

Episode 26: Learning to Fly, Part 2

Clip: The Ballets Russes

Activity: Scheherazade

Theme: Dance Skills, Production

1. As a class, view the clip, *The Ballets Russes*, where Tara chooses a dress worn by one of the Ballets Russes dancers. The Ballets Russes, one of the most highly acclaimed and innovative dance companies in Europe, visited Australia between 1936 and 1940. Australia was culturally isolated at the time, and while not starved of ballet, we were not prepared for the lavishness of the Ballets Russes productions, the rich storytelling, and, at times, the controversial themes they explored. Nor had Australians ever seen such contemporary choreography (Fokine) or such a satisfying blend of excellence in visual design (costume, set design – Leon Bakst, Golovin, Benois), music composition (Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel, Rimski-Korsakov) and wonderful dancers (Nijinsky, Bolm, Karsavina, Cecchetti, Massine, Kirsova). Due to the threat of war in Europe, many of the dancers elected to stay in Australia. Kirsova began the first ballet company in Australia which was based in Sydney and Borovansky set up a company in Melbourne, *The Borovansky Ballet*. The Russian legacy influenced dance in Australia until the 1950's. Many of the Ballets Russes ballets were based on folk tales and legends.
2. Find and read the story of *Scheherazade* to the class. Discuss with the students how they would design the costumes and sets. Have them research evidence of the Ballets Russes production and compare how it was originally presented with the classes ideas on how to present the ballet.
3. Play the [music of Scheherazade by Rimsky-Korsakov](#). While students listen, they should complete **Student Activity Sheet E26.1: Scheherazade**, noting ideas for colours, costumes, sets and movements.
4. Individually, ask students to select one character from *Scheherazade* and design a costume for the character. You could show the students images of Bakst's designs for the original production as an example of what they could design. Alternatively, you could ask students to design a costume for the character if they lived in the 21st century, and on completion compare the original to the more contemporary approach.

Download

- Student Activity Sheet E26.1: Scheherazade

Useful resources

- [*From Russia with Love: Costumes from the Ballets Russes 1909 – 1933*](#), National Gallery of Australia 1998, p76-7.
- NGA Website [Ballets Russes Exhibition with images of costumes from Scheherazade](#)
- [NGA Ballets Russes: The Art of Costume Exhibition Book](#)



NAME:

Student Activity Sheet:
Activity:

E26.1
Scheherazade

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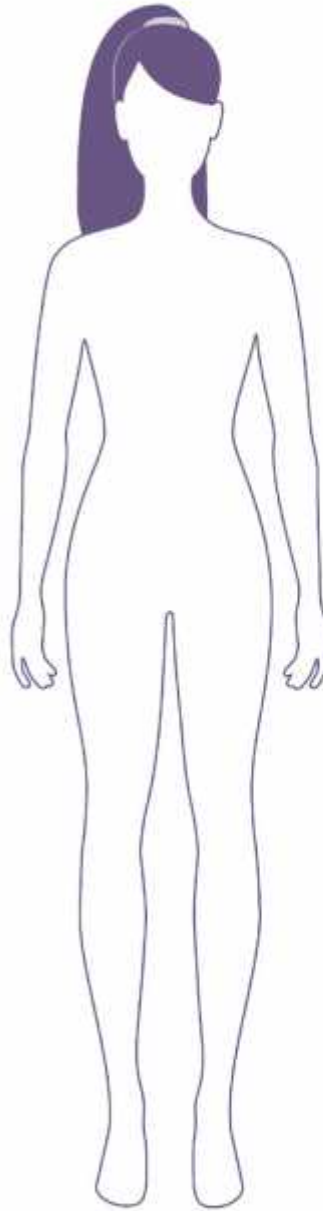
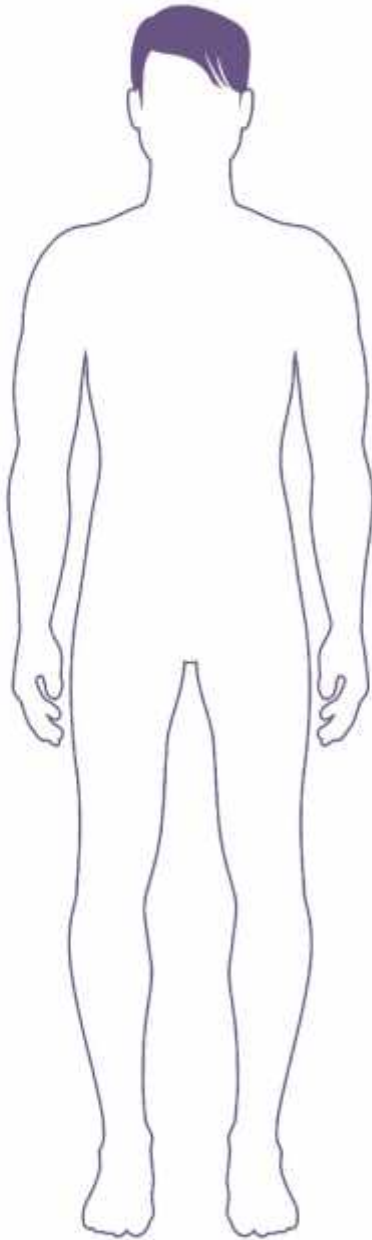
Scheherazade

As you listen to the music of *Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov, let your imagination drift off with the music.

What sort of colours do you imagine using for costumes, sets, props and lighting?

What sort of sets would you put on the stage? (Draw an outline of the sets below).

What sorts of costumes would you dress the dancers in?



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Use the space below to draw poses or describe movements that you might see dancers performing on stage to this music.