

(Download) Leon Bakst and the Ballets Russes

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Charles Spencer

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#424103 in Books 1995 Ingredients: Example Ingredients Original language: English PDF # 1 12.50 x 10.50 x 1.00l, #File Name: 1854903489226 pages | File size: 36.Mb

Charles Spencer : Leon Bakst and the Ballets Russes before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Leon Bakst and the Ballets Russes:

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. When you see a drawing by Leon Bakst you know it immediately. By Craig Matteson Leon Bakst was born in Belorusse in 1866 to a middle-class Jewish family. He showed early talent for art and was educated along those lines. His first work was as a copyist and illustrator for teaching materials and then for popular magazines. When he met Albert Benois, his talent found a new direction. Bakst joined Benois's "World of Art" circle and later joined that group as part of the "Ballets Russes" with Diaghilev as the impresario (you can argue lots of different ways who was the "founder" of the group). In the theater, Bakst found the perfect outlet for his talent. His designs are sensual, full of energy, and have a deep affinity for the orientalism that was all the rage in the early Twentieth Century. He was able to capture fantasy and exoticism (and some eroticism) in his designs. As a person, he was given to strong passions and even obsessions. In the end, he broke down and his final illness seems to be a combination of a mental breakdown and some sort of physical illness that remains undiagnosed. He died in his 58th year. Some say it was the strain of working so hard on Istar with Ida Rubenstien. All we know for certain is the grief and sadness of his friends when they lost this talented artist. This book is wonderful. It is full of great illustrations of Bakst's work. There are also many photographs of the dancers in the costumes (black and white - but the illustrations of those costumes are in color). The richness of the reproductions is quite impressive. There are also photos of the sets in the theater and of those involved with the Ballets Russe. That this book has risen so much in value since it has gone out of print testifies to its quality and value.

Substantially revised and enlarged, this new edition traces the career of Leon Bakst, the costume designer, from his early years in St Petersburg through to his premature death in 1924. Spencer examines and reassesses not only Bakst's contribution to theatre design, but also his work as a portraitist, fashion designer and mural artist.