



Capturing gesture:

# Illustrations to dance narratives for the Beaumont Press

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I shall not attempt to describe what I witnessed, I can only say what I felt. [...] With each new dance you were swept from gaiety to spiritual ecstasy, from sadness to a wild savage delirium that made you long to leap on the stage and join in the dancing. There were times when I could hardly keep still, so passionately stirred was I by the surge and rhythm of their movements.

Cyril Beaumont, *The Diaghilev Ballet in London: A Personal Record*,  
London, Beaumont, 1940, p. 6.

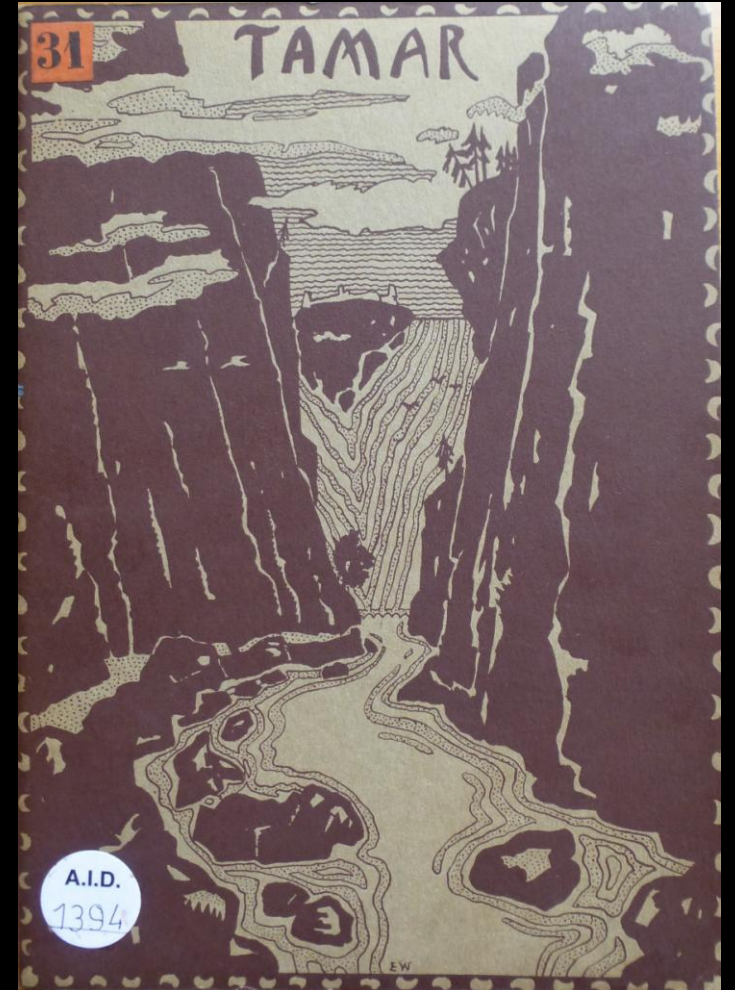
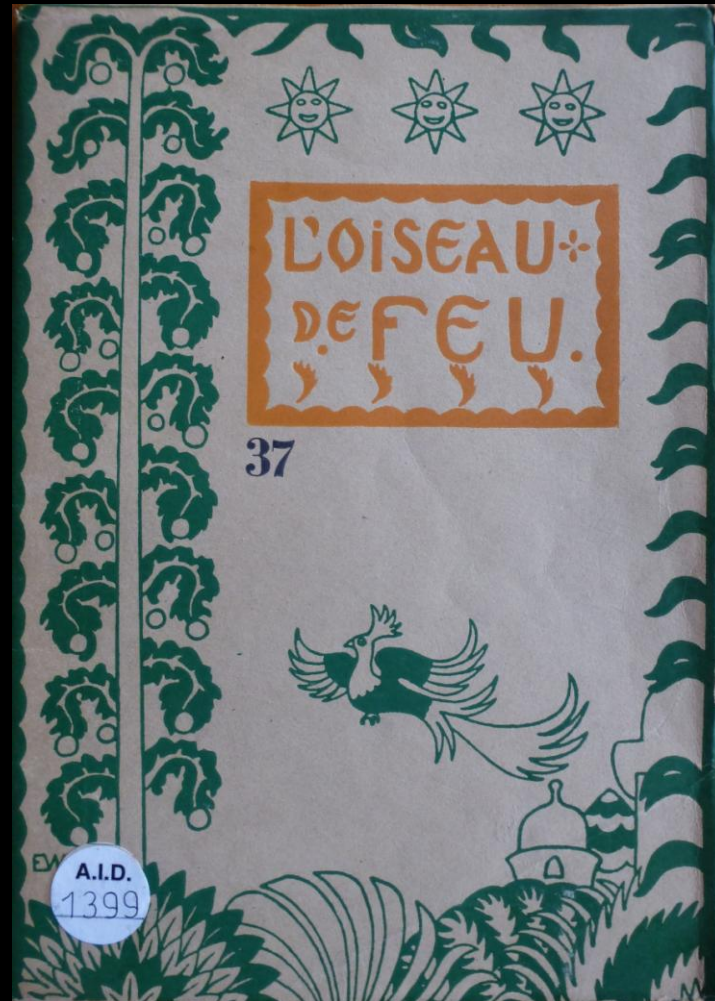
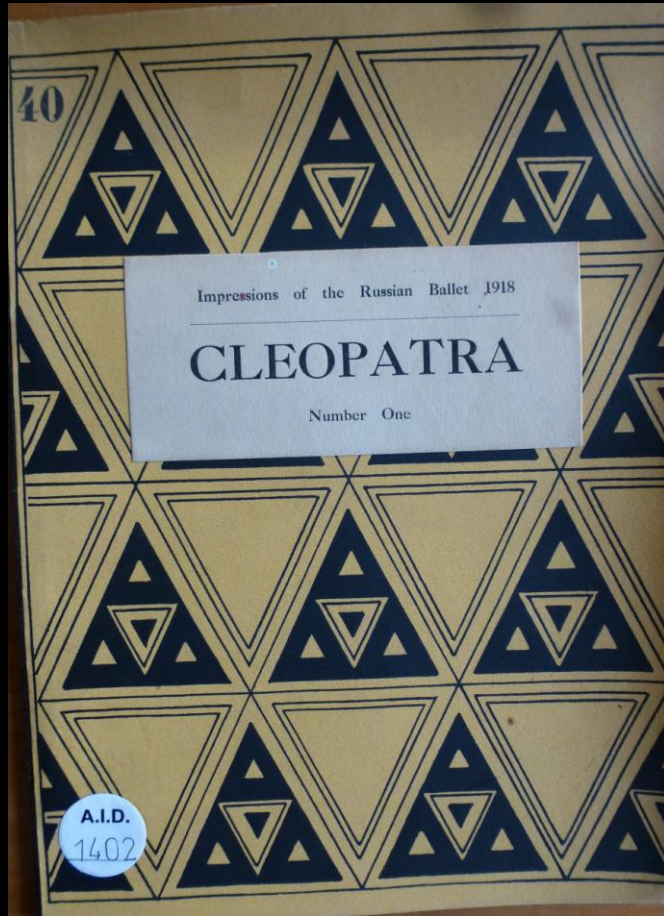
# Cyril Beaumont in 1930 and in the 1970s

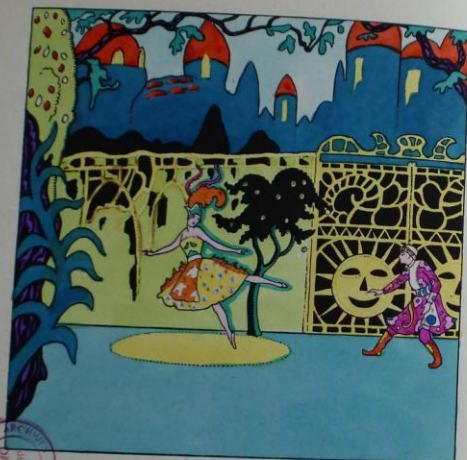
(from Kathrine Sorley Walker,

*Cyril W. Beaumont: Dance Writer and Publisher*, Dance Books, Alton, 2006)



*Impressions of the Russian Ballet, Beaumont Press (1918-1922)*





IMPRESSIONS OF THE RUSSIAN BALLET 1919

# L'OISEAU DE FEU

WRITTEN BY  
C. W. BEAUMONT  
DECORATED BY  
ETHELBERT WHITE



LES ARCHIVES  
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IMPRESSIONS OF THE RUSSIAN BALLET 1919

# THAMAR

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C. W. BEAUMONT  
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ETHELBERT WHITE



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Leon Bakst (1866-1924)

Set designs for *Scheherazade* (1910) and *Thamar* (1912)  
(pen, watercolour, gouache, gold)



Death grows envious and before even such a possibility has entered our minds the dancer is no more. The once bright picture fades more or less quickly into a vague mist, and with the passing of time only a little trick or tilting of the head or a familiar gesture of the hand remains imprinted on the memory.

Vaslav Nijinsky  
and Tamara Karsavina  
in *Les Sylphides*



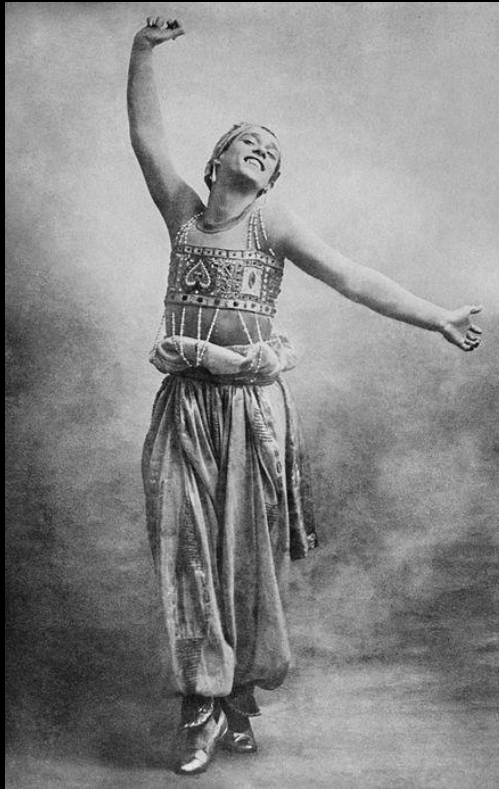
While dancing *terre à terre* he seemed never to touch the ground, but always to travel just above it. His *élévation*, his ability to leap into the air, was prodigious. There was no flurry, no seeming preparation; he vaulted upwards, or bounded forwards, with the effortless ease of a bird taking flight [...]

So I recall memories such as the billowing of his white silk sleeve as he curved and extended his arm; [...] and the end of a *pirouette*, when he came smoothly and with increasing slowness to rest, like a spun wheel which had exhausted its momentum.

*The Diaghilev Ballet in London, London, Beaumont, 1940, pp. 16-17.*



Vaslav Nijinsky in *Schéhérazade*  
(1910)



It was a thrilling experience to see him now darting this way and that, now doubling on his pursuers in a desperate, frenzied anxiety to escape the avenging scimitars. But a blade flashed and he fell headlong, to spin on the back of his neck with his legs thrust rigid in the air. Then the body fell, rolled over, and was still.

*The Diaghilev Ballet in London*, London, Beaumont, 1940, p. 36.

Cyril Beaumont, *Schéhérazade*  
Beaumont Press, 1919, p. 14



*Thamar*  
Beaumont Press, 1919, p. 12.



*L'Oiseau de Feu*  
Headpiece, p. 5:



A figure radiating orange light flashed across the dark background [...] glowing with orange radiance, [it] darted upon the stage, flitted about the tree, and vanished among the shadows. (*The Diaghilev Ballet in London*, p. 18.)

[...] how sadly it flutters its wings, now rendered powerless [...] Then exhausted by its struggles, it flutters to the ground [...].

And if after all the bird takes flight with the lowering of the curtain, the impression left on the mind is so potent, that as Ivan's feather summoned the bird, so the thought of the ballet brings her, fluttering, before us.

(*L'Oiseau de Feu*, p. 7, p. 13.)



IMPRESSIONS OF THE RUSSIAN BALLET 1919

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Cyril Beaumont, *Thamar*,  
London, Beaumont Press,  
1919, p. 5.



# THAMAR

*'A l'appel de Thamar—péri mystérieuse—*

*Sur l'histoire de la femme et du guerrier :*

# *Impressions of the Russian Ballet, 1919*

*Thamar, The Caucasian Dance, p. 8.*

*L'Oiseau de feu, the maidens, p. 8*



I felt compelled to attempt to leap into the air as I had seen the dancers do, if only to expel the rhythm which I seemed to have stored up in my body as electricity is accumulated in a Leyden jar.

*The Diaghilev Ballet in London*, London, Beaumont, 1940, p. 36.



# THAMAR

'A l'appel de Thamar—péri mystérieuse—

Scénario de Léon Bakst, musique de Léon Bakst.

## PROGRAMME OFFICIEL DES BALLETTS RUSSES



Costume de "NARCISSE"

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

### Comœdia Illustré



Première Bacchante de "Narcisse"

d'après l'aquarelle de Léon BAKST

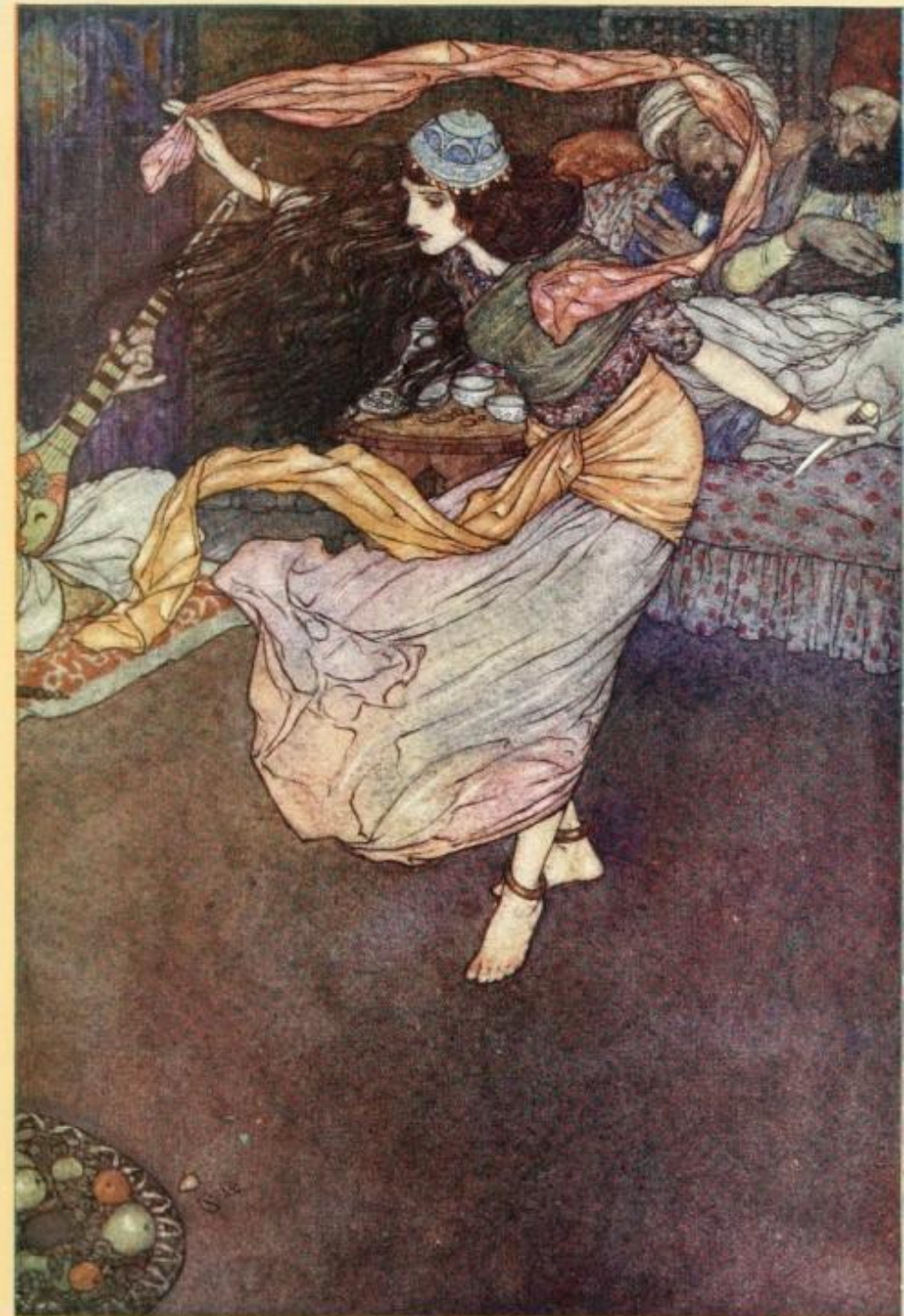
Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France



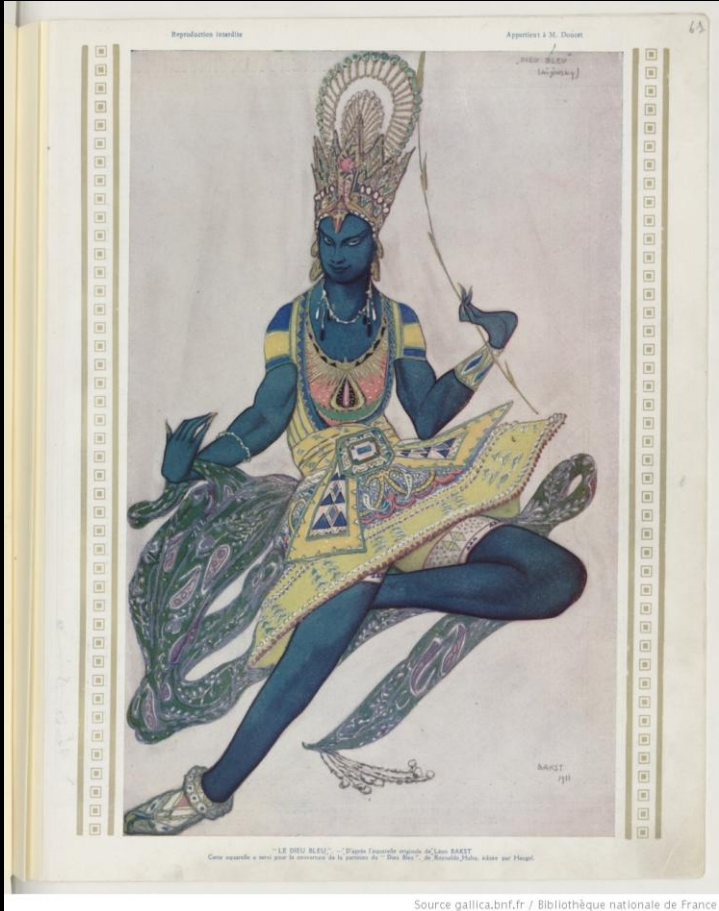
# Edmund Dulac

Laurence Housman, *Stories from the Arabian Nights*,  
Hodder and Stoughton, 1907.

(“Ali Babba and the Forty Thieves” )



Programmes of the 1911 season of the Russian Ballet,  
 repr. in *Comoedia illustré* (15 May 1912).



# Ethelbert White, The Firebird

Pen and black ink on paper  
21.7 x 20.5 cm, Victoria & Albert Museum.



Colour was such a vital part of the ballets that I felt this to be imperative, and I decided on hand-colouring because it seemed to me so much brighter and so much more imbued with the spirit of the theatre than illustrations reproduced by the three-colour process.

Cyril Beaumont, *Bookseller at the Ballet*, London, Beaumont, 1975, p. 123.



# THAMAR

*' A l'appel de Thamar — péri mystérieuse —*

*Sur un lit de... le... le guerrier :*

# Ethelbert and Betty White (1930)

(from Kathrine Sorley Walker,  
*Cyril W. Beaumont: Dance Writer and Publisher*, Dance Books, Alton, 2006)





Herbert Read, *Eclogues*,  
Beaumont, 1919  
(‘The Orchard’, p. 13)

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

THE  
GOOD-HUMOURED LADIES  
A  
COMEDY.

By CARLO GOLDONI.

Translated from the *Italian*

By RICHARD ALDINGTON.

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To which is prefix'd  
*An ESSAY on CARLO GOLDONI*  
By ARTHUR SYMONS.

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The whole embellish'd with Cuts  
By ETHELBERT WHITE.

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LONDON:  
Published by C. W. BEAUMONT at 75 Charing Cross Road,  
MDCCLXXII.

Carlo Goldoni,  
*The Good-Humoured Ladies*  
Beaumont, 1922 (title page)

*The Weeping Ash, 1922*  
(Woodcut, 14 x 18 cm)



*The Wood Shed, 1923*  
(Wood engraving, 16.5 x 21.5 cm)







# THAMAR

*' A l'appel de Thamar—péri mystérieuse—  
Sous le toit de la nuit, le premier...*

## PROGRAMME OFFICIEL DES BALLETS RUSSES



Costume de "NARCISSE"



*Thank you!*