

Part II The ballets

5 *Khamma* (1911-13)

This season I shall present a very important new play-dance. It is entitled *Khamma*. I took the story from one of the old Egyptian legends, to the translating of which, Gaston Maspéro, the French author, devoted his life. It is a stirring human story of a dancing girl, a story full of human emotion. When I finished working out the plot I submitted my ideas to Claude Debussy, who was enthusiastic about writing the music. I was overjoyed, as I was of the opinion that he was the only living man who could do the story justice.

(Maud Allan in the *New York review* (16 Sept 1916))

She has paid [for *Khamma*], she can therefore do anything she likes with it. An arrangement for piccolo and bass drum might please her perhaps? In any case, it will be *most* Egyptian!

(Debussy to Durand, 17 August 1916; *F-Pdurand*)

Debussy's final remarks on the vexed question of his 'légende dansée' (or 'ballet pantomime', as he preferred to call it) were made as *Khamma* went through a second stormy stage in 1916. They reveal the extent to which the tantalising, globe-trotting Miss Allan – 'la "Girl" anglaise' – had worn his patience down over the years.¹ That summer she had demanded a second score for her forthcoming New York appearances with forty (instead of ninety) musicians. In 1912 she had wanted 'six or seven dances' (*F-Pn Rés. Vm. Dos. 13 (24)*) instead of the three Debussy had provided, and the score made twice as long (forty minutes)! Whatever satirical jibes Debussy made about Maud Allan's vacillations, absenteeism and lack of *politesse*, much of the trouble stemmed from the imprecise and unprofessional contract which increasing financial pressures induced him to sign with her in 1910, behind his publisher's back.

What Debussy needed at any time after his marriage to Emma Bardac was a long-term financial saviour such as Saint-Saëns found in 1877 in the Postmaster-General Albert Libon. Neither Claude nor Emma was even remotely capable of living within their financial means, and when the anticipated legacy from Emma's uncle Osiris did not follow his death on 4 February 1907,² matters

gradually deteriorated. Debussy was repeatedly forced to leave *Maison Usher* and works of his own choosing to undertake detested foreign conducting tours and commissions, although this means that we have the ballets *Khamma* and *Jeux* even if the Poe operas remain incomplete. On 25 September 1910 Debussy thanked Durand for yet another loan – for the 'river of gold which has . . . irrigated my banks in the nick of time' (DUR, p. 92) – and it is not surprising that when the Canadian-born dancer Maud Allan offered him 10,000 francs in the same week to compose her a ballet called *Isis* he readily agreed.³

Maud was then at the height of her fame. She had packed the 1700-seat Palace Theatre in London's Cambridge Circus from her first appearance on 17 March 1908 until her last that November with her *Vision of Salome*, danced to an original score by the Belgian composer Marcel Rémy (see Figs. 10 and 11). As Isadora Duncan's main European rival, she could command a salary of £500 a week, which put her in the same 'Caruso' bracket to which Debussy aspired when holding out for a fee of 200 guineas to conduct the Queen's Hall Orchestra in a single concert that same year. And it may have been at this performance of *L'après-midi d'un faune* and *La mer* on 1 February 1908 that she became acquainted with Debussy's music (or perhaps even met him).⁴

Miss Allan's scanty Grecian robes and undoubted feminine charms probably had as much to do with her box-office success as her imaginative dancing, and in 1908 she numbered among her patrons King Edward VII and Bernard Shaw. But she had been trained as a classical ballet dancer and had researched



Fig. 10. Maud Allan as Salome with the head of John the Baptist in *The vision of Salome* at the Palace Theatre, London, ?March 1908

Anthony Beaumont,

extensively the history of the dance and callisthenics. Further, she was an accomplished pianist who had studied with Busoni in Weimar and Berlin in 1901. Her real name was Beulah Maud Allan Durrant⁵ and she was intelligent, independent and highly motivated, though her book *My life and dancing* reveals that she was no militant feminist, being 'sufficiently old-fashioned to believe that the rightful destiny of every woman is to be the wife and mother, to make that inner sanctuary known by the sweet name of "Home"' (p. 114)! She herself never married and, whilst she had many admirers of both sexes,⁶ her main interest lay in her stage career for which she abandoned her official musical studies in 1902. After her debut in Vienna the following year, her repertoire came to include interpretations of Mendelssohn's *Spring song*, Chopin's *Valse in A minor* and *Marche funèbre*, Rubinstein's *Valse caprice* and Grieg's *Peer Gynt* suite.

The musicality and rhythmic nature of her dancing were often singled out for critical praise. As she told Philip Richardson in June 1916 (p. 275) in her characteristically informal English:

Well, I think I told you that I have studied music very thoroughly, consequently you will understand that I am able to tell at once if a piece of music is suitable for a dance. Having selected the music, I decide upon the general idea of the dance – that is to say, the story which I wish to convey. If this happens to be of a historic nature it will mean a lot of research in order that the costume may be accurate, and the dance in keeping with the character who is being portrayed. Having arranged the general idea, I take the music in phrases and see what emotion each one conveys to me. That is about as far as I go – everything else is spontaneous.

Mrs Doris Langley Moore, who travelled with her and kept her press books between 1923 and 1925, kindly told me that as a dancer Maud was 'extremely graceful and musical, but that she lacked the essential technique for dancing below the waist . . . She had the most beautiful and unblemished feet',⁷ and photographs invariably reveal these to the best advantage, though with her legs covered (see Figs. 10 and 11).

William Leonard Courtney, the co-author of *Khamma* (formerly an Oxford philosophy don), probably first met Maud Allan in connection with his work as drama critic and literary editor of the *Daily telegraph*. Reviewing *My life and dancing* to commemorate her 250th consecutive performance at the Palace Theatre on 14 October 1908, he wrote in adoration:

The main virtue of Maud Allan is that she is utterly and entirely Greek; Greek when she represents Botticelli.⁸ Greek also when she puts before us the languorous and seductive charm of Salome.

When she dances she strikes upon the harp of life, and sets us dreaming. She is, above all, the interpreter of strange, half-remembered thoughts.

As such she would have appealed to Debussy had he seen her dance.

Busoni,

Khamma

Fig. 11. Maud Allan as Salome with the head of John the Baptist in *The vision of Salome* at the Palace Theatre, London, ?March 1908

Isis was soon renamed *Khamma* and the scenario was probably compiled in London in mid-1910 after Maud Allan's first American tour. Censorship troubles with her notorious *Vision of Salome* may have prompted her to seek an equally exotic and sensational alternative, for she was forced to give *Salome* before a private subscription audience only in Munich in April 1907 (Allan, p. 84), and in January 1910 she found the Metropolitan Opera unavailable to her following the withdrawal of Strauss's operatic version in 1907 by the outraged owners after only one performance. Loie Fuller, another contemporary rival, had also been attracted to the Salome story. She performed it in the Théâtre des Arts in Paris in November 1907 with a specially commissioned

score by Florent Schmitt, *La tragédie de Salome*, and the *succès de scandale* everywhere achieved by Oscar Wilde's play of 1893, with its 'Dance of the seven veils', may well be the reason why Maud Allan wanted seven dances in *Khamma*.

The precise genesis of the scenario of *Khamma* is impossible to trace, for the only surviving copy is in French in Debussy's hand (see Appendix). To summarise, the action takes place in the inner temple of the ancient Egyptian sun god Amun-Ra on an overcast late afternoon. Besieging hordes surround the city as the high priest prays to the stone god for deliverance. No answer is forthcoming, but the high priest has an intuition that the dancer Khamma may hold the secret of victory. In scene 2 Khamma enters, veiled (as in *Salome*). She wishes to escape from the present troubles. As moonlight floods the temple she prostrates herself before Amun-Ra and performs three dances to persuade him to deliver his people from the invaders. When the hands of the statue begin to move, she performs an ecstatic fourth dance of delirious joy, at the climax of which she falls dead to the ground, accompanied by a flash of lightning and a thunderclap. In scene 3 the high priest and the now-victorious worshippers of Amun-Ra approach the temple at dawn. The gates are opened to reveal the prostrate body of Khamma: when they realise that she has died to save them, they curtail their celebrations as the high priest blesses Khamma's corpse.

The story, as the opening quotation to this chapter suggests, derives from Sir Gaston Maspéro's 'La fille du prince de Bakhtan et l'esprit possesseur', one of his *Contes populaires de l'Égypte ancienne*.⁹ The original tale was discovered by the Egyptologist Jean-François Champollion on a stone tablet in the Temple of Khonsu at Thebes, and this was brought back to the Bibliothèque Nationale by Émile Prisse d'Avennes in 1846. To simplify considerably, the story is about the spirit possession of the prince's beautiful eldest daughter and its exorcism through Khonsu, god of destiny, by means of an 'approving nod of the head to his prophet'. Maspéro informs us that Rameses III began the practice of consulting the statue of the god Amon under all circumstances, and explains how (p. 165, n. 1) in ancient Egypt statues like that of Khonsu were normally made of wood with movable limbs. Thus head and hand movements by a god are mentioned in both source and scenario, although no precise textual transference is involved. The name 'Khamma' may derive from Khonsu, or more probably from Satni Khamoïs, a son of Rameses II who acted as regent of Egypt for his aged father; 'Khamma' might have been devised as a feminine form of 'Khamoïs', though Debussy probably hit the nail on the head when he referred wickedly to Miss Allan as '*Khamma* . . . (soutra)' in a letter to Emma of 3 December 1910 (BAR, p. 89). Certainly 'Khamma' must have been chosen for its exotic appeal by Courtney or Allan, for in Hindustani it means a reed-pen (*Khama*), whilst its Egyptian (Arabic) meaning is a putrid stench!¹⁰

The idea for the ballet probably came from Courtney, who, during his wide reading, came upon a potentially ideal subject for the dancer he so admired. Maud Allan may have lacked the expertise to collate a full-length ballet scenario and translate it into French, and so Courtney probably assisted her, though the naïve enthusiasm and frequent expostulations in the scenario suggest Allan rather than Courtney, who was a model English stylist of his period. Maud Allan's letters are contradictory as usual: in the first instance on 30 September 1910 she presumed it was 'not necessary' that she and Debussy 'should go through the scenario together'; whilst on 26 June 1912,¹¹ after she had studied the score Debussy sent her, she told him 'I do not find it altogether in accordance with the full text and thought which was submitted and verbally explained to you, and which was the outline upon which you were to build up the music, even to enlarging on the given scenario.'

This implies that Debussy may have played some part in fleshing out an initial summary scenario for *Khamma* into a format which he could respond to musically. As in *Jeux*, he stuck closely to his text in an almost cinematographic manner. This would perhaps explain why he felt free to cross out an episode at the end where 'four priests slowly carry Khamma's body on interwoven branches through the flower-throwing crowds' (p. 8 of the scenario), and his rudeness in letters about the scenario perhaps reflected his distaste for its basic conception, which he told Robert Godet (6 February 1911; GOD, p. 126) 'was childishly simple and without the interest that it ought to have'.

According to the original contract, providing the scenario reached Debussy by 6 November 1910, he was to send Maud Allan her score by the end of February 1911. She then had the exclusive right to use the music in special dances in all European theatres, as well as those in North and South America, South Africa and Australia.¹² The 1910 contract also gave her the right to perform *Khamma* in a 'single Music Hall', Charles Morton's Palace Theatre, and she clearly envisaged a triumphant return there in 1911. This has unfortunately given rise to the notion that Debussy's score was 'a piece of hack work . . . a short music-hall number':¹³ nothing could be more misleading or false.

For the ballet rights to *Khamma*, Maud Allan was to pay Debussy no less than 20,000 francs: 10,000 on signature of the contract, 5000 when the score arrived, and 5000 after the fourteenth performance; in addition, Debussy was to receive 50 francs after each of the first 500 performances. These terms show that before the advent of the film score the theatre offered the best opportunities for a composer, and that Maud Allan saw *Khamma* as a second *Vision of Salome*. Debussy retained the publishing rights to the score, the royalties from which were to be shared equally between Miss Allan and himself, but the concert rights (without the ballet) were to go to Maud Allan for England and America and to Debussy for all other countries.

It is not certain how much of *Khamma* Debussy composed in 1911. When

the proposed submission date in February arrived it is doubtful if he had even started, and at this point his attention was diverted for three months by *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* which, unlike *Khamma*, had a definite production date. Naturally Debussy did not refer to *Khamma* in his letters to Durand before any problems arose, and 1911 found him occupied variously with his Poe operas, *Gigues* and the orchestration of the clarinet *Rapsodie*. But by November the cat was out of the bag, and on the 18th Debussy was forced to show Durand the incriminating Maud Allan contract (which was a direct breach of his exclusive arrangement with Durand made in August 1905). The short score, probably under way by then, seems to have been completed during January 1912 when Debussy told his publisher that he was 'in a fever trying to find what was missing and in the agony of trying to finish something at any price!' (DUR, p. 107). Nonetheless, he soon hoped to play *Khamma* to him, and he may even have made two versions of parts of it for he asked Durand on 1 February (DUR p. 108): 'When can you come and hear the new version of this curious ballet with its trumpet-calls which savour of revolt and fire and send a shiver down your back?' This is about as enthusiastic as Debussy got with what he otherwise called his 'wretched little Anglo-Egyptian ballet' (GOD, p. 126), and his desire to dedicate it to Mme Durand was probably a peace-offering to compensate for his double-dealing over the contract.

Maud Allan, meanwhile, had been touring South Africa, and her return to Europe in April 1912 'in a feverish haste to work on *Khamma*' spurred Debussy into action. A piano reduction¹⁴ was printed, but was not put on sale for legal reasons till August 1916. He also began the orchestration, but his 'anxious life' meant that he got only as far as bar 55 of scene 1, and the remaining five-sixths was orchestrated by Charles Koechlin between 6 December 1912 and the end of January 1913.¹⁵ Debussy thanked Durand for this part of his 'elegant solution' to the Maud Allan affair,¹⁶ and the full score was delivered to him on 5 February. Unbeknown to both of them, however, 'la "Girl" anglaise' still had quite a few tricks up her capacious sleeves.

As a favour to Debussy, Durand had taken over the *Khamma* contract with its expensive attendant problems on 22 April 1912. After Maud Allan had allowed a text to be printed for a fee of 3000 francs, they sent her a proof copy of the piano reduction. Her objections after studying this were three. First, she feared that an orchestral performance of *Khamma* might be given before she had staged her ballet, thus detracting from its novel impact. Second, as she had paid for *Khamma*, she wanted it dedicated to her and not to Debussy's publisher's wife. Third, she thought that the music 'although beautiful in itself, should be sufficient for a scenario lasting forty minutes',¹⁷ that is, twice as long! 'I presume, however', she added as a closing blow to an incredulous Debussy on 29 May, 'that you will lengthen it for me.' As we say, she supposed wrong, and despite threats on 26 June that she would have the revisions done by someone else,¹⁸ Debussy refused to alter his score. There

had been no mention of timing in the contract or scenario. But the stubborn Miss Allan remained undaunted. 'As the music now stands', she informed Durand on 9 September, 'believe me, it could never be a success. I know the public sufficiently well, and also that all of Debussy's music is not beloved, and this would certainly be the least successful of all. I cannot jeopardise my reappearance here or anywhere with it as it stands.' On the same day she wrote emphatically to Debussy: 'Believe me, dear Mr Debussy, *Khamma* needs alteration and I ask you again to realise this now and not cause further delay and possible trouble, but agree to get at it at once!'

The 'Girl' and her 'offensiveness' lashed Debussy into a fury.

It is inadmissible [he told Durand on 12 September] that she should pronounce judgments absolutely without authority, and in the manner of a bootmaker who has misconstrued his orders . . . My dose of philosophy is probably not strong enough, for I have a profound loathing for the whole business . . . And here comes this little madam to give me lessons in aesthetics . . . who talks of her sense of taste and that of the English, which passes all understanding! On the one hand you want to cry; on the other – better still – you want to give her a good spanking! Finally, without going to either extreme, one should perhaps give her a lesson in courtesy at the very least.

So much for the *entente cordiale* which, as Debussy put it earlier, had 'been well and truly overbalanced' by Maud's rude requests.

Durand then offered Miss Allan back the 10,000 francs she had paid Debussy, provided they could keep the world rights to the music of *Khamma*. She could have new music composed for her scenario 'by one of those genius musicians that exist only in England' and performed under the same title if she so wished. At this juncture, matters seem to have gone temporarily into arbitration, as letters from a solicitor (Th. Verveer) in the Durand archives reveal. A delay of one year was proposed to Maud by Durand in January 1913 before Debussy's score was performed, to allow her time to get new music composed. But in mid-February 1913 she was still awaiting the return of the manager of the Palace Theatre, Alfred Butt, whom she needed to consult about her ballet plans. Then, without making a decision on *Khamma*, she left for an extended (and somewhat intrepid) tour of India, the Malay States, China, the Philippines, Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand and America.

Désiré-Émile Inghelbrecht showed interest in conducting *Khamma* in September 1913 (perhaps after the success of the concert version of *Le martyre*), and on 18 September Debussy told Durand (DUR, p. 116) that 'the few essential orchestral modifications were finished'. But they decided that they had better do nothing until word came from Miss Allan. Debussy supposed she was 'dancing for the negroes in darkest West Africa' and was no doubt secretly relieved that she could not get near enough to a postbox to mail any more of her infuriating demands.

1916 found Maud temporarily 'resting' at her luxurious Regent's Park

mansion in London and planning yet another tour through the principal cities of America, beginning in New York in September.¹⁹ She planned to perform *Khamma* on her nation-wide progress, and as she told Philip Richardson (p. 274):

In one way this will be a new departure for me, for there will be one or two others included in the cast in addition to a chorus or *corps de ballet*.

Debussy difficult? Yes, I suppose he is. His music can never become popular in the usual acceptance of the term. I have another new number, however, which is arranged on more popular lines, and will appeal to all.²⁰

This indicates the sort of woman Debussy was up against. The next shock came on 26 July when she told Durand that 'Mr Debussy promised to be kind enough to make two scores for me – one for large orchestra and one for small orchestra – as the music will sometimes be given with a full symphony orchestra, and often with one of forty musicians.' Ernest Bloch had suggested double woodwind, four horns, two trumpets (thus invalidating most of the vital distant fanfares), three trombones, timpani, harp and strings.²¹ To this Debussy replied (at first kindly) on 28 July that 'there are dances in *Khamma* whose effect is based upon a multiple division of strings', and that the proposed number of players was insufficient. Feeling too ill to do anything himself, he left matters to Bloch, though he wrote to him in a letter on the same day.²² 'If Maud Allan had warned me of the small forces at her disposal, I would have orchestrated *Khamma* in an entirely different manner.' However, he thought that

if the strings were really 'first-class', they might still manage . . . In the situation where we now find ourselves, it is best if I leave you a completely free hand: any advice I might give you will be contradicted by reality. But I should like to point out that you cannot, despite all your skill, multiply one violin by four . . . There is a piano in my score, and it is there perhaps that you will find your salvation!

But by 30 July 1916, when he had studied the score in greater detail, Debussy was in a much angrier and less compromising mood. Asking him to reduce *Khamma* from ninety to forty players was like asking her to 'dance with only one arm and one leg', he told Maud in no uncertain terms. 'There is some analogy between a crime like that and the [musical] amputation you desire.' If she went ahead with such a charade, he washed his hands of it.

Maud Allan made one last attack on Durand, claiming erroneously (perhaps desperately) that Debussy knew all along about the smaller orchestras most theatres could accommodate.

The contract shows [she wrote on 7 August] that the Palace Theatre, London, was in mind, and this theatre, in fact no theatre, has an orchestra of ninety, or even half that number; at the most forty musicians. These points were discussed at length before I placed the order with Mr Debussy. Had it not been agreeable to him to write a

work that could be played by forty musicians I should certainly never have placed the order and pay [*sic*] a large sum of money for a work, no matter how beautiful, that I could not use other than in the largest opera houses. Even in theatres one rarely finds place in the orchestra pit for forty musicians, not to speak of ninety, and a piano too. Besides, how does Mr Debussy expect to have this work played 500 times to get his royalty, when he makes things so difficult to arrange?

Apart from the last point, this of course was all nonsense, as the Maud Allan Orchestra was specially formed for her 1916 tour and could have been any size she could afford. In addition to which, Debussy habitually scored for a theatre orchestra of full symphonic proportions and there is no evidence at all that he was ever asked to do otherwise in *Khamma*. 'The truth is', he told Durand on 17 August, 'that *Khamma* does not please her at all, and she is looking for a reason to put me in the wrong and extricate herself.' And then came the exasperated postscript about the Egyptian 'arrangement for piccolo and bass drum' with which this chapter began.

In September Maud Allan told reporters that she had had scenery made for *Khamma* which had been exhibited at a New York gallery. In the *Musical courier* on 21 September (p. 22) she also showed that she had at last faced up to orchestral reality when she wrote: 'I shall be able to do the work only in the larger cities and then with a minimum force of eighty.' She even took pains to correct a misconception begun by the *Courier* report of 27 April (p. 10): 'A mistaken notion seems to obtain', she explained, 'that *Khamma* is another form of Debussy's *Faun* prelude. That is not so. The subject of this pantomime is Egyptian, and the music was written for it . . . It is remarkable music, the best Debussy has done since his *Pelléas*.' But on 16 October Maud Allan was forced to begin her New York season without *Khamma* and Fig. 12 (a photograph taken at one of her performances in November 1916) shows her once again in her costume for the *Vision of Salome*. As far as I know, *Khamma* has never been performed in America in its original ballet form.

In December 1919 Emma Debussy tried to trace the 'nomadic Miss Allan' through Durand, when P.-B. Gheusi was planning a performance of *Khamma* at the Théâtre Lyrique du Vaudeville (see Fig. 4). But by then Miss Allan was again in America, having travelled abroad after losing her extraordinary criminal libel case against the MP Noel Pemberton-Billing in 1918 (see Kettle), together with her European reputation. She ended up accused of sadism by association and heredity, and suspected of pro-German sympathies, again as a result of a performance of *Salome*, but this time in Oscar Wilde's play.

On 11 October 1921 Maud sent her friend Mrs George Millard to Paris to collect from Durand the score and scenario that she had paid for, as she hoped to interest Henri Malherbe in her ballet for the Opéra-Comique. But this proposal met with no success. In 1923 Percy Pitt apparently enquired about a stage performance for the following London season; now that someone else

was prepared to foot the bill she changed her tune about the difficulties of mounting the ballet, writing to Pitt on 2 April:²³

I have all the orchestral parts for ninety-two musicians . . . I should be very glad to give the first performance of *Khamma*, which is my own property, under your direction and feel sure it would be an added attraction for your next London season. I also have the stage set model done by Dulac and the costume designs also by Dulac.

But again nothing came of this, perhaps because she announced in the same letter that she was leaving the following Friday for a series of concerts in Gibraltar, Malta, Cairo and Alexandria!

In the end *Khamma* was first performed in a concert version in Paris conducted by Gabriel Pierné on 15 November 1924. Percy Pitt must have alerted Maud Allan about this beforehand, perhaps in case she was interested in hearing her commission. But her reply on 19 October (*GB-Lbm* Fr. Egerton 3304, no. 15) suggests the reverse. Referring once again to her original contract, she wrote: 'Durand . . . has the concert rights *only* for a few countries but should not have it performed ere I give the first stage performance.'²⁴ This having dragged on so long I suppose Durand thinks he will go ahead. However I will write him about it.'

Thereafter Maud Allan seems to have lost interest in her exotic brain-child and was not present when it received its ballet première at the Opéra-Comique on 26 March 1947 (see Fig. 13) with choreography by Jean-Jacques Etcheverry and with Geneviève Kergrist as *Khamma*. Miss Allan had by then retired to her suitably extravagant Frank Lloyd Wright house in Pasadena, California, and she died (sadly alone) in a rest home in Lincoln Park Avenue, Los Angeles, in 1956. As she left no will, the whereabouts of Debussy's manuscript score (presumably the missing manuscript of the piano reduction) remain unknown.

Charles Koechlin, however, did see *Khamma* as a ballet in 1947 (indeed, he was the only representative of the original team of creators to do so). He attended the performance on 24 April and liked the work so much that it inspired him to go ahead with a ballet of his own.²⁵ He went to several more of the twenty-two performances given, and on 24 May 1948 tried to persuade his friend François Berthet to go and hear his orchestration, 'which sounded really good'.²⁶

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But why did Debussy complete his music for *Khamma* if he was so disparaging about the ballet? The scenario of *Khamma*, if less 'sumptuous' than that for *Le martyre*, has more substance and variety than the inconsequential *Jeux*, and is more theatrically viable than *Masques et bergamasques*, which Debussy constructed for Diaghilev in 1909 (see Chapter 6). There may even have been an element of jealousy in Debussy's attitude to the *Khamma* scenario: he had always wanted to be his own librettist, but as Marcel Dietschy points out



Fig. 12. Maud Allan as Salome in *The vision of Salome* in New York, November 1916, probably at B.F. Keith's Palace Theater



Fig. 13. Design by Luc-Albert Moreau for the ballet premiere of *Khamma* at the Opéra-Comique, Paris, 26 March 1947

(1962, p. 209), he had 'neither the assured style nor the theatrical experience to write himself a libretto or a scenario which would inspire the appropriate musical clothing'. Thus there is no score for *Masques et bergamasques*, and *Maison Usher* remains an incomplete edifice, apart from the libretto to which Debussy devoted so much time.

Debussy's condemnation of *Khamma* arose, I feel, for three reasons. First, because he felt compelled to write it, 'for reasons of domestic economy', as he put it to Robert Godet (GOD, p. 126). Second, because he hated Maud Allan's impudence, unreasonable demands and the resulting embarrassment with his publisher. Third, because he disliked the plot she had concocted with Courtney. 'Have you ever thought of the effect that a ballet scenario can have on the intelligence of a female dancer?', he quizzed Durand in January 1912 while finishing the ballet. 'When considering that of *Khamma* you sense a curious vegetation invading and swamping your brain, and you make excuses for dancers in general.' Eight months later he complained in wickedly racist terms that the scenario was 'so shallow and dull that a negro could do better'!

But this does not mean that once Debussy got inside his subject he did not give of his musical best: he was too much of a professional to do otherwise. In the same letter he told Durand that 'aided by I know not what providence, I nonetheless found the necessary inspiration to write my music'. His enthusiasm for his score shone through as he summoned his publisher to hear the chilling trumpet-calls in 1912, and the idea of underlying menace expressed through sinister distant muted trumpets is one that *Khamma* shares with *Usher* – a work he took perhaps too seriously.

Then there is Debussy's adamant refusal to modify *Khamma*. 'Such music as I have composed will remain exactly as it is', he told Maud emphatically on 16 July 1912. Answering her demand for a reduced orchestration in July 1916, Debussy admitted to her that she could never know how much he was 'heart-broken' to be unable to find a solution to her problems. But 'poor *Khamma*', he added, 'has waited so long that she can afford to grow a little older', though neither of them envisaged just how much older that would be! Koechlin's account of his orchestral collaboration reveals the care Debussy took to preserve the orchestral transparency of the subterranean prelude, a factor which allies it to the diaphanous and subtle orchestration of *Jeux*, which Debussy described to Caplet (CAP, p. 60) as being 'without feet'. Koechlin also considered *Khamma* to be superior to *Jeux* 'because it was less sectionalised, and at times more vigorous, without losing its inimitable Debussyst charm' (p. 36). The legend that Debussy told Koechlin 'write *Khamma* yourself and I will sign it' (LO, 2, p. 156) is, in fact, approximately true. Koechlin recounts in his autobiography²⁷ that Debussy asked him one day to his surprise to 'write a ballet for him that he would sign'; but Koechlin considered that orchestrating *Khamma* had been daring enough, and declined to take up the offer.

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Both *Khamma* and *Jeux* work on two levels. Superficially they provide music appropriate to the events in their detailed scenarios, and on a higher level they are unified in themselves, though by very different means. Instead of the continual motivic renewal in *Jeux*, which uses at least twenty-one different motifs against a more or less constant rhythmic pulse, *Khamma* has just four main themes (Ex. 37 A-D). A and B represent the idea of distant revolt and, in a striking transformation from the whole-tone scale to the transposed dorian mode, A₂ represents the deliverance from this.²⁸ C, on trombones, represents the high priest of Amun-Ra. D is Khamma herself. Her three dances form a sort of intermezzo in the middle of the work, and each has its own sinuous theme which is subtly linked with either C or D from Ex. 37. Ex. 38, coming as an identifiable motif before Ex. 37 D, is the hardest idea to account for as it has allegiances with A, B and C and foreshadows the end of D. It probably derives from Ex. 37 C as it is first associated with the high priest (a case where the scenario can help with the formal analysis).

Khamma differs principally from *Jeux* in that its themes develop symphonically, especially C and D. These two combine and are used in varying

Ex. 37. *Khamma*, principal themes

theme A

A, R, p. 1, bars 3-6

pf, dbn

p marqué

A₁, R, p. 6, bars 13-15

ob, bn

p expressif

A₂, R, p. 31, bars 4-5

3 trbn, vcs, dbs

f marqué et très rythmé

theme B, R, p. 3, bars 5-7

3 tpt

[pp] plus rapproché 3

theme C, the high priest's theme

C, R, p. 4, bars 4-6

trbn I, III (muted)

pp

C₁, R, p. 9, bars 9-10

bn, vc, db

p marqué

C₂, R, p. 18, bar 6

eng hn

p

C₃, R, p. 25, bars 6-11

vcs, dbs (pizz.), 2 hn (sons bouchés)

pp mystérieux

C₄, R, p. 30, bars 1-4

eng hn

pp plaintif

theme D, Khamma's theme

D, R, p. 8, bars 4-8

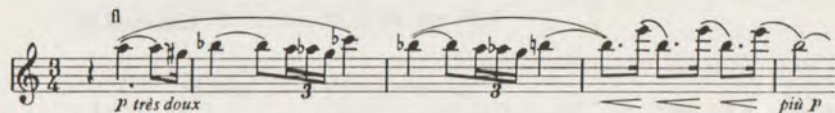
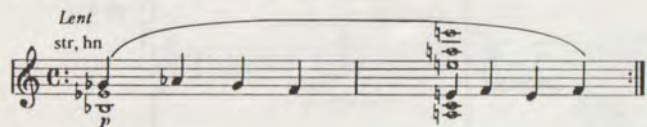
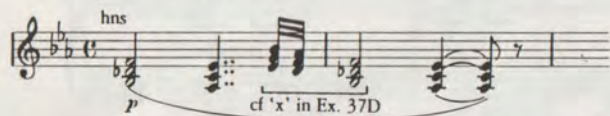
hp

p léger

D₁, R, p. 9, bars 15-17, Khamma's entrance

fl

p

D₂, R, p. 13, bars 12-16D₃, R, p. 32, bars 7-10D₄, R, p. 32, bars 16-18Ex. 38. *Khamma*, R, p. 7, bars 13-14

forms of skilful augmentation and diminution at different points in the score, but chiefly as the ballet reaches its main climax and *Khamma* destroys herself in the ecstatic final dance that brings the sign of deliverance from Amun-Ra (R, pp. 25-9). The themes also have purely musical functions: B is a linking and unifying theme, leading flexibly into scenes 1 and 2, into Ex. 38, and into *Khamma*'s first and second dances and the final victory celebrations, whereas C is the theme with which the three scenes and the final section begin (C, C₁, C₄ and C₃), having an assertive authority which links it with the high priest and which contrasts it with the fluid, feminine grace of the *Khamma* theme (D).

The skill with which the themes are transformed to meet the exigencies of the drama and with which they interlock into the basic ongoing structure in *Khamma* is quite breathtaking (see Exx. 37 and 38). As Hirsbrunner says (p. 120), 'individual elements are interchangeable and rearrangeable', though the Germanic criticism that 'Debussy is not concerned to achieve a stringent logicity of musical association' is not appropriate to his art-concealing art.

Each work represented to Debussy a new challenge to be met with a new, non-traditional formal solution: his themes relate to the drama and to each other with their own particular logic and are far from being musical 'spare parts'. The analytical difficulty lies in the skill with which Debussy covered his tracks,²⁹ and any attempt to uncover his secrets from a formally conventional standpoint is only likely to breed frustration.

The use of C₄ to evoke the dawn at the start of scene 3, and the augmentation of the *Khamma* theme into D₃ and D₄ at the very end of the ballet are just two examples of the technical skill which makes the listener instinctively realise that Debussy's works are unified, but leads him to imagine this as being achieved in some strange way that defies explanation. Unprejudiced study and listening, however, prove the truth to be otherwise, and it would be churlish to deny that Debussy's use of the various intervals up to the perfect fourth in *Khamma* was at least as musically and dramatically productive as either Stravinsky's three-note melodic cells in *Les noces* or any Schoenberg note-row. Theme A is characterised by the major second or whole tone; C uses minor and major thirds; and D the chromatic minor second. B has wider leaps and a dotted rhythm which links it with D. D itself uses the minor and major third both in outline (bar 88) and at 'x'; it also uses the major second, especially in its transformations D₁ to D₄, and thus Debussy combines features of all the other main themes into one, appropriately the *Khamma* theme itself. One further subtlety is that Ex. 37 D appears before *Khamma* does, at the moment when the high priest suddenly realises that there is hope of divine deliverance from the marauding mob outside the city. By introducing the *Khamma* theme at this point, Debussy makes clear, as soon as she enters with the same rising scale a few bars later (Ex. 37 D₁), that *Khamma* was the subject of the high priest's vision. Thus Debussy cleverly plants the idea of *Khamma* as the instrument of deliverance in our minds by both theatrical and musical means.

The other remarkable aspect of *Khamma* is its Stravinskian influence, and Koechlin (p. 51) comments on its 'harsher chords, verging on bitonality like those of "Surgi de la croupe et du bond"'.³⁰ He must surely have had in mind the distant trumpet fanfares of Ex. 37 B which briefly use the same combination of keys (C and F sharp major) that form the basis of part 2 of *Petrushka* (OS, pp. 58ff). They also occur in *The firebird* and Debussy heard both these scores at their Ballets Russes premières³¹ before he began the music of *Khamma*. The only difference is that Debussy's bitonality is less clearly defined than Stravinsky's; its wider spacing and the absence of parallel seconds makes the end result far less strident. But it is hard to believe that Debussy did not have Ex. 39a from *Petrushka* in mind when he wrote Ex. 39b in scene 1 of *Khamma*: the triplet and 'scotch snap' rhythms; held treble C and B flat; key combination (C and F sharp/G flat major); and implied use of the same descending whole-tone scale in the lowest part are all common factors.

Ex. 39

(a) Stravinsky, *Petrushka*, OS, p. 58, figs. 95-6

(b) *Khamma*, R, p. 7, bars 10-11

Ex. 37 A₂ would not sound out of place in the Shrovetide Fair scene in *Petrushka*, and the fanfares in *Khamma* regularly juxtapose major and minor triads (Ex. 37 B), a device favoured by Stravinsky in his early Russian ballets.³²

Significantly, in the same week as Debussy told Durand he was working on the orchestration of *Khamma* (DUR, p. 109), he also wrote to Stravinsky. In this letter of 13 April 1912 (*Souris*, p. 46) he says:

Thanks to you I have passed a most enjoyable Easter holiday in the company of *Petrushka*, the terrible Moor and the delightful *Ballerina* . . . I don't know many things of greater worth than what you call 'le Tour de Passe-Passe': there is a kind of sonorous magic within it, a mysterious transformation of mechanical souls which become human by a sorcery which is, until now, uniquely your invention. Finally, there is an orchestral infallibility that I have encountered only in *Parsifal*.

This refers to the passage in the first tableau (OS, pp. 35-8) where the showman suddenly reveals the three marionettes and, by a conjuring trick with his

flute ('le Tour de Passe-Passe', p. 35), brings them to life. Debussy's admiration of these novel orchestral effects was reflected in the similarly important roles he gave to the piano, celesta and muted trumpets in the opening section of *Khamma* which he orchestrated. Ex. 40a shows a celesta figure added only during orchestration which is missing in the 1912 piano reduction (R, p. 6, bars 13-14). It is also directly comparable with Stravinsky's celesta figure on pp. 37-8 of the miniature score of *Petrushka* (Ex. 40b).

Ex. 40

(a) *Khamma*, R, p. 6, bars 13-14

(b) Stravinsky, *Petrushka*, OS, p. 37, bar 2

On 18 December 1911, Debussy had written excitedly to Robert Godet (GOD, p. 129) about Stravinsky's 'instinctive genius for colour and rhythm . . . His music is worked out in a full orchestral style, without an intermediate stage, and from a sketch that is charged with the dictates of his emotion. There is neither precaution nor pretension: it is childlike and barbarous.' For the moment Debussy in his established position felt equipped to cope with the rising star of Stravinsky's genius. But the danger can perhaps be seen in his indulgence in a little of the 'sincerest form of flattery' in *Khamma*, and in 1913 *The rite of spring* was to make him feel a lot less secure as he saw his own theatrical efforts and reputation eclipsed by a *succès de scandale*.

Khamma, nonetheless, provides a compendium of Debussy's harmonic procedures and is a better example of 'the latest discoveries in the chemistry of harmony' than *Reflets dans l'eau*, to which the epithet originally applied. Between the uneasy prelude, which is worlds away from *Pelléas* in scoring and content, to the final celebrations with their Stravinskian seven-beat phrases (Ex. 37 A₂) and gamelan-like orchestral sonorities, the keys of B flat minor and C major form the main tonal centres. But, almost as if the two were meant to be seen as a dissonance which finally resolves, *Khamma* ends in A minor, or rather on an open A, just as *Jeux* and *La chute de la Maison Usher* do. The satisfactory nature of this ending is a tribute to Debussy's skilful tonal planning, for A as a tonal centre is heard only twice before: once in the minor

at the start of scene 1 (when it introduces Ex. 37 C), and once in the major (in passing) during Khamma's final ecstatic dance (R, pp. 27-8). Otherwise A minor is achieved only in the last thirteen bars, and then via E flat minor (see Ex. 37 D₃) rather than E minor, which is never used as its dominant.

Khamma also offers supporting evidence to Roy Howat's theories about Debussy's use of the 'golden section' and proportional structuring (see Howat, 1979 and 1983). Whilst he was prepared to lengthen *Jeux* for Diaghilev in 1912, Debussy was not prepared to lengthen *Khamma* for Maud Allan. In fact he cut a short passage from the end of the scenario, as we have seen, which suggests that he knew in advance that it would make the final scene too long and upset his proportions. The main climax of the revised version of *Jeux* (OS, p. 113) comes precisely at the golden section point between the start of the final section (bar 565) and the end. But in *Khamma*, proportionally perfect when Debussy allowed the piano reduction to be printed in 1912, the climax with the death of Khamma (bar 407) was already precisely placed at the golden section point between the start of the final section (bar 344) and the end. Whilst this is no proof that Debussy deliberately used this proportional device, it is yet another in a mounting collection of intriguing coincidences.

Khamma is a superbly structured and imaginative ballet and its greatest misfortunes are its neglect and the absence of a published orchestral score. It is as different from *Jeux* as chalk from cheese, and certainly does not lack 'musical meaning, purpose and inner continuity', as David Cox suggests (p. 61). If he can call others to task (p. 50) for considering *Jeux* 'elusive', then he falls into his own trap with *Khamma*, which need be 'fragmentary and elusive' no longer, and will, I hope, soon achieve the universal recognition it so richly deserves.

6 Nijinsky and Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (1909-13): *Masques et bergamasques*, *L'après-midi d'un faune* and *Jeux*

As soon as I receive *Jeux* in a suitable proof state, I will send you a copy . . . for I should like your opinion on this 'badinage' . . . à trois! You were astonished at *Jeux* as a choice of title and would have preferred 'Le parc'! Please allow me to persuade you that *Jeux* is better: on first acquaintance it is neater, and it also conveniently expresses the 'horrors' which take place between these three characters.

(Debussy to Stravinsky, 5 November 1912; LL, p. 233)

Debussy's relations with Diaghilev, 'the Maecenas of the arts', on the one hand provided him with a powerful theatrical stimulus; on the other they were fraught with mistrust and conducted at an artistic distance. Debussy resisted interference in his creations and refused to play Diaghilev and Nijinsky excerpts from *Jeux* during composition, just as he wrote his own scenario for *Masques et bergamasques* when Louis Laloy was Diaghilev's preferred librettist. Whilst the Ballets Russes appealed to Debussy and his contemporaries for their fusion of the arts of music, dancing, drama and painting, Debussy in particular was unsuited to their new, twentieth-century team-work approach. As Theo Hirsbrunner points out (p. 119), his individualistic attitude remained firmly implanted in the later nineteenth century and left the composer in complete artistic control, though it is precisely that uncompromising attitude which gives his works their enduring strength: *Khamma* and *Jeux* have survived as masterpieces in their own right, though in the concert hall rather than the theatre.

Stravinsky on the other hand, like Cocteau, was prepared to fulfil Diaghilev's command to 'astonish' him, though his *Rite of spring* fell foul of Nijinsky's Dalcrozian choreography (as encouraged by Diaghilev) and can never be reproduced exactly as it stunned its audience in May 1913. If one looks back on the Ballets Russes as a vital artistic force created as a reaction against Wagnerism and the Wagnerian approach to art, an important point is missed, for there were many similarities 'between the aims of the Symbolist movements, which had evolved under the influence of Wagner, and those

- 43 See Act 3 scene 1: 'Je vois une rose dans les ténèbres' (VS, pp. 123-4).
- 44 Scorpio and Sagittarius also played a substantial part in the initiation rites for novices in certain occult sects, as Pierre Mariel describes (p. 397): 'The neophyte who follows the path of initiation finds first Scorpio agitated by the passions of Mars, which will then be consumed by the eagle of Jupiter, guardian of Sagittarius, to allow him to arrive at Capricorn, the "gateway to the Gods".' Traditionally, the scorpion committed suicide when surrounded by a circle of fire and this symbolised the death of the novice as he or she left the material world to be spiritually reborn. The Prieuré de Sion, to which Debussy is supposed to have belonged, also had an extra sign between Scorpio and Sagittarius, called Ophiuchus (The Serpent Holder), but I have been unable to ascertain the significance of this. My thanks go to Roy Howat for pointing this out to me; and see Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln, pp. 72 and 425 n. 31 for further details. One further coincidence is that Poe's own life was ruled by the dark planets Jupiter and Mars (associated with Scorpio and Sagittarius), according to John Matthews, to whom I am grateful for this information.

Chapter 5 *Khamma* (1911-13)

- 1 Perhaps with *Khamma* in mind, he wrote on 27 July 1916: 'I am too old to begin the battle of yesteryear with *Pelléas* all over again. The masterpiece written in poverty is an old, old story.' (Letter in *US-NYpm*, Mary Flagler Cary collection, addressee unknown.)
- 2 He left his 25 million francs to the Pasteur Institute to show his disapproval of his niece's conduct (see Dietschy, 1975, p. 6).
- 3 The undated contract (*F-Pn* Rés. Vm. Dos. 13 (20)) was probably drawn up late in September 1910 as a letter from Maud Allan to Debussy of 30 September, questioning some of its clauses, is preserved as Rés. Vm. Dos. 13 (21).
- 4 Debussy cannot have seen her dance in 1908 as he was no longer in London by the time her season opened. In February and May 1909, when Debussy was again in London, Maud was stunning St Petersburg and Moscow.
- 5 She dropped the outer names after her elder brother, ^{Thea} Tom Durrant, was hanged for the murder and rape after death of two young girls in San Francisco, where she grew up. Her expensive education (which far from perfected her written English) was rumoured to have been financed by an ex-Mayor of San Francisco, Adolph Sutro, who may have been her true father. She kept her private life secret, especially after her case against Noel Pemberton-Billing in 1918 (see p. 137), though some further biographical details can be found in Allan, Kettle, McDearmon and Moore.
- 6 The *New York sun* (21 Jan 1910) reported that during her first American performance at the Carnegie Hall on the previous night 'three times in the musical interludes a squad of four ushers rushed frantically down the aisle bearing an enormous pot of orchids . . . After the performance it was announced that the orchids were a little tribute of appreciation to Miss Allan from Miss Hoffman.' (cited in McDearmon, p. 91) Rumours that Maud was a lesbian were, however, unfounded.
- 7 Letter of 1 June 1978.
- 8 It was seeing Botticelli's *Primavera* in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence in 1900 that inspired her whole career of 'alternative' dancing (Allan, p. 63).

- 9 Maud Allan would have had to use the revised and expanded third French edition (Paris, E. Guilmo, 1905), as Mrs C.H.W. Johns' English translation of the fourth edition did not appear till 1915 (London, H. Grevel); the story she used occurs on pp. 159-67 of the 1905 edition and pp. 172-9 of the 1915 edition.
- 10 I am grateful to Patrick Buckland, Reader in Modern History at Liverpool University, for help with this etymology.
- 11 *F-Pn* Rés. Vm. Dos. 13 (23), p. 2.
- 12 More extensive quotations from the numerous contracts and letters relating to *Khamma* can be found in Chimènes (1978, pp. 11-29, and 1980).
- 13 Vallas, 1973, p. 217. *Le palais du silence* was intended for the Alhambra music hall (see Chapter 8) and Debussy did not consider this to be any sort of drawback.
- 14 This was hardly the right description as no full score existed, see Chapter 4, n. 34.
- 15 Koechlin began work from the piano reduction (R), p. 7, bar 9 onwards. Debussy orchestrated 78 of the 458 bars, pp. 1-10 of the 80-page orchestral MS score (see Appendix). For further details of this collaboration, in which Debussy carefully supervised and even adjusted Koechlin's orchestration (carried out directly from R), see Orledge, 1975, pp. 30-5.
- 16 The proposal for Koechlin as collaborator was made by Durand who knew of his skill from his orchestration of 'Saint-Saëns' scenic trifle entitled *Lola*' in 1901 (Durand, 1925, p. 28). As Fauré had suggested Koechlin for this first commission, it is indirectly to him that we owe the bulk of the orchestration of *Khamma*.
- 17 All otherwise unacknowledged letters by Debussy, Ernest Bloch and Maud Allan quoted in this chapter come from the Paris archives of Durand et Cie and are quoted by kind permission. The forty minutes dropped to thirty-five on 6 August 1912 (see *F-Pn* Rés. Vm. Dos. 13 (24)).
- 18 *F-Pn* Rés. Vm. Dos. 13 (23).
- 19 Now with the Maud Allan Company and the Maud Allan Orchestra, conducted by Ernest Bloch. She opened on 16 October at the 44th Street Theater, moving to B.F. Keith's Palace Theater on 27 November; her first performance here was advertised as the 'most important début in the history of vaudeville' (McDearmon, p. 98). Coincidentally, Debussy was also planning an American tour about this time.
- 20 *Nair, the slave: a love tragedy of the orient*, with music by Enrico Belpassi and a scenario by Pietro Boldini, which she performed in New York with a cast of six principals. Predictably, it told the story of a dancing slave who kills her master when she fears for her lover's life (see McDearmon, p. 98). The cynical might have called it a rewrite of the Ballet Russes' successful *Schéhérazade* (1910) with Maud Allan in Nijinsky's famous role of the golden slave.
- 21 5-5-3-4-3, making a total of 39 players. Bloch even told Durand on 21 July that 'Maud Allan declared to me that Debussy was engaged in making a reduction for small orchestra himself.'
- 22 This letter did not arrive till 1923! It belongs to Mme Suzanne Bloch and was kindly communicated to me by Margaret G. Cobb.
- 23 *GB-Lbm* Fr. Egerton 3304, no. 14.
- 24 This was curiously similar to Debussy refusing Ysaÿe permission for *Pelléas* to be given in concert form in 1896 (see Chapter 3).

- 25 *Voyages; film dansé* which was found to be too difficult for performance at the Opéra-Comique and was eventually replaced by *L'âme heureuse*, first performed at the Opéra-Comique on 20 February 1948.
- 26 Letter kindly supplied by Madeleine Li-Koechlin.
- 27 *Étude sur Charles Koechlin par lui-même* (1939, revised 1947), published in *ReM*, nos. 340-1 (1981), p. 65.
- 28 There is a notable similarity between Ex. 37 A and the bass theme at the start of the magic chamber prelude in *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* (Act 2 no. 1, VS, pp. 30-1).
- 29 Only one page of sketches for *Khamma* has survived (*F-Pn* MS 17728), for instance, though appropriately they show the genesis of the *Khamma* theme (D) itself.
- 30 The reference is to the third of Ravel's *Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé* (1913), the only one not also set by Debussy in the same year.
- 31 *The firebird* at the Paris Opéra on 25 June 1910 (after which, backstage, he first met Stravinsky), and *Petrushka* at the Théâtre du Châtelet on 13 June 1911.
- 32 It is to these introductory trumpet-calls that Heinz-Klaus Metzger refers (p. 124) when he praises *Khamma* as a precursor of Honegger's *Pacific 231*.

Chapter 6 Nijinsky and Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (1909-13): *Masques et bergamasques*, *L'après-midi d'un faune* and *Jeux*

- 1 For the fullest available picture of Diaghilev's life and career see Richard Buckle's excellent *Diaghilev* (1979).
- 2 See Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi: *Musicians gallery* (London, Faber, 1933), p. 136.
- 3 See Nectoux, 1979, pp. 20-1. As he says, Debussy's incidental music to accompany readings of Pierre Louÿs' *Chansons de Bilitis* in 1901 belongs to the same *tableau vivant* tradition, a mixture of dance, mime, poetry reading, song and choral items extremely popular in Parisian salons at the turn of the century.
- 4 The masque being a predominantly English courtly entertainment of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the bergamasque (*bergamasca*) a contemporary Italian dance using variations with a simple recurring harmonic scheme.
- 5 As well as calling him a 'contorted Chinaman', according to Mme de Tinan (interview on 1 April 1979). Laloy was, however, as French as Debussy.
- 6 A letter to André Caplet (CAP, p. 37) on 24 July contains 'a two-day interruption during which I wrote the book for a ballet for Claude Debussy and for the next Russian season'.
- 7 Nothing came of this project, needless to say.
- 8 Perhaps the 'ballet persan' that Toulet refers to later in a card to Debussy on 20 February 1912, or even a revival of plans for *As you like it* (see Chapter 12).
- 9 Nijinsky not Fokine. As Buckle points out (1980, p. 124), this shows that Diaghilev intended Nijinsky to be a choreographer 'as early as the first Saison Russe'. He may thus have intended to entrust all Debussy's ballets to Nijinsky's tender care.
- 10 The third tableau of Laloy's scenario for *Fêtes galantes* of 1913 hinges on a similar unmasking (see Chapter 9).
- 11 Cain (p. 54, no. 193) lists a water-colour sketch by an unidentified artist,

- from Jean-Aubry's collection, marked '1909. Masques. Debussy', which suggests that some progress was made in the direction of a performance.
- 12 See his books on *Diaghilev* (pp. 185-6, 219, 223-9) and *Nijinsky* (pp. 279-89) for a fuller account of the genesis, performance and criticisms of this ballet.
- 13 The first performance was given on 20 February 1910, conducted by Gabriel Pierné, at the Concerts Colonne. *Ibéria* lasts about eighteen minutes altogether, and with Diaghilev's desire for novelty and its more suitable length, would seem to me to be a more likely proposition.
- 14 'Debussy au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées', *Programme et livre d'or des souscripteurs* for the Debussy Festival there on 17 June 1932.
- 15 See letter no. 3 by Emma Debussy in *F-Pn*, undated but probably 1916 or 1917. Debussy is described as suffering from 'flu, fever and shingles'!
- 16 *F-Pn* Rés. Vm. Dos. 13 (7). Diaghilev probably signed with Durand's London representative as Debussy's signature is missing from the document.
- 17 If the incident as Blanche describes it did take place it must have been between 12 and 17 June, for the company only crossed the channel on the 11th and the contract was signed on the 18th.
- 18 The legendary aeroplane in *Jeux* has taken a long time to ground. The first Diaghilev ballet to include an aeroplane (off stage) was *Romeo and Juliet* in 1926 (Buckle, 1980, p. 307). By coincidence Mary Garden claimed (1952, p. 87) that Debussy promised to write her a *Romeo and Juliet* opera after *Pelléas*, though there are no other signs of this.
- 19 Russian pronunciation of 'Nana' (Nyanya).
- 20 An interesting sidelight on this is that Diaghilev had visited Maeterlinck at the Abbey of St Wandrille on 4 October, perhaps to discuss a ballet version of his popular *L'oiseau bleu*, first performed in 1909 (see Buckle, 1979, p. 237). Was Debussy in mind for this project too? (Any suggestions as to the identity of the 'diminutive lady as biting as a mosquito' would be most welcome.)
- 21 With only minor differences in that bars 3-4 are an exact repeat of bars 1-2 in R (cf R, p. 42, bars 14-17, with Ex. 44, bars 1-4).
- 22 Letter cited by kind permission of *US-AUS*.
- 23 These extra classes proved unpopular and she was nicknamed 'Rithmitchka' by the company in jest (Buckle, 1979, p. 247).
- 24 viii no. 6, p. 72, signed 'Swift'; cited in Ornella Volta (ed.): *Erik Satie: écrits* (Paris, Éditions Champ Libre, 1977), pp. 134-5.
- 25 See Whittall, pp. 269-71 for a study of tonality in *Jeux*, and Eimert for a detailed analysis which shows the impossibility of applying 'traditional formal schemes' to the ballet, as Debussy had pointed out.
- 26 Letter to Pierné of 4 February 1914 (Cain, p. 67, no. 286).
- 27 See Holloway, pp. 167-79.
- 28 For instance, he makes oboes 1 and 2 and the cor anglais play continuously between figs. 46 and 47, and adds them to the melody line more extensively between figs. 68 and 69.
- 29 LO, 2, p. 182; and see pp. 178-88, and Souris for a fuller discussion of the relations between Debussy and Stravinsky.
- 30 BAR, pp. 109-10. The news of Nijinsky's marriage on 10 September to Romola de Pulszky and its disastrous effect on his relationship with Diaghilev were by then common knowledge.