More often than not, the history of twentieth-century dance is framed by the polarities of ballet and modern dance. While useful in a general way, this paradigm is far from adequate when applied to the broad spectrum of turn-of-the-century dance in Europe. Especially problematic is the assumption that in European centers like Paris choreographic activity by women was a phenomenon uniquely associated with the progenitors of modern dance.

Although women may have been a rarity at the Paris Opéra, many served as ballet mistresses at less illustrious institutions, including the Opéra-Comique, music halls such as the Folies-Bergère, which had its own ballet troupe, and theaters such as the Châtelet, which specialized in spectacle shows. Also problematic is the equating of the female soloist tradition with dancers who founded their art on an explicit rejection of ballet. While this was certainly the case of the vast majority of soloists who emerged in North America and Germany, it overlooks the appearance in France and elsewhere in Europe of soloists who began their careers as ballet dancers, performed on the ballet stage, and developed a solo repertory that was often strikingly similar to that of early modern dancers, yet also overlapped with certain ballet forms of the period. Finally, in defining the creative role of the soloist preeminent in terms of choreography, that is, as an artist performing a story of her own making, the paradigm fails to account for the many Europeans who constructed highly original personas even if their dances were frequently staged by others. Appearing in venues associated with the opera house, concert hall, and commercial theater, these soloists have been ignored by historians of ballet and modern dance alike. In part, this is because their roots lay outside the Anglo-Saxon and German worlds on which most of the modern dance literature is based; in part, too, because their careers were seldom associated with major institutions. To a greater extent, however, they have disappeared from the historical record because they fall outside prevailing conceptual categories. Belonging neither to the "modern"
nor to the "ballet" camp, they exist in a nameless, invisible limbo.

Turn-of-the-century Paris was an international mecca for female soloists. Many came from abroad: Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, and Maud Allan from North America; Stasia Napierkowska from Constantinople,1 Djemilé Fatmé from Turkey, Mata Hari from the Dutch East Indies, Sada Yacco from Japan, Sahary-Djeli from the Middle East. Their repertory was as exotic as their origins. Greek, Hindu, Japanese, Javanese, Spanish, Turkish, Cambodian: their dances traversed the world, ignoring borders and often the niceties of national style as well, especially in the Salomé works that no fewer than four of them—Fuller,2 Maud Allan,3 Sahary-Djeli,4 and Mata Hari5—presented in the decade before World War I.

Even in the case of French-born dancers such as Jane Hugard (a sometime Salomé who choreographed the premiere of Maurice Ravel's Ma Mère l'Oye),6 Odette Vâlery (another sometime Salomé, whose Cleopatra dance featured a live asp),7 Ariane Hugon (who specialized in "Greek"

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1. According to an article published in a London newspaper in 1911, Napierkowska was born in Constantinople to a Russian father and a French mother. Her father, an engraver, had left Russia for political reasons and settled in France, eventually obtaining a professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts in Constantinople, where his daughter was born. At the age of twelve, the family returned to France. In time she came to the attention of Madame Mariquita, the venerable ballet mistress of the Opéra-Comique, who arranged for her to dance not only at the Opéra-Comique but also at the Folies-Bergère, where she scored a great success in the "Eastern ballet" Les Aîies ("Palace Theatre: A New Russian Dancer," Stasia Napierkowska Clipping File, Dance Collection, New York Public Library).

2. Loie Fuller's production of La Tragédie de Salomé, with a libretto by Robert D'Humières and music by Florent Schmitt, premiered in November 1907 (Margaret Haile Harris, Loie Fuller: Magician of Light [Richmond, Va.: The Virginia Museum, 1979], p. 20). This, in fact, was Fuller's second Salomé. Her first, a pantomime by Armand Sylvestre with music by Gabriel Pierné, was presented in 1895 at the Comédie-Parisienne.

3. Allan danced her "Vision of Salomé" at the Théâtre des Variétés in the spring of 1907. The number was part of La Revue du Centenaire, starring Max Dearly and Polaire and featuring "Le Palais de Danse" and "Napoleon I, the Imperial Court, and the Grand Army" among its ten tableaux ("Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro [Paris], May 7, 1907, p. 4).

4. Sahary-Djeli's "new and original mime-drama version" of Salomé was given at the London Hippodrome in March 1911. It was written by Xanrof with music by Léo Pouget.


6. Ma Mère l'Oye was produced in 1912 by Jacques Rouché's Théâtre des Arts. At this time, Hugard was probably a dancer at the Opéra. An undated clipping describes her program at the Comédie-Royale as conveying "the perverse and passionate play expressed in Richard Strauss's music and the sketches of Gustave Moreau" ("Les danses de Salomé par Mme Jane Hugard," Folder 25, Valentine Hugo Collection, Theatre Museum, London).

7. For photographs of Valéry as Cleopatra, see "Great Snakes Alive! Cleopatra the Charmer," The Sketch [Supplement] (London), Aug. 5, 1908, p. 8; and "Original'nyia