

# The Fascist Turn in the Dance of Serge Lifar: Unraveling the Hidden Messages



Serge Lifar, a legendary choreographer known for his remarkable contributions to the world of dance, has been a subject of fascination and controversy. His innovative choreography and artistic prowess have earned

him a place among the most influential figures in the ballet world. However, in recent years, a different aspect of Lifar's legacy has come under scrutiny: his alleged association with fascism.

## Fascist Collaborations and Symbolism

During the Second World War, Lifar found himself in occupied France under the Vichy Regime, a collaborationist government that allied with Nazi Germany. During this period, Lifar's work took on a distinctly different tone. His choreography began to incorporate elements that many critics have interpreted as fascist symbolism.



### The Fascist Turn in the Dance of Serge Lifar: Interwar French Ballet and the German Occupation (Oxford Studies in Dance Theory) by Mark Franko

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 31943 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Print length : 291 pages  
Lending : Enabled



In his ballet "Icare," for example, Lifar included a scene where the protagonist, Icarus, escapes from his imprisonment by flying away with swastika-like symbols on his wings. Another ballet, "David Triumphant," featured a character who bore a striking resemblance to Adolf Hitler. Lifar's use of such symbols has led many to question whether he harbored fascist sympathies.

## **The Ambiguity of Art**

The interpretation of Lifar's choreography has been a subject of fierce debate. Some critics argue that the symbols and themes in his work were merely artistic devices, not expressions of political belief. They maintain that Lifar was primarily interested in exploring the aesthetics of dance and that his use of fascist imagery was simply a reflection of the tumultuous times in which he lived.

Others, however, contend that the fascist undertones in Lifar's choreography were intentional and revealed his true beliefs. They point to his collaboration with the Vichy Regime and his admiration for authoritarian figures as evidence of his fascist leanings.

## **The Dance of Shadows**

The controversy surrounding Serge Lifar's work has cast a shadow over his legacy. The question of whether he was a fascist sympathizer or merely an artist influenced by his time continues to divide critics and scholars alike.

What is certain is that Lifar's choreography remains a complex and fascinating body of work that reflects the interplay between art and ideology. His ballets, both beautiful and disturbing, invite us to question the nature of artistic expression and its potential for both inspiration and manipulation.

## **The Legacy of Serge Lifar**

Serge Lifar's legacy is a testament to the enduring power of art to provoke and inspire. His choreography, regardless of its political implications, continues to captivate audiences worldwide. His work reminds us that art is

not always a safe haven from the complexities of the world around us and that even the most beautiful creations can carry hidden messages.

The fascist turn in the dance of Serge Lifar is a reminder that art is never truly neutral. Whether consciously or unconsciously, artists are influenced by the political and social climate of their time. Lifar's choreography, with its enigmatic symbolism and ambiguous intentions, serves as a cautionary tale about the potential dangers of mixing art and ideology.

As we continue to explore the complexities of Serge Lifar's legacy, we must remain vigilant in our scrutiny of artistic expression, ensuring that it remains a force for good and not a tool for oppression.



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