



Ritual, Symbolism,  
and an Archaic  
Depiction of Marriage  
in Nijinska's *Les Noces*

SKYLAR SMITH

# Bronislava Nijinska

- Began as soloist in Diaghilev's Ballet Russes
- In August 1915 moved to Kiev with husband Alexander Kochetovsky
- Joined St. Petersburg's Imperial Ballet School
- After the Russian Revolution Nijinska opens School of movement in 1917



# Background of *Les Noces*

- While in Kiev Nijinska begins creation of *Les Noces*
- *Les Noces* or *The Wedding*
- Companion Piece to Vaslav Nijinsky's *Rite of Spring*
- Created Six Years After the Russian Revolution
- Inspired by Marriage Laws and Traditions





# Costuming

- Designed by Natalia Goncharova
- Long Braids
- Peasant Women
- Wealthier Men
- Importance of the Red and Blue Ribbon

# Music

- Music Composed by Igor Stravinsky
- Inspiration was taken from The Russian Folklorist P.V. Kireevsky's anthology of folksongs
- Product of the Russian Church
- Music makes references to the Virgin Mary and to Saints
- Ritualistic Music
- Words reflect fear of sexual violence



# Choreographic Symbolism

- Opening pose
- Braiding Motif in the first scene "Blessing of the Bride"
- The Bride's Chamber Scene
- Blessing of Bridegroom
- Braided Noose
- Wedding Feast





Sections of  
*Les Noces*

- Consecration of the Bride
- Consecration of the Bridegroom
- Departure of the Bride
- The Wedding Feast



# Lasting Impact

- Ballet Russes first and only female choreographer
- *Les Noces* introduced the idea of feminism to the ballet world
- Use choreography to address political issues



# Excerpt from *Les Noces*

- <https://video-alexanderstreet-com.proxy-sru.klnpa.org/watch/les-noces>





# Conclusion

---

# Works Cited

“Early Modern Ballet.” *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage*, by Sally Banes, Routledge, London, 2006, pp. 108–122.

GARAFOLA, LYNN. “An Amazon of the Avant-Garde: Bronislava Nijinska in Revolutionary Russia.” *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, vol. 29, no. 2, Edinburgh University Press, 2011, pp. 109–66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41428397>.

GARAFOLA, LYNN. “Crafted by Many Hands: Re-Reading Bronislava Nijinska’s ‘Early Memoirs.’” *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, vol. 29, no. 1, Edinburgh University Press, 2011, pp. 1–18, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41428387>.

*Les Noces*, Alexander Street, video-alexanderstreet-com.proxy-sru.klnpa.org/watch/les-noces. Accessed 30 Nov. 2021.

---