

4-12-2018

Making of Nationalistic Dance: Agrippina Vaganova and Choi Seung-Hee

Angela Kim

Binghamton University--SUNY, angela77kim@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://orb.binghamton.edu/dissertation_and_theses



Part of the [Dance Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kim, Angela, "Making of Nationalistic Dance: Agrippina Vaganova and Choi Seung-Hee" (2018). *Graduate Dissertations and Theses*. 63.

https://orb.binghamton.edu/dissertation_and_theses/63

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations, Theses and Capstones at The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact ORB@binghamton.edu.

MAKING OF NATIONALISTIC DANCE:
AGRIPPINA VAGANOVA AND CHOI SEUNG-HEE

BY

ANGELA KIM

BA, Sang Myung University, 2000

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in Theatre
in the Graduate School of
Binghamton University
State University of New York
2018

Accepted in partial fulfillment for
the degree of Master of Arts in Theatre
in the Graduate School of
Binghamton University
State University of New York
2018

April 12, 2018

Andrew Walkling, Graduate Director
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

David Bisaha, Faculty Advisor
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

Barbara Wolfe, Member
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

Anne Brady, Member
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

Tom Kremer, Member
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

Laura Hawkes, Member
Department of Theatre, Binghamton University

Abstract

This thesis applies nationalism theories from Eric Hobsbawm's *Inventing Tradition* and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* to show how Agrippina Vaganova and Choi Seung-hee's dances became their nation's representative dance forms. Agrippina Vaganova's Modern Russian Ballet and Choi Seung-hee's *Sinmuyong* (New Dance) made significant impacts in their respective countries in the twentieth century by each becoming a systematic dance form that became synonymous with the nation. This thesis argues that Agrippina Vaganova's Modern Russian Ballet and Choi Seung-hee's *Sinmuyong* (New Dance) became their nation's representative dance forms due to interactions between performance, social changes, and discourses of media. These, along with the need to increase national patriotism, helped transform these dances into national and nationalistic art forms.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my professor David Bisaha for his endless patience and thoughtful guidance. Without his guidance and help, this thesis would not have been possible. I would like to thank all professors in the Theatre Department, members of the costume shop, and staff. Last but not least, I would like to thank the support and love from my family. My awesome husband, Immanuel Kim and my lovely son, Nathan Kim, encouraged and supported me.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 Agrippina Vaganova: Overcoming the Crisis of Russian Ballet.....	9
Russian ballet before Vaganova.....	11
The Rise of Agrippina Vaganova (1879-1917)	16
Shaping Soviet ballet under Lenin and Stalin regime (1918-1953)	18
Shaping Russian nationalistic ballet in post-Stalin era (1953-Present)	47
Conclusion.....	52
Chapter 2 Choi Seung-hee: The victim of ideological conflict.....	54
Korean Traditional Dance before Choi Seung-hee.....	57
Sai Shoki (Choi Seung Hee) during Japanese colonial period (1926-1945)	60
<i>Chosŏn Minjok Muyong</i> –Shaping North Korea Nationalistic Dance (1946-1969)	72
<i>Sinmuyong</i> – Constructing Nationalistic Dance in South Korea (1980-Present)	85
Conclusion.....	95
Conclusion.....	98
Bibliography.....	103

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Enrico Cecchetti & Marius Petipa.....	14
Figure 2 - Agrippina Vaganova.....	16
Figure 3- Cecchetti Position of arms.....	27
Figure 4- Vaganova's Position of arms.....	27
Figure 5- <i>Stability-aplomb</i>	28
Figure 6- Correct posture.....	29
Figure 7- <i>Attitude</i>	30
Figure 8- 1895 <i>Swan Lake</i>	35
Figure 9- 1895 <i>Swan Lake</i>	35
Figure 10-1933 <i>Swan Lake</i>	41
Figure 11- 1933 <i>Swan Lake</i>	41
Figure 12- Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet.....	53
Figure 13- Court Dance & Folk Dance.....	58
Figure 14- <i>Kwangsanggok</i> (Capriccio) in 1931.....	66
Figure 15- <i>Ehera Noara</i> (Dance of the Carefree) in 1934.....	66
Figure 16- Sai Shoki in Media.....	71
Figure 17- Sai Shoki Phamplet.....	71
Figure 18- <i>Banyawolseonggok</i>	74
Figure 19- <i>Sadosungui Iyagi</i>	76
Figure 20- <i>Sadosungui Iyagi</i> movie in 1956.....	77
Figure 21- <i>Sadosungui Iyagi</i> , USSR performance poster.....	77
Figure 22- Ten basic foot movements.....	79
Figure 23- Eight body directions.....	79
Figure 24 – Ten arm movements.....	80

Figure 25- Books related to Choi Seung-hee in South Korea National Library....	89
Figure 26- South Korea's <i>Buchaechum</i> (Fan Dance)	92
Figure 27- <i>Buchaechum</i> (Fan dance) in 1984: L.A. Olympic.....	93
Figure 28- 1988 Seoul Olympic advertising posters.....	94
Figure 29- Choi's Modernized Shaman dance & <i>The Song of Jade</i>	94
Figure 30- Choi Seung-hee's North Korean Fan dance.....	95

Introduction

If South Koreans were asked to identify their country's most recognizable and traditional dance, they would most likely choose the Fan Dance. What most Koreans would not know is that the Fan Dance was one of the dance repertoires from *Sinmuyong* (New Dance in Korean) that was created not thousands of years ago but in the 1930s. *Sinmuyong* is a modernized Korean traditional dance, which was created in the 1930s by Korean dancer Choi Seung-hee, and it heavily influenced modern Korean dance today. If Russians were asked to identify their well-known nationalistic dance, many would consider ballet. Although ballet did not originate from Russia, Russian pride in their ballet derives from Agrippina Vaganova, who reformulated this dance form into a method that significantly influences ballet today. Vaganova's method became the standard ballet method during the Soviet Union (after the Soviet Union collapsed, the ballet style was renamed Modern Russian Ballet), and the Soviet media promoted Vaganova's dance to show Soviet socialist national pride. I found similarities in these two dancers. These two dancers were dissatisfied with the existing dance styles and decided to invent new dance forms. Their new style of dance influenced their dance field significantly, and they eventually systematized their dance forms into a nationalized school of thought by their governments.

These two new dance styles occurred in the 1930s and created their respective nation's representative dance forms. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, the new communist ideology affected international relations and the production of arts, including dance. Similarly, the Korean War (1950-1953) was the one of the first

conflicts of the Cold War, dividing the international community between communist countries and the democratic countries. During a period of expansion of communist ideology, artists and dancers played critical roles either in supporting the political ideology or rejecting it.

Agrippina Vaganova's Modern Russian Ballet and Choi Seung-hee's *Sinmuyong* (New Dance) made significant impacts in their respective countries in the twentieth century by each becoming a systematic dance form that became synonymous with the nation. I argue that Agrippina Vaganova's Modern Russian Ballet and Choi Seung-hee's *Sinmuyong* (New Dance) became their nation's representative dance forms due to the interactions between performance, social changes, and discourses of media. These, along with a need to increase national patriotism, helped categorize these dances as national art forms. The Soviet public media promoted Vaganova's dances to show Soviet national pride and the socialist ideology. Choi Seung-hee's dance is a complicated case in that North Korea considered her dance as a socialist dance while South Korea promoted it as a democratic art form.

My thesis mainly discusses nationalistic dance and nationalism and how the discourse of media shapes these ideologies, so I would like to clarify the meaning of nationalism and nationalistic dance first. My theoretical approach to these two choreographers is based on Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Eric Hobsbawm's critical introduction called "Inventing Traditions" in his book *The Invention of Tradition*. According to Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*, the nation is an imagined political community which is composed of people who share a common language, a cultural community with a sense of sovereignty. "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of

their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (B. Anderson 5). Benedict Anderson claims that nationalism developed with the rise of printed materials that represent a particular geopolitical community, where individuals create for themselves a self-and-other dichotomy that includes and excludes people from the concept of the nation. Nationalism creates national subjects, who share a common language, ideology, historical background, culture, and a sense of homogeneity. For Anderson, nationalism is constructed by capitalism and print media, through which individuals are subjected to a monoglot reading group. In the cases of Vaganova and Choi, print media including posters, newspapers, books, and journal articles helped support the promotion of these two dancers and their performances as something intrinsic to the nation.

In his chapter “Inventing Traditions,” Hobsbawm argues that if old forms of tradition were seen as unadoptable and unviable then they could possibly be replaced by new forms, in the process creating a sense of nationalism. “Inventing traditions, it is assumed here, is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 4). According to Hobsbawm, new tradition can be invented and constructed by a single initiator, and the invention of traditions may lead to the construction of nationalism. He claims that new traditions can be transplanted from old ones, giving a sense of a tradition that has been practiced for many generations. "Sometimes new traditions could be readily grafted on old ones, sometimes they could be devised by borrowing from the well-supplied warehouses of official ritual, symbolism, and moral exhortation – religion and princely pomp, folklore, and Freemasonry (itself an earlier invented tradition of great symbolic force)" (Hobsbawm

and Ranger 6). Applying Hobsbawm's theory to the case of Agrippina Vaganova and Choi Seung-hee, I argue that the so-called traditional dances that have become the pride of the Soviet Union and Korea were invented and reconstructed in the modern era to give the semblance of something that had existed for many generations.

While Benedict Anderson mainly focuses on print-language as the main component of building imagined communities because of the relationship between development of the printing press and the religious Reformation period in the sixteenth century, I will analyze dance performances in the twentieth century by using not only printed materials but also other media outlets such as photography and video footage. I will use Hobsbawm's nationalism to explain how the Soviet Union and both North/South Korea invented their national dance forms. I argue that Vaganova's ballet method and Choi Seung-hee's *Sinmuyong* became the sources for which Soviet ballet and Korean dance took nationalistic shape. Shaping national dances occurred as a result of media discourses, dance critics, journals, and newspaper articles. In other words, media shaped these dances to represent the national and fostered an imagined community. This approach can help us understand art as a nexus of political ideology and cultural construction influenced by the dissemination of media.

My questions about these two dancers are: How did these two dancers' styles become the representative nationalistic dance in their country? What agents or institutions supported these dancers? What were the political circumstances that determined these dances as nationalistic dances? In order to answer these questions, I researched printed materials and films about Vaganova and Choi Seung-hee.

For Vaganova, I began with Vaganova's method book *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet*, and *Agrippina Vaganova the Great & the Terrible*, a documentary film from 2010. This documentary is the latest one and has the most information. I

used articles from *Izvestia* (Delivered messages or news, 1917- 1991), *Pravda* (Truth, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Soviet Union, 1912- Present), *Vechernaya Krasnaia Gazeta* (The Evening Red Newspaper, 1922-1936), and magazines *Zhizn' iskusstva* (Art Life, 1917-1922), *Rabochii I Teatr* (Worker and Theater 1924-1937), for criticism about Vaganova.

For Choi Seung-hee, I went to South Korea to do my research. I went to the National Library of Korea and Seoul National University Library. These two libraries have the most materials in South Korea. The National Library has a digital section, where they digitized many old newspapers. I was able to find many articles about Choi from the 1930s.

I also went to the North Korea Center, which is located in the National Library of Korea. It was great for me to visit the North Korean library because I got to see how North Koreans talked about Choi. In the North Korea Center, I made copies of North Korean newspaper articles and journals about Choi. I found Choi's book on dance method written in North Korean called, *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong Gibon* (Basics of Chosŏn Ethnic Dance) in 1958.

Mainly, I researched print materials about Choi Seung-hee, published in South Korea, and a video documentary *Muyongga Choi Seung-hee* (The Dancer Choi Seung-hee), which was produced by Arirang TV (Korea International Broadcasting) in 2005. For the North Korea section, I went to the National Library of Korea in South Korea and collected materials about Choi Seung-hee from the North Korea Center in the library. Mainly, I focused on Choi Seung-hee's dance method book *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong Gibon*, *Muyonggk daebonjib* (Choi Seung-hee's Dance Drama scripts collection, which was published in 1958 from North Korea), and critical writing about Choi Seung-hee in *Rodong Sinmun* (Workers Newspaper), *Minju Chosŏn* (Democratic

Korea Newspaper), *Munhak Sinmun* (Culture Newspaper), and *Chosŏn Yesul* (Chosŏn Art Magazine). I used *Rodong Sinmun* and *Chosŏn Yesul* as the primary sources because *Rodong Sinmun* is regarded as a source of official North Korean viewpoints and *Chosŏn Yesul* was the only art magazine in circulation during Choi Seung-hee's life time.

This thesis is divided into two chapters. The first chapter begins with historical background on Russian ballet to contextualize Vaganova's place in these changing times. The 1920s was a struggling period for the ballet in the Soviet Union. According to Krasovskaya, most left-wing press such as *Zhizn' iskusstva* (Art Life) and *Kransnaia gazeta* kept attacking classical ballet as a "charming conglomerate of foolishness with an old traditional style" (Krasovskaya 148). The Soviet public demanded a new Soviet ballet. In the 1930s, after ten years of Vaganova's experience, the Soviet public finally recognized her ballet as a new Soviet art. The necessity of reformation on classical ballet arose from the Soviet public, and Vaganova's new dance method met that need at the right time. In the 1930s, the Moscow Lunacharsky State Institute for Theater Art (GITIS) added a faculty to train ballet historians and critics. At the end of World War II greater focus was placed on dance training and production at the Bolshoi (Lee 1999 302). Vaganova took that responsibility and made a great achievement with the Soviet government's support.

The second chapter critically approaches Choi Seung-hee's *Sinmuyong* (New Dance) in a country that was undergoing Japanese colonization (1910-1945) and later the Korean War (1950-1953). Choi created the modernized Korean Traditional dance, which is *Sinmuyong* (New Dance) during the Japanese colonial period. At this time, two nationalistic groups used Choi Seung-hee (Japanese pronunciation: Sai Shoki) to construct ideologies through media. First, the Japanese General Government and its

publications tried to construct Choi Seung-hee's image as a successful modern dancer under the Japanese rule. The second group consisted of *Dong-A Ilbo* (Dong-A newspaper, run by Koreans, and written in Korean) and *Baeksshipjahiu* (a Choi Seung-hee supporting group established in 1934). Both emphasized Choi Seung-hee as a Korean dancer and tried to construct Korean national identity through media in contrast to Japanese colonial media. These two political ideologies affected Korea and Japan's society, and they created two different nationalistic images of Choi Seung-hee during the Japanese colonial period.

After Korea was divided into north and south, both countries needed to reconstruct their national and political identity. North Korea shaped their nationalistic dance with Choi Seung-hee's dance method and named it *Chosŏn Minjok muyong*, which means the dance of the Korean people. Kim Il-sung (dictator of North Korea, 1948-1994) and the North Korean ruling party used media to promote Choi's dance as the invented tradition of North Korea. Furthermore, the North Korean ruling party and its media constructed North Korean dance using Choi's style. South Korea, on the other hand, shaped their nationalistic dance with Choi's dance style but avoided using Choi's name in public media until the 1980s because she was considered a Japanese collaborator and a North Korean sympathizer in the South. There, Choi's dance was called *Sinmuyong*, which means simply New Dance, to distinguish it from traditional dance. It was not until the 1980s that South Korea credited Choi for inventing the dance. Choi Seung-hee was the victim of ideological conflict from both countries. She created the modernized Korean Traditional Dance and developed it throughout her life, but her name was buried in history because of political and ideological conflict. Beginning from the 1980s, South Korea with mass media redefined the Korean dance with Choi Seung-hee. Choi Seung-hee's career shows the complex intersections of

political ideology, nationalism, and media discourse, and how these shaped nationalistic dances in both countries.

In conclusion, I will sum up these two dancers' artistic activities, differences in their political environments, and interactions with media. Vaganova and Choi Seung-hee's contributions to dance were similar, but the different political environments and discourse of media led their life into two different paths. I will make some comparative conclusions by comparing these two dancers.

Chapter 1

Agrippina Vaganova: Overcoming the Crisis of Russian Ballet

An anonymous critic lamented over the dismal future of Russian ballet after the Revolution in 1917 saying, “Ballet will now die, for where can such an exotic flower bloom but in the hot-houses of the Court?” (Guest 113). Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first Soviet Commissar of Education (all theatrical arts were under the auspices of this Commissariat), made a speech in March 1921 that expressed the attitude of the Soviet government toward the art of ballet and its importance: “To lose this thread, to allow it to break before being used as the foundation of a new artistic culture – belonging to the people – this would be a great crime. . . . Can ballet be abolished in Russia? No, this will never happen.”¹ After the Russian Empire collapsed, the Bolsheviks took over and implemented Soviet socialist ideology. Lenin and the Bolsheviks wanted to abolish every aristocratic and bourgeois culture in the Soviet Union. Lenin thought that ballet was a remnant of court culture, but Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky, the first Bolshevik Soviet People’s Commissar of Education, believed in the importance of upholding the art of ballet. Fortunately, Lenin changed his plan from completely eliminating ballet to reforming ballet. According to Homans, “In 1919, Lenin designated the former Imperial Theaters a national property dedicated to bringing theater – socialist theater – to the masses”

¹From the speech by A. V. Lunacharsky at the jubilee of Yekaterina Gelsler, March 6, 1921. Quoted from: Yuri Bakhrushin. “Dance in Soviet Schools,” in *The Art Education of Soviet School children*,” issue I Moscow, 1947, p. 170.

(Homans 322).

Before the Russian Revolution in 1917, Russian ballet consisted mainly of French and Italian ballet styles. In 1934, Agrippina Yakovlevna Vaganova (1879-1951), a professional ballet dancer, a choreographer, and an instructor of the Leningrad State Ballet School, published a new standard teaching method book: *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet*. Her method has become systematized in most of the Soviet Union choreographic schools. “The enormous experience amassed by those associated with Russian ballet was critically interpreted and systematized in the Soviet period and became the innovative basis of the activity of Soviet ballet instructors” (Vaganova v). Various media forms such as newspapers, theater performances, and magazine articles constructed Vaganova’s method as the new artistic culture that helped shape Soviet ballet during the socialist period, which is now simply known as Russian ballet.

Why then did the Soviet Union adopt Vaganova’s ballet methods as the representative of nationalistic and socialist forms knowing that she had supported Imperial ballet? How did Vaganova ascend in her career and become a national and ideological symbol for the Soviet Union? In this chapter, I will briefly explain the history of Russian ballet and contextualize Vaganova’s place in these changing times. I will discuss how Vaganova’s method was systemized in the State Ballet Schools of Moscow and Leningrad, and how it became Soviet nationalistic ballet by examining three distinctive periods of her life: first, the years of being a ballerina under Tsar Nicholas II (1879-1917); second, the years of being an artistic director and instructor under Lenin and Stalin’s regime until her death (1918-1953); and third, the later years of reevaluating her achievements in the history of Russian ballet (1953- present).

Within these three periods, I will discuss the different cultural aspects of her new dance forms presented in her book *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet*, which was published in 1934. I will also focus on her choreography numbers such as *Swan Lake* in 1933 and *La Esmeralda* in 1935 to explain how the Soviet ideological system shaped these. Finally, I will analyze the interaction between her choreography numbers with the media. The demand for an *invented tradition* of Soviet ballet started from Lenin's regime and became formalized as Soviet ballet in Stalin's era.

Russian Ballet Before Vaganova

Before discussing Vaganova's ballet method and choreography numbers, it is important to examine the historical background of Russian ballet to contextualize Vaganova's place in these changing times. Russian ballet started in the seventeenth century under Peter the Great (1672-1725). According to Crisp, it was part of Peter the Great's policy to "open a window on the West" (26). Peter the Great adopted the court ballet of Louis XIV and encouraged social dance at the palace. Peter's Westernization policy remained in Russia's ballet culture until the nineteenth century. "Peter the Great founded a *Teatralnaia Khoromina* (Theatre room) at the Kremlin, which remained in use until the capital was transferred to St. Petersburg. Peter the Great reformed the first dance school, but the ballet academy (the Imperial Ballet School) was formed slightly later in 1736 during Anna Ioannovna's reign" (Roslavleva 21). This ballet academy was the Imperial Ballet School from which Agrippina Vaganova graduated in 1897. The school later changed its name to the Leningrad State Choreographic Institution during the Soviet Union regime. In 1957, the institution was renamed as Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet to honor

Vaganova and her legacy.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, St. Petersburg became the home of Imperial Russian ballet and was firmly established under the protection of the Tsar (Crisp 27). Imperial Russian ballet looked to the West to learn and adopt the art. According to Crisp, “During the nineteenth century the Imperial Russian Ballet owed almost everything to the influence of French and Italian choreographers, teachers and dancers” (Crisp 27). Russia developed its ballet culture by inviting foreign instructors and dancers. Soon, Russian ballet was taken over by foreigners and developed in a different direction.

In the early nineteenth century, there was a movement to oust the foreigners and promote Russian ballet led by the Russian choreographer, Ivan Valberkh (1766-1819). “He took an important part in the independent development of national ballet, playing no mean role in the formation of the national style of Russian ballet” (Roslavleva 34). This was an exclusionary movement to restore the national character of Russian ballet. However, Imperial Russian ballet was still composed of many foreign artists. In other words, Russian ballet knew the importance of promoting native artists to reflect nationalistic pride, but it also knew the value of retaining foreign artists to improve Russian ballet:

There were two sides to the activity of the Imperial Theater’s Directorate. Undoubtedly it consolidated national artistic talent and potentialities, assisting, whether deliberately or not, towards their development. On the other hand, it conducted a policy of discrimination against native actors, however talented, in favor of foreign companies and guest-artists, giving the latter higher pay and better conditions in every respect. (Roslavleva 33)

Even though Russians preferred foreign artists, the Imperial Theater had produced many native artists in the nineteenth century such as Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), Lev Ivanov (1834-1901), Alexander Gorsky (1871-1924), Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929), Pavel Andreyevich Gerdt (1844-1917), and Nikolai Gustavovich Legat (1869-1937). Although many native artists and dancers helped develop Russian ballet in the nineteenth century, its ballet method and pedagogy were dependent on the French and Italian schools. The most influential foreign artists were Marius Petipa (1818-1910) and Enrico Cecchetti (1850-1928). Marius Petipa was born in France and became the *Premier maître de ballet* (the first Ballet Master) of the Imperial Theater from 1871 to 1903. Enrico Cecchetti was born in Rome and became the principal dancer at the Maryinsky Theater in 1887. He taught at Maryinsky Theater from 1890 to 1902 and created *Cecchetti Method*. Their influences cultivated Imperial ballet and made Russia the new center for classical ballet.

The Imperial Russian Ballet was inevitably dependent on French and Italian classic ballet schools of thought because there was no Russian artist who developed a uniquely “Russian” ballet system until Vaganova published her method. There were many ballet methods in the world, and the most well-known methods at the time were Cecchetti (Italian), Ecole Francaise (French), Bournonville (Danish), and Royal Academy of Dance (British). In the late nineteenth century, Russia became a center of Imperial ballet. Many genius foreign artists, such as Marius Petipa, Enrico Cecchetti, and Christian Johansson from Sweden brought the art of ballet to fruition in Russia. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, the name of Imperial ballet was eradicated and was replaced by Soviet ballet, as the Bolsheviks banished most of the tsarist culture for being too bourgeois and conservative. Natalia Roslavleva describes the decline of

Imperial ballet in her book *Era of the Russian Ballet*: “The gale of the Revolution gave a new lease of life to all branches of art, which reached an unprecedented flowering. It penetrated into the musty sanctum of the Imperial ballet that had been going through an acute state of crisis on the eve of the Revolution” (190). What was once hailed as the best ballet in Europe found itself in a dire predicament as there were no internal reforms or no new talents to bring Imperial ballet out of strict artistic limitations.

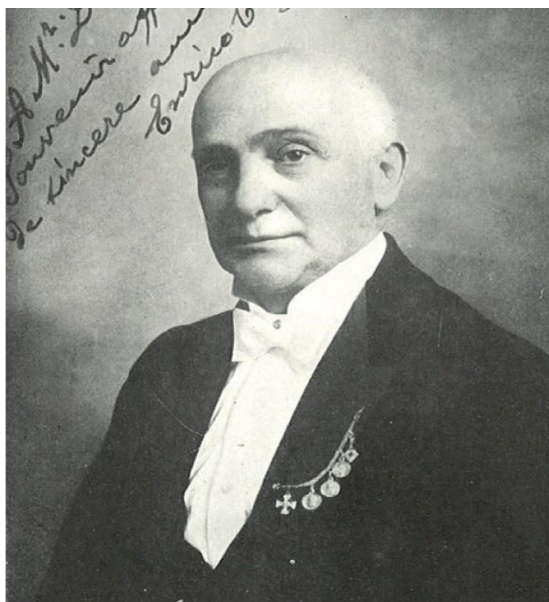


Figure 1 - Enrico Cecchetti



Marius Petipa – RT Russiapedia

<https://www.cecchetti.co.uk/heritage-2>

One of the most famous prima ballerinas, Anna Pavlova, settled in England in 1913 because ballet in Russia was available only on the Imperial stage and because she was unable to find an outlet for her great talent elsewhere in the country (Roslavleva 190). Along with Anna Pavlova, Sergei Diaghilev, Tamara Karsavina, Igor Stravinsky, Vaslav Nijinsky and many other artists, dancers, and choreographers fled Russia in the early twentieth century because of the considerable problems with

jettisoning ballet, an economic crisis, and ideological differences.

Meanwhile, a lesser-known ballerina took this opportunity to advance in her career as a prima ballerina: Agrippina Vaganova. Although Vaganova also felt the limitations of Imperial ballet, she chose to stay in Russia because she supported the value of classical ballet rather than modernistic experimental dance forms. Sergei Diaghilev's 1909 Paris Season performance shows Vaganova's preference for classical ballet. In 1909, Russian ballet was divided into two camps: the modernistic *Diaghilevtsy-Fokinisty* camp and the classical *Imperialist* camp. Bronislava Nijinska, who was one of the most famous ballet dancers and choreographers of the Ballet Russes, referred to, "The '*Diaghilevtsy-Fokinisty*,' as we were called by the other party, and the '*Imperialisty*'—that is almost all those who had not taken part in the Paris Season [and] were strong supporters of the old established traditions" (Nijinska 280). Vaganova did not appear in the Paris Season performance because she considered herself to be a part of the Imperialist camp. She had other opportunities to go abroad to perform and seek refuge from an oppressive political environment, but she always refused these invitations. She reshaped classic ballet by eliminating superfluous movements in classic ballet and elaborating techniques. She protected classic ballet from the ideological crisis in the newly formed Soviet Union. Vaganova wrote about the hardships in the magazine *Zhizn' iskusstva* (The Life of Art): "Those who assert that the old ballet has spent itself and should be forgotten are deeply wrong. . . . If art should, indeed, reflect contemporary life, it does not mean that classical examples of its past should disappear" (*Zhizn' iskusstva*, 1925, No.7). Vaganova would become one of the leading choreographers in the Soviet Union—a state that rejected classic ballet for being too conservative and bourgeois.

The Rise of Agrippina Vaganova (1879-1917)

Agrippina Iakovlevna Vaganova (1879-1951) was born in St. Petersburg, which was the birthplace of the Imperial Ballet. Her father was an usher at the Maryinsky Theater, which allowed its employees to send their children to the ballet school. In 1888, Vaganova was admitted to the Imperial Ballet School at the age of ten. She worked as a ballet dancer at the Maryinsky theater from 1897 to 1916. In 1921, she started to teach at the Leningrad State Choreographic Institute (formally known as the Imperial Ballet School). She then became the artistic director of the Leningrad State Choreographic Institution from 1931 to 1937. She revised ballet pieces such as the *Swan Lake* in 1933 and the *La Esmeralda* in 1935. In 1934, she published her ballet technique in a book called *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet*, which became one of the single most important texts in the ballet world (Krasovskaya *xvi-xxxii*).



Figure 2 - Left Image: Photo taken by an unknown photographer of Agrippina Vaganova in "La Esmeralda". St. Petersburg, circa 1910. Photo comes from Mrlopez2681's own collection and was scanned by Mrlopez2681. 05:40, 9 September 2006 (UTC)

Right Image: <http://www.danzaballetblog.com/2014/09/>

Her influence in Russian ballet can be divided into three periods: first, the years of being a professional ballet dancer; second, the period of working as an instructor under Lenin and Stalin's regime until her death; and third, the later years of reevaluating her achievements in Russian ballet. Vaganova was not recognized as a great Russian ballerina. Despite her outstanding technique and diligence, she was not favored by directors of the theater. Her large head, thick legs, and stiff arms were not qualities for a ballerina from the perspective of the Imperial Theater directors (Roslavleva 199).² But her technique was superior to other ballet dancers. Akim Volynsky, who was a ballet critic and fervent advocate of classic ballet, recognized Vaganova's outstanding technique and praised her as "queen of variations" (Chistyakova vi). Vaganova was finally promoted to a first soloist, but it was only a year before her retirement. "On May 5, 1915, Teliakovsky gave orders to promote Vaganova, by then a first soloist of the company, to the position of a ballerina beginning on May 6, 1915" (Krasovskaya 75). She only played the roles of Corps de Ballet, Pas de Quatre, Pas de Trois, and other numerous character solos until 1911. She performed some leading roles shortly before her retirements such as *La Source* (Naila), *Swan Lake* (Odette-Odile), *The Humpbacked Horse* (Tsar-Maiden), *Giselle*, and *The Beautiful Pearl* (one of the two pearls – a ballerina part) but none of these performances were well received (Krasovskaya xvii). Her stage career as a dancer was not successful. Levinson wrote for the Newspaper *Rech'* (Speech), "despite the incomparably beautiful pattern of her dance and elusive design of lines distinctly drawn and immediately erased in the air by her rhythmic movement, Vaganova's

² The principal female dancer of a ballet company or prima ballerina.

performance was lacking plasticity” (Krasovskaya 76). Most of the critics praised her highly skilled technique but their overall assessment of her performance was negative. After her last performance, *Giselle*, on October 30, 1916, she retired from the stage. Despite her extraordinary techniques, she was not able to succeed as a prima ballerina. Therefore, her days of a prima ballerina ended short.

Shaping Soviet Ballet Under Lenin and Stalin Regimes (1918-1953)

After the Revolution, the demand to reform ballet heightened under Lenin’s regime. Lenin used Vaganova’s ballet style to invent a new Soviet ballet character, and Stalin used Vaganova’s ballet to educate Soviet citizens. Lenin and the left-wing newspapers such as *Zhizn’ iskusstva* and *Krandsnaia gazeta* pushed for a reformation of Soviet socialistic arts through the media.

The year 1917 was an unfortunate year for Vaganova. When the Revolution came, her husband, a retired colonel loyal to the fallen tsar, shot himself on Christmas Eve, and she assumed the responsibility of being the breadwinner of the family (Homans 354). She had to take care of her son and her sister, who had two children of her own. In 1918, she began her teaching career at the amateur private dance school, but three years later she moved to the State Ballet School (Dover viii-ix).

The year 1917 was also a chaotic year for Russia because of the February Revolution. Tsar Nicholas II abdicated his throne, and the provisional government took control in March of 1917. During the Russian Civil War (1917-1922), Russia was divided into many different political factions. The largest rivaling groups were the Bolshevik Red Army and the anti-Bolshevik White Army. The Red Army was led by Vladimir Lenin, who was a socialist, and the White Army was led by Pyotr

Nikolayevich Wrangel, who supported monarchism and capitalism. After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks overthrew the provisional government and established the Soviet Union in 1922. These years not only changed the political course of Russia, it also deeply affected Vaganova's life and career.

During the Civil War, Vaganova and her family were frightened by imminent uncertainty and financial crisis. The new government terminated her pension, so her family moved to a small apartment. Despite the governmental guarantee of electricity, there were times when the electricity was turned off the entire day. The cost of firewood and food increased. Vaganova had to sell her personal items to make ends meet and started performing at small stages including movie theaters. In 1918, she started teaching at private ballet schools until the Leningrad State Theater and the Leningrad State Choreographic Institute invited her to teach (Krasovskaya 83-95).

When Vaganova returned to the theater in 1921, many things had changed. The Maryinsky Theater changed its name to the State Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet (GATOB) and the Imperial Ballet School became the Leningrad State Choreographic Institute.³ Jennifer Homans explains about this change in her book: "After the initial uprising in February 1917, the former Maryinsky Theater had changed: The Imperial arms and golden eagles once prominently displayed over the boxes had been ripped out, leaving an ugly hole, and the ushers' elegant gold-braid uniforms discarded. The new ushers wore drab gray jackets" (321). The new Soviet regime changed the role of art from dancing for the tsar to dancing for the people. The classic ballet was also in a precarious situation as the Soviet government changed the

³ Vaganova Ballet Academy is the associate school of the Maryinsky Theater. GATOB (Gosudarstvenny Akademicheskyy Teatr Opery i Baleta [State Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet]) was the official title of the Maryinsky Theater from after the October 1917 Revolution until 1935, when it was renamed the Kirov Theater.

ideological purpose of ballet.

During the Russian Civil War (1917-1922), the ballet school was not doing well. Many Russian artists left the ballet theater and sought refuge in places like France, England, Denmark, and the United States to list a few. Students were suffering under the harsh conditions. Mikhailov, a ballet dancer who graduated in 1921, described the harsh condition during the Russian Civil war in his book *Life in the Ballet*,

The war, famine, cold, and economic ruin could not but affect our life at the school. The students were housed at the boarding school, where all of us lived as a close family. The beds were moved from the large bedrooms into a fairly small infirmary. We dressed in all the warm clothes we could find and sat in coats during the classes on general subjects. As before, we had four meals a day, but the rations became noticeably poorer. (Krasovskaya 92)

Under these hardships, Vaganova was invited to the Leningrad State Theater and the Leningrad State Choreographic Institute. Vaganova choreographed the graduation performance on June 10, 1921, but it was not well received by critics. It took a lot of time to train students according to her new method. At the same time, socialist critics were still skeptical about classic ballet that Vaganova promoted.

The socialist press kept attacking and criticizing classic ballet as remnants of bourgeois and aristocratic culture. "The formalistic "left-wing" press called ballet a hothouse art, wholly conditioned by the feudal way of life and doomed to destruction under the new circumstances" (Vaganova ix). An article in *Zhizn' iskusstva* (Art Life) said, "Classical art, rooted in the gallantries of the age of King Louis is originally

alien to our age” (1927, No. 6, p.6). The demand for cultural reformation movement began in the left-wing parties and organizations. One of the distinctive Soviet artistic organizations was the “*Proletkult*” which formed during the Russian revolution. Roslavleva describes the wave of the demand for a new Soviet ballet with the *Proletkult* movement:

It was a time when the very right of ballet to existence was questioned by those who wanted to create the new by destroying the old, particularly when it concerned ballet, so directly associated with court pleasures. Representatives of “*Proletkult*” (short for “proletarian culture,” this organization had branched in many towns, published its own magazines, and claimed a complete monopoly in the administration of art) wanted to invent “new forms” in laboratory conditions entirely divorced from life and its realities. (192)

Proletkult started around 1905 with an earlier revolution against Nicolas II, but it failed, and the organization disintegrated thereafter. In 1917, the *Proletkult* formed again during the Revolution. The theorist of the *Proletkult*, Aleksandre Bogdanov believed that the proletariat had to create a new culture in order to eradicate the old aristocratic tradition. The main purpose of the *Proletkult* was to enlighten workers with a new socialist cultural education (Mally 1-2). Classical ballet became one of the targets of harsh criticism because of its aristocratic tendencies and dependence on foreign culture. The *Proletkult* movement did not last a long time because it did not pursue artistic value, or the aesthetics seen in classic ballet. The performances were poor in quality as many of the dancers were amateurs rather than professional. Above all, the *Proletkult* performances did not correctly represent the

proletarian ideology and failed to propagate socialism. According to Roslavleva, by 1922 the *Proletkult* organization died a natural death, expedited in particular by Lenin's famous letter where he condemned as "theoretically wrong and practically harmful" any attempts to invent their own special kind of culture and establish *Proletkult* autonomy (194).

Lenin and the Bolsheviks learned from the failure of the *Proletkult* movement that art could not be complete without its own cultural and historical roots. Initially, members of the Bolshevik wanted to expel classic ballet because they believed that classic ballet represented the tsarist and aristocratic culture. At the same time, they knew that another *Proletkult*-type of art could not be the solution. The state academy, leaders of education departments, the administration, the press, and representatives of the public met together to resolve this problem. I.V. Exkhsovich, Administrator of the Academic Theatres, in his concluding speech, expressed the opinion that the Petrograd (a former name of Saint Petersburg) ballet "had not yielded anything in quality compared with prewar standards, despite the extremely difficult conditions and unexpected complications – the only treasury of choreographic art in the world. These reforms, brought about by the new content of Soviet ballet, were associated with the name of Agrippina Vaganova" (Roslavleva, 198). Vaganova, a retired prima ballerina who used to be called the "queen of variation" and had the most knowledge in classical ballet, was well-suited for this reformation and systematization of Soviet ballet.

Soviet censorship began after the October Revolution in 1917, when Lenin and the Bolsheviks realized the great usefulness of cinema, ballet, and theater to enlighten Soviet citizens. Cinema, ballet, and theater began to be controlled by proletarian forces. Vance Kepley, Jr. described the Soviet censorship in his journal

article, “Soviet Cinema and State Control: Lenin’s Nationalization Decree Reconsidered”:

Lenin believed that religion must be eliminated in the Soviet Union, and the major substitution for a religion he saw was the arts. Yet rather than allow artists total freedom, he asserted that Soviet leaders should decide the subjects and style of art and that early Soviet ballet, cinema, and theater were fully state-owned industries. (On August 27, 1919, Lenin gave his decree nationalizing the film industry in Soviet Russia.) As early as 1907 Lenin observed to a colleague that cinema could prove useful as an instrument of enlightenment if only it were controlled by proletarian forces rather than capitalists. (3)

At the beginning, Lenin censored and even attempted to eliminate classical ballet from the Soviet Union because of its bourgeois tendencies, but he soon discovered the great use of classical ballet to educate masses with Soviet socialist State Choreographic Institute, the old idea of a secluded boarding school was maintained. However, the new curriculum was made to include ideological studies" (Ezrahi 91). Reforming classical ballet into nationalistic ballet started in the mid-1920s after the dissolution of the *Proletkult*. However, the actual Soviet socialistic ballet was formed in the 1930s under Stalin’s regime.

Starting from the late 1920s, a new style of dancer appeared in Soviet theaters. Marina Semyonova, Galina Ulanova, Olga Jordan, Natalia Dudinskaya, Tatiana Vecheslova, and Feya Balabina, were trained by Soviet instructors and, above all, used Agrippina Vaganova’s method (Vaganova x). Vaganova’s new ballet style

was not well received by critics and public at the beginning. In the late 1920s, left-wing critics finally gave credit to Vaganova's new ballet style. In 1926, the left-wing journal, *Rabochii I Teatr* (The Worker and the Theater), praised Vaganova's new ballet style saying, "much of Semyonova's style ... grace, the same exceptional plasticity, and a sort of captivating modesty in her (Ulanova's) gesture" (*Rabochii I Teatr* 1926, No.9, p.13). The critics, who had criticized Vaganova's ballet as an accidental bloom of old-fashioned art, changed their opinion and realized the importance of Vaganova's ballet method. Starting from Marina Semyonova, many of Vaganova's pupils demonstrated the revolutionary ideology in Vaganova's ballet method. Vaganova's method became a new way to cultivate Soviet-style ballet.

Vaganova published her ballet method book *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet* in 1934 and it became an influential textbook for these ballerinas. "Her first pupils, Natalia Kamkova and Marina Semenova, Vaganova trained them from their first class to the last. Later she took classes only for pupils in their last two years and taught the *class de perfectionnement* for the company. In those first years, she was actually creating and trying out her method on her pupils" (Roslavleva 199). Vaganova's ballet method, which combined French, Italian and Russian ballet schools, cultivated a different ballet technique and training system. The Soviet Union adopted Vaganova's ballet method and her choreography numbers to promote Soviet socialism and nationalistic pride. "A standard training method now prevails throughout the Soviet Union based on the theories of Agrippina Vaganova" (J. Anderson 187). Her book was translated into many languages, and she received an award called People's Artist of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in 1934. By offering her the most prestigious award for artists, the Soviet Union accepted Vaganova's method as a national art form, and the media celebrated her

achievement. After reading about Vaganova's achievement, Lyubov Blok (widow of the poet Alexander Blok) commented on how Vaganova's book transformed ballet throughout the Soviet Union, systematizing it and giving it a truly national character, one that was both contemporary and Soviet (Krasovskaya xxx). This systematizing of Vaganova's method cultivated the Soviet *invented tradition* and became Soviet nationalistic ballet.

Basic Principles of Classical Ballet

Vaganova took classical ballet and improved the fundamentals aesthetically and scientifically. The most distinguishable achievement of Vaganova's method was that it allowed dancers to use their whole body with synchronized movements. Vaganova removed the excessive ornamental use of hands and arm movements in the Italian and French schools. She reorganized classic ballet by eliminating superfluous parts of Italian and French ballet. In Vaganova's ballet method book, she criticizes French ballet for being "soft and graceful, but unnecessarily artificial and decorative" (vii). She writes of its "saccharine sweetness, the flaccidity of its poses—the arms with softly sagging or affectedly elevated elbows and elegantly outspread fingers" (vii). For Vaganova, French ballet was too measured and gentle, and this limited the body from fully expressing itself. On the other hand, the Italian school incorporated sharp angular positions, too many steps, and difficult movements into the dance, such as the thirty-two consecutive fouettés (viii). For Vaganova, Italian ballet lacked poetry and content as it was concerned with strenuous body movements (vii). Before Vaganova created her method, Russian ballet or Imperial ballet had adopted French and Italian ballet styles. Later, Vaganova reinvented Russian ballet by emphasizing

strength, flexibility, and endurance. She insisted on using the entire body as opposed to a single body part. “Vaganova’s system aimed at teaching pupils to dance with their whole body to acquire harmony of movements and to widen their expressive range” (Vaganova xii).

Vaganova eliminated pantomime scenes in classical ballet and replaced them with dance movements. The need to remove conventional pantomime in ballet was often explained in newspaper articles. On April 13, 1932, *Vechernaya Krasnaia Gazeta* (The Evening Red Newspaper) published, “We had to get rid of the stereotyped pantomime scenes and gestures, unclear and alien to contemporary audiences” (Krasovskaya 171). In order to satisfy Stalin and the critics, Vaganova had to remove pantomime parts from classical ballets. According to Bennet and Poesio, mime acting was considered an essential skill in Italy in the nineteenth century. Italian choreography relied on the conventional language of gesture (3). Cecchetti brought pantomime hand movements to Russia. Bolsheviks and the Soviet academy considered these arm gestures to be excessively ornate and remnants of foreign bourgeois culture, which were not suitable for Soviet socialism. Soviet critics targeted mime and attacked it through media. Vaganova knew what the Soviet government expected from her, so she removed mime and character-dancing components from the curriculum. Kirstein explains this change of ballet education in her book *Ballet: Bias and Belief*, “Russian ballet classes do not apply to character-dancing, which has its own barre system . . . Agrippina Vaganova, the author of the best modern work on the subject and academician of Soviet Technicum for ballet in Leningrad, gives almost the same order” (Kirstein 337).

Vaganova’s method was not only scientifically or aesthetically designed, but it was also a way in which she preserved classical ballet from repressive censorship

under the Soviet government. Vaganova’s method clarified all the muddled terminologies from foreign ballet schools and codified the terms into French. Before the invention of Vaganova’s method in the Soviet Union, there were many foreign ballet terminologies that had existed in Russian ballet. These different terminologies from foreign schools created confusion among dancers. For example, Vaganova’s three basic arm positions and six Port de bra clarified confusions in foreign arm positions and opened limitations of expression in arm movements. Below are the comparison pictures of arm position.

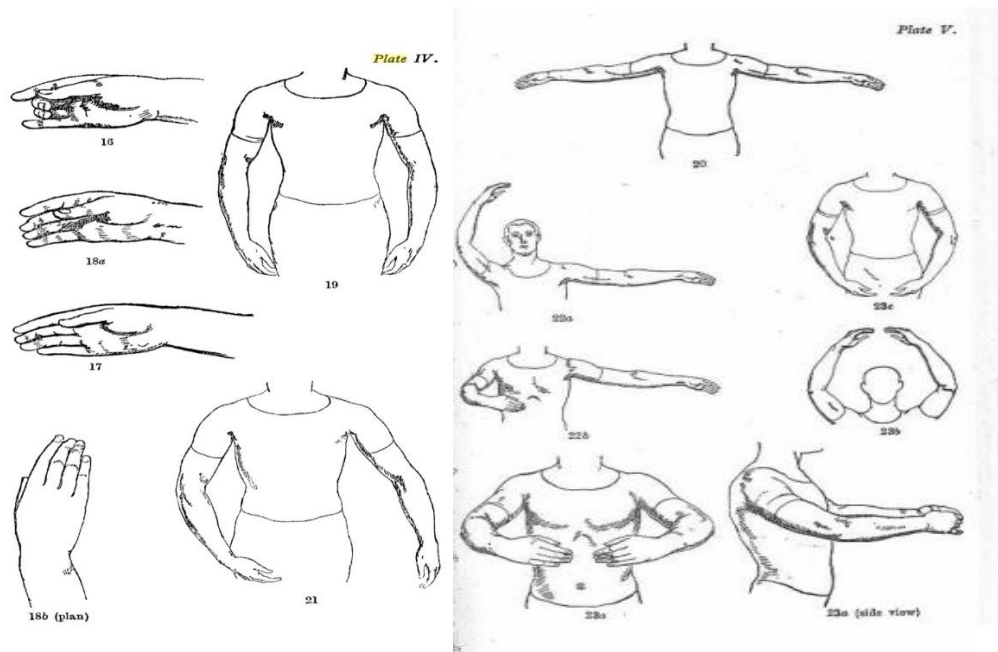


Figure 3- Beaumont, Cyril W. *A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Classical Theatrical Dancing (method Cecchetti)* – Position of arms, p. Plate IV, V

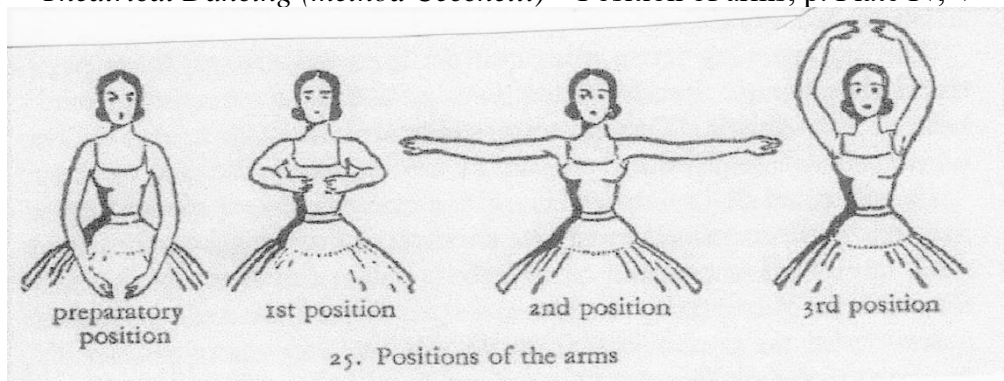


Figure 4- Vaganova’s Position of arms (Vaganova 42)

Unlike other methods, Vaganova emphasized the *stability-aplomb* and the *port de bras* (coordination of arm and body movements). Vaganova says in her book, “Nevertheless, I think it necessary to include aplomb in the basic conceptions of classical ballet because a correctly set body is the foundation of every step” (24). It seemed obvious to train stability while dancing, but Vaganova did not overlook the importance of the relationship between spine and aplomb and included it in her basic concepts. This was an evidence of scientific innovation in her ballet method because it implied that she knew the anatomy of human body and muscle uses. Her picture of *stability-aplomb* coincides with the picture of correct ballet posture which was created by researching human bones and muscle structure. The following pictures are the comparison pictures of Vaganova’s *stability -aplomb* and correct posture with human bone structures.

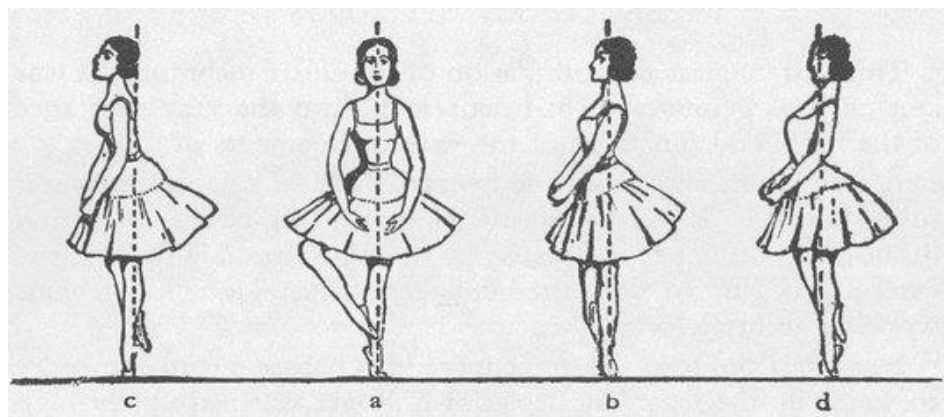


Figure 5- *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet - Stability-aplomb:*
a, b-correct; c, d- incorrect (Vaganova 25)

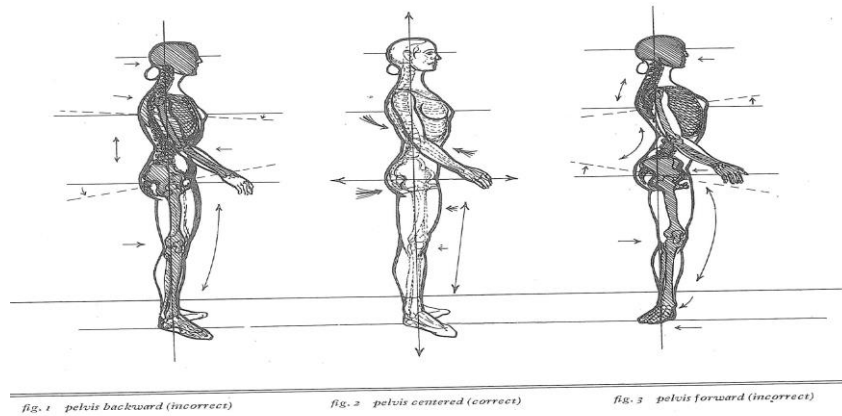


Figure 6-*The Classic Ballet, Basic Technique and Terminology* – Correct posture: fig 2-correct, fig1&3- incorrect (Stuart 25)

She eliminated angled lines which appeared in foreign ballet schools and elaborated on the beauty of flowing lines in the human body. Homans said, “Coordination was key, and Vaganova pioneered a way of training in which the head, hands, arms, and eyes all move in synchrony with the leg and feet... every part of the body had to work at the same time and in close harmony, fluidly through the spine” (355). Vaganova emphasized smoothness and rounded natural arm line. This smoothness of line applies to the dancer’s back, as well.

Vaganova's discovery of the dancer's arching back is another distinctive part of her method. "The most pronounced area of Russian accent came in the use of the dancer's back. The pedagogue's emphasis on the arching of the lower back and waist into a stretched and strongly curved spine became a signature of her dancer's silhouette or *plastique*⁴ ... called “Russian” or “Vaganova” back” (Greskovic 95). The following picture is the comparison of Italian, French, and Vaganova attitude positions. In French ballet, the upper body leans forward, and it is harder to maintain balance. In Italian ballet, the upper body is completely straight, which makes it

⁴ A ballet technique for mastering the art of slow, controlled movement and statue-like posing.

difficult for dancers to lift their legs. In Russian or Vaganova's ballet, the upper body is slightly bent, which creates an easier arch for dancer's lower back. This change of movement helped dancers have better balance along with an aesthetically fluid line. Her Attitude position shows elevation and equally distributed balance in the entire body.

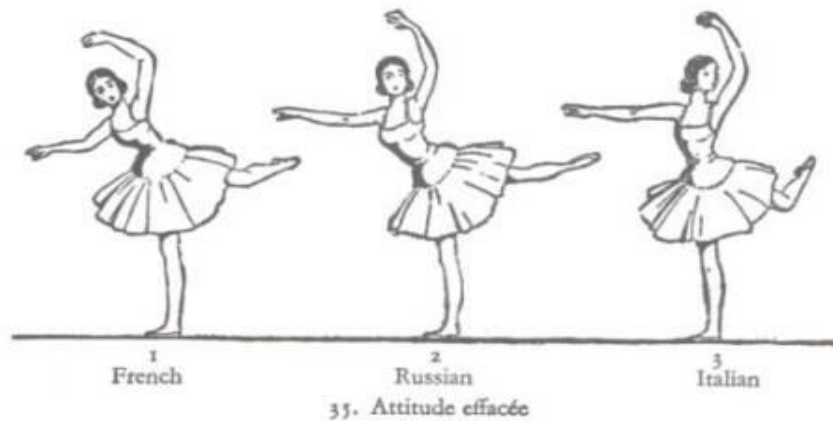


Figure 7- *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet – Attitude* (Vaganova 55)

The Soviet Union and public media accepted her method as the Soviet ballet method and systematized it into Soviet ballet academies. Vaganova formalized an innovative ballet method, and it influenced the entire country. In 1934, the Leningrad Choreographic School asked her to teach the main discipline - methods of teaching classical dance, which was intended to produce future teachers who could spread her method in the Soviet Union.⁵ Vaganova trained teachers who would teach in Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev, Riga, Almaty, Tallinn, Baku, Novosibirsk, and Perm in professional ballet schools, amateur studios, and theaters as well (Krasovskaya 219). Kerzhentsev, Chairman of the USSR Committee on Arts Affairs, declared on

⁵ It is one thing to teach classical dance to students but totally another to explain the meaning and purpose of this process to a diverse group of already established and future teachers (Krasovskaya 216).

December 19, 1937 that the Leningrad Choreographic School should broadly make use of Vaganova in its pedagogical work (Krasovskaya 226). According to Krasovskaya, Vaganova began to teach in two central ballet cities in the Soviet Union in order to promote her method: “In 1943, Vaganova became a ballet consultant to the Bolshoi Theater, while retaining her position of professor at the Leningrad Choreographic School” (237). The imperial classical ballet was not acceptable and unviable in the new Soviet Union regime; instead, the Soviet Union replaced the Imperial traditional ballet with Vaganova’s method.

Soviet Socialism *Master Plot and Dram-balet*

According to Homans, Stalin had his own private box at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater. He did not use the old, gold-encrusted royal accommodations once reserved for the tsar; instead, he watched opera and ballet from a specially designed bulletproof enclave tucked into the corner of the house to the left of the stage (342). Nationally, he strengthened his power by controlling media and eliminating opponents. As a result, the Soviet nationalistic ballet was officially established in the 1930s under Stalin’s regime.

Vaganova’s artistic activities were influenced by elements of socialist realism such as *Master Plot* and *Dram-balet*. Homans says, “In the 1930s, especially as Stalin consolidated his power, a vast web of Party organizations reached into every aspect of production: script, music, sets, costumes, and choreography were all subject to review by unions, party officials, and committees of worker and peers” (Homans 343). In 1934, Andrei Zhdanov, member of Stalin’s Central Committee, addressed the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers. This speech gave a clear guideline for

socialist realism in art: “Socialist Realism ...demands of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism” (Homans 346). Zhdanov’s speech was delivered to Soviet writers, but it applied to all fields of art. In ballet, socialist realism was accomplished through the ideas of Soviet *master plot* and *dram-balet*.

Socialist realism influenced ballet in the Soviet Union. In order to understand socialist realism in ballet, it is critical to know the terms of “*dram-balet*” and “*master plot*” identified by Katerina Clark. *Dram-balet* was a genre generated under Stalin’s regime and Soviet *master plot* was defined in Katerina Clark’s book *The Soviet Novel* in 2000. Katerina Clark explains the socialist *master plot* in her book:

"As is generally true of ritual forms, the *master plot* personalizes the general processes outlined in Marxist-Leninist historiography by encoding them in biographical terms: the positive hero passes in stages from a state of relative “spontaneity” to a higher degree of “consciousness,” which he attains by some individual revolution” (Clark 16).

The term “Soviet *master plot*” was created by Katerina Clark in her book *The Soviet Novel*. Katerina Clark discovered that Soviet master plot applied to most of Soviet theatrical art, and it was intended to enlighten the masses and revolutionize society. *Dram-balet* appeared in the 1930s as a new genre, and it became the main theme of ballet during the Stalin era. On the other hand, *dram-balet* constructed a utopian image among the Soviet people with an uplifting and didactic drama. Janis Ross claimed that the socialist brand of realism was a utopian project presenting a

landscape of abundance, fellowship, and happiness (Ross 21). *Dram-balet* shaped the imagined utopian nation among citizens. Homans says, “[*Dram-ballet*] had to tell a straightforward, uplifting story about heroic workers, innocent women, and courageous men. Abstract dances or complicated allegorical or symbolic ballets open to misinterpretation were strictly banned. Every step or gesture had to have a clear dramatic meaning” (Homans 345-347). *Dram-balet* became influential in the 1930s, but the development of *dram-balet* had already begun in the 1920s. *The Red Poppy* shows a similar structure of *dram-balet* in the 1920s. In 1927, Vasily Tikhomirov created *The Red Poppy*, which depicted a story of a "good" Chinese (communists) against "bad" Chinese (capitalists) and Western imperialists. These ballet performances followed the form and content of *dram-balet* and propagated socialism and an imagined utopian nation for the Soviet people.

Swan Lake

The most prominent ballet performance associated with Russia is *Swan Lake*. The reason is that the Soviet Union constructed its imagined community with *Swan Lake* as the definitive art form. “In the postwar years, *Swan Lake*, in particular, become a de facto second national anthem” (Homans 365). Stalin’s successor Nikita Khrushchev once complained to foreign diplomats that he had seen so many performances of *Swan Lake* that his dream was haunted by "white tutus and tanks all mixed up together" (Pliskaya 140). In the 1930s and 1940s, the Soviet Union experienced numerous protests, political instability, and wars. Most of the time, Soviet streets were covered with parades of military corps and tanks. Khrushchev’s nightmare of *Swan Lake*’s white tutus and tanks illustrates the cultural and political

changes in the 1930s and 1940s Soviet Union.

According to Homans, the Bolshoi Theatre and its dancers acted as cultural emissaries abroad, serving as icons of Soviet power and cultural achievement. Classical ballet was the de facto official art of the Soviet state (Homans 342). *Swan Lake* was the most famous performance and was seen as a national icon because cultural emissaries presented the ballet in the name of the Soviet Union. The shaping of Soviet nationalism through *Swan Lake* started in 1933 with Vaganova's *Swan Lake* under Stalin's regime. The theater staff of GATOB decided to make a new socialist realist version of *Swan Lake* in 1931. The new *Swan Lake* premiered in 1933. To understand what differentiates Vaganova's *Swan Lake* from previous performances, it is important to know the original version of *Swan Lake*.

The first *Swan Lake* was staged in Moscow in 1887, but the most well-known version is the production choreographed by Petipa and Ivanov in 1895. This *Swan Lake* story took place in medieval Germany. Prince Siegfried learns on his twenty-first birthday that he must choose a bride. He was not interested in any of the local noble women, so he ran out of the palace with his friends to go hunting. He comes to a magic lake and meets the Swan queen (Odette), who is trapped in the lake. Odette tells him through mime that she lives with her twenty-four swan maidens in the magic lake and that only during the night do they turn into humans. She says only true love can break the spell. If he forswears his love, then she will live as a swan forever. He pledges his love to Odette but Rothbart, the sorcerer, tricks him with his daughter Odile. In this version of *Swan Lake*, the role of Odile is played by the same dancer as Odette. Odile entices Siegfried, and Siegfried swears his love to Odile instead of Odette. In this scene, Odile performs thirty-two fouetees dance movements in Petipa's choreography. After Siegfried finds out that he had been fooled, he apologizes to

Odette and redeems himself by killing the Sorcerer. At the same time, Odette throws herself into the lake. Siegfried throws himself into the lake, and the strength of his love breaks the spell. Odette and Siegfried reunite after death.



Figure 8- Left: Prince Siegfried with swans, Right: Sorcerer Rothbart in 1895 *Swan Lake* -<https://petipasociety.com/swan-lake/>



Figure 9- Petipa and Ivanov's *Swan Lake* in 1895 - <https://petipasociety.com/swan-lake/>

In 1913, Vaganova performed the role of Odette-Odile in *Swan Lake*. Nearly twenty years had passed since Petipa and Ivanov's *Swan Lake* premiered. Critics praised her technique but were critical of her overall performance, claiming that she was unable to portray Odette well. However, a few critics saw her potential as a choreographer in her performance. "Pleshcheyev wrote that Vaganova was making steady progress, working on her dance technique, mindful of the styling of forms" (Krasovskaya 70). Another critic Volynsky wrote, "Each detail in Vaganova's performance is a small world of choreography, distinguished by internal consistency" (Krasovskaya 71). Exactly twenty years later, Vaganova choreographed *Swan Lake* in 1933, establishing herself as a choreographer into the world of ballet.

Vaganova witnessed the downfall of Fyodor Lopukhov (the former artistic director of GATOB) because he failed to convey socialistic realism in ballets that satisfied Soviet censorship. In 1927, Anatoly Lunacharsky (first Soviet People's Commissar of Education), said, "Theatre must become a real weapon of agitation and propaganda...The censor must have a definite place. But its interference must be minimal" (Ross 92). The following year a classification system for ballets was created with five levels of ranking based on the ideological acceptability of the ballet's narrative. Many left-wing critics attacked Lopukhov, and he finally resigned from his artistic director position in 1931. *Rabochiy I teatr* (Worker and Theatre) criticized Lopukhov's *The Nutcracker* in 1928 as an "absolute lack of understanding of the tasks facing the Soviet theatre – a lack demonstrated, in part, by his incorporation in the choreography of popular dance forms from the West" (Swift, *Art of the Dance in the USSR*, 66, p. 212). Vaganova became the artistic director of GATOB in 1931, and she knew to avoid Soviet censorship by learning from Lopukhov's case.

Vaganova's version of *Swan Lake*, unfortunately, has been lost. But

Krasovskaya (Vaganova's student) provides a detailed account of Vaganova's *Swan Lake* in her book *Vaganova*. The scenario for the new version of *Swan Lake* was inspired by Maxim Gorky, according to Krasovskaya. Gorky published a novel called *The Story of a Young Man in the Nineteenth Century* in 1931, including a revision of *Swan Lake*. Dmitriev, who took charge of the scenario, stage sets, and costumes, used Gorky's version of *Swan Lake* in 1933. Boris Asafiev reviewed the score and restored numerous passages that had been deleted from the old production. Radulov was a stage director, and he helped build action and a logical sequence of the mise-en-scene. Ulanova took the role of Swan Queen (Odette), and Konstantin Sergeyev acted as Count Siegfried. In Vaganova's *Swan Lake*, Odile (Rothbart's daughter) was performed by different dancer, Olga Jordan. Vaganova was a choreographer, which meant that she was the director for this ballet performance. Vaganova knew her task as a Soviet choreographer, so she eliminated Odette's conventional pantomime scene from the original *Swan Lake* and emphasized the corps de ballet parts. Krasovskaya said, "Vaganova simply straightened the lines, adjusted the unison of the corps de ballet's movements, and polished the smoothness and precision of the dance of the four cygnets. She also sharpened the wing-like arm movements of the whole swan corps" (176). It was a brilliant change because Vaganova satisfied the Soviet censorship by deleting mime scenes in *Swan Lake* and put more attention on swan corps movements. This satisfied the censorship board because Vaganova's revision of the performance eliminated bourgeois elements and incorporated more of the working-class ideology through the development of the swan corps movement.

Vaganova's totality of body movements was not only applied to individual dance movements, but it also appeared in the corps de ballet. Especially in *Swan Lake*, dancers in the corps de ballet synchronized their movements. It seems like that

they are all the same dancers. It is hard to find individuality in this corps de ballet. Vaganova's method made this totality of corps de ballet possible, and it also suited the totalitarian military regime of Stalin. Janice Ross discovered the link between the corps de ballet of *Swan Lake* and the Soviet military corps. She said, "The corps de ballet comes into unique focus in *Swan Lake* as an ensemble that is coded as seductively feminine yet drilled into martial precision. As such its order, in fact, evokes another corps – that of the military" (30). She asserts that the totality of a large group symbolizes potential value in political power and military organization.

In Vaganova's version of *Swan Lake*, Prince Siegfried was replaced by Count Siegfried, and Swan Queen became Chief Swan (no given name for the role). The historical background changed to nineteenth century East Prussia. The GATOB eliminated the unrealistic magical scenes in *Swan Lake*, as well. Vaganova tried to save much of Petipa and Ivanov's choreography, but she also knew that the Soviet Union might censor those parts. Instead, she added a new hunting scene in the performance. Homans says, "She had to make the story more "realistic": blood spattered on the white swan's wings, and the entire ballet was set as a decadent dream unfolding in the white in the mind of a rich and corrupt count" (354). In the past, one ballerina played the parts of both Odette and Odile. But in Vaganova's version, two ballerinas took on the role of the two characters in order to make the scene less magical and more realistic. That is, it made sense to have Siegfried be enticed by a completely different ballerina rather than the same ballerina who plays both Odette and Odile's parts. The entire stage setting and costume changed from fancy castle outfits to modest medieval costumes.

In many parts, there were evident influences of socialist realism in Vaganova's *Swan Lake*. Below is the opening scene of the 1933 *Swan Lake*:

Konstantin Sergeyev (1910-1992, Russian dancer, choreographer) as the Count appears on the empty terrace. Holding a book of poetry in his hands and absorbed in reading, he walks slowly down the steps. He looks very different from fairy-tale princes. With his modest jacket and a beret pulled down over his dark curls, he more resembles a student from foggy Germany or perhaps he could have been Werther, Lensky, or any other young man imbued with Hamlet's romanticism. (Krasovskaya 174)

In this *Swan Lake*, a masculine Prince Siegfried who has a habit of hunting in the original version is now a romantic Count, who loves to read poetry. From this first scene, Vaganova's *Swan Lake* clearly shows the influence of the socialism in ballet as it changed the social status of the main character from a prince to a decadent bourgeoisie who suffers from the corruption of his bourgeois society.

Surprisingly, Vaganova's final part of *Swan Lake* is different from the positive socialist conclusion. Count Siegfried stabs himself with a knife and Odette dies. The group of swans covers Odette and Siegfried's dead bodies with their wings. The dead bodies fall through the trapdoor on stage and a stuffed swan comes up from the same trapdoor. The final scene is the swans gliding over the calm lake toward the light of the rising sun. This indicates the finale of the performance. GATOB focused on realistic drama in the plot, so it ended with overly dramatic tragedy.

Overall the performance received mixed reviews from the critics. The defenders of tradition thought that "altering a masterpiece was harmful...they found it unacceptable that the new *Swan Lake* was so heavily dramatized" (Krasovskaya 178). On the other hand, liberal critics complimented Vaganova's *Swan Lake* saying that the

production avoided two extremes: on the one hand, giving illustrative explanations of the plot, and on the other, encoding the action with symbolism, ill-suited to its musical progressions (Krasovskaya 179). Vaganova's *Swan Lake* received positive reviews from the left-wing critics as a work of socialist ballet. Vaganova's *Swan Lake* did not adhere to the uplifting heroic storyline of *dram-balet*, but its attempt at socialistic realism followed the form of *dram-balet*, which resulted in receiving an acknowledgment from the critics. In 1934, a Soviet critic and musicologist, Boris Asafyev, wrote an essay about Vaganova's *Swan Lake* saying that she reinterpreted the ballet through the political lens of the new doctrine. Asafyev says, "This is not a fairy-tale utopian world, but a psychologically real one" (Homans 31). Asafyev acknowledged Vaganova's *Swan Lake* as a Soviet socialist ballet, which is telling evidence that the ballet helped construct the "imagined communities" among Soviet citizens.

Vaganova's *Swan Lake* became the exemplar for other *Swan Lake* productions in the Soviet Union. For example, Konstantin Sergeev's 1953 film production of *Swan Lake* was based on Vaganova's *Swan Lake*. Sergeev's version was made into a color film called *Stars of the Russian Ballet* in 1953.⁶ This film not only kept Vaganova's choreography, but it was also performed by the same ballet dancers from the 1934 *Swan Lake* production. This film cast stars like Galina Ulanova, who was one of Vaganova's original Swans, and Natalia Dudzinski, who was also one of Vaganova's students, in the role of Odile. This shows how Soviet ballet continually used Vaganova's ballet method and choreography through different forms of media

⁶ *Stars of the Russian Ballet*, this 1953 film includes performance stars Galina Ulanova, one of Vaganova's original Swans, with Natalia Dudzinskaia, another Vaganova student, in the role of Odile.

production. Vaganova died in 1951, but her countless pupils maintained her ballet method and choreography to shape Soviet ballet. The idea of *inventing tradition* in Soviet ballet started from Lenin's regime and was formalized during Stalin's era. He reshaped nationalistic Soviet ballet with Vaganova's ballet method, socialistic realism, and discourse of media.



Figure 10- Swan Lake in 1933, (Courtesy of e-Onegin.com – Fund of the Ballet and Dance Photography)



Figure 11- Swan Lake in 1933, (Courtesy of e-Onegin.com – Fund of the Ballet and Dance Photography)

Esmeralda

The Soviet Union used Vaganova's *Esmeralda* in 1935 to construct the characteristics of Soviet ballet as well. *La Esmeralda* was first performed in 1844, and the story was inspired by Victor Hugo's novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*. The first *La Esmeralda* production during tsarist Russia followed the original version and preserved the novel's tragic ending. In 1935, however, Vaganova's *Esmeralda* removed mime scenes and added socialist realist scenes to show Soviet socialist ideology.

In 1933, two years before the premiere of Vaganova's *Esmeralda*, Vaganova and Radlov (the drama director) met and planned the production of the new *Esmeralda*. The main focus of this meeting was to find ways to elaborate the original version of Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*. According to Krasovskaya, Radlov suggested eliminating the happy ending of the old production (Marius Petipa's *La Esmeralda* in 1886) and replacing it with Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*' tragic ending. However, unbeknownst to Vaganova, and perhaps to Radlov as well, when Hugo revised his novel for an opera libretto he had introduced a happy conclusion (Krasovskaya 183). In 1883, a book called *The Theatre* was published in London, and it included the information on Victor Hugo's happy ending version of *La Esmeralda*. "Victor Hugo introduced a happy ending for Marzials and Randegger's opera libretto in 1883" (*The Theatre* 287-290). Thus, Vaganova and Radlov followed the same happy ending conclusion.

Vaganova's *Esmeralda* became one of the most well-known Soviet ballets as it evoked socialist ideology through the downfall of capitalism, proletarian heroes, and an optimistic ending. Claude Frollo (the archdeacon of Notre Dame cathedral)

represents the corruption of aristocratic society and the hypocrisy of religion. Claude Frollo acts humbly and generously in public, but his mind is full of greed, which represents the greed in capitalist societies. Frollo often uses his authority to fulfill his desire, which indicates the fallacy of aristocratic society. Soviet socialism was against religion, so Frollo's immoral religious character was well suited for Soviet socialist ideology. Esmeralda and Quasimodo are protagonists and proletarian heroes. Finally, in Vaganova's *Esmeralda*, these proletarian protagonists win against the aristocratic society and this represents Soviet socialist utopia.

In Marius Petipa's version of *La Esmeralda* in 1886, Frollo is sexually obsessed with Esmeralda, so he orders Quasimodo (the hunchback) to kidnap Esmeralda. But Captain Phoebus de Chateaupers saves Esmeralda and captures Quasimodo. Esmeralda asks to release Quasimodo, and Quasimodo is deeply touched by Esmeralda's kindness. Esmeralda falls in love with Captain Phoebus, but Frollo stabs Phoebus with a knife out of jealousy. Frollo makes false charges against Esmeralda and gives her an ultimatum to choose him or death. Esmeralda refuses the ultimatum, and Frollo gives her a death sentence. Right before Esmeralda is hanged, Phoebus arrives alive. Phoebus survived and recovered from the stabbing. He reveals that Frollo is the real criminal. Frollo takes a dagger and attempts to do away with them, but Quasimodo wrests the dagger from his master and stabs him to death. Esmeralda and Phoebus are happily reunited.

Vaganova's 1935 *Esmeralda* used the same plot but removed the mime parts and added socialist realist components such as an uplifting conclusion. She realized that she had to add these elements of socialist realism in order to avoid brutal criticisms from the left-wing critics and censors. She stated in the article, "We are trying to portray Esmeralda's image as realistically and truthfully as possible. We

would like to show her as a simple girl of the people, who has to take care of her modest household and food” (Krasovskaya 190). Vaganova’s gestures, such as adding socialist realist elements, protected her, her ballet productions, and her dancers during the Soviet regime.

Vaganova’s *Esmeralda* and *Swan Lake* were well-received by Stalin, which prompted the People’s Commissariat of Education to produce socialist ballet. After Vaganova’s *Swan Lake* and *Esmeralda* had made significant success, The People’s Commissariat of Education invited the Leningrad Opera and Ballet Theater (GATOB) to perform in Moscow. Krasovskaya wrote in her book, in June 1935, two months after the premiere of *Esmeralda*, GATOB invited as guest performances on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater. The ballet company presented *Swan Lake*, *Esmeralda*, and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*.⁷ The new capital city received these ballets with admiration and was delighted to discover ballerinas and corps de ballet, now mostly containing Vaganova's students (Krasovskaya 200). Vaganova’s *Esmeralda* and *Swan Lake* were used to cultivate Soviet ballet during the Soviet regime. On the one hand, it was fortunate that Stalin acknowledged Vaganova’s genius talent as a choreographer and a ballet instructor, but on the other hand, Stalin saw her as another threatening power in the GATOB. Stalin’s the Great Purge began with hatred of Sergei Kirov, a rising leader and the head of the party organization in Leningrad. Stalin ordered the assassination of Sergei Kirov in 1934 and began to purge people who related to Kirov or anyone who threatened his authority (Homans 345).

After Stalin ordered the assassination of Sergei Kirov, Stalin intensified his political oppression and persecution. The increasing popularity of Sergei Kirov was

⁷ *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* was choreographed by Rostislav Zakharov in 1934.

threatening Stalin and Stalin's fear began the Great Purge. Homans describes the Great Purge in her book: "In the course of the next four years (1934-1938), an estimated two million people - artists, intellectuals, and high Party officials prominent among them –were arrested and sentenced to death or sent to labor camps...Leningrad, the country's cultural capital and Kirov's personal fief, was crippled, and power was henceforth increasingly concentrated in Moscow" (345). Stalin changed the name of GATOB to the Kirov Ballet to honor his name and hide his assassination attempt on Kirov from the public.

After Vaganova published her ballet method book *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet* and the success of *Swan Lake* and *Esmeralda*, Vaganova became one of the most influential people in the Kirov Ballet. Vaganova made these brilliant achievements while Sergei Kirov was working as the first secretary of the Communist Party in Leningrad. Vaganova's success might have arisen during Stalin's growing hatred over Kirov and he may have seen her as another threatening power in the Kirov ballet. Stalin did not order her killed like other victims of the Great Purge, but Stalin did take away her power in the Soviet ballet field.

After 1937, Vaganova's life and career descended. On December 9, 1937, the Kirov Theater had a meeting. It was a meeting to assess Vaganova's qualification as an artistic director. Many of her pupils were in the meeting, but ironically, they were criticizing her. The documentary film, *Agrippina Vaganova: The great & the Terrible* extracts from the record of the artistic board meeting:

Tatyana Vecheslova, who was a pupil of Vaganova, claimed, "We work in a socialistic state and not in a private company where you introduce your own rules and laws. We need to put an end to it." Vakhtang Chabukiani, a ballet

dancer and choreographer, said, “In our company behind the scenes, squabbles and adulation are rampant. And who is to blame for it? The artistic director!” Even Galina Ulanova, one of Vaganova’s precious pupils turned her back on Vaganova, “I think we need a new person for our artistic management who would be a creative ballet master for our company.” By that time, she lost contact with most of her pupils. She stepped down quietly from the artistic director position. (*Agrippina Vaganova: The great & the terrible 2010*)

The actual reason for Vaganova’s resignation is unclear. According to the documentary film *Agrippina Vaganova: The great & the Terrible*, there was a power struggle inside the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theater and Vaganova lost her battle. On the other hand, Homans claimed in her book *Apollo’s Angel* that Vaganova was a victim of Stalin’s elusive tastes, “As the terror spread, *Dram-ballets* took on ever more ideologically strident tones and obvious themes. The stakes were high. Although dancers were spared the worst of Stalin’s horrors, the sense of danger was acute and pervasive” (Homans 357). After Kirov’s death, Stalin was suffering paranoia of overpowering individuals other than him. His fear of losing his dictatorship affected even the field of ballet. Stalin forced Vaganova to resign from her Artistic Director position of Kirov Opera and Ballet Theater in order to remove Vaganova’s authority in ballet.

As a result of Vaganova’s resignation, the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theater was under Stalin’s control. Stalin did not like Vaganova’s overpowering influence in ballet, but he could not deny her brilliant ballet method and its use of nationalistic ballet. On December 22, 1937, a notice of Vaganova’s resignation was posted on the information board:

The order of the USSR Committee on Arts Affairs #852 dated December 19, 1937 declares 1. Comrade Vaganova is released from work in the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theater at her request.... 3. We suggest to the Leningrad Choreographic School that it should broadly make use of Vaganova in its pedagogical work. 4. We suggest to the publishing house Iskusstvo (Art) that it should publish a newly revised edition of Vaganova's book, Basic Principles of Classical Ballet, for the needs of choreographic schools in the Soviet Union... Chairman of the USSR Committee on Arts Affairs, Kerzhentsev. (Krasovskaya 226)

As we can see from number 3 and 4 of the order of the USSR Committee on Art Affairs #852, even after Vaganova's resignation, the Soviet Union continued to use Vaganova's ballet method and continued as nationalistic ballet with her method. Beginning from 1943, Vaganova became a ballet consultant at the Bolshoi Theater, while she also taught at the Leningrad Choreographic School. She taught at the Leningrad Choreographic School until her death in 1951. In 1957, the Leningrad Choreographic School was renamed to the Vaganova School to honor her legacy.

Shaping Russian Nationalistic Ballet in Post-Stalin Era (1953-Present)

After Stalin's death in 1953, the censorship of socialist realistic ballet began to fade slowly. *Dram-balet* and Soviet *Master Plot* were not the main concern in the work of ballet. Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, who was the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1953- 1964) after Stalin's death, criticized repressions during the Stalin regime and announced the "thaw" in culture and art. The *thaw* or de-Stalinization allowed for controlled

freedom of expression in art, and the ballet was also a part of this social change (Homans 366). Khrushchev's attempt at peaceful foreign policy opened up the Iron Curtain that divided the Soviet Union from Western Europe and the United States. Khrushchev used ballet to show cultural superiority to other countries and built the national pride among the Soviet citizens.

Khrushchev's de-Stalinization policy allowed for cultural exchanges such as ballet performances with the West. Despite advocating for change in ballet, he still used Vaganova's method, as it remained a foundation of Soviet pride. In 1956, the Bolshoi and Leningrad Ballet visited London and they were a great success. It was the first time the Soviet dancers performed in a non-communist country. In the same year, "a BBC broadcast of *Swan Lake* drew some fourteen million viewers" (Homans 372). The Bolshoi Ballet's New York performance in 1959 brought a sensation in the U.S. "At the New York Metropolitan Opera House performance in 1959, the theater was packed, with more than two hundred people crowded around the sides and in the aisles" (Homans 373). Galina Ulanova, Vaganova's pupil, performed in these performances and gained stardom in the Western countries. Khrushchev's peaceful foreign policy opened the chances to build a positive reputation for Soviet ballet to the world.

Khrushchev and Soviet media built the national pride with Soviet ballet dancers and the excellence of Vaganova's method. In 1959, Khrushchev told American reporters:

Now, I have a question for you, which country has the best ballet? Yours? You do not even have a permanent opera and ballet theater. Your theater thrives on what is given them by rich people. In our country it is the state that gives it

money. And the best ballet is in the Soviet Union. [...] you can see yourselves which art is on the upsurge and which is on the downgrade. (Homans 373)

For nearly half a century, Soviet ballet was isolated from the world because of the Iron Curtain. After the Soviet ballet performances in the late 1950s, Western audiences were astonished by its complex and superb dance movements. Although Soviet ballet was isolated from the Western countries, Vaganova developed a new ballet methodology, which amplified the expressive capacities of ballet dancers. Khrushchev used the Soviet ballet stars with Vaganova's method to show their cultural superiority and propagate Soviet socialism.

After the performances in the West, Soviet ballet earned world fame. As a result of these performances, the number of small private ballet academies and the number of visiting performances in the Western countries increased. The government monitored these visits to the Western countries in the late 1980s. "Mikhail Gorbachev (the former general secretary of the Soviet Union from 1985 to 1991) launched the "Glasnost" (openness) policy from 1985 to 1991 and advocated for the social and political reforms to bestow more rights and freedoms upon the Soviet people" (Hall, *The Cold War Museum*, coldwar.org). During this period, financial instability in the Soviet Union was serious. National ballet academies were no longer supported by the state; thus, these ballet academies maintained their schools on their own.

After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Russia used Vaganova's method to rebuild their nationalistic dance through media, which was no longer focused on her achievements in socialistic realism ballet performances as in the past, but instead shifted the interest to the contribution of her ballet method to the world. Russia constructed a new image of Russian Ballet but still used Vaganova's method from

Stalin's socialist realist era. The Russian media began to emphasize the contribution of Vaganova's method to the history of ballet, and how she protected classical ballet during times of ideological conflict. Roslavleva, the Russian critic and ballet historian, shows an example of how the discourse of media shaped the Soviet socialistic ballet during the Soviet Union period. Roslavleva focused on Vaganova's achievement in socialism realistic ballet in her book *Era of the Russian Ballet* in 1966: "Agrippina Vaganova gave the fruitful period of the nineteen-thirties the name of the 'new spring of our ballet' ... Vaganova summed up the points of issue determining the re-birth of ballet in those years in the following succession: (a) significance of themes, dealing with historical conflicts ..., (b) tense and dramatically well-developed plots, and (c) realistic characters rendered in artistic form" (Roslavleva, 236). Roslavleva emphasized Vaganova's contribution to Soviet realistic ballet and helped explain how the Soviet Union constructed socialistic ballet using Vaganova's method.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many scholars began to point out her conservatism in classical ballet, and how she protected the classical ballet during the Soviet period. Not only the Russian media but also other countries' media outlets reevaluated the socialistic expressions in her artistic activities as a lip-service to the Soviet censorship. These various media outlets no longer focus on Vaganova's attribution on socialist realism but are instead focusing on the technical and aesthetic aspects of her method. These are examples of changes of perception on Vaganova after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Vera Krasovskaya, who was a student of Vaganova and an author of a book *Vaganova* in 2005, makes the point again and again in her book that Vaganova's goal was to preserve the classical legacy. (Krasovskaya, xxx). Carolyn Pouncey claims in the journal article *Stumbling toward Socialist*

Realism: Ballet in Leningrad, 1927-1937:

Vaganova was not, however, a communist, and her appreciation for the goals of socialist realism seems to have been superficial at best. She cared that her dancers perform well and that her ballets be staged without a great deal of criticism; she also understood what, as artistic director, she needed to say to ensure that the productions she supervised did not fall foul of the regime. To that end, she repeatedly recast socialist realism to include the stories she wanted to tell. (192)

The documentary film *Agrippina Vaganova the Great & the Terrible* emphasized her contribution to ballet history rather than to the construction of Stalin's Soviet Union. Ludmila Semenyaka, who studied at the Vaganova Academy and became a Ballerina at the Bolshoi Ballet, said in the documentary film, "When the Americans are trying to convince me that Balanchine represents American style ballet, I think in my head...for me, Balanchine is a grad of Russian school" (*Agrippina Vaganova the Great & the Terrible* documentary film). Yakari Saito, a prima ballerina of Tokyo Ballet, said in the film, "I was trained in the Bolshoi and I feel like I am Vaganova's student too. Everything is based on the Russian school of the classical ballet" (*Agrippina Vaganova the Great & the Terrible* documentary film). Russian media reshaped the image of Russian ballet with Vaganova's classic ballet by minimizing the Soviet socialistic aspects in Vaganova's classic ballet and by emphasizing her contribution to classical ballet. Through these various media outlets, the Russian people feel national pride rather than pride in a past political ideology.

Conclusion

Agrippina Vaganova was a brilliant ballet dancer and a critic praised her as "a queen of variation". Her technique was superior to other ballet dancers, but she never became a successful prima ballerina. Even though she was not the best ballet dancer, she became the best ballet instructor in the Soviet Union. She began to teach at Imperial Ballet Academy from 1921 and she developed the ballet method. After Russia became a socialist county, Lenin and the Bolsheviks requested cultural reformation. Vaganova developed her new ballet method and published a book *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet* in 1934. She choreographed *Swan Lake* and *Esmeralda* according to socialist realism principles. Stalin systematized her method in Soviet Ballet Academies and constructed imagined Soviet ballet with Vaganova's ballet. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 and Russia rebuilt the nationalistic ballet with Vaganova's method and discourse of media. Russia media minimized the Soviet socialistic aspects in Vaganova and put strength on her achievements in world ballet history.

After Vaganova resigned from the artistic directorship of the Leningrad Choreographic Institution in 1937, she started focusing on generating future ballet dancers. Vaganova never stopped teaching ballet, until the end of her life in 1951. During the Second World War in 1941, a bomb destroyed a wing of the theater, but it did not stop her from developing ballet. On June 19, 1943, Vaganova was awarded the title Professor of Choreography and became a ballet consultant to the Bolshoi Theater. We cannot deny the tragic history of the USSR era, but we also cannot deny the great achievement that Agrippina Vaganova made in ballet history. "No matter where and how *Swan Lake* is produced, it almost always includes Vaganova's 'hunting scene.'

The Diana and Acteon pas de deux is still considered a test of virtuosity that is frequently highlighted by famous dancing partners as well as during international ballet competitions and festivals” (Krasovskaya 212). Russian ballet no longer serves as entertainment for the Tsar or propaganda tools for Soviet socialism. Now Russian ballet serves as entertainment for the world’s audiences and evokes national pride. The intersections of political ideology, nationalism, and media discourse may not be surprising, but Vaganova’s case teaches us the importance of how we should apply these elements to understand art. Vaganova’s case teaches us that art and media discourse should not be limited or reduced by politics. Although Stalin and the Bolsheviks accentuated political ideology in art and controlled the media to educate citizens with the dominating political ideology, Vaganova reinvented her ballet method to improve and expand the art of ballet, regardless of political affiliation. Vaganova’s ballet method remains as a legacy because of her artistic vision rather than because of her political association.



Figure 12- Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet

Chapter 2

Choi Seung-hee: The Victim of Ideological Conflict

On the night of January 1938, the leading Korean modern dancer Choi Seung-hee (1911-1969) performed for the first time in America. She arrived at the San Francisco Theater and saw a crowd of Korean Americans demonstrating in front of the theater. The demonstrators were shouting anti-Japanese slogans and were selling anti-Japanese badges to people. They believed that Choi Seung-hee was a Japanese collaborator, and her performance was a political ploy to support Japan. Choi Seung-hee used the Japanese name “Sai Shoki” in her performance pamphlet because of Imperial Japan’s *sōshi-kaimei* policy, which forced Koreans to adopt Japanese names during the colonial period. According to Kim Ch’an-jōng, an author of *Ch’umkkun Choi Seung-hee* (A Dancer Choi Seung-hee), “Sai Shoki” is not a complete Japanese name, rather it was based on the Japanese pronunciation of the Korean name Choi Seung-hee” (Kim, *Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 195). Korea was under Japanese rule from 1910 to 1945, and 1938 was the height of Japanese oppression on the Koreans. Korean Americans did not know that Koreans had to change their names into Japanese and simply assumed that Choi Seung-hee used her Japanese name because she was a collaborator. From the perspective of the Korean Americans, she was a betrayer of the Korean identity. Despite the anti-Japanese demonstration, “Choi’s performance was successful. Nearly 1,400 seats were filled, and out of 1,400 seats, the number of Korean audience members was less than a hundred” (Kim, *Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 198-199).

The legacy of Choi Seung-hee began during the Japanese colonial period and continued past the division of North and South Korea. Choi Seung-hee invented a new Korean dance style that combined Western modern dance with Korean traditional dance in the 1930s. Choi Seung-hee's dance deeply influenced the field of dance in the two countries and became representative of national dance forms in each country. During the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War, Korea lost many parts of its culture and cultural heritage. Both North and South Korea needed to reconstruct their cultural image, and they did so through national dance. North Korea and South Korea built their imagined traditional dance with Choi Seung-hee's dance style through various media outlets.

Why did Choi Seung-hee's dance influence the two countries in two different time periods? What was Choi Seung-hee's political ideology? How did the media from the two countries affect the nationalistic development of Choi Seung-hee's dance? What are the differences in Choi Seung-hee's dance between the two countries? In order to answer these questions, I researched print materials about Choi Seung-hee, which was published in South Korea, and a video documentary *Muyongga Choi Seung-hee* (The Dancer Choi Seung-hee), which was produced by Arirang TV (Korea International Broadcasting) in 2005. This documentary is the latest one and has the most information. For the North Korea section, I went to the National Library of Korea in South Korea and collected materials about Choi Seung-hee from the North Korea Center in the library. Mainly, I focused on Choi Seung-hee's dance method book *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong Gibon* (Basics of Chosŏn Ethnic Dance) published in 1958 and *Muyonggk daebonjib* (Choi Seung-hee's Dance Drama scripts collection, which was published in 1958 from North Korea), and criticism about Choi Seung-hee in *Rodong Sinmun* (Workers Newspaper), *Minju Chosŏn* (Democratic

Korea Newspaper), *Munhak Sinmun* (Culture Newspaper), and *Joseun Yesul* (Chosŏn Art Magazine). I used *Rodong Sinmun* and *Chosŏn Yesul* as the primary sources because *Rodong Sinmun* is regarded as a source of official North Korean viewpoints and *Chosŏn Yesul* is the only one art magazine during Choi Seung-hee's life time.

In this chapter, I will discuss how Choi Seung-hee's dance style was used to shape nationalistic dance in two different countries (North and South Korea) by examining three distinct periods of her life: first, the years of being a professional Korean dancer under the Japanese colonial period (1926-1945); second, the years of her working as a dancer and a dance director in North Korea until her death (1946-1969); and third, the later years of reevaluating her achievements in the history of Korean dance in South Korea (1980s-present). Within these three periods, I will discuss how Choi's dance was systematized in different countries, and how it became a nationalistic dance through the help of various media outlets. I will briefly explain the history of Korean dance and contextualize Choi Seung-hee's place in these changing times. Finally, I will analyze her artistic activities in light of the social and political changes that were happening in both countries. I argue that Choi Seung-hee's dance became the *invented tradition* of nationalistic dance in both North and South Korea and that it helped shape each country's political ideology through its dissemination in media.

Korea lost many parts of its dance culture and cultural heritage during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953). After Korea was divided into North and South Korea, both countries needed to reconstruct their national and political identity. North Korea built their nationalistic dance using Choi Seung-hee's dance method and named it *Chosŏn Minjok muyong*, which means the dance of the Korean people. The North Korean ruling party used media to promote

Choi's dance as an invented tradition reflecting Korea's long and glorious history. Furthermore, the North Korean ruling party and its media popularized North Korean dance by using Choi's work. South Korea, on the other hand, shaped their nationalistic dance with Choi's dance style but avoided using Choi's name in public media until the 1980s because she was considered to be a Japanese collaborator and North Korean sympathizer in South Korea. There, Choi's dance was called *Sinmuyong*, which means simply New Dance, eliminating any indications of being political. However, South Korea failed to realize that its attempt at being apolitical was a political decision in itself. It was not until the 1980s that South Korea credited Choi for inventing the dance. Choi Seung-hee (Japanese pronunciation: Sai Shoki) was the victim of ideological conflict from both countries. She created the modernized Korean Traditional Dance and developed it throughout her life, but her name was buried in history because of political and ideological conflict. Beginning from the 1980s, South Korea used mass media to redefine Korean dance. Choi Seung-hee's career shows the complex intersections of political ideology, nationalism, and media discourse, and how these shaped nationalistic dances in both countries.

Korean Traditional Dance before Choi Seung-hee

It is essential to know the basic history of Korean Traditional dance first in order to distinguish the differences between Choi Seung-hee's new dance style and Korean Traditional dance. Before Choi Seung-hee created *Sinmuyong* (New Dance), Korean traditional dance was mainly composed of court dance and folk dance. Yi, Pyöng-ok, a professor in the Yongin University Dance Department, claims that there are three subdivisions of Korean folk dance in his book *Korean Folk Dance*: "While

leaving the large categories of court dance and folk dance in place, folk dance should contain three divisions: commoners' dance, ritual dance, and professional dance. Professional dance can then be further subdivided into *gisaeng* (courtesan) dance, artist's dance, and shaman dance" (Yi, *Korean Folk Dance* 82). Commoner's dance and ritual dance were performed in open-air public venues. Professional dance was often performed indoors, such as main rooms of aristocrats' houses or *gibang* (brothel houses). Court dances were developed from the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392) for entertainment at festive banquets and rituals (Nam & Gim 76). Court dances are composed of slow and graceful movements. Unlike folk dances, in which bare hands are used openly, the naked hand is considered indecent and disrespectful in the court dance. In most of the court dance, the hands are completely concealed with long coverlets called *Hansam*, a type of long tube-like sash draped over each hand (Nam & Gim 77). Court dance is a combination art of playing instruments, song, and dance and mostly performed in the courtyard of the palace.



Figure 13- Left: Court Dance, Won, Jong-gyu, Jeonju Gyeonggijeon Hall
Right: Folk Dance, Korean Folk Village in Suwon - keepcalmandwander.com/korean-folk-village-in-suwon-seoul/

After the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910) was invaded by Japan in 1910, many

concubines and professional dancers in the palace ended up working as *gisaengs* at *gibangs*, so many repertoires of Korean traditional dance were maintained by these *gisaengs*. Later in the 1930s and 1940s, Choi Seung-hee learned Korean traditional dances from *gisaengs*, or professional Korean traditional dancers, and created a modernized Korean dance method. Yi Ae-sun said in her book *Choe Sŭng-hŭi muyong yesul yŏngu* (The study on Choi Seung-Hee's artistic dance) "starting from 1942, she began to systematize her modernized Korean dance method based on her learning and researching on-court dance, ritual dance, commoner's dance, and *gisaengs* dance" (Yi, *The study on Choi* 193). Choi Seung-hee became one of the leading modern dancers who brought the evanescent Korean traditional dance out of the brothels into the theater, and she made this dance a theatrical art form. Choi studied in Japan under Japanese modern dancer Baku Ishii (1887-1962), who first performed modern dance in Korea in 1926, and learned the basics of modern dance and ballet. Baku Ishii was influenced by Martha Graham and Mary Wigman. Ishii never incorporated Japanese tradition dance into his modern dance like the way Choi did with hers. Choi developed her own modern dance pieces inspired by Korean folk dances such as fan dance and hourglass drums. She also used Korean traditional dresses to show the integration of Korean traditional dance and modern dance (Kim, *Dancing Korea* 28). This modernized theatrical Korean dance form was called *Sinmuyong* (New Dance) to distinguish it from traditional dance. She developed the modernized Korean dance, and her dance method greatly influenced the field of Korean dance. Her influence on Korean dance can be divided into three time periods: first, under Japanese colonialism; second, working as dance director in North Korea; and third, the reevaluation of her achievements in the history of South Korean dance.

Sai Shoki (Choi Seung Hee) During Japanese Colonial Period (1926-1945)

During Japanese colonial period, there were two nationalistic groups that used Choi Seung-hee (Sai Shoki) to shape their political ideologies through the discourse of media. *Kyeongseong Ilbo* (Kyeongseong newspaper written in Japanese) and *Maeil Sinbo* (Everyday newspaper written in a mixture of Japanese and Korean), run by the Japanese General Government, tried to construct Choi Seung-hee's image as a successful modern dancer under Japanese rule. On the other hand, *Dong-A Ilbo* (Dong-A newspaper, which ran by Korean and written in Korean) and *Paeksipjahoe* (Choi Seung-hee supporting group established in 1934) emphasized Choi Seung-hee's modernized dance as Korean and tried to construct her image into that of a successful Korean dancer. During the Japanese colonial period, two nationalisms existed in Korea: Japan wanted to suppress Korea in every aspect and control Korea under Japanese rule, while the Korean people wished for liberation from the Japanese. These two political ideologies affected Korea and Japan's society and it influenced the way Choi Seung-hee's work was discussed by different media groups.

Choi Seung-hee was born in 1911 from a *yangban* (noble) family. From 1926 to 1929, she studied under Baku Ishii in Japan. While she was studying under Baku Ishii, she debuted on Japan's stages and received attention. She was the first Korean woman in Baku Ishii's dance company, and her talent grabbed Japanese audience's interest. "In 1929, she came back to Korea and performed the dance recital in 1930, which was supported by *Kyeongseong Ilbo* (Seoul Newspaper) and *Maeil Sinbo* (Everyday Newspaper)" (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 71). *Kyeongseong Ilbo* was a newspaper, which was established in 1906. After the forced annexation of Korea by Japan, *Kyeongseong Ilbo* was used to propagate Japanese Imperialism. This shows

Choi's fame in Japan and among Japanese people during the Japanese colonial period.

Most of Choi's dance repertoires were composed of modern dance and had no Korean nationalistic ideology until 1930. The Japanese government and its reporting in *Kyeongseong Ilbo* and *Maeil Sinbo*, supported Choi without any restriction. Beginning in 1931, several of Choi's repertoires included Korean nationalistic themes. Her dance pieces depicted a Korean people suffering under the Japanese rule, and, as a result, *Kyeongseong Ilbo* stopped supporting on her performances. Chŏng, Su-ung (a documentary director and a writer) wrote in his book *Ch'oe Sŭng-Hŭi: Kyŏktong Ŭi Sidae Ŭl Salta Kan Ŏnŭ Muyongga Ŭi Saengae Wa Yesul* (Choi Seung-hee: the life story and art of a dancer who lived in a turbulent era) about the movement of media. "After she created anti-Japanese and nationalistically themed dances, *Kyeongseong Ilbo* and *Maeil Sinbo* stopped supporting her performances, and *Dong-A Ilbo* (East Asia Daily newspaper) began to support her performances" (Chŏng, *The life story* 371). *Dong-A Ilbo* is a newspaper in South Korea that has been in operation since 1920. *Dong-A Ilbo* was established by Korean members and was famous for supporting *Singanhoe* or other Korean nationalist organizations.⁸ One of the most famous incidents, which showed *Dong-A Ilbo*'s Korean nationalistic ideology, was when the editors of the newspaper erased the Japanese flag on 1936 Korean Olympic marathon gold medalist Sohn Kee-chung's chest and published the image. Because of this incident, *Dong-A Ilbo* was suspended from further publication. Therefore, there was a close correlation between the beginning of Choi's Korean nationalistic creation and *Dong-A Ilbo*'s sponsorship.

There are two main reasons why her dance repertoires shifted to Korean

⁸ *Singanhoe* was a Korean nationalist organization during Japanese colonial period. It founded in 1927.

nationalistic themes. The first reason is that she was influenced by Korean artists while she was in Korea and the second reason is her marriage with proletarian writer Ahn Mak. From 1930 to 1933, Choi met Korean artists and learned Korean traditional dances in Korea. Chŏng Su-ung writes, “Choi Seung-hee learned traditional dances from gisaengs and local professional dancers. She combined Korean traditional dance and contemporary dance” (Chŏng, *The life story* 19). While she met these artists, she did not only learn Korean traditional dances but also experience Japanese repression against Koreans. Beginning from 1933, Choi’s dance style shifted from contemporary dance to *Sinmuyong*.

Choi married to Ahn Mak, a proletarian writer and a Russian Literature major student from Waseda University, on May 10, 1931. Ahn Mak was one of the leading members of KAPF (Korea Artista Proleta Federacio). KAPF was a Korean socialist group of artists, established in 1925. Ahn Mak was arrested on October 6, 1931 because he designed and orchestrated the Korean independence movement. After Ahn Mak was caught as a member of the Korean independence activists, the content of Choi’s dances changed to express the unfortunate fate of Koreans under Japanese rule. In his book, *Ch’umkkun Choi Seung-hee* (A Dancer Choi Seung-hee), Yi Yŏng-nan explains many of the changes that Choi made in her dance numbers *Those who yearn for home*, *Kwangsanggok* (Capriccio), and *The thorny path*: these dance numbers depicted the unfortunate fate of Koreans under Japanese rule (53). In *The thorny path*, Choi described Ahn Mak’s suffering in the jail. She depicted five people who were roped in a dark room and they were writhing around on the floor in agony (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 95). As she changed to Korean nationalistic themed repertoires, the support of the media shifted from *Kyeongseong Ilbo* and *Maeil Sinbo* to Korean media *Dong-A Ilbo*. Later in 1934, Song Jin-woo, the president of *Dong-A*

Ilbo, became one of the founder members of the Choi Seung-hee supporting group *Paeksipjahoe* (White Cross Institute), established in 1934.

Ahn Mak's arrest influenced Choi's dance career, as well. Kim Ch'an-jöng says, "People avoided coming to her performances because of Ahn Mak's arrest, and the Japanese government did not give her the permission to perform because of her new dance contents" (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 96). As a result of censoring Choi's performances, she faced serious financial difficulty, so she decided to go back to Japan and work under Baku Ishii's dance company in 1933. Fortunately, Baku Ishii accepted her to his dance company and gave her many chances to perform on stage. Choi grabbed Japanese audience's attention again. She introduced her modernized Korean dance *Ehera Noara* (*Dance of the Carefree*) to the Japanese audience at her first solo dance concert in January 1934, and it was a great success. As a result of successful first solo concert in Japan, a Choi Seung-hee support group (*Paeksipjahoe*) was formed.

Han Kyung-ja explains the importance of *Paeksipjahoe* in her journal article *The Asiatic Patronage Environment of the Choi Seung-hee Dance*, "*Paeksipjahoe* included many artists, politicians, presidents of magazine publishers, and cultured individuals who are chosen as the top-notch in Japan such as Baku Ishii, Yasunari Kawabata, Ma Hae song, Song Jin woo, Lyuh Woon-hyung... especially many of the nationalist leaders who had worked for the independence of Korea" (Han 281). The initiators of *Paeksipjahoe* were thirty-two people. They supported Choi financially and advertised Choi Sung-hee through the media.

Yasunari Kawabata, a Japanese writer who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1968, watched Choi's first dance solo performance, and he became a member of *Paeksipjahoe*. Kawabata complimented her modernized Korean dance

style many times and he claimed her to be the best modern dancer in Japan. Kawabata wrote an article on the magazine *Munye* (Literature), “I believe that Sai Shoki (Choi Seung-hee) is the best modern dancer in Japan. Firstly, she has a great body shape and strength that makes her dance more powerful than others. Another reason is her unique Korean dancing style. Choi’s modernized Korean dance makes her stand out from other dancers” (Kawabata, November 1939). Ma Hae Song, another member of *Paeksipjahoe*, was an author of children’s book and an executive member of the Japanese magazine *Modern Ilbon* (Modern Japan). He frequently reported Choi Seung-hee related articles for the magazine and actively supported her (Han 274). The group put emphasis on Choi’s image as a Modernized Korean dancer, which helped foster pride among Koreans.

After her dance concert, she became a celebrity in Japan. Sai Shoki (Choi)’s colleague Ishii Yaeko said about Sai Shoki’s fame in the 1930s, “In the mid-1930s, the most of magazines included Sai Shoki’s pictures” (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 143). Before she began to perform in America and Europe in 1937, many manufacturing companies hired her to advertise their products. She even filmed the movie *Bandoui Muhui* (Dancer of Peninsula) in 1935, as a main character (Yi, *Ideology of artistic dance* 58). The Choi Sung-hee (Sai Shoki) boom in Japan was possible because of the combination of Choi’s New Korean dance, the work of the *Paeksipjahoe* and rising desire for national pride among Koreans living in Japan.

In the 1930s, there were about 400,000 Koreans living in Japan. The Japanese government and the people discriminated against these Koreans, and they were treated as an inferior ethnic group. Japanese discrimination against Koreans was indescribably severe, so I will list a few relevant examples of this. Beginning in 1912, Japan extorted lands from Korean people and Choi’s family was a victim of this

injustice incident. Yi Yong-nan wrote on her book *Ch'oe Sŭng-hŭi muyong yesul sasang* (Choi Seung-hee's ideology of artistic dance), "the land of Choi Seung-hee's family was transferred to the hands of the Japanese landowner in 1918, and thus Choi's family suffered financial difficulty" (Yi, *Ideology of artistic dance* 32). The Japanese government also forced the Japanese language to become the standard language and banned Korean language and cultural education from the school system. After *sōshi-kaimei* policy established in 1938, which forced Koreans to adopt Japanese names, people could not go to schools or be employed anywhere without changing their names to Japanese names. The worst and the most infamous system was *Wianbu* (Comfort women). *Wianbu* were women and girls forced into sexual slavery by Japanese military. These were just a few examples of Japanese discrimination against Koreans during the Japanese colonial period.

When Choi Seung-hee rose in fame, her success gave the Koreans who living in Japan hope and pride. However, the San Francisco performance, in which she used her Japanese name, led the Koreans living in America to misunderstand Choi as a Japanese collaborator, causing her to become a victim of ideological conflict. According to Ishii Iyako, who was Ishii Baku's wife, "Choi received many invitation letters from other countries and we were delighted to hear this great news from Choi Seung-hee" (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 177). Choi's purpose in her American and European tour performances is described in her letter to her brother in 1936: "Through these American and European tour performances, I will learn other countries dances correctly and I will find my creativity in dance. I will also prove the uniqueness in my dance" (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 182). Beginning from the San Francisco performance on February 1938, Choi performed in America, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and South America.



Figure 14- *Kwangsanggok* (Capriccio) in 1931- (Chöng, *The life and art* 75)



Figure 15- *Ehera Noara* (Dance of the Carefree in 1934),
(Chöng, *The life and art* 82-83)

In San Francisco, Korean American activists misunderstood her because of her Japanese name “Sai Shoki” on her pamphlet. At the same time in Japan, there was a rumor that she had joined the anti-Japanese movement in San Francisco to help the activists sell anti-Japanese badges to people. The Japanese magazine *Muyong yesul* (Art of Dance) published an article saying, “Choi Seung-hee joined an anti-Japanese

movement in America. She distributed anti-Japanese fliers and sold anti-Japanese badges. She even introduced herself as ‘Noted Korean Dancer’ on her poster” (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 203). This article was far from the truth, except for the “Noted Korean Dancer” on her poster, which she wrote herself. In the past, she had claimed that she was a “Noted Korean Dancer” at her annual performances in Japan up to 1936, but it had not caused any problems. On her San Francisco trip, she simply translated what she had written from Japanese to English and put it on her San Francisco performance poster. However, the word ‘Korean dancer’ on her pamphlet and the presence of anti-Japanese activists in front of the theater caused the misunderstanding of Choi Seung-hee as an anti-Japanese activist in the eyes of Japanese people. As a result of this misunderstanding from both Korean Americans and the Japanese, she could not go back to Korea or Japan, where her family members resided. This incident was also a potential problem for her family members. She had to write a formal apology to the Japanese public, which was published on August 16th, 1938, in the *Niroku Newspaper* (Twenty-Six Newspaper):

The only purpose of my trip was to further develop the art of dance. I did not do anything that betrayed the country, and I would never do anything unpatriotic.... I am deeply saddened and confused by this misunderstanding.
(Choi, *A Letter from Choi Seung-Hee in New York* August 16th, 1938)

In order to maintain her dancing career, she had to give lip service to the Japanese government. Her message was published in many media channels, where she showed her regret, apology, and patriotism. The Japanese government resolved this anti-Japanese misunderstanding but because of this incident, she had to pretend to

be more like a Japanese collaborator in order to show her patriotism to the Japanese government. When she finished her performances in America, Europe, and South America and returned to Japan in 1940, Japan had begun to force the Koreans to adopt, assimilate, and conform to Japan, which is also known as *Japanization*. Kim Ch'an-jōng wrote about the *Japanization* of the Korean public media in his book *Chumkkun Choe Sūng-hŭi (A Dancer Choi Seung-Hee)*: "Japan banned all Korean newspapers except the *Maeil Sinbo* (Japanese General Government's Korean newspaper) by August 1940. Japan did not ban the *Maeil Sinbo* (Japanese General Government's Korean newspaper) because it was used for spreading *Japanization* to the Koreans" (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-Hee* 235). After *Japanization*, *Maeil Sinbo* was the only one newspaper that wrote in Korean. Before *Japanization*, some elementary schools were able to teach Korean to students, but *Japanization* completely banned teaching Korean and Korean culture from every school. People were forced to worship the Emperor of Japan. Young males were forced to serve in the Japanese army.

Upon her returning to Korea in 1940, Japanese government's surveillance on Choi Seung-hee had gotten worse. The Japanese police called her in and instructed her to add more Japanese dances to her repertory (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-Hee* 253). The Japanese government forced Choi Seung-hee to avoid using the word "Korea" in her advertisements and dance contents, and instead, constructed her image as an icon of Japanese modern dance through media. Her performances were mainly composed of a modern interpretation of Korean traditional dance, but after this warning from the Japanese police, she had to choreograph more Japanese-themed dances. On her program, she had to change the titles of her dances to avoid mentioning Korea. Kim Ch'an-jōng wrote, "She deleted the word 'Korean dance' and

changed it to ‘Asian dance.’ She no longer introduced herself as a ‘Noted Korean Dancer’ but instead changed it to ‘Asian Dancer’ to avoid suspicions from the Japanese authorities” (256). Even though Choi complied with all of the demands from the Japanese police, the surveillance and scrutiny of Choi and other Koreans increased as Japan engaged in war.

On December 8th, 1941, Japan declared war on America. Around this time, Choi Seung-hee tried to set up an ‘Asian Dance Team’ but the Japanese government rejected her plan. Japan requested Choi Seung-hee to perform in China for the Japanese military camps. She had no other choice but to keep up her dancing career. “She performed over one hundred performances for the *Kwantung Army*” (Chŏng, *The Life and Art* 29).⁹ Because of all the cooperation that she did for Japan, she was allowed to maintain her New Korean Dance during the Japanese colonial period. But after the liberation of Korea, South Korea evaluated her only on her cooperative activities for Japan and not on her dance contents. Because of these Japanese military camp performances and her Japanese names on dance performance posters, South Korea considered her to be a Japanese collaborator. She could not stand the criticism from South Korean media and went to North Korea a year after the liberation.

From 1938 to 1940, Choi Seung-hee performed over one hundred and fifty times in America, Europe, and South America. Her performances were successful, and in 1938, she signed a contract with the Metropolitan Entertainment Company to perform in the United States. A documentary on Choi Seung-hee by Arirang TV in 2005 explains the Metropolitan contract: “In 1938, Choi signed a contract with the Metropolitan and Choi Seung-hee was the first Asian to sign exclusive contract with

⁹ The *Kwanthung Army* was military group of the Imperial Japanese Army.

Metropolitan Entertainment Company” (*Choi Seung-hee* documentary film 2005). Many articles from around the world approved her performances as a success. An American reporter, Cecil Smith, said in *Chicago Daily Tribune*, "Sai Shoki, noted Korean dancer, won the approval of her audience thru the diversified interest of her repertoire, the polished excellence of her technique, and the graciousness of her appealing personality" (Feb 23, 1940). *New York Evening News* introduced her as "Anna Pavlova of the Orient" (June 19, 1938). Choi Seung-hee was one of the most famous Asian dancers in the world during the 1930s and 1940s. But unfortunately, her potential to become a global dancer came to an end after she defected to North Korea in 1946.

It is hard to deny that Choi Seung-hee cooperated with the Japanese government in some cases, such as the performances for Japanese military camps, but she had no other choice but to keep up her dance career during the Japanese colonial period. She had to give lip service in order to keep her Korean dance. As we can see from her dance contents, she tried to preserve Korean traditional dance (such as the fan dance, the usage of musical instruments, and dance steps) under Japanese rule. In the early 1930s, she choreographed many dance numbers, which depicted Korean people suffering under Japanese rule. Beginning from 1933, most of her dance repertoires were modernized Korean traditional dance and she introduced herself as a Korean dancer. During the Japanese colonial period, ideological conflict produced two different nationalisms. These two different nationalisms built two nationalistic images of Choi Seung-hee, and it caused the misunderstanding of Choi's ideology as a Japanese collaborator after liberation.



Figure 16- Sai Shoki in media. Left: Cosmetic commercial (Chŏng, *The life and art* 307)
 Right: France Brussels performance news article from *L'Informateur* newspaper in 1939 <https://www.whoim.kr/detail.php?number=55708&thread=54r03r01>



Figure 17- Sai Shoki pamphlet. *Original Hallyu Star Choi Seung-Hee Reborn*, KOREA.net Gateway to Korea

***Chosŏn Minjok Muyong* –Shaping North Korea Nationalistic Dance (1946-1969)**

From 1946, North Korea used Choi Seung-hee and her dances to invent *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong* (Korean People's Dance) and North Korean media used that dance to construct the imagined tradition around her work. After Korea's independence on August 15th, 1945, Korea was divided into two countries: South Korea and North Korea. Choi Seung-hee went to North Korea in July 1946 and her name was buried and omitted from South Korea's media until the 1980s. In South Korea, she was regarded as a Japanese collaborator, communist, and a North Korean sympathizer, so she could not receive a fair evaluation of her achievements in the field of Korean dance for many decades. After the liberation of Korea, anti-Japanese and anti-communist discourses dominated the political and social landscape in South Korea. Anti-Japanese activists in South Korea wanted to punish all Japanese collaborators who sympathized with Japan during the colonial period, and they believed that Choi Seung-hee was one of the Japanese collaborators. Choi Seung-hee had to go to North Korea.

In August 1946, Kim Il-Sung (the dictator of North Korea 1948-1994) gave Choi a welcoming gift for crossing the border to North Korea. He gave her a dance studio for her to teach her dance style, and named it in her honor, calling it the *Choi Seung-hee Dance Laboratory*. Choi Seung-hee was appointed as the Director of the National Art Theater in 1948 (Dong 8). *Choi Seung-hee Dance Laboratory* became *Choi Seung-hee North Korea National Dance Laboratory* in 1953 and a political subject has been established as well (Chŏng, *The Life and Art* 312).

Most of her artistic activities in North Korea were dance dramas. She created and developed dance dramas with *Chosŏn Minjok muyong*, which is the modernized

Korean dance style. The main reason for her creation of dance dramas was based on the Party's need to invent a tradition that would propagate socialist ideology. Kim Il-sung welcomed artists because he wanted to employ the artists to spread socialism to the people. According to the North Korean art magazine *Chosŏn Yesul* (Korea Art), "In March 28th, 1947, the plan of popularizing literary arts was presented at the 29th Central Committee meeting of the North Korea National Assembly and emphasized the spreading of literary arts to the people" (*Chosŏn Yesul* 1968, No 9). Kim Il-sung and the party used arts and public media to educate the masses with socialism, and dance drama was one of them. North Korean dance drama showed the life of North Korean citizens, distinctive cultural characteristics, and a revolutionary society. Kim Il-sung and the party put emphasis on Marxist-Leninist historiography, and this political ideology was implemented into dance drama as well. Choi Seung-hee choreographed many dance dramas in North Korea, and *Banyawolseonggok* (The Song of Banyawolseong) in 1948, and *Sadosungui Iyagi* (The Story of Sado Castle) in 1954 were her famous dance dramas.

***Banyawolseonggok* (The Song of Banyawolseong)**

Choi Seung-hee's first dance drama *Banyawolseonggok* was choreographed in 1948. According to Dong Kyung-won's journal article *A Study on Seung-hee Choi's Dance-drama Works: With a Focus on Their Analysis and Historical Significance in the Performing Arts Field*, *Banyawolseonggok* was successful as the first North Korea dance drama, and it was performed in China, USSR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Eastern Europe from 1949 to 1950 (Dong 167). I analyzed Choi's first dance drama *Banyawolseonggok* from articles in North Korean

media and her dance drama scripts collection book *Muyonggk daebonjib*, which was published in 1958.

The historical background of *Banyawolseonggok* takes place during Silla Kingdom (57 BC-935 AD), one of the three kingdoms in Korea. Banyawolseong was the name of a region in Silla. There, a rebellion took place under the tyranny of a feudal ruler. A group of citizens rose up against the tyrant in the name of justice. The drama is also a love story about Bak-Dan, a daughter of the citizen army leader and her fiancé Young-Nam, a young leading member of citizen army. The plot ends happily with the defeat of the feudal ruler.

This plot shows the influence of Marxism-Leninism in North Korean dance drama, which has a similar character-building pattern to *dram-balet* and the *master plot* of Soviet Socialism. Unusual for North Korean socialist dance drama, the main character Back-Dan dies at the end of the story. But the overall narrative trajectory and ideological message was about the proletarian heroes overcoming the bourgeoisie. *Banyawolseonggok* was her first dance drama, and she created eight more dance dramas in North Korea. The commonalities in her dance dramas were proletarian heroes, an uplifting ending, and the rewarding of virtue and the punishment of evil.



Figure 18- *Banyawolseonggok*, Choi Seung-hee is on the right, *Zum Segye Ilbo*, 16 Dec. 2016, [news.zum.com/articles/34920544? c](http://news.zum.com/articles/34920544?c)
***Sadosungui Iyagi* (The Story of Sado Castle)**

Choi's other representative dance drama was *Sadosungui Iyagi* (The Story of Sado Castle) in 1954. The first stage opened at Moranbong Theater in Pyongyang (the capital of North Korea). *Sadosungui Iyagi* became Choi's most well-known dance drama. It was a great success among the people, and it was adapted into a film in 1956. An article in *Rodong Sinmun* (Worker's Newspaper) described the success of developing nationalistic character in *Sadosungui Iyagi*, "Choi Seung-hee's *Sadosungui Iyagi* contributed to developing North Korean dance drama and successfully created modernized dance drama with *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong* (North Korean Dance)" (November 1954). *Rodong Sinmun* is the leading state newspaper in North Korea, which can be read as the state praising Choi for her representing the ethos of the nation and the party consciousness of the people through her dance drama.

The historical background of *Sadosungui Iyagi* (The Story of Sado Castle) also takes place during the Silla Kingdom. It is a dance drama of grand scale, composed of five acts and six chapters. *Sadosung* is a castle in Silla Kingdom. It is a dance drama that embodies the heroic struggle of the Silla people against foreign invasion. The story is about a daughter of Sado castle's lord, Geum-hee and her love story with fisherman Sun-ji'. The citizen army, aided by Sun-ji and Geum-hee, defeat the foreign invasion. This dance drama ends with Sun-ji and Geum-hee's engagement ceremony. Choi Seung-hee directed and took the main role of Geum-hee. *Sadosungui Iyagi* became the most successful dance drama of Choi Seung-hee.

Sadosungui Iyagi became part of a nationally representative dance repertory

in North Korea. Choi Seung-hee and her dance troupe visited other communist countries and performed *Sadosungui Iyagi*. Choi Seung-hee and her North Korean dance troupe acted as cultural emissaries. An article in *Munhak sinmun* (Culture newspaper) on January 31st, 1957 recounts Choi Seung-hee and her dance troupe's experience from performing abroad;

The National dance troupe performed *Sadosungui Iyagi* and introduced the great achievements of North Korean dance to the people of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Albania.... *Pravda* and *Izvestia* (broadsheet newspaper of Soviet Union) praised Choi's *Sadosungui Iyagi*; Choi's dance drama *Sadosungui Iyagi* showed distinctive ethnic character and had a well-developed *syuzhet*. (*Munhak sinmun*, January 31st, 1957, p. 2)¹⁰

Choi and the National dance troupe performed many times in socialist states for amity and cultural exchanges.



¹⁰ *Syuzhet* is a terminology originating in Russian formalism and employed in narratology that describe narrative construction.

Figure 19- *Sadosungui Iyagi* 1954 - Choi Seung-Hee is on the left (Chõng, *The Life and Art* 276)



Figure 20- *Sadosungui Iyagi* movie in 1956 (a clip from South Korea MBC news in 2015)



Figure 21- *Sadosungui Iyagi*, USSR performance poster in 1956 in Korean Classical Music Record Museum.”

www.hearkorea.com/gododata/gododata.html?g_id=15&g_no=37930

Chosŏn Minjok Muyong Gibon (Basics of Chosŏn Ethnic Dance)

After the success of *Sadosungui Iyagi* (The Story of Sado Castle), the years from 1955 to 1957 were her heyday in North Korea. Choi Seung-hee received an award called People's Artist of North Korea in 1955, and she also received a medal of honor, the North Korea National Order, which is the highest of all medals, in 1957. In the same year, she became a Supreme member of the North Korean party. *Choi Seung-hee North Korea National Dance Laboratory* was renamed as *North Korea National Dance Institution*, and she was inaugurated as a Principal of the institution (Dong 9). In March 1958, she published a dance method book, *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong Gibon* (Basics of Chosŏn Ethnic Dance). It was the first Korean dance method book, which systematized the basic movements of Korean dance.

The most prominent achievement of Choi's *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong* is that she codified Korean dance movements for the first time in Korean dance history. Before she created the *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong* method, Korean traditional dance was passed down from person to person. Her dance method made the wide dissemination of Korean dance possible and it allowed application of basic Korean dance movements into dance dramas or new choreography possible. Choi developed the dance method by combining distinctive characters of Korean traditional dance with western dance style such as ballet and Ishii Baku's modern dance. Choi adopted costumes, props, and distinctive dance movements in Korean traditional dance and elevated the expression of movements.

Choi's *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong* codified ten basic foot movements (Figure 22), eight body directions (Figure 23), and ten arm movements (Figure 24). Choi's

method book arranged with ten lower body movements, eight upper body movements, and whole-body movements. It begins with the training of lower body movements and put emphasize on uses of *gulsin* (bending knees movements) in lower body movements. This shows that her method is based on Korean traditional dance. Most of the movements in Korean traditional dance have the principle of motion in a correlation between *gulsin* in lower body movement and respiration. *Gamgi* is another unique dance movement in Korean traditional dance. In *gamgi* movement, dancers wrap around the body with both arms. Each arm goes in opposite direction and makes circle motions to create *taegeuk* or *yin-yang* shape with arms. Her dance step shows the heel-based dance steps. Every dance step in Korean traditional dances begins with the heel to the toe. These distinctive dance movements in Choi's dance method show that Choi's dance method is based on Korean traditional dance. Korean traditional dances are more like flowing movements, but Choi exaggerated some of the dance movements and made into fixed positions. Choi's dance movements of the tilted waistline and upward movements show the western influence in Choi's dance style.

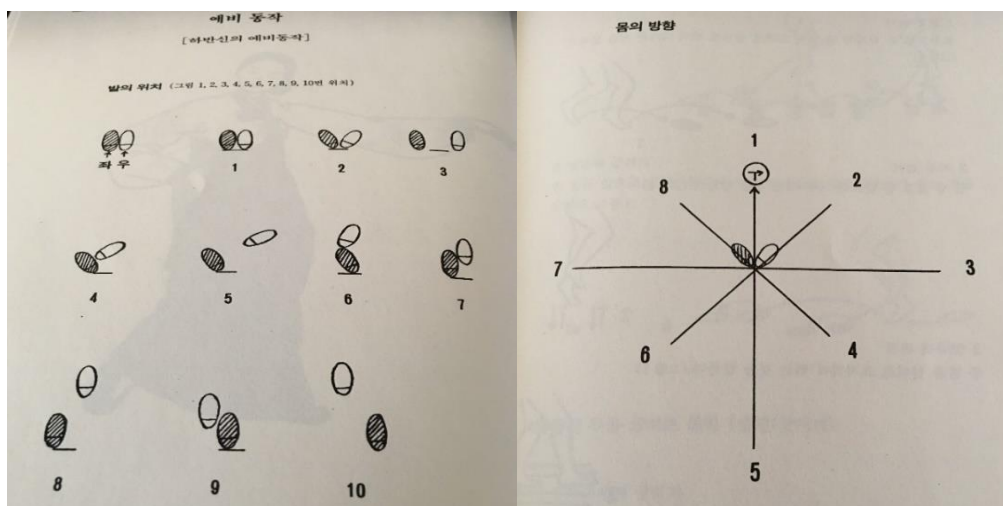


Figure 22- Ten basic foot movements

Figure 23- Eight body directions (Choi's *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong* 10, 11)

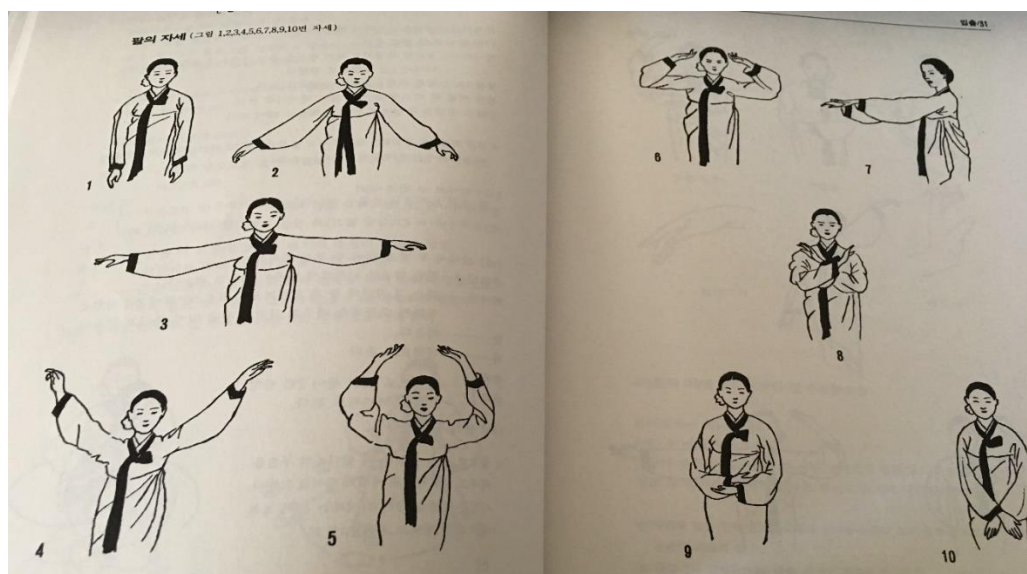


Figure 24 – Ten arm movements (Choi’s *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong* 30, 31)

Choi also adopted many props and costumes from Korean folk dances and court dances. Fans and *jangu* (hourglass drum) came from folk dances and *hansam* (a type of long tube-like sash draped over each hand) and swords came from court dances. She applied the basic design of Korean traditional costumes, but she modernized the costumes for more active dance movements. She used thinner and lighter materials for dance costumes, such as see-through styles. She also designed new, revealing, half-nude dance costumes for some dance numbers.

North Korea used Choi Seung-hee’s dance method to invent the North Korean nationalistic dance. Kim Il-sung and the North Korean party realized the usefulness of dance for educating masses with a communist ideology. According to Sim Jeong-min in his article, *Choi Seung Hee's Historical Dancing Activities based on TV documentary The Dancer Choi Seung-Hee*, “Choi’s *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong Gibon* (Basics of Chosŏn Ethnic Dance) filmed in 1962 and it was provided to schools as the national standard dance” (Sim, *Historical Dancing Activities* 246). Choi’s

dance method is still used in North Korea today. Communism put emphasis on conformity and equality and it is opposed to democratic countries, which pursue individualism and diversity. North Korea used Choi's method to train many individuals working together and through this physical training; North Korea disciplines bodies in the communist ideology of conformity and equality.

***Juche* ideology**

Starting from 1958, Choi Seung-hee's life and career descended. After Choi Seung-hee published her method book, Ahn Mak (Choi Seung-hee's husband and the vice president of cultural ministry) was purged as a political dissident in North Korea. In his book *Chumkkun Choe Sŭng-hŭi* (A Dancer Choi Seung-hee), Kim, Ch'an-jŏng writes, "In between April to September 1958, the political confrontation arose among North Korean politicians, and Ahn Mak became one of the victims of this political confrontation" (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 392). From 1955, Kim Il-sung introduced *Juche* ideology, which is the North Korean socialist ideology created by Kim Il-sung and North Korean party.

Kim Il-sung and the party were beginning to emphasize *Juche* ideology and eliminated those who stood against Kim Il-Sung's *Juche* ideology. Kim Il-Sung stabilized and strengthened his political power by purging oppositional factions, and Ahn Mak was one of them. Yi, Yŏng-nan wrote in her book *Ch'oe Sŭng-hŭi muyong yesul sasang* (Choi Seung-hee's Ideology of Artistic Dance), "Ahn Mak was arrested on suspicion of being antiparty in August 1958 and he was purged in 1959 as a group of the *Yan'an faction*" (Yi, *Ideology of Artistic Dance* 152). The *Yan'an faction* was a group of pro-China communists in the North Korean government after the division of

Korea. The *Yan'an faction* was involved in a power struggle in North Korea, but Kim Il-sung defeated it and began to dominate the North Korean government with *Juche* ideology.

Kim Il-sung openly criticized Choi Seung-hee. On December 14, 1958, Kim Il-sung made a speech at a meeting to writers and artists, “Some of the artists are still having the remnants of old ideology, which are not suitable to North Korea socialism... as an example, one dance master is full of self-conceit. She is under the illusion that there is no North Korean dance without her” (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 402). Kim Il-Sung did not mention Choi Seung-hee’s name but the word “dance master” clearly implied Choi Seung-hee. Kim Il-sung did not purge her immediately with her husband in 1958, but he removed her authority in the dance field and gave her a laborious administrative job. According to Kim, Ch’an-jǒng, “Starting from December 1959, she began to work as a receptionist for people who defected from Japan to North Korea” (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 403).

The North Korean public media began to criticize Choi Seung-hee and her works, as well. An article criticized Choi Seung-hee in *Rodong Sinmun* (Worker’s Newspaper) in 1959, “Our artistic creations were less mindful of the modern topics, which depicts ordinary citizen’s real life. For example, the National Dance Theater created only one modern theme dance drama since the National Dance Theater was established” (*Rodong Sinmun*, February 5th, 1959). After Kim Il-sung criticized Choi Seung-hee, the North Korean media also criticized Choi Seung-hee. Most of Choi Seung-hee’s dance dramas depicted the historical past of Korea, which the North Korean media criticized her openly for lacking in portraying modern themes and ordinary people’s life.

In 1961, she became the chair of *Chosŏn Dance Union*, but this was only a nominal position as the actual power was held by Kim Il-Sung (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 410). From 1961 until her death, she created two dance dramas, but these were not well received by North Korean critics. She focused on teaching her dance method to the people until 1967. Kim Il-sung and the North Korean party announced Juche ideology as the national ideology on April 15, 1967. Juche ideology included three concepts: Self-reliance, Anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle, and Monolithic System. Juche means the “Self-reliance” in Korean. According to the North Korea’s official English website, “Juche idea is based on the philosophical principle that man is the master of everything and decides everything . . . Establishing Juche means adopting the attitude of a master towards the revolution and construction” (*Official Webpage of the DPR of Korea* <http://www.korea-dpr.com/dprk.html>).¹¹ Anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle means the rewriting of history to emphasize Kim Il-sung’s achievements during the colonial period. The Monolithic System concept implies that Kim Il-sung is the only leader and the whole party and people need to firmly arm themselves with Kim Il-sung’s ideology.

After Kim Il-sung announced Juche ideology, Kim Il-sung and the North Korean party began to eliminate those who did not support Juche ideology. According to Kim Ch’an-jŏng, Japan’s *Asahi* newspaper in Nov 8, 1967 wrote an article stating, “According to the story that I heard from a North Korean reporter, recently, antiparty groups were in the process of being purged, and Bae Ki-jun, the president of the North’s Central News Agency, and dancer Choi Seung-hee were imprisoned” (Kim 418). Choi Seung-hee was imprisoned from North Korea, and the media never

¹¹ DPR: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

mentioned her name again until the 1990s. In fact, it is unclear as to why Choi was imprisoned in the first place. There is no documentation about her purge because those who are purged cannot be discussed in North Korea. There were many rumors about Choi's purging incident, but the real reason is still unclear. Kim, Ch'an-jŏng wrote in his book:

After Kim Il-sung announced Monolithic System, there was a witch hunt for antiparty people which conducted by Kim Jung-il and North Korea party.¹²

Kim Il-sung did these atrocities in order to enforce his political system... Choi Seung-hee was purged because she did not actively participate in the creative dance that would make Kim Il-sung as an absolute leader. (Kim, *A Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 422-423)

Most of scholars have claimed that North Korea purged Choi Seung-hee because of her conflicting political ideology. After Choi Seung-hee's purging incident, Choi Seung-hee was purged and her name was disappeared from North Korea public media. Yi Ae-sun wrote about Choi's purging incident, "Choi Seung-hee's name was disappeared from North Korean media from 1967 until 1998. After Kim Jung-il announced to move Choi Seung-hee into the patriotic martyr's cemetery in 1998, her name reappeared in North Korean public media" (Yi, *Study on Choi Seung-hee* 20).

Even after Choi's purging incident, North Korea continued to use her dance technique manual *Chosŏn Minjok muyong Gibon* (The Basic Movements of North Korea Dance). Kim Chae-won wrote comparative research on changes in North Korea dance, finding that "As a result of comparison of three North Korean dance videos

¹² Kim Jung-il: Kim Il-sung's son and he became a next dictator leader of North Korea from 1994 to 2011.

produced in 1962, 1973, and 1996, some of the movements became bigger and faster than 1962. Beginning from 1973, there were new complicated movements. But these movements were still based on Choi's *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong Gibon*" (Kim, *Succession and Transformation* 193). North Korea kept constructing the invented tradition of North Korean dance with Choi's dance method, but the Party omitted her name from the North Korean public media until 1998.

After Choi Seung-hee was purged in 1967, Choi Seung-hee's dance dramas vanished from the stage and *Juche* and *Monolithic System*-based propaganda performances appeared. In 1970, *Pibada Guekdan* (Sea of Blood Theatrical Troupe) was established and most of the performances used for strongly propagating *Juche* ideology. The stories of their dances are meant to exemplify the values of the *Juche* ideology, with self-reliance and solidarity being the central themes.

In 2011, *Sadosungui Iyagi* was performed in the Pyongyang Grand Theatre to celebrate Choi's one hundredth birth year. After Kim Jung-il reevaluated Choi Seung-hee's achievements in North Korea and made an announcement to move Choi Seung-hee into the patriotic martyr's cemetery in 1998, it showed the signs of regaining of Choi Seung-hee's honor in North Korean dance history.

***Sinmuyong* – Constructing Nationalistic Dance in South Korea (1980-Present)**

Choi Seung-hee's dance style has also been used in South Korea to shape its national representative dance. In North Korea, her dance was called *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong*, to reflect its socialist character. In South Korea, Choi's dance was called *Sinmuyong* (New Dance), a name that indicates an attempt to remove politics from the dance. *Sinmuyong* was used to redefine South Korea's national dance beginning in the

1980s. These two nationalistic dances are both based on Choi's creative dances from the 1930s and 1940s. The South Korean media emphasized three points to construct Choi's *Sinmuyong* as a nationalistic dance. First, *Sinmuyong* constructed national pride by highlighting Choi's achievements in other countries to show Choi Seung-hee as a world-famous dancer. Second, it emphasized that Seoul was her birthplace, which implied that she is essentially from South Korea and therefore her dance was natively Korean. Last, it showcased Choi's influence in styles such as the Fan dance, which is the most well-known representative dance that constructs an imagined community for South Koreans.

Before I explain how South Korea constructed Choi Seung-hee's dance as a nationalistic dance, it is important to explain social and political changes in South Korea. After its liberation from Japan and the Korean War, South Korea suffered from political unrest, student protests, and dictatorship. Until the early 1990s, South Korea was under military dictatorship, which oppressed freedom of speech among others. After the *Gwangju Uprising*, which happened in the city of Gwangju from May 18 to 27, 1980, and the *June Democratization Movement*, which was a nation-wide democratic movement from June 10 to June 29, 1987, South Korean civilians fought to eliminate the military regime. Roh Tae-woo, the president of South Korea from 1988 to 1993, was the first president of the postwar era who did not take power through a military coup d'état. Roh Tae-woo announced *Bukbang Jeongchaek* or *Nordpolitik*, which was a foreign policy that enabled cultural exchange with North Korea. Roh Tae-woo's *Bukbang Jeongchaek* attempted to ease the tense relationship between North and South Korea, but it was also an attempt to appease the student activists, who wanted the government to acknowledge North Korea as the same ethnic people as the South. Above all, Roh made his attempts because South Korea was

going to host the 1988 Summer Olympics, and he did not want the world to witness bloody student activism on the streets of Seoul. One of the biggest accomplishments that resulted from the student protests was the gaining of freedom of speech, particularly regarding the mentioning of North Korea in South Korea's public and state media. It was during the late 1980s that Choi Seung-hee's name reappeared in South Korean media, revealing the hidden or deleted portions of her history in the field of dance. Yi Ae-sun described this reevaluation of Choi Seung-Hee in her book *Choe Sŭng-hŭi muyong yesul yŏngu* (The study of Choi Seung-hee's artistic dance):

Beginning from the 1980s, South Korea reevaluated Choi Seung-Hee's achievements in the Korean Dance field. The article *Wolbuk mu-yongga Choi Seung-hee jae-jomyeonghada* (The reevaluation of dancer Choi Seung-hee who defected to North Korea) was published in the magazine *Gaeksseok* (The Auditorium). The demanding of reexamination of dance history arose from Korean culture and literature departments. After the magazine *Gaeksseok* published its reevaluation of Choi Seung-hee, countless numbers of articles and books were published about Choi Seung-hee in South Korea. (Yi, *The reevaluation of dancer* 21)

After the liberation of Korea, South Korea kept Choi Seung-hee's dance style, which had been passed down to Choi Seung-hee's pupils. However, South Korea had simply removed the name of Choi Seung-hee from South Korean dance history until the 1980s. Kim Seon-mi describes negative evaluations on Choi Seung-hee that predated her rediscovery in her journal article, *Study of debate on the phase of Sinmuyong: To celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Sinmuyong* "Jo Won-kyung

introduced modern Korean dancers in his book *Muyong yesul* in 1962. He mentioned Choi Seung-hee's name as 'Choi' and avoided mentioning about her achievements in Korean dance" (Kim, *Study of debate* 878). Until the 1980s, people avoided mentioning her name and disparaged her achievements. Chŏng, Su-ung, a documentary filmmaker and writer, wrote in his book, *Kyŏktong Ŭi Sidae Ŭl Salta Kan Ŏnŭ Muyongga Ŭi Saengae Wa Yesul* (Choi Seung-hee: Life and Art of a Dancer During Turbulent Times) "In 1983, when I was working as a filmmaker in Japan, I brought a book *Choi Seung-hee*, which was written by a Japanese writer Dakashima Yusaburo, to Korea. At that time, I got a warning from the Korean intelligence agency that I had brought a seditious book with me" (Chŏng, *Life and Art* 5). This is just one of the many examples of South Korea's censorship and blacklisting of anyone or anything related to North Korea, and it shows that Choi Seung-hee's achievement in Korean dance had been deleted or neglected in media until the late 1980s.

After the democratization movement in South Korea in the 1980s, South Korea reevaluated Choi Seung-hee's achievements in Korean dance history and finally allowed her name to be included in histories of South Korean dance. Yi Ae-sun wrote, "From the late 1980s, a boom in studies of Choi Seung-hee and her dance began. In the 1990s, a full-scale and objective reconsideration was attempted in many ways" (Yi, *Study on Choi Seung-hee* 20). There were many books about Choi Seung-hee published in South Korea after the 1980s. I've searched Choi Seung-hee related books from the South Korea National Library in a chronological order. There were hundreds of theses and journal articles, but I did not include those in this list. After Choi Seung-hee published her autobiography in 1937, no books were published about Choi Seung-hee until 1989.

Publishing year	Number of books
1989	1
1990-1999	5
2000-2009	9
2010-Present	8

Figure 25- Books related to Choi Seung-hee in South Korea National Library

After South Korea gained the freedom of speech about North Korean subjects in the 1980s, the critical opinion of Choi Seung-hee has shifted from seeing her as a Japanese collaborator or North Korean sympathizer to the progenitor of *Sinmuyong* (Modernized Korean traditional dance). These are examples of how authors of South Korea reevaluated Choi Seung-hee in their books. Kang Yi-hyang published a book *Sangmyungui Chum Sarangui Chum* (Dance of life, Dance of love) in 1989. This book introduced Choi's life and artistic activities as a part of *Sinmuyong*. Jung Byung-ho published a book *Chumchuneun Choi Seung-hee* (Choi Seung-hee, the dancer) in 1995. Jung Byung-ho collects research materials and interviews with people who surrounded Choi Seung-hee during the 1930s and 1940s. Jung Byung-ho pointed out that South Korean scholars should break away from seeing Choi Seung-hee as a Japanese collaborator or North Korean sympathizer and should focus on Choi's artwork itself. Yu Mi-hee wrote a doctoral thesis *Yeogwonjuui Ibjangesubon Choi Seung-hee Muyong Yeongu* (A Study on Choi Seung-hee's Dance Art as seen through Feminism) in 1997. Yu Mi-hee focused on the ways Choi Seung-hee's life and art analysis was tied with feminism in South Korea's dance field. Kim Ch'an-jöng's book *Chumkkun Choe Süng-hŭl* (Dancer Choi Seung-hee) was published in 2002. Kim Ch'an-jöng is part of a second generation of Koreans living in Japan and he used

primary sources from Japanese media. He depicted Choi Seung-hee as an artist who struggled through revolutions and wars. Yi Ae-sun's *Ch'oe Sŭng-hŭi muyong yesul sasang* (Choi Seung-hee Artistic Thought) was published in 2002. Yi Ae-sun is a professor at Yanbian University in China. She collected primary sources of Choi's achievements in China and emphasized Choi's influence on dance in China and East Asian countries. All of these scholars praise Choi and her accomplishments as a dancer. The consensus of their appraisal of Choi looks past her ideological influence from North Korea and only consider her dance movements and her impact on Korean Dance.

As a result of this surge of interest, many scholars have included her name as a part of Korean dance history and in so doing, reshaped the definition of South Korean dance. Nam Sang-Suk, a professor at Korean National University of Arts, defined Choi Seung-hee's *Sinmuyong* in her book *An Introduction to Korean Traditional Performing Arts*: "Choi Seung-hee developed 'New Dance' (*Sinmuyong*) which is the bridge between the 'Creative Dance' (*Changjak chum*) and the 'Traditional Dance' (*Jeontong muyong*)" (Nam & Gim 100). Choi Seung-Hee was the first professional dancer who preserved the diminishing Korean traditional dance during the colonial period and made it into a modernized theatrical art.

After the late 1980s, many scholars discovered her traces all over the world. South Korean media emphasized Choi's achievement as a world-famous dancer in order to fortify national pride. For example, most Choi Seung-hee related books and documentaries include discussion of her successful world tour performances in America, Europe, and South America from 1937 to 1940. These books rely on the many newspaper articles from all over the world that had praised Choi Seung-hee's

achievements in other countries. Such coverage also enabled the South Korean media to highlight her global achievements to boost national pride. In other words, the way in which South Korean scholars depict Choi Seung-hee during her career in Japan are through her unwavering national identity and pride in Korea. They no longer treat her as simply a Japanese collaborator, but an artist who kept her Korean identity.

Many Choi Seung-hee related writings and films from South Korea mention her birthplace as Seoul to emphasize her national identity as a South Korean. In this way, South Korea can claim that Choi is essentially from South Korea and not North Korea. Kim Ch'an-jōng says in his book *Chumkkun Choe Sŭng-hŭi* (Dancer Choi Seung-hee), "Choi Seung-hee was born in November 24, 1911, in Kyeong-seong (the former name for Seoul)" (Kim, *Dancer Choi Seung-hee* 22). In another book, Yi Aesun says, "Choi Seung-hee was born in Seoul and was a descendant of a noble family" (Yi, *Study on Choi Seung-hee* 100). An individual's birthplace has geopolitical implications as to where that person came from and an imagined national connection to people from the same location or country. In this sense, mentioning Choi Seung-hee's birthplace was an important political strategy to establish Choi Seung-hee as a South Korean.

Buchaechum (Fan dance) is the most famous national representative dance in South Korea. Every Korean student majoring in Korean dance and professional dancers in Korean dance troupes must know how to perform the *Fan dance*. *Buchaechum* is the most nationalistic repertoire in South Korea because the climax of the routine is the formation of South Korea's national flower, the *mugunghwa* (hibiscus or rose of Sharon).



Figure 26- South Korea's national flower, the *mugunghwa* formation in *Buchaechum*:
Instiz, 25 Feb. 2014, www.instiz.net/pt/1855565

One of the most nationalistic parts of *Buchaechum* is the final formation of the dance. Dancers make a circular formation and the solo dancer is placed in the center of this circular formation. Ahn Gwi-ho, a professor of Seoul National University of Fine Arts, wrote an article about *Buchaechum* on the South Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration's digital website, stating "The floral design is not merely aimed at creating figures, but instead celebrates the prosperity of the nation through the spread of floral seeds and fragrance" (Ahn, *South Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration*).¹³ What Ahn is saying is that the dance is not aimed at displaying the talent of individual dancers but at the unity of the dancers to create a national symbol.

The *mugunghwa* formation was created in 1968, in order to enter the Mexico

¹³ *South Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration*
<http://english.cha.go.kr/cha/idx/SubIndex.do?mn=EN>

Olympics Fine Arts Festival. Before 1968, Fan dance was performed as a solo dancer performance. In 1968, in order to participate the Mexico Olympics competition, Kim Paik-bong, a pupil of Choi Seung-hee, created the fan dance by using the entire troupe. Ahn Byung-ju, professor at Kyunghee University's Dance Department, wrote in her article *Structural Principles and Artistic Characteristics of Kim Paik-bong's Buchaechum* (Fan dance), "In the Mexico Olympics Fine Arts Festival, South Korea received a gold medal with *Buchaechum* (Fan dance). After the Mexico Olympics, Fan dance was performed in Expo 70, the 1972 Munich Summer Olympics, and many other international events. The Fan dance became a representative Korean dance in the world" (Ahn, *Kim Paik-bong's Buchaechum* 173-174). South Korea has been performing the Fan dance to advertise the 1986 Asian Games, the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, the 2002 World Cup, and the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games. KTV Daehan News reported that the *Buchaechum* (fan dance) was also performed in the closing ceremony of 1984 L.A. Summer Olympic Games. Twenty dancers performed the fan dance in order to advertise the next 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. Fan dance begins around three minutes and fifteen seconds in the video linked here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPEH1dQB0NI>



Figure 27- *Buchaechum* (Fan dance) in 1984: L.A. Olympic. Daehan News No.1502



Figure 28- 1988 Seoul Olympic advertising posters. Left: *A Century of Olympic Posters at the V&A Museum of Childhood.*” Dezeen, Dezeen, 12 May 2016, www.dezeen.com/2008/03/13/a-century-of-olympic-posters-at-the-va-museum-of-childhood/

Right: *Print By Ahn Chung-Un*, www.popartuk.com/sport/fan-dance-commemorative-art-print-by-ahn-chung-un-ev007-limited-edition-print.asp.



Figure 29- Left: Choi’s Modernized Shaman dance – Herald Internet News, http://biz.heraldcorp.com/common_prog/newsprint.php?ud=20110112000947/ / Right Choi’s *The Song of Jade* (Chŏng, *The Life and Art* 142)



Figure 30- Choi Seung-hee's North Korean Fan dance:
www.uriminzokkiri.com/index.php?ptype=music_world&no=74&pn=15. Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS)

In 1992, the Korean Ministry of Culture designated *Buchaechum* as a masterpiece dance and it was registered as Korea's Intangible Cultural Property in October 2014. Choi influenced South Korea's *Sinmuyong* enormously. Most of the choreographers who developed South Korea's dance after the division of Korea were Choi's pupils: Jang Chu-hwa, Song Bum, Kim Jin-geol, and Kim Paik-bong.

Conclusion

When I was in elementary school in South Korea, every year there was an anticommunism poster drawing competition. This competition awarded students who drew the most creative anti-North Korea poster. I still remember one of my posters that had the image of the Korean map. On my poster, I drew North Korea with red

color and South Korea with blue color. I drew a machine gun and a tank on the North Korea side and a white dove on the South Korea side. No one told us how to draw these anticommunism posters, but we all knew that we had to depict North Korea as the enemy. The anti-communism poster competition shows the strong ideological hegemony of anticommunism in South Korea during the 1970s and 1980s and the type of education each student received.

I had not heard of Choi Seung-hee until I entered university in 1996. I was curious and fascinated by Choi Seung-hee because many Korean dances were associated with this woman. But unfortunately, there were not enough written sources about Choi Seung-hee during the 1990s. Two decades later, I finally had a chance to research about Choi Seung-hee for my thesis. My interest in the relationship between Choi Seung-hee's dance method and nationalism intensified.

South Korea began to develop its nationalistic dance with Choi Seung-hee's dance style and, later, added her name to the history of Korean dance in the late 1980s and 1990s. Before then, there were not many sources that explained Choi Seung-hee's life or her dance. Although public media began to acknowledge Choi Seung-hee in the late 1980s, there were conflicting ideas and debates about Choi's works and political identity. As more researchers examined Choi's life, more journal articles, performances, films, and academic works have been published about Choi. Today, people cannot talk about Korean traditional dance without mentioning Choi. Choi and her *Sinmuyong* have completely become synonymous with Korean traditional dance.

The most prominent achievement of Choi Seung-hee in Korean dance is that she codified Korean dance movements for the first time in dance history. Before she created the *Chosŏn Minjok Muyong* method, Korean traditional dance was passed down from person to person. Her dance method applied basic Korean dance

movements to her new choreography. Choi developed the dance method by combining distinctive characters of Korean traditional dance with western dance styles such as ballet and modern dance. Choi adopted costumes, props, and distinctive dance movements in Korean dance and elevated the dancer's expressive range.

Choi's dance was used to invent different countries' nationalistic dance through the help of various media outlets. Choi Seung-hee was the victim of ideological conflict from both North and South Korea. She modernized Korean Traditional Dance and developed it throughout her life. Both North and South Korea invented their nationalistic dance with Choi Seung-hee's dance style, but her name was buried in history for many decades because of political and ideological conflict.

Conclusion

Agrippina Vaganova's Russian classical ballet and Choi Seung-hee's *Sinmuyong* show the strong intersections of political ideology, nationalism, and media discourse, and how these shaped nationalistic dances in their respective countries. These two dancers have many similarities: they felt the limitations in traditional dance styles and invented new dance styles based on tradition; their new dance styles were institutionalized in their countries and became their nation's representative dance forms; and finally, these two new dance styles occurred at a similar historical period in the early twentieth century. However, each was formed differently.

The ideological turbulence between the free world, communist countries, and fascist countries during the twentieth century influenced international relations and the production of arts, including dance. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, Lenin and the Bolsheviks established the Soviet Union with socialist ideology. At the beginning, Lenin and the Bolsheviks wanted to eliminate classical ballet from the Soviet Union because of its bourgeois tendencies. On the other hand, Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first Commissar of Education, and I.V. Exkhsovich, Administrator of the Academic Theatre, believed in the quality and importance of classical ballet and advocated for its existence. After the failure of experimental art movements, such as *proletkult* (short for "proletarian culture") in the early 1920s, Lenin realized the great usefulness of classical ballet to educate the masses with Soviet socialist ideology.

Around this time, Vaganova's new style of ballet appeared in Soviet theaters. Vaganova's new ballet style revolutionized classical ballet. The Bolsheviks and their

left-wing media supported Soviet ballet and Vaganova's new ballet style. Vaganova published her ballet method book *Basic Principles of Classic Ballet* in 1934 and her method was employed in Soviet Union ballet schools. Vaganova choreographed *Swan Lake* and *Esmeralda* under Stalin's regime. She had to design *dram-balet* with socialist *master plot* in order to avoid censorship and protect her performances. Stalin used Vaganova's method and performances to shape Soviet ballet. After Stalin ordered the assassination of Sergei Kirov, first secretary of the Communist Party in Leningrad, Vaganova became a victim of Stalin's Great Purge, as well. Stalin did not execute her like other victims, but Stalin removed her power and position in the Soviet ballet world. Even after Vaganova's forced resignation, the Soviet Union continued to use Vaganova's ballet method and continued to construct a nationalistic ballet using her method. The idea of inventing tradition in Soviet ballet started with Lenin's regime and was formalized during Stalin's era. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and Russia rebuilt the image of Russian ballet with Vaganova's method. Various media outlets no longer attributed Vaganova to socialist realism, but instead focused on the technical and aesthetic aspects of her method.

Contemporaneously, in Asia, Choi Seung-hee faced similar problems in Japan and Korea, but they were more complicated. Choi Seung-hee invented *Sinmuyong* (new dance) during the Japanese colonial period, and it was used to construct two different nationalistic images through different media groups. Japanese media praised Choi Seung-hee and her dance style as a Japanese nationalist modern dancer. On the other hand, the Korean media claimed that Choi was an inspiration to Koreans and someone who upheld their national pride. Choi Seung-hee and her dance were elevated as nationalistic representatives in two different media groups.

Korea lost many parts of national heritage and culture during the Japanese

colonial period and the Korean War. Therefore, both North and South Korea needed to reconstruct their national and political identity. Choi Seung-hee's dance was used to build nationalistic dance in both countries. North Korea named it *Chosŏn Minjok muyong*, which means the dance of the Korean people. Choi Seung hee published the Korean dance method book *Chosŏn Minjok muyong Gibon* (The Basic Movements of North Korea Dance) in 1958. Choi Seung-hee wrote her most well-known dance dramas *Banyawolseonggok* (The Song of Banyawolseong) and *Sadosungui Iyagi* (The Story of Sado Castle) with North Korean socialist principles in order to avoid censorship and protect her performances. Kim Il-sung, dictator of North Korea from 1948-1994, and the North Korean party used media to promote Choi's dance as an invented tradition of North Korea. Kim Il-sung and the North Korean party eventually purged Choi Seung-hee in 1967 because of her conflicting political ideology. After Choi Seung-hee's purge, her name was removed from North Korean media until 1998. In 1998, Kim Jong-il (Kim Il-sung's son, the next dictator of North Korea from 1994 to 2011) announced the movement of Choi Seung-hee into the patriotic martyr's cemetery, and her name reappeared in North Korea public media. Even after Choi's purge, North Korea continued to use her dance techniques as written in *Chosŏn Minjok muyong Gibon* (The Basic Movements of North Korea Dance) and continued to build up North Korean dance using her method.

On the other hand, South Korea named Choi's dance *Sinmuyong*, which means simply New Dance. South Korea avoided using her name in public media until the 1980s because Choi Seung-hee was considered as a Japanese collaborator and North Korean sympathizer in South Korea. After its liberation from Japan and the Korean War, South Korea suffered under political unrest, student protests, and dictatorship. Until the late 1980s, South Korea was under a military dictatorship,

which oppressed freedom of speech among other rights. Roh Tae-woo ended this dictatorship and announced *Bukbang Jeongchaek* or *Nordpolitik*, a foreign policy that enabled cultural exchange with North Korea. As a result, the South Korean government allowed the state media to mention North Korea. In the late 1980s, South Korean media began to reevaluate her achievements in Korean dance history and finally included her name to redefine South Korean dance.

If I were to describe these two dancers in a short sentence, then I would say that Vaganova's life best resembled a heroic story and Choi Seung-hee's life was a tragedy. These two dancers invented new dance methods which influenced their nation's dance and became the representative dance forms in their countries. But their life and political society were different. Even though Vaganova resigned from the ballet directorship, her legacy in Russian ballet was not tarnished in Russian ballet history and media. On the other hand, Choi Seung-hee was a victim of ideological conflict. Because of her Japanese name and positive images of her in Japanese media, Koreans misunderstood her political ideology and national affiliation. As a result, she could not remain in South Korea and had to go to North Korea, where her life ended in the hands of Kim Il-sung's purges. Her name was buried for many decades in both North and South Korea because of the misunderstanding caused by media outlets and conflicting political ideology. After the 1980s, Choi Seung-hee finally regained her legacy in Korean dance history.

Vaganova and Choi protected their traditional dances, which preserved their countries' distinctive cultural character from political conflicts. They both reinvented their traditional dances by eliminating unnecessary movements in traditional dances and accelerating the expression of whole-body movements. Their dance methods became valuable assets to their nations and in the history of world dance, but their

artistic creativity was limited by the censorship of politics. These two artists were victims of political conflict because they could not express their own ideas completely in their performances. Some people believe that art should be separate from politics. To some degree, I agree with that idea. But I think a complete separation of art and politics or political ideology might not be possible. As we can see in the past dance history, dance and politics or political ideologies have been an integral component in developing the artform. One thing for sure is that art should not be controlled by politics and art should have the freedom of expression.

To me, Vaganova and Choi Seung-hee were exceptional dancers, choreographers, and teachers, both with an endless passion and love for dance. We cannot deny that unfortunate political and ideological conflict that happened in the early twentieth century, but we have to commend these great artists who contributed their talents to the world of dance during some of the most adverse moments in history. Lastly, I would like to finish writing in hopes that there will be a society with no more victims of political ideology like Agrippina Vaganova and Choi Seung-hee.

Bibliography

"A Dance of Hope: Rediscovering the Artistry and Power of Choi Seung-Hee." *The Japan Times*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Mar. 2017.

Ahn, Byung-ju. "Structural Principles and Artistic Characteristics of Kim Paik-bong's Buchaechum." *Journal of Korean Physical Education Association for Girls and Women*, 2004, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 161-185.

Ahn, Gwi-ho. "Buchaechum Kkottlpiwo Moranhyanggi Mulri Pujigirl (May the grace of the dance be known to the world)."
http://www.cha.go.kr/cop/bbs/selectBoardArticle.do;jsessionid=SCh3cafkpH1rxn0YAzOQwHplwHWnKR4A4MZ8o5Qaj6Qqp6DIgUvwjiUVfDPzjTqA?nttId=32115&bbsId=BBSMSTR_1008&pageUnit=10&searchtitle=title&searchcont=&searchkey=&searchwriter=&searchWrd=&ctgryLrcls=&ctgryMdcls=&ctgrySmcls=&ntcStartDt=&ntcEndDt=&mn=NS_03_06. Accessed 20 Feb 2018.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. Verso, 2006.

Anderson, Jack. *Ballet & Modern Dance: A Concise History*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Book, 1986. Print.

Au, Susan, and Cohen, Selma Jeanne. *Ballet & Modern Dance*. New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1988. Print.

Bennett, Toby, and Giannandrea Poesio. "Mime in the Cecchetti 'Method'." *Dance Research* 18.1 (2000): 31-43. Web.

Bland, Alexander. *University of Ballet and Dance in the Western World*. New York: Praeger, 1976. Print.

Bronislava Nijinska, *Early Memoirs*, trans. and ed. Irina Nijinska and Jean Rawlinson, with an introduction by Anna Kisselgoff (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981).

Cheon, Ji-gi. *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Arts*. National Folk Museum of Korea. Seoul. 2016.

Chin, Elizabeth. "Ballet across Borders: Career and Culture in the World of Dancers." *American Anthropologist* 103.3 (2001): 879-80. Web.

Choi, Seung-hee. "Choi Seung-Hee, A Letter from Choi Seung-Hee in New York." *Niroku Newspaper*, 16 Aug. 1938.

Ch'oe, Sŭng-hŭi. *Chosŏn minjok muyong kibon* (Basics of Chosŏn Ethnic

Dance). Pyongyang: Chosŏn Yesulja, 1958.

Ch'oe, Sŭng-hŭi. "Ttetui Gatuini Sesangdo nulda (The world is wide with Same Intention)." *Munhak sinmun* (Culture newspaper), 31Jan, 1957.

Ch'oe, Sŭng-hŭi. *Minju Ilbo* (Democracy Newspaper), South Korea: July 21 Jul 1946.

Ch'oe, Sŭng-hŭi, *Muyonggk daebonjib* (Choi Seung-hee's Dance Drama scripts collection). Pyongyang: The Cultural History of Korea. 1999.

Ch'oe, Sŭng-hŭi. *Pulkkot: 1911-1969, segi ūi ch 'umkkun Ch 'oe Sŭng-hŭi chasŏjŏn* (Flame: 1911-1969, The Autobiography of Choi Seung-Hee, the Dancer of the Century. Seoul: Jaumgwa Moum, 2006.

Choi, Seung-hee. "Choi Seung-Hee, A Letter from Choi Seung-Hee in New York." *Niroku Newspaper*, 16 Aug. 1938.

Chŏng, Pyŏng-ho. *Aesthetics of Korean Traditional Dance*. Kyŏnggi-do P'aju-si: Chimmundang, 2004.

Chŏng, Su-ung. *Ch'oe Sŭng-Hŭi: Kyŏktong Ŭi Sidae Ŭl Salta Kan Őnŭ Muyongga Ŭi Saengae Wa Yesul* (The life and art of a dancer in turbulent times), Seoul: Nunpit, 2004.

Chosŏn Yesul (Korea Art), Pyongyang North Korea, 1968.

Clarke, Mary, and Crisp, Clement. *Understanding Ballet*. New York: Harmony, 1976. Print.

Demidov, A. *The Russian Ballet: Past and Present*. 1st ed. Moscow: Garden City, N.Y.: Novosti Agency Pub. House; Doubleday, 1977. Print.

Dong, Gyeong-won. "A Study on Seung-Hee Choi's Dance-Drama Works: With a Focus on Their Analysis and Historical Significance in the Performing Arts Field." *The Korean Journal of Arts Studies*, vol. 9, June 2014, pp. 151–205.

Ezrahi, Christina. *Swans of the Kremlin Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh, 2012. Print. Ser. in Russian and East European Studies.

Freyja. *SWAN LAKE - White Swan (Ulanova-Sergeyev, 1940)*, YouTube, 10 May 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v.

Graff, Ellen. *Stepping Left Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928-1942*. 1997. Print.

Greskovic, Robert. *Ballet 101: A Complete Guide to Learning and Loving the Ballet*. 1st ed. New York: Hyperion, 1998. Print.

Hall, Jason. "The Cold War Museum." *Cold War Museum*, www.coldwar.org/articles/80s/GlasnostandPerestroika.asp.

Han, Kyung-ja., "The Asiatic Patronage Environment of the Choi Seung-hee Dance." *The Journal of Dance Society for Documentation & History*, Vol. 35, 2014, pp. 263-282.

Hobsbawm, E. J. "Introduction: Inventing Tradition." *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, Cambridge [Cambridge shire]; New York: Cambridge UP, 1983, pp. 1-15.

Homans, Jennifer. *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet*. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 2010. Print.

Johnson, Robert. "Where Nijinsky and Pavlova Did Their First Plies." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 21 Feb. 1998, www.nytimes.com/1998/02/22/arts/dance-where-Nijinsky-and-pavlova-did-their-first-plies.html.

Kang, Hyeon-mo, "Buchaeui Hwalyongae Daehan Minsok kyoyukjuk Jupgeun (The Folk Educational approach to the application of fans)." *Comparative Folk Studies*, Vol. 30, 2005, 261-287.

Kang Yi-hyang, *Sangmyungui Chum Sarangui Chum* (Dance of life, Dance of love). Seoul: Jiyangsa. 1989.

Kant, Marion. *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print. Cambridge Companions to Music.

Kendall, Elizabeth. "Opera, Ballet, and Political Power." *Kritika* 15.2 (2014): 441. Web.

Kepley, Vance. "Soviet Cinema and State Control: Lenin's Nationalization Decree Reconsidered," *Journal of Film and Video* 42, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 3.

Kerensky, Oleg. *The World of Ballet*. 1st American Ed.]. ed. New York: Coward-McCann, 1970. Print.

Kim, Chae won, *Choi Seung-hee Dancing - Succession and Transformation*. Seoul. Minsokwon. 2008.

Kim, Ch'an-jöng, *Chumkkun Choe Süng-hüi* (A Dancer Choi Seung-hee), Seoul: Han'guk Pangsong Ch'ulp'an, 2003.

Kim, Mal-bok, and Han'guk Munhwa Yesul Wiwönhoe. *Dancing Korea: New Waves of Choreographers and Dance Companies*. Elizabeth, N.J.: Hollym, 2012.

Kim Seon-mi, "Study of debate on the phase of Sinmuyong: To celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Sinmuyong." *The Korea Journal of Sports Science*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 2017, pp.875-883.

Kirstein, Lincoln, and Reynolds, Nancy. *Ballet, Bias, and Belief: Three Pamphlets Collected and Other Dance Writings of Lincoln Kirstein*. New York: Dance Horizons, 1983.

"Korea sends A Dancer to America." *New York: Evening News*. June 19, 1938.

Krasovskaya, V. *Vaganova: A Dance Journey from Petersburg to Leningrad*. Gainesville: U of Florida, 2005. Print.

Lawson, Joan. *The Story of Ballet*. New York: Taplinger, 1976. Print. Kirstein, Lincoln. *Four Centuries of Ballet: Fifty Masterworks*. New York: Dover Publications, 1984. Print.

Lee, Carol. *Ballet in Western Culture: A History of Its Origins and Evolution*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999. Print.

Mally, Lynn. *Culture of the Future: the Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia*. University of California Press, 1990.

Martin, John Joseph. *World Book of Modern Ballet*. 1st Ed.]. ed. Cleveland: World Pub., 1952. Print.

Moonstone. "The Children of Theatre Street - Ballet Documentary - Complete with Grace Kelly." *YouTube*, YouTube, 15 July 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYKAZRXN1ZI.

Nam Sang-suk & Gim Hae-suk, *An Introduction to Korean Traditional Performing Arts*. Seoul, South Korea: Min Sok Won, 2009.

Nijinska, Bronislava, Nijinska, Irina, Rawlinson, Jean, and Kisselgoff, Anna. *Bronislava Nijinska--early Memoirs*. 1st ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981. Print.

Pouncy, Carolyn. "Agrippina Vaganova (1879-1951): Her Place in the History of Ballet and Her Impact on the Future of Classical Dance (Book Review)." *The Russian Review* 62.3 (2003): 456-57. Print.

Pouncy, Carolyn. "Stumbling Toward Socialist Realism: Ballet in Leningrad, 1927-1937," *Russian History/ Histoire Russes*, 32, No. 2. 2005. Print.

Rabochii I Teatr (The Worker and the Theater), 1926, No.9, p.13.

Rico, Maria Del. "Ballet History." *Contemporary-dance.org*. N.p., 2010. Web. 12 Feb. 2017.

Rodong Sinmun (Worker's Newspaper). Nov 1954.

Rodong Sinmun (Worker's News Paper). Feb 5, 1959.

Roslavleva, Nataliia. *The era of the Russian Ballet*. New York: Dutton, 1966. Print.

Ross, Janice. *Like a Bomb Going off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia*. 2015. Print.

Shim, Jung min, *Choi Seung Hee's Historical Dancing Activities based on TV documentary The Dancer Choi Seung-Hee*. Korean Association for Visual Culture (19), Incheon, PP 223-262.

Sin Dong-rib. "Junsului Dancer Choi Seung-hee, Ilje Gangjumgi France gongyeonJunmo drunatda" (Legend of the Dancer Choi Seung-hee, the full picture of the French performance was revealed) *Newsis*, Joong Ang Ilbo, 7 Sept. 2017, www.newsis.com/view/?id=NISX20170908_0000090120.

Stahl, Joan. "Krasovskaya, Vera. Vaganova: A Dance Journey from Petersburg to Leningrad. (Brief Article) (Book Review)." *Library Journal* 130.10 (2005): 132. Web.

Stokes, Adrian Durham. *Russian Ballets*. London: Faber & Faber, Limited, 1935. Print.

Sunderland, Willard. "How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism (review)." *Journal of World History* 16.2 (2005): 235-37. Web.

Surits, E. Ia. *The Great History of Russian Ballet: Its Art and Choreography*. Richmond, [Moscow]: Parkstone; Great Encyclopedia of Russia Pub. House, 1998. Print.

Swift, Mary Grace. *The Art of the Dance in the U.S.S.R.* University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.

TheBolshoi97. "2008 Vaganova Ballet Academy Graduation (Excerpts 7/7) - Diana and Actaeon Pas De Deux." *YouTube*, YouTube, 29 May 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5Jat-WVCFs.

Vaganova, A. Ia. *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet; Russian Ballet Technique*. New York: Dover Publications, 1969. Print.

Vechernaya Krasnaia Gazeta (The Evening Red Newspaper), 1933.

Wiley, Roland John. *A Century of Russian Ballet: Documents and Accounts, 1810-1910*. Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1990.

William, Beatty-Kingston. *The Theatre* (May 1st, 1883). "Our Musical Box", pp. 287-290.

Wolferen, Karel Van. *The Enigma of Japanese Power: People and Politics in a Stateless Nation*. London: Macmillan, 1989.

Wulff, Helena. *Ballet across Borders: Career and Culture in the World of Dancers*. Oxford; New York: Berg, 1998. Print.

Yasunari, Kawabata. "Without hesitation, I would say Sai Shoki is the No. 1 (female dancer) in Japan." *Munye* (Literature). Nov 1939.

Yi, Yöng-nan, *Ch'oe Süng-hŭi muyong yesul sasang* (Choi Seung-hee Artistic Thought). Minsogwön, Söul, 2014.

Yi, Ae-sun. *Choe Süng-hŭi muyong yesul yöngu: 20-segi yesul munhwa wa ũi kwallyön sok esö* (Study on Choi Seung-hee's artistic dance: relationship with the 20th century art culture). Seoul South Korea: Kukhak charyowön, 2002.

Yi, Ae-sun. *Ch'oe Süng-hŭi muyong yesul munjib* (A Collection of Choi Seung-hee's Dance Drama). Seoul South Korea: Kukhak charyowön, 2002.

Yi, Pyöng-ok. *Korean Folk Dance*. Seoul, Korea: Korea Foundation, 2008.

Yu, Mi-hee. *Yeogwonjuui Ibjangesubon Choi Seung-hee Muyong Yeongu* (A Study on Choi Seung-hee's Dance Art as seen through Feminism). Dissertation, Seoul South Korea: Ehwa University, 1997.

Zhizn' iskusstva (Art Life), 1927, No. 6, p.6.

<Image Sources>

Ahn, Chung-Un. *Fan Dance Commemorative Art Print by 1988 Seoul Olympic Games Limited Edition Print*. PopArtUK: *Posters, Prints*, www.popartuk.com/sport/fan-dance-commemorative-art-print-by-ahn-chung-un-ev007-limited-edition-print.asp.15. Accessed 18 Feb 2018.

Beaumont, Cyril W., et al. *A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Classical Theatrical Dancing (Classical Ballet) Cecchetti Method*. New ed. rev. ed., C. W. Beaumont, 1971.

"Celebrating the intention of a hundred years of Choi Seung-hee's birthday." *Uriminzokkiri*. Korea Ryugilo Editorial Bureau, 2011, www.uriminzokkiri.com/index.php?ptype=music_world&no=74&pn=15. Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS). Accessed 28 Jan 2018.

Cha, Gil-jin. "An Unknown Story of Dancer Choi Seung-Hee." *Zum Segye Ilbo*, 16 Dec. 2016, [news.zum.com/articles/34920544? c](http://news.zum.com/articles/34920544?c). Accessed 16 Feb 2018.

"A Triumph come back with Glory (L.A. Olympic Special)." *YouTube*, uploaded by KTV Daehan News No. 1502, 1 Jan. 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPEH1dQB0NI>

Elizabeth, James. *Cecchetti Classical Ballet*, www.cecchetti.co.uk/heritage-2/. Accessed 10 Jan 2018.

File: Agrippina Vaganova -Esmeralda 1910.jpg. Wikimedia Commons, *the free media repository*. https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Agrippina_Vaganova_-_Esmeralda_1910.jpg&oldid=287412768. Accessed 15 Feb 2018.

Growcott, Amy. *Swan Lake*. The Marius Petipa Society, 29 Sept. 2017, petipasociety.com/swan-lake/. Accessed 19 Feb 2018.

Jo, Jeon-hui. *Choi Seung-Hee's Brussels Performance*. 23 Dec. 2017. H&C Who I Am, www.whoim.kr/detail.php?number=55708&thread=54r03r01. Accessed 16 Feb 2018.

Korean Folk Village in Suwon. KEEP CALM and WANDER, 22 Aug. 2015. <http://keepcalmandwander.com/korean-folk-village-in-suwon-seoul/>. Accessed 19 Feb 2018.

Kwon, Jung-yun. *Original Hallyu Star Choi Seung-Hee Reborn*. 26 Jan. 2012. KOREA.net Gateway to Korea, *Global Communication and Contents Division*, www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Society/view?articleId=90906. Accessed 3 Jan 2018.

MBC News "Open North Korean film ' Story of the Sado castle ' and Choi Seung-hee's performance in the film." *YouTube*, 27 Aug. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=L105CAs4ngM. Accessed 20 Jan 2018.

Marius Petipa – Russiapedia Opera and Ballet Prominent Russians, Prominent Russians: Marius Petipa, *TV-Novosti*, russiapedia.rt.com/prominent-russians/opera-and-ballet/marius-petipa/. Accessed 9 Feb 2018.

"Pyongyang DPRK 100th Anniv. of Choe Sung-Hee's Birth, 2011." *YouTube*, uploaded by James P, 28 Mar. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtBWgwYqVR8.

Sadosungui Iyagi – USSR Poster. 28 Sept. 2017. *Korean Classical Music Record Museum*, uploaded by Rho, Jae-myeong. www.hearkorea.com/gododata/gododata.html?g_id=15&g_no=37930. Accessed 8 Jan 2018.

Stuart, Muriel, et al. *The Classic Ballet, Basic Technique and Terminology*. 1st ed.]. ed., Knopf, 1972.

Tema, Sencillo. "Septiembre 2014." *Danza Ballet Blog*, Jason Morrow, 30 Sept. 2014, www.danzaballetblog.com/2014/09/. Accessed 4 Jan 2018.

"The required performance scenario of the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics Opening Ceremony." *Instiz*, 25 Feb. 2014, www.instiz.net/pt/1855565. Accessed 20 Feb 2018.

"Vaganova Method." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 15 Aug. 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaganova_method. Accessed 19 Jan 2018.

Wön, Chöng-sun., et al. *The Dancer, Choi Seunghee Muyongga Ch'Oe SŭNg-hŭi*. Fullscreen. ed., Korea], Daeju Media, 2008.

Won, Jong-gyu. *Jeonju Gyeonggijeon Hall*. Facinating Jeonju, 16 May 2013, www.jjclim.kr/board/bbs/board.php?bo_table. Accessed 9 Feb 2018.

Yuliya Dimitrenko. "Arippina Vaganova the great & the terrible documentary film (English subtitles)." *YouTube*, 28 July 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=tX8b1d0MzyE.

Yun, Jung-hyun. "The Centennial Anniversary of Choi Seung-Hee's Birth." *Hit@Heraldcorp.com*, 13 Jan. 2011, biz.heraldcorp.com/common_prog/newsprint.php?ud. Assessed 11 Feb 2018.