

## Questions for Professor Cynthia Williams

### 1. What was the specific assignment?

Here is the actual assignment:

DAN 210 Dance History BALLET RUSSES PAPER ASSIGNMENT  
For this paper, due **Wednesday, November 19**, please describe one of the major ballets of the Ballet Russes from the **voice of a participant**; either the choreographer, composer, designer, dancer, critic, or audience member. The paper may take the form of a **letter**, a **diary entry**, or a **newspaper column**. The length of the paper will depend upon which format you take, but the suggested length is 2-3 pages. Please include all pertinent information about the ballet (choreographer, date, composer, dancers, designers) but don't spend an inordinate amount of time on the plot. **Citing your sources** is more difficult in this kind of paper—I'd suggest either using a different typescript for direct quotations, followed by (author page) or some other way of acknowledging use of published material. **Use primary sources** when possible and **cite all references using MLA style**. Include a **works cited** page.

Ballets to select from:

<i>Petrouchka</i>	Fokine
<i>L'Après midi d'un Faune</i>	Nijinsky
<i>Le Sacre du Printemps</i>	Nijinsky
<i>Les Noces</i>	Nijinska

Additional source materials (on reserve):

Baer, Nancy Van Norman	<i>Art of Enchantment</i>
Baer, Nancy Van Norman	<i>Bronislava Nijinska</i>
Berg, Shelley	<i>Le Sacre du Printemps</i>
Craft, Robert	<i>Stravinsky : Selected Correspondence</i>
Garafola, Lynn	<i>Diaghilev's Ballets Russes</i>
Garafola, Lynn	<i>The Ballets Russes and its World</i>
Hansen	<i>Scenic and Costume Design for the Ballets Russes</i>
Hodson, Millicent	<i>Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace</i>
Kochno, Boris	<i>Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes</i>
Lederman	<i>Stravinsky in the Theater</i>
MacDonald, Nesta	<i>Diaghilev Observed by Critics in England and the US</i>
Ostwald, Peter	<i>Nijinsky</i> <i>Stravinsky Le Sacre du Printemps Anthology of Musical Criticism</i>
Wachtel, Andrew	<i>Petrouchka</i>

Please bring to class on Monday a draft of your paper. We will spend time in class discussing them.

## **2. How does this assignment fit with the goals of your course?**

The assignment fits within the goals of my course in several ways: it asks the students to move beyond detached observation about dance to inhabiting the experience of the dance, as choreographer, dancer, or audience member; secondly it requires the students to absorb the factual information about the dance and its importance in history and express that in a personal way; and thirdly it provides them with the opportunity to be more creative in writing style--not all academic papers need to be dry treatises!

## **3. Why does this student's essay stand out for you as strong writing?**

This essay stood out for me for a variety of reasons: Meg's deftness with incorporating cited material within a non-typical format; the vibrancy of her prose; the sense that she was actually there at the premiere, and the depth of understanding she displayed in her discussion of the ballet.

### **Questions for Meg Stirling**

#### **1. How did you go about completing this essay? What steps did you follow?**

First, I selected my topic – I chose to write about the ballet *Petrouchka* from the perspective of a dance critic because this topic was of interest to me. The next step of my writing process involved library research – I took notes from an encyclopedia and from a number of books that I found on course reserve. Then, using my notes, I created a three section outline. In the first section, I listed some facts about the ballet (the choreographer, premiere date, composer, dancers, designers, and librettist). In the second section, I summarized the basic plot information of the ballet, and I listed (and cited) several important quotes that I found in my reading. Finally, I generated a list of quotes about the ballet which were taken from dance critics at the time of the ballet's premiere. This added authenticity and an element of historical perspective to my piece. Once my outline was complete, I began to write my first draft.

#### **2. What was the most challenging aspect of this essay assignment?**

The most challenging aspect of this assignment was for me to imagine that I was a dance critic in 1911. Fortunately, I was able to find many sample critiques of this ballet through my research in the library.

#### **3. How does this essay connect to your work in the course as a whole?**

This semester, the class has studied many different styles of dance, choreographers, and specific ballets throughout history. This essay connects to my work in the course as a whole because it represents a close examination of a particular choreographer and ballet.

#### **4. What is the most important thing you learned from doing this essay?**

Writing this essay reminded me of the importance of the writing process. When writing a paper that involves research, I have learned that it is especially important to outline and draft the paper before composing the final copy. In addition, I learned a fair amount of information about the topic of my paper. Fokine's *Petrouchka* holds a significant place in dance history because it was unlike any other ballet of its time.

