

Topic Page: [Nijinsky, Vaslav, 1890-1950](#)

Definition: **Nijinsky, Vaslav** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Russian dancer, often regarded as the greatest male ballet dancer of the 20th century. Dancing with the Ballets Russes, his most noted roles were in *Petrushka*, *Les Sylphides* and *Scheherazade*. From 1912, Nijinsky choreographed such ballets as *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *Jeux*, *Le Sacre du printemps* for Diaghilev and Stravinsky's *The Rites of Spring* (1913).

Summary Article: **Nijinsky, Vaslav**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(vəsläf' nyǐzhēn'skē), 1890–1950, Russian ballet dancer and choreographer; brother of Bronislava Nijinska. Nijinsky is widely considered the greatest dancer of the 20th cent. and was ballet's first modernist choreographer. He entered the Imperial Ballet School, St. Petersburg, in 1900 and made his debut in 1907. He traveled to Paris (1909) and, as premier danseur in Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, was the first to dance the leading roles in *Petrouchka*, *Les Sylphides*, *Scheherazade*, and *The Spectre of the Rose*, all choreographed by Fokine, and in ballets he himself choreographed—*The Afternoon of a Faun* (1912), *The Rite of Spring* (1913, for which Stravinsky composed the famous score), *Jeux* (1913), and *Till Eulenspiegel* (1916). Nijinsky developed a system of dance notation that was not deciphered until 1984; since then a number of his reconstructed ballets have been performed. Often considered the greatest male dancer of the 20th cent., Nijinsky was noted for his intensity and eroticism as well as for his superb technique, particularly his jeté and elevation. His relationship with Diaghilev was stormy, ending bitterly when the dancer married. In 1919, Nijinsky's career was abruptly terminated by disabling schizophrenia. He lived in retirement in England and Switzerland until his death.

See his 1919 diary, ed. by his wife, R. Nijinska (1936, rev. ed. 1963, unexpurgated tr. ed. by Acocella, J. , 1998);

biographies by R. Nijinska (1933 and 1952, repr. 1968) and R. Buckle (1971); studies by L. Kirstein (1975), B. Van Norman (1986), and M. Hodson (1996); catalog for the exhibition "Nijinsky: Legend and Modernist" (2000).

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Nijinsky, Vaslav. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/nijinsky_vaslav_1890_1950



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