark plaits, leads the women in a slow sensuous dance which gives way suddenly to a quick wild rhythm as the chief himself leaps into the centre of the camp and gives a fierce and violent display indicative of his joy in his own physical powers. His men swiftly follow his example and the stage becomes charged with a vivid moving mass of colour while the dancers alternately advance and retreat, their bows and arrows being constantly drawn back in simulation of a chase, their leaps become higher and more frequent as the music rises to a frenzy to die away as the men fall back exhausted. Once more they watch the slower, graceful movements of the women which serve only to spur them on to attempting greater and more violent efforts. The chief again revels in his prowess and the warriors urge their flagging spirits to further feats. They jump high in the air their hands clapping sharply as one leaps swiftly over his neighbour to be imitated at once by the next; the plaits of the womenfolk fly out as they whirl faster and faster, the whole tribe spinning in circles which constantly widen and narrow around the central figures of the chief and his maiden until, as the primitive exciting music reaches a crashing crescendo, the women flee to the tents and the men expend their last strength in a great leap to follow them and remain poised on one knee, their bows held aloft in triumph.