KASIAN GOLEIZOVSKY
AND ECCENTRIC DANCE

Kasian Yaroslavovich Goleizovsky (1892-1970) first thought of founding his own ballet studio when he staged his miniature dance numbers during 1915 and 1916 at the Nevolin Intimate Theater while still a dancer with the Bolshoi Theater (Fig. 154). Goleizovsky choreographed these pieces to the music of Chopin and Scriabin, composers to whom he returned again and again throughout his professional career. In this way, Goleizovsky gained experience precisely in choreographing miniatures and also established contact with performers who were to become his ongoing colleagues, especially during his supervision of the Chamber Ballet between 1921 and 1924.

The first dancers to become members of the Chamber Ballet—Goleizovsky, Elena Adamovich, and Grigorii Pozhidaev—were mentioned in reviews of the Intimate Theater production of Mikhail Kuzmin's The Selection of the Bride in 1916:

Friday's ballet-pantomime, M. Kuzmin's The Selection of the Bride, had been staged previously at a private performance in the home of Mme. Nosova that only a chosen few were fortunate enough to attend. The lavish sets and brilliant costumes, and so on, elicited much talk.

Noteworthy in the Intimate Theater production was the performance of Mme. Adamovich, a dancer with the Imperial Ballet, in the title role. Kuzmin's ballet is semi-comic. It was beautifully conceived, illustrated with pleasant music, and elegantly staged. The ballet was preceded by a mannered prologue expressively recited by M. Borisoglebsky. . . . Mme. Adamovich has gained the sympathy of the ballet public for her prowess as a character dancer. Having engaged the dancer for an entire month, the Intimate Theater will probably afford us the opportunity of seeing her in scenes that suit her métier.1

Goleizovsky's major piece at the Intimate Theater was the one-act ballet *The Faun* (also known as *The Dance of the Nymphs* and *Fauns*) set to music by Ilia Sats. The influence of Goleizovsky's mentors at the Bolshoi Theater is clearly seen in this piece, for they, too, were enthusiasts of the Classical Greek forms of dance developed from Dionysian ritual that Isadora Duncan had introduced into ballet.

As soon as he won his independence, Goleizovsky set out to form his own company as well as a studio and school. In fact, the first "Outline for a Practical Theater School" (now in the Goleizovsky Archive in Moscow) is dated 1915 and just one year later he opened a private ballet school—the so called Ballet Arts Workshop. *Dances from Different Epochs*, *The Faun*, and *Pierrot's Nightmare* were included in the repertoire of the Workshop, pieces that, in 1918, also entered the repertoire of Goleizovsky's new Studio attached to the State Theater Institute. Reviews of *The Faun* appeared in the press and pupils from the Imperial ballet school took part in the Studio's productions. As a rule, the repertoire as well as the audiences that came to these performances were oriented towards the august conventions of the Bolshoi Theater, so it is not surprising that Goleizovsky's innovative production shocked spectators. The newspaper Velikaia Rossia [Great Russia] even labeled *The Faun* a "puppet show romp . . . that should not be allowed in a school" and was offended by the "futile waste of the energies of our shining youth. . . . One may hope that, in the future, similar misunderstandings in the Temple of Art will not be repeated under the aegis of such respected mentors as Vasilii Tikhomirov and Vera Mosolova." This marked the beginning of an open confrontation between Goleizovsky and conservative tradition.

The Studio's most significant piece was the *Tenth Sonata* (based on music by Scriabin) which was performed throughout the 1920s under various other titles (*Sonata*, *Sonata of Life and Death*, *The Sonata of Death and Movement*, and *White Mass*). Twelve women and six men performed the *Tenth Sonata*: the dancers were nameless and the female soloist (Nina Podgoretskaia, later a dancer with the Bolshoi) and the corps-de-ballet were dressed in identical long, white, shapeless robes. "I portrayed a bird surrounded by several youths who were pursuing me. They would catch hold of me and toss me up into the air," the ballerina recalled later.

Initial reviews dubbed *Tenth Sonata* the "hallucination of a madman," a response that was as candidly negative and peremptory as reviews of *The Faun* had been. Similar to a one-act ballet (at least in length), *Tenth

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2. S. Besonov, "Balet," Velikaia Rossia (Moscow), No. 26, July 4, 1918, p. 4.
3. Ibid.