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'LE PAS D'ACIER' (1927):

**A STUDY IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY AND RECONSTRUCTION
OF GEORGE JAKULOV'S SET DESIGN
FOR DIAGHILEV'S 'SOVIET' BALLET.**

VOL. 1

**by
Lesley-Anne Sayers.**

A thesis submitted to the University of Bristol, through Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, School of Fine Art. April 1999.

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to explore and elucidate the nature of the Diaghilev Ballets Russes' production of Le Pas d'Acier, (1927). Its focus is the contribution of the Russian artist and scenic designer, George Jakulov. The thesis is accompanied by a model through which the study has undertaken a practical exploration of Jakulov's designs for Le Pas d'Acier, and the problems and possibilities of their reconstruction. Focussing on Jakulov's set design, this study explores the problems involved in the historiography of Le Pas d'Acier, producing a 'natural history' of the research process. The study considers Jakulov's designs, concept and approach through locating and analysing primary source material. Presenting some previously unpublished materials, it explores the chronology of the design process and the nature of Jakulov's designs and concept. It identifies two distinct phases in the ballet's development; the production of the first scenario in 1925, (produced by Jakulov and Serge Prokofiev along with the music and designs), and the ballet's realisation in 1927. By comparing source materials relating to these two phases, the study identifies and explores the production's adaptations to the 1925 concept and designs. It then seeks to draw conclusions as to the significance of developments and departures. Locating, analysing and then using a variety of source materials, including contextual study of Jakulov's oeuvre and review descriptions, the study explores theoretically, and practically via the model, problems and possibilities in reconstructing the set design.

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Last but not least I would like to thank my husband, Peter Sayers, without whose help and support I could not have completed this project.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I acknowledge assistance from the following with regard to the production of this thesis and the accompanying model:

- 1) Margaret Jones, M.A (Oxon) for her translation of source materials in Russian;
- 2) Peter Sayers BA. (Hons) for technical help in building parts of the model and for assistance in photographing the model.

I declare that in all other respects this thesis and the accompanying model are entirely my own work. The views expressed in this thesis are also those of the author and are not necessarily those of the University of Bristol or of Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Sayers', followed by a period. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'P' and a prominent 'S'.

VOLUME 1

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INTRODUCTION

1. Background Introduction to 'Le Pas d'Acier' (1927)¹.

In 1924-25 impresario Serge Diaghilev, director of Les Ballets Russes, expressed the desire to put before his public a ballet that would represent the theatrical and social innovations of post-revolutionary Russia. To this end, he commissioned a score from Serge Prokofiev and designs from George Jakulov. They were also jointly responsible for the ballet's scenario which was written in 1925 alongside the development of the music and designs². However, Diaghilev did not schedule the ballet for production until 1927, when the choreography and direction was entrusted to one of the company's resident choreographers, Leonide Massine.

The ballet became known as Le Pas d'Acier which translates as 'The Step of Steel'. The title was not decided upon until shortly before the premiere and according to Prokofiev³ the title was Diaghilev's idea. Between 1925 and 1927 the ballet was referred to by Prokofiev's neologistic 'Ursignol', but this was apparently dropped as sounding too much like a parody of Stravinsky's Rosignol. In the French programme the ballet is subtitled '1920', another earlier idea for the title that had been dropped. Elizabeth Souritz suggests⁴ that the title 'Ursignol' could have arisen from the influence of the imagist poet Kusikov who was a friend of Jakulov's. Kusikov wrote a poem 'Koyavangelieran', the title of which is made up from the words 'Koran' and 'Evangile'. Souritz argues that 'Ursignol,' is constructed in the same way, with an abbreviation for the USSR in French (URSS) and the syllable 'gnol' from the end of 'Rossignol' which begins with the syllable

¹ This brief narrative introduction is intended purely to introduce the reader to the ballet and the general background of the study. It is drawn from a variety of primary and secondary source materials that are identified and discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

² The study discovered the scenario and musical outline uncatalogued, amongst correspondence for 1925, at the Prokofiev Archive in London. Its dating of the materials is fully discussed in Chapter 1.

³ Prokofiev, (1960), p.66,

⁴ In an unpublished paper in Russian sent to the author in 1996.

‘ros’, like the word ‘Russia.’ Hence the play on words: ‘urs’ has replaced ‘ros’ – ‘Soviet Russia’ has replaced ‘Russia’.

Le Pas d’Acier premiered in Paris at the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt on June 7th 1927, and in London at the Princes Theatre⁵ on July 4th 1927. It was set in 1920 and consisted of two acts. The first presented a series of scenes depicting Russian life peopled with ‘types’ including a sailor, peasants, soldiers, and drunkards. The second, set in a factory, depicted scenes of industrialisation and organised labour. The principal parts were danced by Leonide Massine as the Sailor, Alexandra Danilova as the Worker Girl, and Serge Lifar and Liubov Tchernicheva whose roles were untitled but were described by several critics as that of ‘apache dancers’⁶. Other principal parts were taken by Vera Petrova, Thadee Slavinsky and Leon Woizikovsky. It was however, largely an ensemble ballet, realised through the mass use of the corps de ballet, consisting of thirty-eight dancers, giving a total cast of forty-five all of whom were on stage together at certain points in the ballet.

In his desire for a ballet that would reflect life and art in Soviet Russia, Diaghilev turned first to the Russian composer Serge Prokofiev⁷, telling him that it would not be necessary for him to modify his radical style⁸. It was the Spring of 1925 and Diaghilev and Prokofiev were both in Paris. One of the major international artistic attractions of the season was the ‘Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs’, where the work of the new Soviet artists and architects was causing particular excitement among the European avant-garde. Jakulov was a prize winner at this exhibition⁹ and by the early summer Diaghilev had commissioned him to design his new ballet, asking him also to jointly prepare the scenario with Prokofiev.

⁵ The Princes Theatre became known as the Shaftesbury after the original Shaftesbury Theatre was bombed in World War II.

⁶ The term was used to describe a particular type of wild Parisian dancer in the 1920s.

⁷ Prokofiev was well known to Diaghilev ; he had previously composed the ballet Chout performed by the company in 1921 with choreography by the designer Michael Larionov.

⁸ Prokofiev (1960), p. 65.

⁹ It is probable that Diaghilev would have come across his work already, perhaps having seen the enormously popular Kamerny Theatre production of Girofle Girofla (1922), with designs by Jakulov, which toured abroad in the early 1920s.

Jakulov was an Armenian painter who lived and worked in Moscow. He began designing for the theatre in 1918, working for Alexander Tairov at the Kamerny Theatre. In 1920 he began working with Vsevolod Meyerhold, the influential Soviet theatre director who staged the seminal works of theatrical Constructivism in the 1920s. In Jakulov's writings and work of the 1920s his basic allegiance to Constructivism is clear but the complexities of his highly distinctive style resists easy classification. His approach to theatre, and his relationship to Constructivism are explored in chapter 3 of the thesis.

Prokofiev had not been back to Russia since 1914, but he had left with official permission and returned in 1926 for a lengthy visit after writing the music for Le Pas d'Acier. Jakulov however, had been living and working in the Soviet Union consistently, taking an active part in artistic developments. It appears that the basic idea of the ballet was Jakulov's and that Prokofiev took his thematic concept for the music largely from Jakulov's vision, enthusiasm and descriptions¹⁰. Prokofiev helped Jakulov elaborate and structure his basic ideas of the ballet in Paris during 1925. The surviving material from 1925, discussed in this thesis, indicates a visual emphasis in terms of inspiration and descriptive ambition; it was to be a ballet that would represent the ideals of 'construction'¹¹, and one that would enable Prokofiev to seek new form while returning to a Russian idiom. In an interview on the ballet in 1928, Jakulov claimed that his intention was to show the decay of the old Russia in contrast to the enthusiastic revolutionaries and workers of the new Soviet Russia¹².

Appreciating the crucial role of the director in the new Soviet theatre, Diaghilev asked both Tairov and Meyerhold to collaborate on the production¹³. He also tried to involve a Russian writer, Ilya Ehrenburg, in the writing of the scenario¹⁴. According to Diaghilev's secretary and librettist, Boris Kochno, Diaghilev also

¹⁰ Prokofiev (1960), p.65. Primary source material, discussed in Chapter 1, tends to support this view.

¹¹ This term and ideal is discussed in Chapter 3.

¹² Jakulov (1928), p.5.

¹³ Kochno (1970), p.264.

¹⁴ See Jakulov's letter to Kousikov, Appendix 4, A.

tried to engage the Soviet experimental choreographer Kasian Goleizovsky for the choreography¹⁵. It was only after he had failed in these attempts to secure Soviet collaborators that he finally turned to Leonide Massine for the choreography. Massine had broken with Diaghilev under acrimonious circumstances in 1921 but had rejoined the company in 1925. Diaghilev decided to stage Le Pas d'Acier in early 1927 and Massine was entrusted with the production in Monte Carlo in late March 1927. Prokofiev arrived for the very first rehearsals but Jakulov was absent until late May, meeting with the company when they arrived in Paris, where the set was built¹⁶. The ballet opened in Paris approximately two weeks later.

The study's chronology and dating of source materials, discussed in this thesis, indicates that most of the surviving materials relating to the set design date from 1925. Review descriptions of the 1927 production indicate certain departures from the original materials and it is likely that these arose largely from Massine's entry into the collaborative process. However, documentary evidence located by the study suggests that neither Prokofiev nor Jakulov were entirely happy with the Diaghilev production.¹⁷

There is a certain irony in the notion of a ballet, inspired by the new Soviet republics, being produced by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. The company consisted of some of the leading dancers and choreographers from the St Petersburg and Moscow companies but was entirely realised in, and addressed to the West from its first performances in Paris in 1909. The outbreak of the first World War had severed the company's connections with Russia and the turmoil that encompassed Russia from 1914 through the years of Revolution and Civil War cemented the company's dislocation. Although Diaghilev's politics appear ambiguous¹⁸, the company was certainly a focal point for White Russian émigrés, most of whom

¹⁵ Kochno (1970), p.264.

¹⁶ This dating comes from the study's chronology which has emerged from putting together information from various sources. See Chapter 1 section 5 p.116 para.1

¹⁷ Documentary sources are identified and discussed in Chapter 1.

¹⁸ Diaghilev's attitude towards the Russian Revolution is described generally as one of ambivalence. However, unlike many of his associates, he never disapproved publicly of the Soviet Union and in 1917 he insisted on flying the red flag at a production of Le Oiseau de Feu, a gesture that caused a furore. See Lifar (1940), pp.444-47.

were far from sympathetic to the Soviet Union, and it depended for its patronage on aristocrats and high society. The political context in which the ballet was seen and realised, i.e. the growing fear of Bolshevism that gripped Western Europe, particularly after England's General Strike in 1926¹⁹, demands consideration in understanding the context of this work.

It is also ironic that while the French and English reviews of Le Pas d'Acier often saw the work as a piece of Bolshevik propaganda, in the Soviet Union it was to be condemned as decadent entertainment for the bourgeoisie and as a misrepresentation of the Soviet regime²⁰. To some extent, the ballet is a fascinating example of the ideological mutability of artistic representation and of how integral the arts are to political and social context.

This short-lived ballet remains unexplored by dance historians and has frequently been dismissed as a failure or as a mere flirtation with Soviet ideas²¹. This view is largely in keeping with that of the ballet's contemporary Jean Cocteau who castigated Massine for "*turning something as great as the Russian revolution into a cotillion-like spectacle within the intellectual grasp of ladies who pay six thousand francs for a box.*"²². Many of the contemporary reviews however, collected together and discussed in this study, pose a challenge to later dismissals of the work. This study concentrates on the set design, but hopes to show, through reconstruction and analysis, that the conception, development, and realisation of this ballet are of considerable historical interest.

Very little has been written about Le Pas d'Acier in secondary sources and the generation who participated in the work as creators or spectators, is increasingly no longer available as a resource. Adverse evaluations of Le Pas d'Acier are an

¹⁹ H.T.Parker makes a light hearted reference to this at the start of his review of the London performance of Le Pas d'Acier, in The Boston Evening Transcript, July 23rd 1927 (reproduced in Appendix 7). For a more serious interpretation of reactions to the success of the Bolshevik revolution in Europe see for example, Trevelyan, G.M. (1959) p.558.

²⁰ For an account of the Soviet attack on Le Pas d'Acier see Seroff (1969) p.181ff.

²¹ For example, Brinson and Crisp (1970), p.86, devote one line to Le Pas d'Acier, as a "late, unsuccessful flirtation with Soviet ideas". Spencer and Dyer (1974) are similarly dismissive.

obvious reason for its neglect in terms of historiographical enquiry. However, to some extent the developmental model of Western ballet leads to a list of seminal works that inhibits the selection of other works for discussion that fall outside the evaluative criteria of dominant perspectives. In retrospect there has been little to generate historical interest in Le Pas d'Acier and much to conspire against it. For example, although Massine's work continued to be extremely popular after the demise of Les Ballets Russes, particularly during the 1930s, as the century progressed his work came to be of less interest to dance scholars than the neo-classicism associated with Balanchine. Critical opinion showed relatively little interest in Massine's earlier works until the 1980s²³ and then it was directed predominantly at the 'classicism' of his symphonic works. Interest in Massine's interaction with modernism tends to have focussed on Parade of 1917, designed by Picasso. Unlike so many of the Diaghilev Ballets Russes productions, Le Pas d'Acier has not left behind sumptuously beautiful costumes, or designs by artists who have come to be highly valued in the European art market. It is also clear from the reviews and other contemporary accounts that its political associations with Communism were problematic at the time of its production. The political and ideological sensitivity of its subject matter, both in regard to the Russian Revolution and the industrial, mechanised nature of organised labour, has certainly been a factor in its critical appraisal. The ballet's rejection of the classical technique, its embrace of utilitarian aesthetics and its rejection of ballet's traditional subject matter and approach, have also no doubt played a part in engendering its unpopularity amongst advocates of classical ballet who have largely been responsible for its historiography²⁴. The division between apologists of the classical ballet and those of the modern dance within dance history and criticism, that is marked until quite late on in the twentieth century, has also perhaps served to disable interest in works that cross the traditional boundaries or show shared influences.

²² Letter to Boris Kochno from Jean Cocteau dated June 13, 1926 (misprint for 1927?), reproduced in Kochno, (1971), p.265.

²³ Garcia-Marquez (1996) p.383, describes "decades of neglect of Massine's serious works" and writes of the renewed interest in the late 1980s led predominantly by American critic Anna Kisselgoff, who found a "striking classicism" in his Les Presages of 1933.

²⁴ As discussed in chapter 2, the ballet was very unpopular within the company and company members have tended to be a major source for later historians dealing with the period.

Yet there are many reasons why a study of Le Pas d'Acier could be of interest. For example, it was a highly successful realisation of the 1920s Machine Dance and the reviews alone reveal the contemporary significance and challenge of its themes and stylistic approach. Also, it brought together an artist of the new Soviet Republics, Jakulov, a seemingly undecided Soviet or émigré, Prokofiev, and the Russian émigré, Massine, to create a work about contemporary Russia at a unique moment in history. As noted above, the ballet, which evolved alongside Stalin's rise to power, was condemned on both sides of the future 'iron curtain'. Amongst the revealing extremes of judgement it received, it was frequently read as a glorification of, and a tractate against, both the Russian Revolution and the industrialisation of the modern world. In terms of its ambiguities and politicised history alone it is of interest, but also, in terms both of its style and its thematic explorations, it has possibly important links to other works across the arts of the period. In addition, very little is known about Jakulov in the West, yet a study of his appreciation in the literature of the former Soviet Union indicates that his influence on stage design, was considerable. In terms of Les Ballets Russes, a case study of a particular ballet can also be revealing in terms of what it has to tell us about the nature of artistic collaboration within company productions, and the interactions of design, music and choreography. This study is particularly addressed to the area of dance history, but hopes to show that Le Pas d'Acier is a work of significant interest to several subject areas.

2. Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to shed new light on Le Pas d'Acier (1927). Focussing on Jakulov's set design, the study aims to explore source materials and present its findings as they evolved with the research process.

This study sets out to produce a model reconstruction of Jakulov's set design for Le Pas d'Acier and to explore and elucidate the following research questions:

- (A) What is the nature of the source material for this ‘lost’ work and to what extent does it enable knowledge or interpretation?
- (B) What is the nature of Jakulov’s conception and designs for Le Pas d’Acier?
- (C) Did the ballet’s production in 1927 depart significantly from Jakulov’s and Prokofiev’s original conception in 1925? If so how and why?
- (D) What is involved in a ‘reconstruction’ of Jakulov’s set design and what emerges from it?

3. Methodology and Source Materials

3.1 Background

This study results from a long standing interest in questions relating to the nature of dance historiography and the problems of research into an art form that is frequently defined in terms of its ephemerality. In retrospect it arose from a desire to move away from the idea of the ‘lost’ performance and explore what *remains* of theatrical productions, not just in terms of surviving artifacts and documentation, but in terms of a work’s origination, interactions, impact and traces. This interest arose from a background in undergraduate drama and postgraduate dance study and work within the field of dance writing and research that was becoming increasingly orientated towards historiography.

The study was originally planned as an exploration of interactions between Constructivism and Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes during the 1920s. It gradually came to focus on Le Pas d’Acier as a product of such an interaction²⁵, about which very

²⁵ Russian dance historian Elizabeth Souritz, has concluded that Le Pas d’Acier was the most ‘Constructivist’ of the 1920s ballets, which is to say more ‘Constructivist’ than anything produced in the Soviet Union. See Souritz, (1980), p.119.

little appeared to be known. In retrospect, the location of the research project in a department of art and design almost certainly influenced a shift in emphasis away from Diaghilev's Ballets Russes towards this ballet's particular set design. At the same time however, the study's interests and motivations responded by moving away from the planned concern with Constructivism towards exploring a potential historiography of the ballet. The practical component requested of the study was initially resisted, but it eventually led to the whole approach of the study as well as to the model reconstruction.

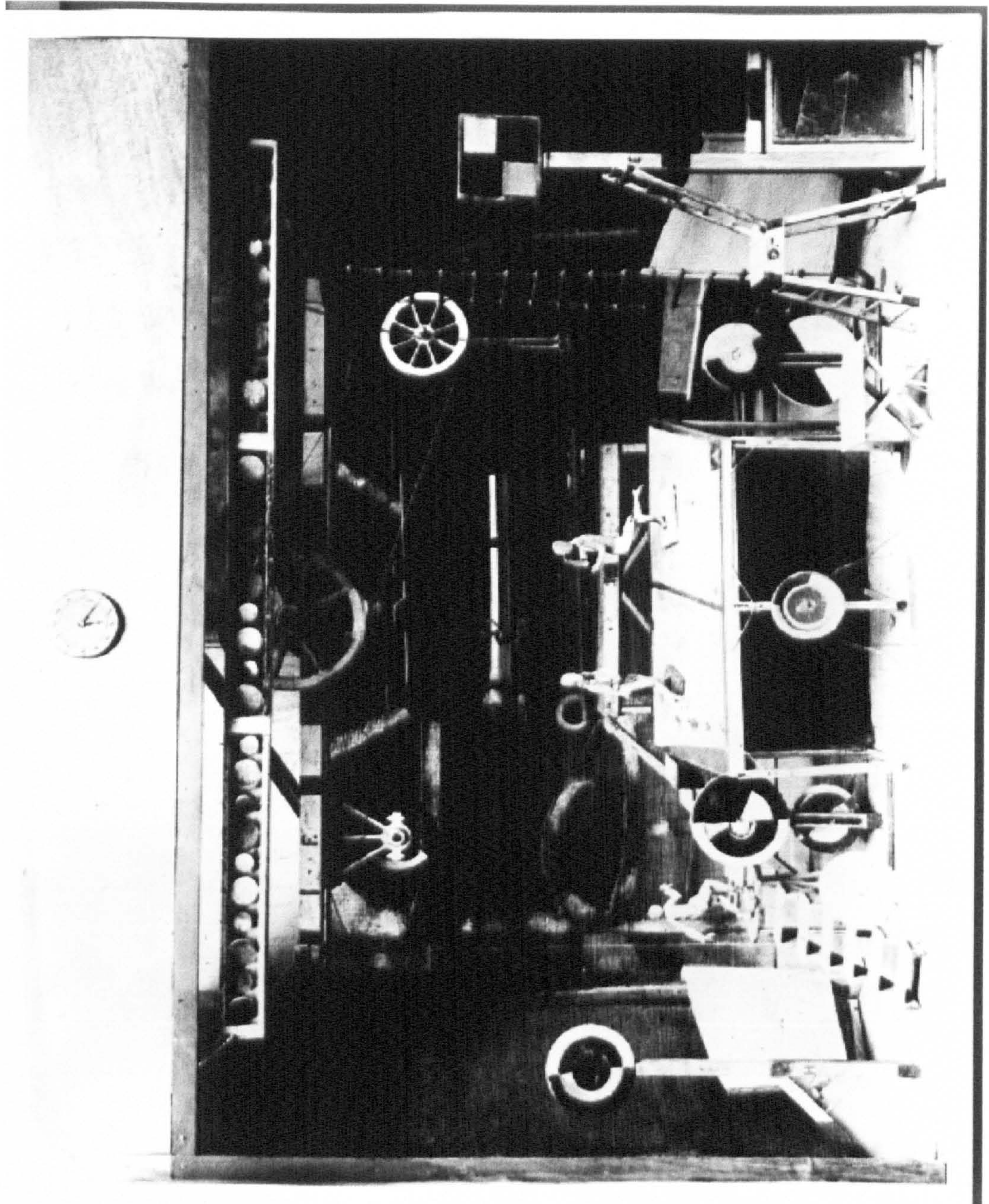
3.2 Methodology Relating to the Practical Reconstruction of the Set as a Model.

The practical aspect of the study began with the initial gathering of primary source material. An original photograph of Jakulov's model set, which is thought to date from 1927, was studied in the Boris Kochno collection at the archives of the Paris Opera. A copy of this photograph was obtained for private detailed study. (See **fig. 0.1**) This photograph was then compared with an enlargement of a 5x4 transparency of the surviving model set offered for auction by Sotheby's in 1984. (See **fig. 0.2**) From this photograph it can be seen that parts of the model have been lost and parts damaged. It has also been crudely repaired during its history. The study could find no reason however, to doubt its authenticity, or to conclude that it was not the same model as in the black and white photograph.

The idea of building a model in proportion to the Paris or London stages was abandoned on the grounds that the study was not pursuing a replication of performance conditions. The study's model has however, endeavored to keep to the scale and proportions indicated by the photographs of Jakulov's model. The main problem for the study in not having access to the original model itself²⁶, was to ascertain the size of objects shown on the picture planes of the photographs. The study could find no existing methodology for this and had therefore to invent its

²⁶ See Chapter 1 section 2.1 and 2.2

FIGURE 0.1



Photograph (c.1927) of Jakulov's model for 'Le Pas d'Acier'.
Source: Victoria & Albert Theatre Museum, London.

FIGURE 0.2



Photograph (1984) of model thought to be Jakulov's original for 'Le Pas d'Acier'.
Source: Sotheby's, London.

own. From the Sotheby's transparency a large print was made for detailed study, and from this a 'reverse' perspective drawing²⁷ was produced enabling the size of objects on the model to be ascertained (see **fig. 0.3**). The length and height of the model's box were known and provided by Sotheby's. The photograph's vanishing point was determined by projecting backwards the sides of the model's rectangular box. Using normal perspective drawing techniques²⁸ the relative proportions of the objects could then be determined. The study also had the scale of the figures on Jakulov's black and white photograph to act as a basic check point for its results.

The initial stage of the reconstruction consisted of building a rough model out of white card, with two small metal wheels, net for the gauze, string and nails. (See **fig. 0.4**). This was simply an initial exercise to construct the model as it appeared in the photographs (i.e. **fig. 0.1** and **fig. 0.2**), working from the Sotheby's transparency for details of colour and construction, but using the original black and white photograph of the model for missing components. This was particularly useful as an exercise in observation and analysis. It also revealed many potential complexities and questions both in relation to Jakulov's intentions and the potential aims and objectives of the study's model. This took place alongside the gathering of source materials including Jakulov's drawings, the reviews and other eye-witness and participant accounts. Methods of construction, and the set's capacity for movement was explored, and gaps in knowledge and problems of interpretation became apparent. It became clear that Jakulov's intentions and the functions and overall aesthetic of the envisaged set are not self-evident from the model; they require interpretation. This is fully discussed in Chapters 1 and 4.

The study's final model has been constructed to be a size of 0.7 of Jakulov's model²⁹ and has tried to be as close to Jakulov's materials as possible. The model is

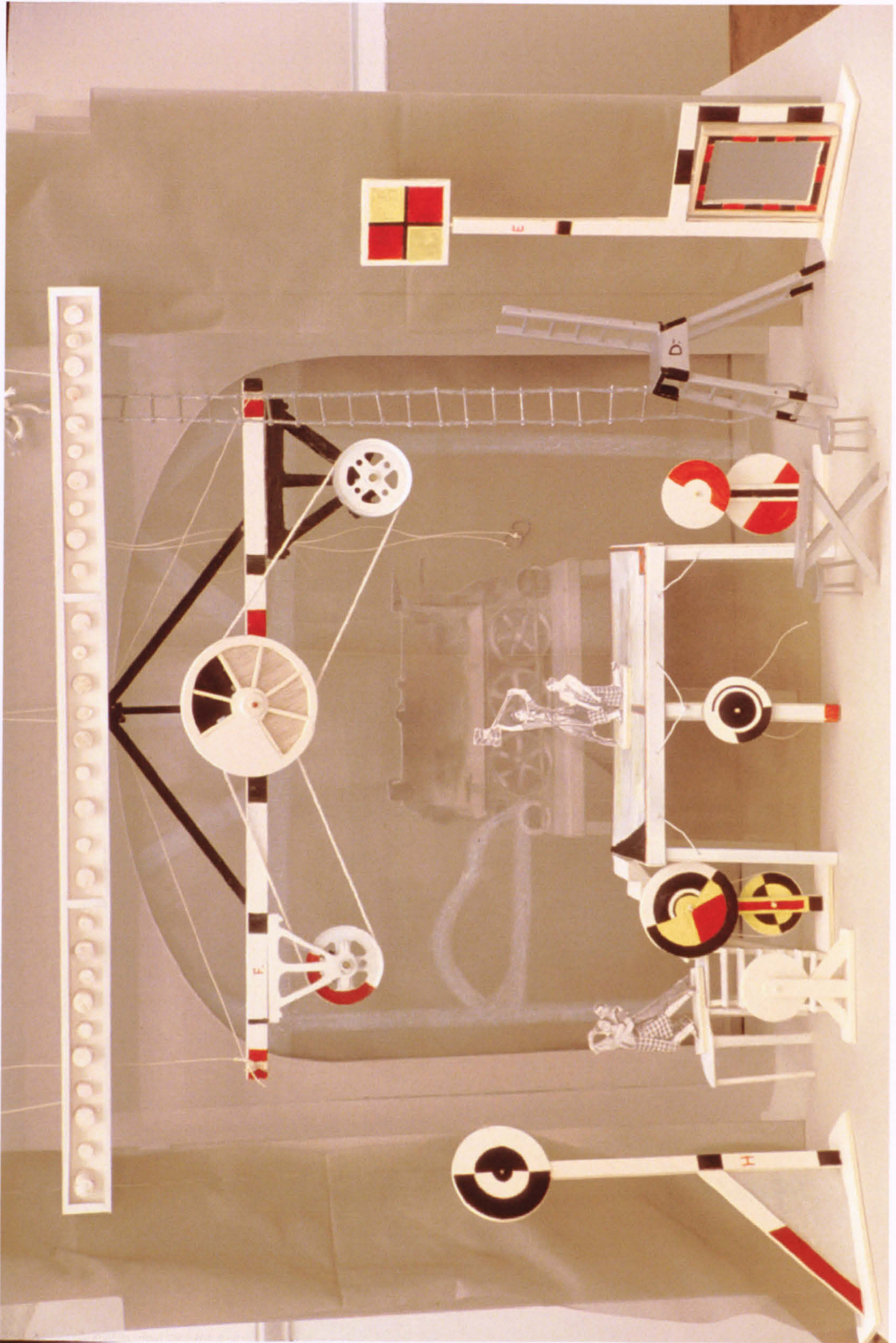
²⁷ In other words the study worked in reverse, from two dimensions to object, rather than from object to two dimensions.

²⁸ The study found Gwen White's Perspective: A Guide for Artists, Architects and Designers, (1968) particularly helpful.

²⁹ Sotheby's measurements of Jakulov's model are 124cms x 75cms. The study's model is 87cms x 52.5cms.

[illegible]

FIGURE 0.4



The study's initial rough copy of Jakulov's model, in white card with various other materials.

built mainly out of wood, the material used by Jakulov on his model and for the actual set. For the moving wooden wheels the study's model uses rubber belting, which relates to descriptions of the belting used on the production set. For the rope ladders it has used string and nails, as on Jakulov's model. However, in interpreting and exploring Jakulov's intentions and finding a visual representation the study has also had to improvise. This is fully discussed in relation to each set part in Chapter 4.

The study recognised that it needed to come to an understanding of Jakulov's conception and vision of the set in performance. This was helped by the discovery of the 1925 scenario which provided a 'window' onto Jakulov's original intentions for the set in action. It was also enabled by detailed study of the 1927 reviews which allow an insight as to how the set was experienced in performance, and how it looked to spectators at the time. The study's wider contextual research also helped the study come to an interpretation of the set's visual, formal and theatrical motivations which have informed the reconstruction.

As will be discussed in Chapter 1, the study's initial research quickly began to indicate that Jakulov's model was not a straightforward replica of the performance set. The study could find for example, no mention in the reviews of the train, which has centre place on Jakulov's model. Then in Jakulov's drawings the train appears as coming on from one side, not on the back platform. Questions arose therefore, as to whether the train was simply stored on the back platform in the model, and regarding which set parts belonged to which act. There was an increasing need to interpret the function of the model in the production process and to determine the relationship of the model to the performance set. The study's chronology, that gradually unfolded with further research, enabled the eventual interpretation of the model in relation to the design process and the production set. In turn however, the reconstruction's need for detailed information, and precise interpretation, to some extent formed the nature of the research enquiry and forced the detailed analytic approach that the study has taken with regard to source materials.

The overall aim of the study's model has been to explore Jakulov's designs within the limitations imposed by the model form and by the fact that the study does not have professional expertise in model making. In order to build the set as a moving apparatus, the study's model has had to solve technical problems but there has, of course, been no opportunity to explore the problems that might arise when producing the designs on a larger scale and in relation to accommodating 45 dancers on stage. Building the set full size might in itself explain some of the adaptations to the production set that almost certainly took place and are discussed in the thesis.

The study's model does not claim to be a replica of either Jakulov's model or the 1927 performance set. The aim has been to explore Jakulov's designs for Le Pas d'Acier, in terms of their nature, adaptability and theatrical potential.

3.3 The Study as Reconstructive Dance History

The building of the study's 3D model reconstruction has been integral to the analysis, interpretation and dating of some of the surviving source materials. It has enabled the study to explore the reconstruction of Jakulov's set design, and to some extent also locate potential source material for a reconstruction of the ballet as a whole. This study is concerned therefore, with an unexplored and effectively interdisciplinary subject area within reconstructive dance history.

Through a reconstructive approach to the ballet's set design, the study takes an empirical approach to constructing a history of the ballet's development from 1925 through to its production in 1927. It explores the ballet as a Western phenomenon and the possibilities of its reconstruction based on its fragmentary historical traces. The study found no established methodology for this path and so ideas and approaches were drawn from several sources to help define, develop and question the research methods, tasks and objectives.

To some extent the problems presented by a 'lost' work, such as Le Pas d'Acier, relate to general problems of dance and theatre historiography and reconstruction. There are for example, clear parallels between the lost performance and current perceptions of general historical events. As Thomas Postlewait argues³⁰, the historian cannot deal directly with the event itself because it has disappeared, s/he can only deal with statements about the event. It is established in contemporary discourse, that the historian constructs, as well as identifies the event out of documents, artifacts and reports³¹. One of the areas in which these issues are particularly pertinent is reconstruction³².

In terms of twentieth century dance historiography, some of the most interesting recent contributions to the field have come from staged reconstructions³³, in relation to theories of reconstruction³⁴, and from a reconstructive approach to written dance historiography.³⁵ There has been a notable development away from the model of revivals by creators, and narratives by historians towards a potentially more dynamic and interactive field. The study came to consider some of the problems involved in reconstruction, in relation to Jakulov's set designs for Le Pas d'Acier, as a direct result of its own practical involvement in reconstructing the set as a model. It became increasingly interested in the similarities and distinctions between written historiography and staged reconstruction. In the end the study's search for Le Pas d'Acier led also to an exploration of the research process, the nature of evidence and the role of interpretation; clearly these all relate to written historiography as well as to practical reconstruction.

³⁰ Postlewait, (1991) p.160.

³¹ See for example, Clifford, J. (1988)

³² The study uses the term 'reconstruction' to be distinct from 'revival' and to imply a greater reliance of primary source research, as opposed to being 'restaged' by one or more of the original creative team. The study acknowledges the complexities of meaning relating to these terms.

³³ For example, Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer have pioneered the reconstruction of 'lost' works from the twentieth century repertoire based on research and documentary evidence. See for example, Hodson, M. (1996).

³⁴ For example, Marc Franco, (1993) and (1995), raises many challenging questions with regard to dance historiography and reconstruction. He questions, for example, the idea of progressive dance history and rejects the idea of reconstruction as authentic revival of an original work, in favour of pursuing stylistic and theoretical aspects of lost work through overtly interpretative reconstruction.

³⁵ See for example, Manning, (1993). See also Copeland, ed., (1982) where Manning claims a reconstructive approach to historiography in her keynote panel address.

This thesis presents its findings in terms of its research process, rather than as a narrative history, in order to focus on and explore the nature of source materials, methodology, and problems of interpretation. Dance has often been defined as an ephemeral art and its theoretical problems seen in relation to the absence of a text. One of the things this model may explain is the central importance of ‘testimony’, not just in terms of passing on a dance work from one generation to another, but in terms of dance historiography. A reliance on interviews with creators and performers is notable in the historiography of twentieth century dance. The effects of this on the historiography of Le Pas d’Acier are discussed in chapter 2 which examines the nature and content of eye-witness and participant accounts.

In recent years dance reconstructors Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer have tackled works from the twentieth century³⁶ without a dependence on testimony,³⁷ demonstrating the possibilities of a scholarly interaction with other source materials while at the same time using testimony as a source when available. Their work has involved a creative interaction with source materials and a filling of gaps in knowledge with a combination of scholarly methods and creative insight³⁸. It is clear however, that testimony would still stand as a criterion by which to judge their work, as their pursuit of authenticity is apparent in their discussions of their working methods, as well as in the works themselves³⁹. Other approaches to reconstruction however, such as that of Mark Franko⁴⁰, have moved further away from the pursuit of authenticity, towards a model of *re*-construction based on an openly theoretical interaction with source materials. Theresa Buckland writes that Franco’s work on the baroque dance “*is no prescriptive manual for how to stage seventeenth century dances. Nor is it a safe historical survey of court ballet. Instead, it is a revolutionary encounter with historical sources which Franco treats*

³⁶ For example, their reconstructions include Nijinsky’s Rite of Spring (1913), his Til Eulenspiegel (1916), Borlin’s Skating Rink (1922) and Balanchine’s La Chatte (1927).

³⁷ See for example, Archer (1987) where he explains how through detailed analysis of documentary source materials he was able to rediscover missing costumes for Nijinsky’s Rite of Spring.

³⁸ See Hodson (1996) for a full account of the methods used in her reconstruction of Rite of Spring.

³⁹ Jane Pritchard, reporting on Hodson and Archer’s contribution to the Preservation Politics Conference at Roehampton Institute, London in November 1997, writes that they only undertake a reconstruction if they can be sure of 65% of the production. Pritchard (1998) p.77.

with erudition and imaginative analysis”⁴¹. Franco argues for a preferred model of re-construction as re-invention. He writes: “*Reinvention sacrifices the reproduction of a work to the replication of its most powerful intended effects*”.⁴² Franco defines this as the radical position, of finding “*the new in the old*”⁴³. This idea of re-invention as a radical departure however, relies to some extent on the existence of a model of reconstruction as “*merely animating an historical artifact*”⁴⁴. It is this study’s point of view that this establishes a misleading dichotomy. Franco’s method is steeped in a deconstructive approach, though he defines this in such a way that it could be argued to be part of the process of any reconstruction. He writes: “*To ‘deconstruct’ historical dance is to get at its root sources through an analysis of the choreography’s theoretical underpinnings.*”⁴⁵ However, the departure from conventional approaches to reconstruction comes in the staging, in the construction that results from the analysis of source materials. Franco’s approach is unconcerned with conventional ideas of authenticity or with the aim of reproduction. He writes: “*The move from reconstruction to reinvention is also a move toward the creation of choreography that actively rethinks historical sources.*”⁴⁶ Ultimately Franco sees conventional approaches to reconstruction as part of an “*obsession with repeatability*”⁴⁷ in theatrical theory and argues for reconstruction to become “*the nexus for awareness of cultural relativity.*”⁴⁸

It is beyond the scope of the thesis to explore current discourse on reconstruction or historiography, but an awareness of theoretical issues that have arisen in response to differing approaches to reconstruction in recent years, underpins this study. Documented approaches to reconstruction such as those provided by Hodson and Archer and by Franco have been particularly helpful in stimulating the study’s reflections on its materials, methods and intentions.

⁴⁰See for example, Franco (1993).

⁴¹ Buckland, (1996) p.101.

⁴² Franco, (1989) p.58

⁴³ ibid

⁴⁴ ibid p.57

⁴⁵ ibid p.60

⁴⁶ ibid

⁴⁷ ibid p.73

The study's basic ambition has been to re-discover Le Pas d'Acier as an historical event. However, in the absence of detailed records and full and reliable testimony, the question arises as to if and how the historical event is accessible. Recognising that it could not reproduce the performance set, the study had to consider to what extent Jakulov's designs could be re-discovered and in what ways gaps in knowledge could be filled, re-discovered/re-invented, while pursuing authenticity. The basic question arose therefore, as to how to define authenticity.

3.4 Reconstruction and Authenticity

One of the first problems for this study was in determining what constitutes the original set. As is discussed in the thesis, the 1927 performance was almost certainly an adaptation of Jakulov's designs produced in 1925. The study found that source materials did not neatly relate to one set design as a singular historical event, but to an evolving entity that has come down to us through dislocated accounts and fragmented remains and indicators of different moments in that evolution. In addition, the study's interpretation of the production also mitigated against any notion of a singular authentic original. The notion of authenticity therefore, demanded to be seen in wider terms than simply referring to an original staging. This is discussed in chapter 4.

The determination of authenticity is perhaps the most challenging aspect of any reconstruction. It is perhaps also the most rewarding, as it brings together the scholarly pursuit of fact with the interpretative and analytical processes, and creative insights that make up the nature of both historiography and reconstruction. The study did not want to lose sight of Jakulov's set design as an actual historical event about which much could be both discovered and inferred. However, it came to see the restrictions and potential afforded by the available source materials, as at best enabling an interaction with the historical event. As a result the reconstruction

⁴⁸ *ibid*

and historiography came together as seeking similar aims, the exploration of meaning rather than reproduction or factual account as ends in themselves.

The study does not claim to have entirely resolved its own position in regard to theoretical questions relating to reconstruction. It has simply used the study's practical component as a means of exploration. Overall the study hopes to show that while an examination and interaction with 'documentary' evidence and primary source material resists reproduction of an original performance set for Le Pas d'Acier, it does enable reclamation and 'authentic' re-construction. The basic theoretical position of the study is to seek a balance between an awareness of instability and a pursuit of factual status. It sees historiography and reconstruction as interactive processes, largely dependent upon and consisting of interpretation. It defines historiographical interpretation traditionally however, as in constant relationship to evidence, as well as perception, as an act that is underpinned by analysis and deduction, and is open to 'proof' and 'disproof'. This is not to argue that history is a science, but that it is based upon acts of interpretation and deduction that must be open and testable⁴⁹.

3.5 Sources and the Study's Approach to Source Materials

3.5.1 Documentary Materials and the Role of Interpretation

As already discussed, this study embraces historical methodologies in seeking to produce an interdisciplinary study of a theatrical production conventionally defined as dance. While the focus of the study has been set design, rather than choreography or music, it is intended to address issues relating primarily to the

⁴⁹ In this respect, the study is in agreement with the argument put forward by Richard J. Evans in his book In Defence of History (1997). While fully accepting the interpretative process in historiography, Evans argues that interpretation is open to proof and disproof and that the historian is able to obtain genuine insights into history. Similarly theatre historian Thomas Postlewait, (1991) p.162, argues that while "our access to the historical event is always problematic. This is not to say, however, that the past is a vacuum, waiting to be filled by any explanation."

historiography of dance as a collaborative theatre art. The nature of the study led to an empirical approach which was questioned during the course of the study, but ultimately it came to be seen as the vital ground work that enabled interpretations of the materials.

For historians and researchers in all fields the view that scholarly empirical method is objective and free of ideology has been seriously challenged during the late twentieth century⁵⁰. Any historical study today addresses itself, consciously or unconsciously, to wider debates that effect the status and understanding of the discipline of history. The study found it helpful to consider to what extent its findings support the view that is succinctly expressed by theatre historian Thomas Postlewait⁵¹:

“The meaning and coherence of information depends upon the explanatory model that the historian brings to (rather than simply discovers within) the data. Change the model, change the meaning.”

The study directly encountered the instability of ‘documentary’ material and its dependence upon interpretation. Documentary source materials relating to Le Pas d’Acier certainly defy any model of the ballet’s reconstruction or historiography as akin to a ‘jigsaw’ of unearthed and missing parts⁵². There are surviving remains that are fragmented but they are also dislocated and require interpretation of one kind or another and to varying degrees. It is clear that even remains of the work itself, either in progress, or in performance, need to be identified and interpreted before they can be described. It is also clear that most of the material that can be identified as contemporary information relating to a work, is not necessarily ‘remains’ of, or records of a performance as such, but a wide range of materials that relate to the work in a broader sense.

⁵⁰ See for example, Clifford, J.(1986).

⁵¹ Postlewait T.(1991) p.159.

⁵² The idea of a jigsaw as a model for the reconstructive process is suggested for example, by Martha Schmoyer LoMonaco’s article (1984): ‘*The Giant Jigsaw Puzzle: Robert Joffrey Reconstructs Parade*’.

It is well established that much of what is ‘discovered’ will depend upon where the historian looks and at how s/he has decided the subject should be approached. To a large extent the formation of ‘records’ operates under similar dictates. For example, at the time of the ballet, the majority of critics reviewing dance were music critics; dance as a separate specialism had not yet emerged. As a result, many of the reviews see the ballet largely as ‘Prokofiev’s new work’, and the object of what they describe and respond to is largely the music. Of the three elements, music, choreography and design, the design almost always receives the least attention. Throughout, the study has attempted to consider to what extent the meaning it ‘found’ was dependent upon perspective.

Recognising the processes of construction within the re-construction of a past event, the study has placed a particular emphasis on source materials, attempting to closely examine their nature and potential.

3.5.2 Categorisation of Source Materials

In categorising source materials questions arose as to how groupings might relate to an overall model of what constitutes the historical event. It became necessary therefore, to define the study’s terms.

The study defines the work as from the creative process through to public performance. The study sees the historical event however, as including the work’s interaction with the spectator, and would therefore, include the reviews as part of the historical event, rather than simply as a response to a historical event.

Theoretically, this model of the historical event could affect the idea and approach of reconstruction, as well as the approach to the work’s historiography. The question could arise as to whether the object of a reconstruction is an historical event or a past work. There are many potential complexities relating to the basic interpretation of what constitutes the historical object. The study has considered these issues while attempting to organise its source materials into groupings that

would most facilitate the exploration of the work, from creative process through to its interaction with spectator response.

The study has attempted to organise and categorise its source materials into information types. Prior to that however, certain basic categorisations of source materials have been applied.

The study defines secondary sources conventionally as after the event accounts that may or may not have accessed the event itself or its 'primary sources'.

The study also defines primary source material conventionally as material that has come from the event and is contemporary⁵³ to the event. The study also includes living testimony and non-contemporary participant and eye-witness accounts as primary source material because, although not contemporary to the event as accounts, they are drawn from contemporary experience and the teller is by definition part of the historical event, either as creator, participant or spectator.

The study found the need to define several sub-categories within the 'primary source' classification in order both to manage the material more effectively and identify different characteristics and problems. It was decided therefore, to first divide the material into that which was contemporary to the work and later participant and eye-witness accounts. Chapter 1 discusses material produced during the life of the work, and Chapter 2 looks at non-contemporary accounts from participants and eye-witnesses.

The study's general approach to the categorisation of primary source materials is as follows:

- **Primary Source Materials**

- Documentary Material

(Material that was produced in relation to the work and is contemporary to the work)

- Surviving performance materials (eg. costumes, set designs)
- Visual records (eg. sketches, photographs, model set, lighting plans)
- Written records (eg. music, notation, programmes, scenario)
- Reviews
- Letters
- Interviews, and other contemporary testimony
- Other response material such as drawings by other artists

- Non-Contemporary Accounts from Eye-Witnesses and Participants

- Living testimony
- Other previously recorded accounts

In Chapter 3 the study moves on to explore contextual material; ie. source materials that are not a direct part of Le Pas d'Acier as an historical event, but may relate to and help elucidate its nature and contemporary relationships.

3.6 Translation and Transliteration of Texts

3.6.1 Translation

The study faced the problem of source materials in three different languages, Russian, French and English. The study undertook the majority of the translation from French, but relied on a professional translator for Russian and for the more

⁵³ By contemporary to this particular work the study means from the start of its creative process in

difficult and complicated texts in French. Handwritten manuscripts often created an initial difficulty of decipherment and overall the process of working with a translator was highly interactive. It meant that the study could contribute its own knowledge to work on the texts involved and be aware of words and phrases that were providing an interpretative ambiguity or difficulty. Translations of major texts used by the study are presented in the Appendices alongside copies of original documents. Particular problems concerning translation and decipherment are noted as and when they arise.

A hidden problem concerning translation may arise with published accounts from participants and eye-witnesses for whom English is not their mother tongue, as it is most often unclear whether memoirs and other texts have been translated or edited.

3.6.2 Transliteration

In general the study has endeavoured to adhere to Library of Congress System 1 for the transliteration of Russian names and texts. However, it has adopted conventional spellings of names associated with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, as they most often appear in English dance historical accounts. For example, it has taken this approach to names such as: 'Serge Diaghilev', 'Leonide Massine' and 'Serge Prokofiev'. Similarly, it has adopted a particular transliteration in terms of rendering the Soviet Armenian set designer's name throughout as 'George Jakulov'. In French texts this name is most often transliterated as 'Georges Yakoulov'. The other common transliteration of this artist's name is 'Georgii Iakouloff'. Several further variants of these transliterations can be found in archives and source materials.

3.7 Problems of Research

Any new appraisal of Le Pas d'Acier is impaired by the fact that very little of the ballet has survived. The music is available for study as are some of Jakulov's drawings; a model set has survived in private hands and there are pre-production publicity photographs and some surviving costumes. There is no known record of any choreographic notation or film⁵⁴; there are no known in-performance photographs and no known photographs showing the actual performance set.

A further problem for the researcher of Le Pas d'Acier is that Jakulov died prematurely in Erevan, Armenia in 1928. Although there was a society of friends devoted to the artist in Paris (Le Société des Amis de Georges Yakoulov⁵⁵) who collected together his work and material, the society chose to export everything back to Erevan in 1975 where it is now housed in the National Museum⁵⁶ (see section 5.2 below.) However, the society's bulletins, Notes et Documents⁵⁷, have been located by the study. These provide some interesting contextual material and are an important source of information on Jakulov, reproducing some of his published and unpublished writings. Moscow based dance historian and museum curator, Elizabeth Souritz, who has studied material relating to Le Pas d'Acier held at Russian archives, had not consulted the Jakulov archive in Erevan and could not say whether there may be relevant material in it⁵⁸. The study has enquired at the archive via an Armenian intermediary (see section 3.8.7 below). It does not appear that the collection holds any original material relating to the ballet itself but detailed research in this archive remains to be done. Material obtained from the Erevan archive is discussed in chapter 3.

⁵⁴ Confirmation of this was sought through various sources including museum curators, the Dance Notation Bureau in New York, The Language of Dance Centre in London, and Massine's daughter, Tatiana Massine.

⁵⁵ Le Société des amis de Georges Yakoulov appears to have been founded in the 1960s by M. Jean C.Marcade. It issued a series of bulletins, Notes et Documents, with material by and about Jakulov starting in May 1967, with the last issue the study has been able to trace in July 1972. These simple typed bulletins are held by the British Library. The address of M.Marcade in Paris was obtained from Nikita Lobanov and a letter was sent asking for further information. Unfortunately no reply was received.

⁵⁶ From information supplied by Nikita Lobanov in a letter to the author, dated 25th November 1995.

⁵⁷ See note 51.

There is evidence that much of the surviving material relating to Le Pas d'Acier was held by Serge Lifar after the break up of the company following Diaghilev's death in 1929. Lifar danced in the original production and staged a new version of the ballet in 1948 with designs by Fernand Leger. On Lifar's death there were several auctions of Diaghilev material but little relating to Le Pas d'Acier appears to have been purchased by collections or museums. Material that may be in private hands is not known to specialist archivists, and when discovered by this research it has not been possible to gain access. It is a problem for PhD research that private collectors are not always as ready to give access to material, or any other kind of knowledge, as they might be if a major exhibition, performance or book was involved. Archives present their own individual problems, particularly as most are under staffed, under resourced and un-computerised. The study found material relating to Le Pas d'Acier to be frequently either uncatalogued, missing or mis-filed and much depends upon understanding the nature of the archive, the history of the materials and formulating the right questions. The skilled help of specialist curators is invaluable but with current pressures is not always available for PhD research. In the case of private collections locating material and gaining access to it can be even more problematic. Private collections of materials relating specifically to Le Pas d'Acier are not published or well known. The study has therefore, turned to auction catalogues for sales of Diaghilev materials to help identify owners and potential owners. However, Diaghilev material has a significant market value, evident from auction sale catalogues⁵⁹, and this may affect the attitude of individual collectors in different ways. With the exception of Nikita Lobanov, the study has not found any private collectors willing to disclose ownership of materials relating to the ballet. The study can however, be fairly sure of the known materials that exist in private collections from previous sales and exhibitions relating to the company and the period. It is quite possible however, that unknown materials lie in undiscovered private collections.

⁵⁸ Information supplied by Elizabeth Souritz in a letter to the author dated October 30th 1995.

The politics of the ballet produce another particular set of problems. Le Pas d'Acier was a Soviet inspired work presented in Western Europe following England's General Strike and amidst Europe's awareness of the successful Bolshevik revolution. Many contemporary artists and critics involved with this work had direct attachments to the old regime and/or were unsympathetic to the rise of Communism. Its subject matter dealt directly with Russian society following the revolution and was therefore extremely sensitive. In addition the work represented a radical departure from star centred works. As an ensemble ballet it did not tend to provide individual dancers with particularly memorable roles which may be part of the reason it receives comparatively little attention in autobiographies.

The study has been unsuccessful in locating any accounts of Le Pas d'Acier directly from Diaghilev, apart from passing references in several letters that have been noted by historians of the period. The study consulted the Prokofiev Archive in London with regard to Prokofiev's accounts of the ballet but there appears to be no single authoritative source relating to Massine. Surviving descriptions by Massine of Le Pas d'Acier appear to be restricted to those contained in his autobiography. It is possible that other material, such as letters and notebooks have survived, but no such material, or knowledge of its whereabouts, has been found at the archives consulted by the study. Massine's daughter, Tatiana Massine, was asked about possible sources but she knew of none and reported that her father had never spoken of Le Pas d'Acier to her⁶⁰. The sources consulted by Massine's biographer, Garcia-Marquez in the early 1990s were extensive and frequently referenced to unspecified private collections⁶¹. There is however, nothing in the work to indicate undiscovered sources for Le Pas d'Acier. Garcia-Marquez's sources for the ballet appear to have been conversations with Kochno, a letter in a private collection concerning Massine's percentage share in the ballet as co-author, and secondary

⁵⁹ For example the surviving incomplete and damaged model of Jakulov's set design for Le Pas d'Acier, thought to be original, was valued by Sotheby's in 1984 as between £20,000 - £30,000. The model for a better known work would undoubtedly be valued more highly.

⁶⁰ Information obtained from a telephone conversation with Tatiana Massine while obtaining permission to study restricted access films of Massine's work, New York, September 1995.

⁶¹ Garcia-Marquez died in 1993 before publication of his book, and so the study could not consult him with regard to possible sources and the nature of private collections of Massine related material.

sources. The conversations with Kochno do not appear to have produced new material, being rather a version of that which Kochno had previously published.

Jakulov has posed a particular set of problems for the study in terms of accessing his work and writings. Very little is known about him in the West and the study has not been able to elicit information from Russian archives, with the exception of Erevan. Material obtained from the archive in Erevan, and a study of the materials produced by Le Société des Amis de Georges Yakoulov in Paris, indicates that Jakulov's supporters have been notably concerned to identify, publish and discuss materials relating to his works. In accessing these materials, the study has concluded that the most probable undiscovered source for material relating to Le Pas d'Acier from Jakulov is letters that he would almost certainly have sent from Paris to his wife, sister and friends in Moscow in 1925 and 1927. Such material may well be in Russian archives and at least some of these may be held in the Jakulov archive in Erevan (see section 3.8.7 below).

3.8 Archives

Many archives, collections and collectors have been approached during the course of the study in search of material on the ballet. Those listed below have been the main sources of information and materials. Materials relating directly to the ballet found in archive collections are reproduced in the study's appendices and discussed in detail in chapter 1.

3.8.1 Fonds Kochno, Bibliotheque-Musée de l'Opera de Paris

The Boris Kochno collection at the archives of the Paris Opera contains programmes, some of Jakulov's drawings, a high quality early black and white photograph of the model set design and some photographs of the dancers in costume, some of which are credited to the Daily Mail. Material has all been dated as 1927, the date of the ballet's first performances, and there is little to reveal

archival history. Contextual material of particular interest was also studied here including material relating to Balanchine's La Chatte (1927), Apollo (1928), Massine's Ode (1928), ballets by Nijinska including Les Noces (1923) Le Train Bleu (1924) and Le Renard (1922), and Lifar's Le Renard (1929). The whereabouts of the model was not known at this archive and the study was directed to archives in Lausanne as a source for material from the Lifar collection, particularly the model.

3.8.2 Les Archives de la Ville de Lausanne

The Archives de la Ville de Lausanne, were consulted and they supplied the study with further copies of programmes for performances in France. They do not hold the model set design and advised that its probable whereabouts was the private collection of Serge Lifar's widow, the Countess d'Ahledfeldt who lives in Lausanne and they kindly provided her address. The Countess d'Ahlefeldt was contacted and replied but she did not answer the question asked concerning her ownership of the model, gave no information and simply referred the study back to Sotheby's (see below).

3.8.3 Victoria and Albert Theatre Museum

The major collection of primary source material relating to the Diaghilev productions in Britain is kept at the Victoria and Albert Theatre Museum in London. Curator, Sarah Woodcock, was consulted about the research, but the collection holds little on the ballet. Some photographs identical to those held by the Archives of the Paris Opera were found here credited to the English photographer 'Sasha', along with a copy of the original London program and a copy of the black and white photograph of the model set design. The study was also able to research here contextual material relating to the history of stage design, consult the William Beaumont Morris Diaghilev Scrapbooks, and rare, out of print books by participants and eye-witnesses. The whereabouts of the model was not known at this archive but the study was directed towards a collection of costumes at the Australian National Gallery in Canberra.

3.8.4 The Australian National Gallery, Canberra.

The Australian National Gallery in Canberra has an extensive collection of costumes from the ballet acquired at auction in 1973. Altogether it holds some 100 costumes and backdrops from Ballets Russes productions and some of these were featured in the catalogue 'From Studio to Stage: painters of the Russian Ballet', published in 1990. Unfortunately this did not include any material relating to Le Pas d'Acier. Although it was not possible to visit this collection, information on it and descriptions were obtained from the curator and are described in Appendix 5.

3.8.5 The Dance Collection at the New York Performing Arts Library

The Dance Collection at the New York Performing Arts Library holds material relating to the 1927 production and to the new version of the ballet created in New York in 1931. Amongst this collection are two original sketches by Jakulov relating to the set design and lighting. In addition it was possible to undertake a broad range of contextual study here including filmed reconstructions of works from the 1920s, such as the Machine Dances of Nicolai Forregger⁶², Oskar Schlemmer's works, and Nijinska's Train Bleu. There is an extensive collection of film and audio material here that gave the study access to research unpublished and unavailable in the UK, including early films of Massine's choreography and archival footage of Forregger's work. It was also possible to research the 1931 production of Le Pas d'Acier and other machine and industrial theme dances of the period including Ruth Page's work Scaffolding (1926) and Adolph Bolm's Iron Foundry (1932). While working at the Dance Collection in New York, material relating to a production of interest to the study, Skyscrapers (1926), which was originally commissioned by Diaghilev and had some interesting parallels with Le Pas d'Acier, was also viewed in the archives of the Metropolitan Opera.

3.8.6 The Prokofiev Archive, London.

Largely as a result of assuming that surviving material on the ballet would be held by collections of Diaghilev material, the study did not discover the vital material held by the Prokofiev Archive housed at Goldsmiths' College, London, until later on in the study. In visiting the archive to examine Prokofiev's score and enquire about the possibility of any surviving correspondence, the study found, with the help of archivist Noelle Mann, a wealth of largely uncatalogued material. This archive was established by Prokofiev's son, the late Oleg Prokofiev, who lived, until his recent death, in South London. The first edition orchestral score, which would have been approved by Prokofiev, is held at this archive. Also in the collection are copies of many letters to and from Prokofiev. It is understood that the original manuscripts are held by the Prokofiev family. Some of these have been catalogued in terms of correspondent, year, place, and sometimes brief references to content, but many remain uncatalogued and grouped simply under years. With the catalogued material the study faced the problem that Prokofiev could have written about the ballet to any one of his many correspondents. With the help of the archivist however, who has a thorough knowledge of Prokofiev's approach and style, and through a survey of his correspondence for the period, letters likely to refer to the ballet were identified. These were then examined in addition to obvious sources such as letters to Diaghilev, Jakulov and Massine. The study made a thorough search of uncatalogued material for the years 1925-1929 and was able to retrieve material by with the help of Russian translator Margaret Jones. In some cases this was achieved by first recognising Jakulov's handwriting.

Material found in this archive has been of particular interest to the study as it was not found in other archives, does not appear to have been published or previously discussed and adds a great deal to knowledge of the work. Such material includes drawings and notes by Jakulov, the 1925 scenario and musical outline and several

⁶² Nikolai Forreger was a Russian director and ballet master. He devised a new system of body movement at the Moscow Proletkult Studio between 1920-21. See Chepalov (1996), p.359-380.

letters of interest. This material is discussed in Chapter 1 and reproduced in Appendices 2, 3 and 4.

3.8.7 The National Gallery of Armenia in Erevan

The Russian collector, Nikita Lobanov alerted the study to the presence of a Jakulov Archive at the National Gallery of Armenia in Erevan⁶³. The study has also become aware of this when research revealed that material kept by the Société des Amis de Georges Yakoulov in Paris, was dispatched to Erevan (where Jakulov died in 1928) during the 1970s⁶⁴. It was not possible to visit the Gallery in Erevan during the course of the study and all attempts to communicate directly with the Gallery failed. However, the study made contact with an Armenian film maker, Karineh Hakobyan, who had previously made a short film about Jakulov's work, and lives in Erevan. Ms Hakobyan informed the study that the gallery has a large collection of Jakulov's paintings and kindly searched the archive for material directly related to Le Pas d'Acier. No new primary source material relating to the ballet itself was identified but some very interesting accounts of Jakulov's work and set designs by Russian writers were located and greatly helped the study's contextual understanding of Jakulov's oeuvre. This material is discussed in Chapter 3.

Unfortunately, the study was only able to undertake very limited research into the nature of this resource but this research suggests that the Gallery holds more than 100 of Jakulov's works. These include sketches, oil paintings and approximately 70 graphical works which are mostly theatre designs. It appears that there is only one photograph of the décor of Le Pas d'Acier and that this is the one held by other archives (see fig. 1). The collection has a copy of Jakulov's autobiography of 1925

⁶³This was confirmed by Russian dance historian/curator Elizabeth Souritz, who wrote to the author saying that she felt it was an unexplored archive of potential interest.

⁶⁴ Jakulov left Paris following Le Pas d'Acier in 1927 very suddenly after hearing that his wife had been arrested in the Soviet Union. According to Notes et Documents, he left many of his paintings behind him not realising that he would never return. The society also had copies of his writings which they published in various issues.

which was eventually published in Erevan as Moia biografiia i khudozhestvennaia deiatel'nost' in 1979. The study could not locate a copy of this in Western archives but a photocopy was obtained from the gallery in Erevan. This contains within it Jakulov's account of his artistic activities between 1918 and 1928 which is directly relevant to the development of Le Pas d'Acier and contains a brief account of the ballet. This account is however, almost identical to Jakulov's article on the ballet published in the Soviet journal Rabis in 1928.

The Gallery also holds a collection of Jakulov's letters from 1927. The study was not able to gain very much information on these and they are a potentially interesting resource for further research. They were apparently written from Paris in 1927 and are said to concern 'Mir Iskustva' (World of Art).

In addition to primary source materials the archive in Erevan also holds secondary source materials on Jakulov that do not appear to be available in the West. S. Aladzhalov's⁶⁵ work, Georgii Iakulov published in Erevan in 1971 and E. Kostina's Georgii Iakulov published in Erevan in 1979, have been invaluable to the study. It was not possible to obtain copies of these books in their entirety but photocopies of the chapters directly concerning Jakulov's stage designs and activities during the period 1920-1928 were obtained from the archive and translated for the study by Margaret Jones.

This archive clearly holds material of value to further research on Jakulov. In addition to the materials already mentioned, holdings apparently include works by some of Jakulov's contemporaries, such as the memoirs of V. Komardenkov and an article (on Jakulov?) by G.Liloyan in the newspaper Kommunist, (Erevan: 13.01.1984).

⁶⁵ Aladzhalov was a theatre designer and writer who worked with Jakulov.

3.8.8 Other International Collections Consulted

In its pursuit of sources for surviving material and wider contextual understanding, the study consulted a wide range of international collections. For example, archives with known collections on Constructivism were consulted including the University of East Anglia who hold a reconstruction of Liubov Popova's seminal Constructivist set for Magnaminous Cuckold (1922), the Bauhaus Archives in Berlin, the Theatre Institute, University of Koln, the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Akademie der Kunste, Berlin, and Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar. A number of newspaper archives and photographic collections were also consulted in pursuit of photographs, including the Hulton-Getty Picture Library which holds the negatives of London theatre photographer, 'Sasha' on Le Pas d'Acier.

3.9 Contemporary Newspapers and Journals

Selected London reviews of Le Pas d'Acier are reproduced by dance historian Nesta Macdonald in her book 'Diaghilev Observed' (1975). Each of these reviews was checked in its original for completeness and many further reviews were located at the British Newspaper Library, and at the British Library. French reviews were obtained from the British Newspaper Library and with the help of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. One American review of the London premiere was also found. The reviews collected together by the study are reproduced in Appendix 7.

3.10 Published Accounts by Participants and Eyewitnesses

A search was made of the memoirs and other writings by company members, associates and likely eyewitnesses. Accounts of Le Pas d'Acier were found in several autobiographies by company members and in Serge Lifar's biography of Diaghilev. Interesting and informative accounts were also found in the writings of Boris Kochno, Natalia Goncharova and Michael Larionov, and in accounts by

eyewitness historians, W.A Probert and Cyril Beaumont. This material is discussed in Chapter 2 and reproduced in Appendices 10, 11 and 12.

3.11 Living Testimony

Surviving participants and eyewitnesses were searched for largely by seeking advice from curators and dance historians. One of the principal dancers in the production, Alexandra Danilova, was alive at the beginning of the study but was of a great age and she did not reply to a written enquiry sent to her in New York. Dame Alicia Markova however, who danced in the corps as a teenager, kindly looked at material sent to her by the study and granted an interview. Dance historian Nesta Macdonald, who saw the ballet aged thirteen, was very helpful in identifying those still living who may have first hand knowledge of the production. She led the study to historian Joan Lawson who saw the ballet in London and kindly endeavoured to recall the production. Dame Ninette de Valois and other surviving members of the Diaghilev company were also consulted, but no new information was obtained. An account of the study's interview with Dame Alicia Markova, and correspondence with Joan Lawson, appears in Appendix 13 and is discussed in Chapter 2.

BECTU - The Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union, London, was contacted in an attempt to find any surviving theatre technician or other participant/eyewitness who may have worked on the production of Le Pas d'Acier at the Princes Theatre. One of the founder unions of BECTU was in existence in 1927 and was very active in the theatre. They kindly printed a letter requesting information on the ballet in the Union's journal Stage, Screen and Radio, in December 1996. It brought a response from a dancer who had performed in several Massine ballets but unfortunately nothing relating to Le Pas d'Acier. The study has not however, carried out similar research in Paris.

3.12 Individual Experts

In addition to individuals mentioned in section 3.11 above, many others were contacted in pursuit of information regarding possible sources and for contextual advice. Information acquired is referenced in the text of the thesis.

3.13 Other Sources

A wide range of other sources were consulted during the study. These have included the following:

Sotheby's of London sale catalogues were an important source of information in tracking ownership of Diaghilev materials. Sotheby's were contacted directly with regard to their sale of materials associated with the production. Although Sotheby's could not reveal the owner of the model auctioned by them in 1984 they confirmed that it was not sold and was returned to its original owner. However, they kindly gave their last colour transparency that was taken of the model at the time of the auction. This enabled a detailed study of the surviving model that was otherwise inaccessible.

The Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson Theatre Collection were helpful in obtaining the location of the London 'Princes Theatre', now the Shaftesbury, and the sizes of the stages on which the ballet was performed.

Colin Maxwell, the head of the model room at the Opera House, Covent Garden, London, and Antony Waterman, draughtsman and model maker, were consulted. They answered general questions about how stage set models are constructed, the function they have in the process of creating a ballet and whether there are conventions that Jakulov may have been following. They kindly considered the problems faced by the study, and looked at its research materials. They gave opinions as to the nature of the set design, the likely authenticity of the Sotheby's model, and advice on building a model reconstruction.

3.14 Some Particular Problems of Source Materials and their Categorisation

3.14.1 Copies and Primary Source Status

Where possible the study has always sought to examine original items. However, there have been circumstances where this has not been possible and only photocopies, or photographic copies have been available to the study. For example, manuscripts studied at the Prokofiev archive were copies of originals held by the Prokofiev family and some of the programmes consulted by the study, ie. from Paris and Lausanne, were copies of originals. It was not always possible for the study to gain access to original documents. Technically therefore, materials studied were not always primary source material but copies of primary source materials⁶⁶. However, the nature of the photocopies and their archival history gave the study no reason for concern over authenticity of content.

As explained above, the surviving model has not been accessible and has been studied purely through a large format professional colour transparency taken by Sotheby's when it last came up for auction in 1984. While original drawings have been seen, detailed study was only possible through photographic copies acquired from the archives.

The study has therefore identified primary source materials, but has not always been able to study the original object and has often only made a detailed study of copies of original materials. This has produced some minor problems which the study acknowledges and these are referred to as and when they arise in the thesis.

⁶⁶ This issue is discussed by June Layson in Adshead and Layson (eds) (1995) p.21.

4. Outline of Thesis Structure and Chapters.

This study is arranged into two volumes and is accompanied by a model reconstruction of Jakulov's set design for Le Pas d'Acier. Volume 1 is divided into four chapters that refer to three distinct stages in the study from the gathering and analysis of source materials, through contextual study to the application of research findings and interpretation involved in the reconstruction.

In Chapter 1 the thesis identifies and analyses the primary source materials located by the study. Chapter 2 examines and discusses eye-witness and participant accounts that were written after the final performances of the work in 1929. In Chapter 3 the study looks at its contextual research, concentrating on Jakulov's oeuvre and the nature of Russian Constructivism in the 1920s. Chapter 4 discusses in detail the study's reconstruction of Jakulov's set design. These chapters are followed by a Conclusion as to the results of the research, its achievements and limitations, and with suggestions for further research.

Volume 2 contains 14 appendices. The majority of these reproduce the research materials located by the study and discussed in the thesis. They also include, in appendix 14, the study's outline reconstructions of the 1925 action and designs in comparison with those of the production in 1927 revealing what can be ascertained from source materials and identifying gaps in knowledge.

Chapter 1:

The Nature, Problems and Interpretation of the Primary Source Materials.

1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to identify surviving primary source materials for Le Pas d'Acier (1927), arrange them into convenient categories and discuss specific problems of interpretation as they arise. As discussed in section 4.5 of the Introduction, this does not include non-contemporary¹ eye-witness and participant accounts which are discussed in the next chapter. The majority of source materials have been located through archive research. The reader is referred back to section 5 of the Introduction, for an explanation of sources. Where possible the study has collated copies of primary source documents and photographic records of visual material; these appear in appendices or as figures in the text.

Some of the material located and discussed below has not been directly examined, such as the surviving costumes held by the Australian National Gallery. Also, in some cases only copies of original documents have been accessible for study. This is noted in the text as and when it arises. Similarly, where dating, origin, attribution or authenticity is in doubt it is specifically noted under the source material in question.

As discussed in the Introduction, the study defines primary source material conventionally² as 'documentary evidence' of the work dating from the time of creation and production. Within this category however, there are many different types of material, including: programmes, photographs, designer's drawings, model set design, music scores, costumes, letters, interviews, and reviews.

¹The study includes as contemporary to the work, any materials emerging during its process of creation through to its last performance in 1929.

² As defined by Adshead and Layson, (1983), p.15-16.

While some materials are ‘remains’ of a performance, such as the surviving costumes; others belong more to the creative process such as the drawings, and the model set design. The study conceives of primary source material therefore, as relating to the *work* as opposed to purely its performance. Reviews for example, often provide contemporary descriptions of a performance but are not part of the performance in the limited sense. Similarly, letters, such as surviving correspondence from Prokofiev to Massine, Diaghilev and Jakulov concerning the work, may refer to the work, but are not of the work. Clearly, material such as letters and interviews, while not remains of a performance, are primary source material for the historian because they may enable understanding of the *work* in its wider sense, and in its historical sense. They can provide insights into the nature of the collaborative process, intentions, background context, struggles and disagreements that may have affected the development of the work.

As discussed in the Introduction, the question arises as to what extent the documentation gathered during the course of historical research is a process of ‘finding’ a work, and to what extent it is the process of assembling building blocks for a historiographical construction about the work. This chapter aims therefore, to explore the materials located by the study both as sources of information, and in terms of the interpretative problems they raise.

2. Visual Records

Surviving visual records consist of the model set, costumes, photographs of the model set, photographs of the performers in costumes, and Jakulov’s drawings. The drawings and model are undated, but have generally been labeled with the date of the ballet’s production as 1927. However, with the help of material found at the Prokofiev archive in London, the study has concluded that in fact most of the drawings, and the model itself, were produced in 1925. The reasons for this are discussed below.

2.1 Black and White Photograph of the Model Set. (See **fig.0.1**).

There are no known surviving photographs of the actual performance set.

Therefore, for the purposes of understanding and reconstructing the set design, one of the most important pieces of documentary evidence is the black and white photograph of Jakulov's model shown in **fig. 0.1**

The original photograph in the Kochno Collection in Paris is of high quality. Copies are also held by the Victoria and Albert Theatre Museum in London. The archives in Paris and London date the photograph as 1927, but this could simply refer to the date of the ballet. The study has found no records to explain the history or function of the photograph. It is possible that it was used to communicate the set design to company members in the early stages of the ballet's rehearsals in 1927. Diaghilev's regisseur, Serge Grigoriev, refers in his memoirs to the company being shown a photograph of the set design that was to be used for the ballet and it maybe that this is the photograph to which he refers³. It appears to be the only photographic record of the set design and it has frequently been reproduced as the record of Le Pas d'Acier's set. The study's research indicates however, that it is a photograph of Jakulov's model that was constructed in Paris in 1925 and that the production set of 1927 was an adaptation of this design. The evidence for this is discussed below.

As the surviving model, discussed in the following section, (see **fig.0.2**) has lost several of the original features, this photograph is the only known record of Jakulov's intentions for the set design. It shows for example, a use of gauzes that has been explored by the study and is discussed in Chapter 4.

2.2 Colour Photograph of The Surviving Model (See **fig. 0.2**)

As discussed in section 5 of the Introduction, the study has not been able to gain access to a model that is thought to be Jakulov's original and is privately owned. It

last came up for auction at Sotheby's in 1984 but was unsold and returned to its owner. Sotheby's could not disclose the name of the owner but enquiries sent via Sotheby's, elicited no response. The model was originally part of the Serge Lifar collection, and according to the Archives de la Ville de Lausanne, the model is owned by Lifar's widow, the Countess d'Aldfeldt. A letter of enquiry sent directly to her simply referred the study back to Sotheby's. Fortunately, Sotheby's kindly gave their remaining 5x4 colour transparency taken of the surviving model when it came up for auction in 1984. A large print was made enabling detailed study. Given its history as part of the Serge Lifar collection, the study has no reason to doubt its authenticity. However, there are certain discrepancies with **fig. 0.1**. The train for example, does not appear to be the same in both photographs and may perhaps be a replacement. It would appear that other parts of the model, such as the pulley system for the overhead wheels, have been crudely repaired during the course of its history. Some other parts remain broken and conveniently reveal the means of construction. The colour photograph is very useful for showing in detail how some of the model was made and gives an indication of the colours used in painting its various parts.

Prior to the 1984 auction, the model was exhibited in Strasbourg in 1969. The exhibition catalogue⁴ lists two accompanying plans that explain its construction. Unfortunately, these plans do not appear to have accompanied the model when it came up for auction in 1984 and archive research has thrown no light on their whereabouts.

The study has found two references to the model in letters from Jakulov to Prokofiev from 1925. His letter of September 1st 1925 (See Appendix 4 section C) indicates that he was at that time working on a model. His letter of October 12th 1925 (See Appendix 4 section D) refers to taking 'S.P' (presumably Sergei Pavlovich Diaghilev) to see the model. However, this letter also introduces the

³ Grigoriev, (1953) p.238.

⁴ Ville de Strasbourg, Deuxième Exposition Européenne Les Ballets Russes de Serge Diaghilev 1909-1929, 15 Mai – 15 Septembre 1969, Cat.ref. 435.

possibility of some complexities with regard to the model. Jakulov complains: “*To make the model with people who do not know the first thing about art or theatre and who know even less about my work and such an exotic thing as our ballet is unthinkable*”. Jakulov may be referring to envisaged problems with the plans for building the actual set. This is one of several indicators in this letter that Jakulov was at odds either with Diaghilev, or with others taking decisions about the production. This is further discussed below.

The main question to arise in connection with the model, concerned its relationship to the performance set. The study had at first assumed that the model would be a replica of the performance set. However, detailed study of review and other descriptions began to suggest otherwise. The study first noted for example, that it could not find any description of the set that referred to the train. Given its size and prominence, this was difficult to explain. Dating the model to 1925 means however, that it belongs with other materials produced during the same period, including the 1925 scenario for ‘Ursignol’⁵ (found by the study in the Prokofiev Archive, reproduced in appendix 2A and discussed below in section 4.1). This scenario features a scene corresponding to the musical section title of ‘The Arrival of the Train’. However, one of the differences between the 1925 scenario and the section titles of the Diaghilev production in 1927 is the replacement of this scene with one entitled “The Hawker and the Countesses” and the 1927 program titles make no reference to a train scene. In the absence of any contemporary description that mentions a train onstage, the study has concluded that it was not part of the ballet as produced in 1927. This put the whole relationship of the model to the performance set into question.

The study has attempted to discover the differences between Jakulov’s original conception for ‘Ursignol’ in 1925 and the final designs used in the performances of Le Pas d’Acier. This has been important not only in terms of establishing a historiography of the ballet, but also in terms of the practical reconstruction of the set design as a model. This is fully discussed in Chapter 4. The methodology for

this comparison involved a careful analysis of review descriptions to ascertain the features and qualities of the performance set. It also became clear however, that in addition to confirming or questioning the similarity of Jakulov's model to the performance set, descriptions of the production set must also inform interpretations of the model's intentions. A potentially complex and in some ways problematic interaction of source materials was beginning to emerge.

Descriptions of the production set were certainly influencing the way the study was interpreting the model. For example, the surviving model is painted a dense red, but the critics describe the performance set as a grey⁶ or drab. This confirmed the study's own doubts about the authenticity of the red background as an intention for the set. Fig.0.1 indicates that gauze was used to cover the background on the original model. The study considered whether Jakulov may have had a red background to explore the use of red light in evoking the factory forge in act 2. It became increasingly clear that there was much on Jakulov's model that required interpretation, that its intentions, as well as its relationship to the production set, were not entirely self-evident. The study's interpretations of Jakulov's model, and of the likely adaptations in production, are discussed in Chapter 4.

2.3 The Drawings

A number of Jakulov's drawings relating to Le Pas d'Acier were held by Boris Kochno after Diaghilev's death in 1929. They now form part of the Kochno Collection at the archives of the Paris Opera. When major international exhibitions of Diaghilev material have been held a few drawings from private collections have also surfaced. The study has collected together copies of all the surviving drawings that have been found during the research. These are reproduced in Appendix 3 with source details.

⁵ The original title of the ballet, see Introduction section 1.

⁶ See also Grigoriev, (1953) p.240. He states that the backcloth was grey.

The first major problem in 'reading' the drawings is that they tend to be dated 1927, but again this could simply refer to the date of the ballet's production, and very little appears to be known about their history. The study's research has gradually dated most of the drawings and their relationship to each other emerged during the course of detailed study. This is fully discussed in Chapter 4. However, for the purposes of identifying and discussing the material in this chapter, the study keeps to its original ordering which was based upon the study's interpretation as to which point in the action they referred to, starting with Drawing A for Act 1, through the entr'acte to drawings relating to Act 2. Again, it was research finds at the Prokofiev Archive that enabled the study to come to a better understanding of the place of these drawings in the creative process. This is discussed below.

Potentially, Jakulov's sketches give a great deal of information regarding the ballet's original intentions, if not its realized form. They present however, many difficulties in terms of reading and interpretation. During the study, Jakulov has emerged very much as a rather haphazard presenter of material, often in very sketchy and note form. For example, it would appear that he was the 'ideas person' behind the creation of the scenario, and yet it was Prokofiev who organized this material into a clearly typed set of descriptions that could be sent to Diaghilev. (This is discussed below). Annotations on the drawings are in Russian and, as discussed in the Introduction, it was necessary for the study to work closely with a Russian translator. This was also not straightforward, as Jakulov's handwriting can be extremely difficult to decipher. The translator's willingness to become very familiar with the idiosyncrasies of Jakulov's style and handwriting, combined with the study's research and background knowledge, enabled the gradual translation and interpretation of the material. The translations that have emerged are provided in Appendix 3. Where there has been any degree of uncertainty it is noted in the translation.

The drawings fall into several distinct approaches. There are for example, sketches where Jakulov appears to be working through particular action moments in terms of the design, (see for example, Drawing C), others where the set becomes very detailed, (see for example Drawings D1 and D2), and others where the aim appears

to be to produce a dynamic impression of the set in movement (see for example, Drawing F1 and F2). There are also a number of costume designs showing some of the main characters from act 1⁷ (see Drawings G-H) and two surviving sketches that appear to give some details of lighting and set construction (see Drawings I and J). In addition, one drawing has survived that shows dancers in act 1, (see drawing K) and has the quality of a drawing in its own right, rather than acting as a sketch exploration or descriptor.

In studying the drawings together, and in conjunction with the model and other source material, particularly the 1925 scenario, it becomes clear that the drawings most probably had different functions and belong to different parts of the creative process. Only one of the drawings however, has the clear purpose of explaining how to construct a part of the set (drawing J) and that drawing, without further information, has remained the most obscure. In the main, Jakulov's drawings of the set appear to have two functions; some *evoke* the design in action, and some *describe* the design in action. It is only the model that details the overall design in isolation. Apart from the costume designs, Jakulov's drawings are notably concerned with the interactions of set and action. This is very much in line with the Constructivist approach to set design discussed in Chapter 3.

2.3.1 Drawing A(1) and A(2) (See Appendix 3)

These drawings depict a specific scene 'The Arrival of the Train', from Act 1. A(1) is the drawing held by the Kochno collection in Paris while A(2) is a version signed by Jakulov, found at the Prokofiev Archive. They are virtually identical apart from the presence of annotations on A(1).

These drawings can be confidently date to 1925 when the scene entitled 'The Arrival of the Train' appears on the musical outline and scenario (see Appendix 2A). Presumably, Jakulov produced one drawing for Diaghilev (A1 that is now in

⁷ Interestingly, no drawings have been found that show the factory act costumes, indicating perhaps that more material almost certainly existed and has either been lost or is in as yet undiscovered collections.

the Kochno Collection) and the other one (A2 now in the Prokofiev Archive) for Prokofiev. The lack of annotations on A2 is perhaps because Prokofiev already knew and understood the intentions of the scene as it corresponds to the scenario he co-wrote and sent to Diaghilev on 11th August 1925 (see below). The drawing held by the Prokofiev Archive was found with another drawing (see D2) under correspondence for 1925 and has a photocopy of a postage stamp attached. The date is not clear, but it appears to be the 2nd September, and whoever originally archived this material has concluded that the date was 02-09-1925. This date is wholly consistent with other material that dates the most active phase of Prokofiev and Jakulov's collaborative creation of the ballet as August to October 1925, when they were both in Paris.

These drawings show a platform on the left and a train on the right. Two signals appear on either side, one of which has an 'arm' that clearly relates it to a railway signal announcing the arrival of a train. Jakulov notes, (in the annotations) and draws, exactly 28 dancers on stage. They are taking part in a dance of wheels and levers, forming two groups, one described as speculators⁸, scatter out from the train, while the other, the public, run to meet the train.

The 1925 scenario describes the train approaching from the right and speculators spilling out, while from the opposite side hungry women come to meet them with their items for bartering⁹. This drawing, showing the train entering from the right and the speculators on the train and rolling onto the forestage, clearly relates to this moment in the scenario. In understanding this drawing therefore, it is important to place it in conjunction with the original 1925 scenario, as opposed to the 1927 production of the ballet which abandoned this scene¹⁰.

This appears to be the only surviving drawing that illustrates act 1. However, when read in conjunction with the 1925 scenario and musical outline it can be seen that the arrival of the train follows a prologue of silhouettes, (which presumably took

⁸ Speculators in Russia during the early 1920s were people who would buy food and take it to places of famine where people would exchange whatever they owned.

⁹ See Appendix 2A, typed page 2, second paragraph.

place behind a gauze), corresponding to section one of the music. The Arrival of the Train was therefore, intended to be the first real scene of Act 1. Judging from the 1925 scenario, the train was most probably intended to remain on stage throughout the first act. However, this drawing does not give all the set detail that the scenario demands of the Act; ladders, a rope and a board for crawling down are also required. The intention of the drawing therefore, would appear to be to note a moment in the action rather than the particularities of the set. As already noted, a preoccupation with the action through which the functional set is found, is a characteristic of all the drawings.

In 1920s Russia, trains had a particular significance, not only as heralds of the new age, but as the means by which news of the revolution and its ideals were spread. The train was a potent symbol. This is further discussed in Chapter 4. Although almost certainly absent in the realised ballet, the train appears to have remained important as an idea, quality or impetus in the work. For example, not only did critics recognise a basic association with railways in the design, but the reviews indicate that the production set introduced pistons puffing smoke into Act 2. Interestingly, Diaghilev, in explaining Le Pas d'Acier to the press, related it to The Train Bleu of 1924, another ballet in which there is in a sense both a presence and absence of a train¹¹.

A point of particular interest is Jakulov's annotation, on drawing A(1), concerning the "*dance of wheels and levers*" which he describes as "*depicted by the movements of arms and legs*". The idea of the dancers depicting machinery through

¹⁰ The reasons for concluding that the train was abandoned have been given under the discussion of the surviving model, and are further explored in Appendix 14 and Chapter 4.

¹¹ Diaghilev saw Le Pas d'Acier as an equivalent in some ways to Nijinska's 1924 ballet Le Train Bleu in terms of its 'modernity' and break with the past. He wrote in his interview with the Observer (July 3rd 1927) that when he produced Le Train Bleu he wanted to show the Deauville of the day, and with Le Pas d'Acier he wanted to produce a ballet that would show the Russia of today. Interestingly perhaps, both ballets have absent but thematically present trains. There is no train in Le Train Bleu, and Diaghilev wrote in his preface: "The first point about Le Train Bleu is that there is no blue train in it. This being the age of speed, it has already reached its destination and disembarked its passengers. These are to be seen on a beach which does not exist in front of a casino which exists still less. Overhead passes an airplane which you do not see, and the plot resembles nothing." Propert, (1931), p.29.

movement was certainly a part of the realised ballet; it was central to Massine's choreography for act 2 and is described by the contemporary critics. This is one of several indications on the drawings that this basic idea of the 'Machine Dance' where dancers imitate the movements and movement qualities of machines¹² was envisaged by Jakulov at the outset of the ballet's design.

2.3.2 Drawing B (See Appendix 3)

This drawing is held by the Kochno Collection in Paris and has been reproduced in Boris Kochno, (1970). It refers to two different points in the ballet. The top drawing is entitled the 'entre-act' – and the 'Reconstruction of the set' to a tempo approximating a 'marche militaire'. This would appear to relate to scene eight of Prokofiev's 1925 musical outline, entitled 'Rearranging the Set', which he also labels as 'Interval' (See Appendix 2A). This became section seven of the music, entitled 'Reconstruction of the Decorations' (see Appendix 2B). In the ballet this scene, as envisaged by Jakulov in this drawing, and by the 1925 scenario, almost certainly did not take place. On the Paris programme section seven is entitled 'Ensemble', and there appears to have been a conventional interval¹³.

Again this drawing needs to be read in conjunction with the 1925 scenario. Jakulov shows the dancers changing the scenery for the second part of the ballet, and literally constructing the factory set. This is specified in the 1925 scenario (see appendix 2A) where the 'firemen' are envisaged as the dancers who change the set. In his general annotations at the top of the drawing, Jakulov states that the wheels are to come down from above on shafts. He labels the figures climbing up the signal pole as the 'Fireman' and 'the person with grappling tool'. Firemen certainly

¹² The 'Machine Dance' and its importance in Russian theatrical Constructivism is discussed in Chapter 3.

¹³ Prokofiev (1960) p75, notes that his 'Divertissement' was played between the two acts of *Le Pas d'Acier*. American critic, John Martin, in discussing the 1931 production (*New York Times* April 26th 1931) states that the Diaghilev production did not play the music through without an intermission. Given that the entire ballet is only about 30 minutes long, this was presumably to enable scene changes.

appeared in the realized ballet¹⁴, but nothing has been found to substantiate the idea they climbed up parts of the set, apart, that is, from mounting the platforms, or that the décor was actively constructed by the dancers.

In the annotations Jakulov states that the set consists of four parts; a static area for the ballet work with an installation at floor level; a mock small ladder/staircase on wheels, mobile (machine tool with pedals); wheels coming down from above on shafts; and lastly, mock lighting devices coming down from above. Jakulov refers to items coming down from above, which presumably means they were to descend from a gridiron¹⁵.

Jakulov also notes on this drawing that the moving devices are to be kept to a minimum and support a range of actions, to serve the interests of economy. This is very much in line with Constructivist ideology in Russian theatre productions and is further discussed in Chapter 4.

The lower sketch on Drawing B is labeled as the finale and the dance with pedals, both of which are described but not detailed in the 1925 scenario. Wheels still appear to be being moved up and down transmission belts and the row of lights, described as rotating, or revolving wheels that light up, has descended from above. The idea of everything being in motion is clear.

Again, the function of these two drawings would appear to be to show action rather than purely the set as such. There appears to be a fairly complex use of the transmission belts and possibly a use of hoisting tackle¹⁶. It can also be seen that the machine tools on the left and right hand sides of the front stage are on small wheels or castors, as is the mobile stairs. From such details it is clear that Jakulov

¹⁴ They are mentioned by the critics. Several of the French critics, who had the programme scene descriptions, noted that the 'Devils' were dressed as firemen. See for example, La Revue Universelle, in Appendix 7, 1st paragraph, lines 9-11.

¹⁵ Plank structure supporting mechanism for drop-scenes.

¹⁶ Hoisting tackle is described in the 1925 scenario. See Appendix 2A, typed page 3, 'Finale'. In the drawings something possibly resembling hoisting tackle appears over the back platform and

has worked out many, if not all, of the practicalities involved in operating the set. Yet the function of the drawing does not appear to be primarily that of expounding the workings of the set; it is rather the spirit of the action and interaction with the set that emerges. The study has concluded that Jakulov has positioned the back platform over to one side, not to indicate its position for the act, but to explore the action taking place on it. A dancer appears to be climbing down from it and when read in conjunction with the 1925 scenario a sense of the action flow, indicated by the sketch emerges. The exploratory nature of the drawings, and their relationship to action flow became increasingly clear during the course of the study; this is further discussed in Chapter 4.

2.3.3 Drawing C (See Appendix 3)

In this drawing Jakulov appears to be isolating particular moments in the second act where groups of dancers operate, or perform on, parts of the set. Space is defined in planes or layers, and by activities and differentiated groups of dancers. The preoccupation with the set as apparatus, rather than as decoration or location, with its possibilities for numerous dynamic interactions with choreography, and the preoccupation with movement itself, is apparent.

From the annotations, we see that the set is divided into three planes or layers; the first is the foreground, the second the front platform, and the third is back behind the gauze. The dancers are divided into men and women. Overall Jakulov notes that the construction of the set is a system of rotating crankshafts and the dancers and the set move together to give an impression “*not of abstract ballet movements but of useful ‘work’*”.

By itself, this drawing is difficult to interpret, even with the annotations. However, it maybe the drawing referred to and explained in the 1925 scenario for Act 2¹⁷.

may have been intended to help with the lifting of the wheel. In the scenario however, it is mentioned only in relation to the finale where it descends over the back platform.

¹⁷ See Appendix 2A, typed page 3, ‘Contents of the 2nd Act, references to “drawing no.1” and “drawing no.2”’.

This refers to ‘drawing 1’, ‘drawing 2’ and ‘drawing 3’, which fits the 3 sections of this drawing that have been labeled in the same way. If so, then this also dates the drawing as 1925¹⁸. By studying the drawing in conjunction with the description in the 1925 scenario, it is possible to appreciate the points in the layered stage action that the drawing illustrates. The scenario explains that the section labeled ‘drawing 1’ (top left) shows “*the first machine, situated near the left wings*” used by four workers at a particular point in the action. The drawing shows two workers manipulating the construction while behind them two workers climb up to the overhead wheel.

The scenario explains that five worker women enter, including the heroine, (the Worker Girl), and work on a milling machine that is seen in silhouette and situated behind the gauze on the highest and most distant platform, as shown in drawing 2 (top right).¹⁹ The scenario’s explanation unfortunately gives little detail of the machine²⁰ but it gives a vivid description of the spatial relationships and the importance of the use of space and lighting in the design. It also reveals how integral the set design is to the action.

The scenario describes ‘drawing 3’ (at the centre of the sketch) as “*a new machine by the right wings*”. The scenario specifies that the heroine is on the top of a small platform besides this machine. From this drawing the small platform would appear to be the mobile stairs (see the ‘3rd moment’ at the bottom of this sketch).

The ‘moments’ listed, therefore, reflect the action flow achieved by selective lighting of one area after another, indicated in the scenario. When read in

¹⁸ Prokofiev’s letter with the scenario for act 1 is dated 11th August 1925. In this letter, he promises to send to Diaghilev all the material for act two in four days. Although the scenario referring to this drawing has been archived with the scenario for act 1, it is not listed as an enclosure in the letter of 11th August. It is probable however, that this material has been grouped together because of its close proximity in origin, as is promised by Prokofiev’s letter.

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that the notion of a milling machine was also central to Popova’s designs for The Magnanimous Cuckold (1922). This play told the tale of a miller and featured mill chutes and wheels in the design. It was of seminal influence in terms of Constructivist theatre design and is discussed in Chapter 3.

²⁰ The study has concluded that the plain white construction shown at the very front of the model is probably the realisation of the scenario’s Milling Machine.

conjunction with the 1925 scenario, Drawing B relates to a powerfully layered stage space, with space used for visual and dramatic effect. The action it depicts revolves around the hero and heroine's separation. The hero, on the central platform, sees his beloved on the far platform but "*is separated from her by empty space and the gauze*"²¹. Again, Jakulov appears to be working out the action flow in this drawing in relation to the development of set parts.

2.3.4 Drawing D(1) and D(2) (See Appendix 3)

These drawings show the dancers at work in the factory in act 2. D(1) is held by the Kochno collection in Paris while D(2) reproduces a second version signed by Jakulov, that was found at the Prokofiev Archive in London. The study has concluded that these drawings date from late August 1925 due to the post mark attached to the drawings in the Prokofiev Archive. (This has been discussed above in relation to drawing A2). The two drawings are very similar but not identical. Both have annotations that refer to numbered parts of their sketch, but the numbering and annotations differ slightly.

Dancers hammer, and perform a variety of actions on different parts of the set. Interestingly, on D(1) the dancer that emerges through the base of the signal is 'pencilled in' – the only figure to appear in this way. This may be an indication that the base of the signal was intended to be partially transparent²².

In the annotations on D(1) Jakulov refers to several dances: "*dance with pedals*"; "*dance with the wheel which puts the set into operation*"; "*dance on mobile stairs with a wheel*". Also noted are "*climbing on a ladder*" and "*beating*". Each of these has been numbered and so can easily be located on the drawing. Also noted is a

²¹ See Appendix 2A typed page 3, first paragraph.

²² The photograph of the surviving model reveals that the original material used here has been lost. On the black and white photograph its material is unclear but it is clearly of a different nature than the material filling the foot of the round headed signal on the opposite side of the stage. The material used for the round headed signal appears to be paper judging from the black and white photograph and so again the concern would appear to be with semi transparency but of a different kind.

“dance with a turning gear wheel that puts the set into motion”. This is described as *“not necessary on the sketch as it will be on the second landing”*.

Drawing D(2), held by the Prokofiev archive, appears slightly ‘rougher’ and omits a number 4 in the progress of annotations from 1-7. It is virtually identical in terms of its specifications. It refers however to a *“dance around a wheel with drive belt”* rather than *“dance with the wheel which puts the set into operation”* but the same wheel, (ie. on the centre of the front platform), is identified. In Drawing B drive belts are shown connecting the overhead wheels to this centre front platform wheel. It appears from the drawings that Jakulov envisaged a mechanical set that could be set into motion by the dancers from certain key points. In the model however, the wheel on the centre front platform has its own separate pulley strings, and there is no evidence of any intentions for the transmission belts to link different levels of the set together. The study has concluded that Jakulov simplified this conception at the model stage of development. These drawings are consistent with others in showing the dancers operating the set. As regards the realized ballet, it is clear from review descriptions that the set moved and dancers wielded hammers, but not that they operated the set to the extent shown on the drawings.

These drawings clearly relate to the second act and would appear, (they are labeled ‘finale’) to be further on in the action than the early stage of Act 2 illustrated in Drawing C.²³ However, this drawing is far more detailed than some of the other sketches and may represent a later stage in the design process. The mobile stairs are no longer shown on wheels, though the ‘machine tools’ remain mobile. The hoisting tackle that appears on the model and is referred to in the scenario is present and appears to be attached to a block weight.

²³ As noted above, the 1925 scenario appears to refer to Drawing C and describes its action as at the start of act 2.

2.3.5 Drawing E (See Appendix 3)

This drawing is from a private collection²⁴ and has proved inaccessible. Although it has been reproduced in an exhibition catalogue, (where it is undated) its nature, with writing in white gouache on black paper, makes deciphering the annotations particularly difficult. However, some progress has been made in translating the readable sections (see Appendix 3).

The drawing shows the set as an elaborate multi-leveled construction with dancers on the ground and mounting ladders through the height of the stage space. It illustrates an architectural conception of the stage space and is an epitome of the Constructivist ideal for theatre design. In the 1920s some of the designs of Alexandra Exter represent a similar ideal and use of space, though were most probably unrealized, such as her multi-leveled designs with converging ladders for ‘Satanic Ballet’ (1922)²⁵. However, the main parts of the drawing are set within a circular containment within the shape of a proscenium arch; it is as if Jakulov is looking at the ballet through a lens. The drawing makes an interesting reference to the lights, described in terms of flood lighting and “*shining forms that give off light*”.

The intention of this drawing would appear to be to give a sense of the overall visual impact of the setting and action, perhaps giving an indication of the depth effects Jakulov hoped to achieve. Dancers are massed in the foreground while others mount the ladders and platforms. The set appears far more multi-leveled than the model or the other drawings indicate. It may be that it is an early conceptual drawing that came to be simplified as the design emerged. Alternatively, it may be a later drawing, seeking to represent the impression created by multiple

²⁴ From the Lobanov-Rostovsky collection, reproduced in Russian Stage Design, Mississippi Museum of Art, 1982, p.320. Mr Lobanov was contacted by the study but the original drawing was crated and inaccessible. The Mississippi Museum of art was also contacted but they had not kept photographic or other records.

²⁵ A work designed for Kasian Goleizovsky’s Moscow Chamber Ballet, with music by Alexander Scriabin. It was a wooden construction with multiple ladders, ropes and cables. It is not known if this design was ever staged. See: E.Souritz ‘Constructivism and Dance’ in Baer (1992) p.128-129.

gauzes and lighting effects. The study considered whether this may be a later drawing exploring adaptations for the production set, but the reviews do not support such a radical departure from the model. This is further discussed in Chapter 4.

The study considered whether this may have been wrongly attributed to Le Pas d'Acier but the annotations refer to features of the design that recur in other sketches, such as the idea of a set in motion, transparent screens, and to the basics of the costumes. In the annotations, Jakulov sees the costumes as breaking down into three categories. The first he labels as 'improvisation'. This perhaps refers to characters in the first act where the clothing included 'improvised' dress, such as the lampshades for hats. The second category he calls 'prozodezhda', a word used in Russia at the time for production clothing, and linked especially to the designs of the Constructivist artists Liubov Popova and Vavara Stepanova²⁶. It is possible these became realized as the shiny metallic costumes of some of the characters that appear in act 1 (see photograph 5 in Appendix 6). Jakulov links this category of costumes to 'NEP', Lenin's New Economic Policy that affected Russian life profoundly in the 1920s²⁷. The third category is labeled working clothes and 'Sunday Bests'. The idea of costumes based on 'Sunday Bests' is not specifically mentioned in the 1925 scenario. In the realized ballet however, it could be reconciled with the 'deer skin' costumes worn by Serge Lifar and Liubov Tchernicheva in the scene that begins act 2, 'Le Beguin', (see photographs 7 and 8). This may just possibly be of significance in attempting to date the drawing, as the scene of 'Le Beguin' was almost certainly an invention of 1927. Alternatively however, 'Le Beguin' may have emerged out of earlier material.

²⁶In the theatre the first realisation of this concept came in Liubov Popova's designs for Meyerhold's production of The Magnanimous Cuckold of 1922. Stepanova also argued for utilitarian clothing that would be determined –in terms of style and design- by function. She published her concept of 'prozodezhda' in an article of 1923: 'Present Day Dress – Production Clothing', (Kostyum segodnyashnego dnya – prozodezhda) LEF, no.2, 1923, pp.65-8. See Lodder, 1983, p.146 ff.

²⁷ Lenin's New Economic Policy aimed at temporarily liberalising the Soviet economy to enable growth following the Civil War. It lasted from 1921-1928. NEP allowed producers to sell products

Overall, the study has concluded that the very general nature of the descriptions here, as opposed to the way Jakulov annotates other drawings, most probably indicates an earlier date for this drawing. It may be one of the drawings which which Jakulov claimed to have ‘ignited’ Diaghilev in 1925²⁸.

Perhaps the most important thing that emerges with this drawing is the idealism of the Constructivist aesthetic. Through this drawing, we can appreciate the nature of Jakulov’s aspiration. When looking at the sketches together, the stark contrast between this drawing and some of the more detailed illustrations of the set in action is apparent. There is a sense in which a functional utilitarianism in real space and an elaborate vision of structures in potential space strive for supremacy within Jakulov’s Constructivist approach. The idea of the ballet as an “exotic”²⁹ conception emerges in Jakulov’s letter to Prokofiev of October 12th 1925, and yet this is perhaps the only sketch that really captures what he may have meant.

2.3.6 Drawing F(1) and Drawing F(2) (See Appendix 3)

These are two similar studies of the décor in which Jakulov appears to have sketched his desired impression of the set in motion for the climactic final scene of the ballet. In both sketches, the shapes and planes are exaggerated and faint figures can be seen mounting stairs that diagonally traverse the height of the space as in Drawing E. The stage space as a whole is divided and articulated with either intersecting structures, or the effects of the dynamism of motion. Ladders or stairways to the side can just be determined, more clearly in F(2). The centrality of the wheel, designed in such a way as to break up and display the dynamic space itself, is particularly notable in F(1); it appears to be moving out of the set on a collision course with the viewer. It is possible that Jakulov intended these drawings

on the open market and permitted a degree of privatization and money was reintroduced to replace the system of barter.

²⁸ See Appendix 4 Jakulov’s letter to Koussikov, which the study has dated as between August and September 1925. Jakulov writes: “after having seen my sketches he (Diaghilev) ignited all over again.”

²⁹ The translated word Jakulov uses to describe “our ballet” in his letter to Prokofiev of 12th October 1925. See Appendix 4.

to show the effects of lighting with the moving props, and possibly smoke effects, and the effects of his wheels in motion. Amidst the dynamism certain dominant forms emerge, such as the wedge shapes in F(1), that can be found within the forms of the model.

One of the more detailed reviews mentions a curtain, “in the style of Picabia” that was encrusted with ropes and edged with tin³⁰. It is perhaps possible that these drawings could relate to Jakulov’s design for a curtain. Unfortunately, the study was not able to obtain more information on F(1), which is in a private collection³¹, and permission could not be obtained for a colour copy of F(2)³².

2.3.7 Drawings G (1) and G (2) (See Appendix 3)

These two drawings show some of Jakulov’s costume designs, and like all of the costume designs located by the study relate to the 1927 production rather than to the characters of the 1925 materials. Drawing G(1) shows a pencil and watercolour drawing with an inscription in Russian translating as ‘The Clockwork Snuffboxes’. This is taken from a reproduction by the Mississippi Museum of Art, the original is in a private collection that the study has not been able to access.³³ If this drawing does relate to Le Pas d’Acier³⁴, the figures perhaps represent a stage in the development from the “hungry women citizens” to the four countesses of the realized ballet. Jakulov’s notes accompanying the 1925 scenario (see Appendix 2A) specify “women in lampshades” as amongst the “hungry women citizens”. In the

³⁰ Henri Malherbe in Le Temps, Paris, Juin 15, 1927 describes this curtain as rising on the second act.

³¹ The Lobanov-Rostovsky collection.

³² F(2) is held by the Archives of the Paris Opera and is printed (surely upside down?) in Les Ballets Russes à l’Opera, the exhibition publication of the Bibliothèque Nationale, of 1992. However, it is not in the public domain and reproduction rights belong to M. Jean de Beistegui, 22 rue Barbet de Jouy 75007 Paris. A request for permission to obtain a colour copy from the archives, received no reply.

³³ It is part of the Lobanov-Rostovsky Collection.

³⁴ The study’s research has revealed no other mention of ‘clockwork snuff boxes’ in relation to the ballet and nothing that relates to three specific female characters in the 1925 materials. However, given the lampshade hats and nature of the dresses, they are likely to be the three other countesses in a scene where there were 4 such characters, ‘The Hawker and the Countesses’, in the 1927

1927 production these characters became the four countesses of the scene entitled ‘The Hawker and the Countesses’, described by critics as wearing multi-coloured garments with lampshades for hats.³⁵ It is clear how colourful and absurd, their costumes would appear in the context of the ballet’s scene and other costumes. In the 1925 scenario they are less prominent, and there are other ‘colourful’ characters, such as sweet-sellers and cigarette-sellers with trays of produce, amongst the traders that are no longer present in 1927. By 1927 a sharp sense of political satire concerning these ladies in lampshades for hats has emerged that is not apparent in the 1925 materials.

Drawing G (2) shows three costume designs. The costume for the Sailor can be seen in realised form in, for example, photographs 1 and 6 (see Appendix 6). Interestingly, the anchor around the sailor’s neck, which is conventionally drawn on this sketch, is formed from a pair of dancers legs on the actual costume³⁶. The figure in a long trench coat and hat with star, may perhaps illustrate the costume for one of the commissars. In the centre there is a lady in a large hat that resembles a lampshade. She holds in her hands something resembling a pole draped in material. The 1925 scenario refers to the women in lampshades. It also notes “*a woman holding a short coat up on a stick like a flag*” which is perhaps featured in this drawing.

production. The lady in the large hat, apparently on the reverse of this drawing, is perhaps the Countess described by the reviews who exchanges items of clothing for food.

³⁵ See for example in Appendix 7- Pierre Lalo writing in the Paris newspaper *Comoedia*, (June 9th 1927), middle of first paragraph – describing the four Countesses “in multicoloured rags with old lampshades for hats” . Also, *Empire News*, July 19th 1927, p.3 “Ladies of society appear with lamp-shades on their heads”.

³⁶ Review descriptions of the choreography of the duet of the Sailor and the Worker Girl, note an acrobatic quality in a scene of sexual conquest described as indecent by several critics. André Levinson noted how Danilova (as the Worker Girl) was “*held in balance, legs villainously spread apart, on the sailor’s tense arm*”,. *Comoedia*, Paris, (Juin 9 1927). Henri Malherbe noted that she was carried off stage astride the sailor’s shoulders, *Le Temps* (Juin 15 1927). The spread-eagled legs of the anchor therefore, may relate to the nature of the role and choreography.

2.3.8 Drawing H (See Appendix 3)

This annotated drawing shows two costume designs. The one on the left would appear to relate to Serge Lifar's costume for 'The Fleeting Romance' (See photographs 7 & 8). These characters do not appear in the 1925 materials. The annotations refer to a cap, to a short jacket of deerskin and to the colours grey and yellow. The drawing on the left would appear to be the design that materialised as Tchernicheva's costume for this scene with Lifar. We know from the reviews and photographs that her costume was very similar to that of Lifar's but she wears a skirt as opposed to the jodhpur style of trousers worn by Lifar. However, the photographs show Tchernicheva in a cap, identical to the one worn by Lifar, and not the headscarf shown in this drawing.

2.3.9 Drawing I (See Appendix 3)

This photograph is taken from a drawing in pencil and coloured crayon owned by the New York Library for the Performing Arts. It shows Jakulov's lighting configurations. Levels I, II, and III would seem to refer to the layers of the stage's depth as if divided by theatre flats, for side and overhead lighting. The Russian annotations read 'from crimson.....to silver' on level I; 'from cobalt to pure silver' on level II; 'from green to ... (illegible)' on level III. Jakulov labels stage flats 1, 2, and 3 on both sides of the stage and also indicates the three levels of overhead lighting. It is clear that a range of colours was to be used and the study has concluded that this diagram probably relates to Act 2 where critics noted colourful lighting effects. Historian W.A. Propert, for example, describes revolving green, red and white lights, "*flashing down on the triple tier of shining, half-naked bodies*"³⁷. The silver lighting would presumably have enhanced a metallic quality of Jakulov's set, which again supports the idea of this diagram as indicating lighting for the factory act. The likely complexity of the lighting is discussed in Chapter 4.

2.3.10 Drawing J (See Appendix 3)

This photograph is taken from a drawing in pen and purple ink with annotations to the prop maker, owned by the New York Library for the Performing Arts. The reverse of the drawing is headed paper of the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre in Paris, indicating this drawing was done late on in the design process. According to Serge Lifar³⁸, the company arrived in Paris only three days before they were due to open at the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt. This dates the drawing to at most two weeks before the premiere of Le Pas d'Acier³⁹.

Unfortunately Jakuloy's annotations are in note form and are very difficult to decipher. Words that are readable translate as references to a carcass and to plywood, iron rings, cables and strings and to iron over a cable. Initially, the appearance of the central column on this drawing, led the study to consider whether it might refer to a factory chimney that was described by two reviewers⁴⁰. If the factory chimney did exist in the ballet it was obviously a later addition and does not appear on the model or in any of the sketches. However, given the notes on the drawing, it appears to refer to cables that were to be run inside a construction. These cables perhaps enabled the movement of an onstage object. It is the only drawing, other than drawing E, that refers to cables. The main concern of the drawing appears to be to give precise measurements for the construction. Parts of the sketches perhaps relate to how an object was to be erected, but the study has been unable to decipher either the intentions of the sketch or the object shown.

³⁷ W.A. Propert, (1931), p. 53.

³⁸ Lifar, (1940) p.447.

³⁹ The season opened on 27th May 1927. Le Pas d'Acier was first performed on 7th June 1927.

⁴⁰ See Appendix 6: The Saturday Review (16th July 1927) p.91-92 para: 3 and The Daily Telegraph (July 5th 1927) p. 12 para: 2. However, it may be that these reviews are reading one of the two main signals shown on either side of the model as a factory chimney. The Saturday Review writes of "the factory chimney and the lamp post". However, although The Daily Telegraph also writes of the factory chimney with the lamp post, it situates the factory chimney as rising at the back and a few lines later refers specifically to railway signals "which stoutly maintained their places on each side of the stage". It is possible however, that The Daily Telegraph's railway signals are the colour wheels shown on the model rather than the two tall signals shown on either side of the model which could therefore, have been at the back on the performance set.

2.3.11 Drawing K (See Appendix 3)

This drawing is the only sketch the study has located showing the dancers in costume on the set. It is featured in an exhibition catalogue of 1969 where it is listed as a watercolour, unsigned and undated. It is initially listed as from the collection of Madame Larionov, but this is later noted as an error giving the source as an unspecified private collection. The study has found no other reproduction and has not been able to trace the original.

The character on the right holds what may be intended to be the bag of flour from the scene of the Hawker and the Countesses; the other three figures are clearly in uniform. It gives an impression of the essential elements of the set design, indicating steps to an elevated area, a wheel and perhaps the rim of signal lights discussed in Chapter 4. It is clear that this is a later sketch, not only because of the movement and costume detail, but because it is inscribed Le Pas d'Acier. The ballet did not receive its final title until in rehearsal in Monte Carlo in April 1927⁴¹.

Apart from Jakulov's isolation of set parts in a later drawing, this sketch is also of interest in terms of the movement quality of the figures. We cannot know whether this accurately represents a moment of Massine's choreography, but the weighting of the movement, and the turned in limbs, are decidedly unclassical and could easily be mistaken as coming from the Modern Dance rather than relating to a Diaghilev ballet.

⁴¹ See Robinson (1998) p.112. Prokofiev's letter to Boris Asafiev of 15th April 1927 notes: "*Did you get my postcard from Monte Carlo? I was there at Diaghilev's summons in order to get rehearsals of my new so-called Soviet ballet (opus 41) rolling. There is a plan afoot to call it The Steel Gallop, but this is strictly between you and me.*" 'The Steel Gallop' is Robinson's translation of Le Pas d'Acier.

2.4 Production Photographs (See Appendix 6)

Copies of photographs located by the study are reproduced in Appendix 6 with source details. In addition to the black and white photograph of the model set, copies of photographs of the principal dancers in costume are held by the Archives of the Paris Opera. The Victoria and Albert Theatre Museum also has copies of some of these photographs. Archive notes sometimes provide the names of the dancers featured and some of the photographs have a credit on the back. Two sources appear frequently amongst these credits: The Daily Mail, and 'Sasha'⁴². There is an interesting absence of photographs from the Paris press, indicating that Boris Kochno obtained his collection from London sources. Further research therefore, into newspaper archives in Paris, may well produce more photographs.

The study has attempted to find further press photographs in UK newspaper archives, but without success⁴³. However, research did reveal the name and address of the copyright holder for the photographs of Sasha⁴⁴ and as a result Sasha's negatives and some prints for Le Pas d'Acier, dated 8th July 1927⁴⁵, the day after the premiere, were eventually found at the Hulton-Getty Picture Library in London (formerly BBC Hulton Picture Library). For the most part the prints held here are identical to, or very slight variations of (ie. taken of the same pose from a slightly

⁴² The late Alex Stewart (1892-1953) published work primarily on theatre, high society and portraits of cinema stars. His work was regularly published in The Sketch during the 1920s where he became known for his kaleidoscopic images. (Source of information and collection of Sashas's photographs: Hulton-Getty Photographic Library, London).

⁴³ The Daily Mail archives are now handled by Solo Syndication & Literary Agency, London. They reported that they did not hold the copyright of a photograph (photograph 8) that was credited to The Daily Mail, and that they could not provide any further assistance or information. The archives for The Times are held by News International Syndication. They were asked to search under the ballet's title, and under Diaghilev and Prokofiev, but reported that they have no files relating to Le Pas d'Acier in their library. However, the study has not been able to carry out exhaustive research in this area and detailed research at key archives may produce more material.

⁴⁴ Copyright of his photographs was found to belong to the late Cyril Holness formerly of 68 Harold Road, Margate whose widow apparently sold or donated the collection of Sasha's photographs to the BBC in the early 1960s.

⁴⁵ The prints are labeled as: "Le Pas d'Acier at His Majesty's Theatre, 8.7.27"; this is puzzling given that the ballet was performed at The Princes Theatre and opened on the 4.7.27. As the London press reviews emerged mostly on the 5.7.27 it would be expected that the 'photo-call' would have been earlier. It is likely therefore, that these prints were labeled later and in error. His Majesty's was one of the company's venues and the choice of the Princes for the 1927 season was because His Majesty's was unavailable (see Grigoriev 1953, p240.)

different angle), those held at the Kochno Collection in Paris and at the Theatre Museum in London, indicating that they derived from the same 'photo-call' when members of the company posed in costume for the press. Some additional photographs that the study had not found in the Kochno collection or at the London Theatre Museum, some of which do not appear to have been reproduced, were located here amongst Sasha's negatives and although very similar in kind to the others, give some further indications about the nature of the movement used. It appears that surviving photographs are press photographs, that Le Pas d'Acier was not extensively photographed and that no press photographs, at least, were taken of the performance set or the corps de ballet. Contemporary press coverage of the ballet in Paris and London featured very few photographs, concentrating instead on 'La Chatte', which also premiered in the June 1927 season, and was more visually appealing than the utilitarian and unflattering costumes of Le Pas d'Acier. Secondary sources also reveal very few photographs of the ballet and Dame Alicia Markova, who told the study she does not own any photographs of the ballet, also could not recall any photographs of herself having been taken in either her act 1 or act 2 roles⁴⁶.

All the photographs located appear to have come from one particular photographic session, with the principals posing for the camera in front of a plain back drop. It is perhaps particularly unlikely that any 'action' shots from in-performance were taken. Such photographs do exist for ballets of this era, for example some were taken of 'La Chatte'. However, such photographs are rare and given the nature of the set design and its dependence upon movement and lighting effects, Le Pas d'Acier would have provided particular problems.

On all the photographs the dancers appear in front of a curtain. The word 'Rideau', meaning curtain or screen, can be seen in some of the photographs and what appears to be part of an abbreviation. This may indicate that they were simply posed in front of the safety curtain on stage. Alternatively, it may be that they are in front of a screen used in the performance – or perhaps the grey backdrop described

⁴⁶ Interview with Dame Alicia Markova, 2nd February 1996. (See Appendix 12).

by Serge Grigoriev⁴⁷. Isolated letters do appear on parts of the model, possibly as an intention to 'play' with the idea of signification on the set. It is notable that the dancers stand right in front of the inscription on the curtain when it is clear they could have been photographed further along where the curtain is blank.

The dancers, (Massine, Danilova, Lifar, Tchernicheva, Woizikovksy, Tcherkass and Efimov) are shown in various poses. As already discussed, these are clearly poses specifically for a press 'photo-call.' While they are almost certainly either poses from the ballet or based on the general nature of poses from the ballet, they are not as seen in performance⁴⁸. It is clear from the reviews that Le Pas d'Acier was very much an ensemble ballet. Critic H.T.P., writing at length on the ballet for the Boston Evening Transcript, wrote: "*Throughout Le Pas d'Acier in accord with Prokofiev's and Iakoulov's plain purpose, he (Massine) employs the dancers only in groups or in ensemble; while rarely and for no more than a passing moment is a couple or a single figure isolated or individualized.*"⁴⁹ The photographs need therefore to be 'read' in conjunction with other material, and interpreted in terms of their probable function and what can be taken from them as information. Nevertheless, most of the photographs are of high quality and reveal some of the costumes in detail as well as the large hammers used by some of the dancers.

What is so startling in the photographs of Le Pas d'Acier, is the presentation of principal dancers in distinctly utilitarian and unflattering costumes and with so little to indicate a basis in the classical technique. To some extent the dominant aesthetic that emerges from these photographs is one of social realism, but the theatricality of the Sailor's costume with its singular booted leg and the other with flared trouser, and the giant hammers introduce a different aesthetic. Similarly, the clear 'Slavic' influence to many of the poses is countered by the very mechanical and stylised gestures of the three male dancers in photograph 5.

⁴⁷ Grigoriev (1953), p.240.

⁴⁸ See June Layson's comments on photography as source material in Adhead & Layson eds., (1995) p.22-23.

⁴⁹ Boston Evening Transcript, (July 23rd 1927).

2.4.1 Photographs 1, 2, 3 and 4 (See Appendix 6)

These photographs show Massine and Danilova as the Sailor and the Worker Girl in the costumes of their duet in Act 1. They are in full costume with Danilova in a tartan skirt, socks, flat ballet shoes, shirt, a jacket that is leather in appearance with matching cap. Jakulov's use of asymmetry in the sailor's costume, with one trouser leg tucked into a long boot, can be clearly seen, as can Massine's cape.

Something of the choreography's Slavic movement language can also be seen in these photographs and certain hand gestures and use of clenched fists, emerge. In photograph 3 Massine and Danilova present an interesting 'fan' of intertwined hands and photograph 4 shows Danilova in an untraditional lift astride Massine's shoulder. This may be the way in which she was carried off stage in the ballet; as already noted critic Henri Malherbe describes the Sailor carrying off the Worker Girl astride his shoulders⁵⁰.

2.4.2 Photograph 5 (See Appendix 6)

This photograph is particularly interesting because it does not appear to have been previously reproduced and it is the only photograph to feature dancers other than the four principals. Archival records give no information, but Dame Alicia Markova was able to identify the dancers as Konstantin Tcherkass on the left, Leon Woizikovksy in the centre, and Nicolai Efimov on the right⁵¹. According to the details provided on the Paris program for the premiere, these three dancers appeared together only once, (apart from the 'Ensemble'), in Act 1 scene 5, 'The Legend of the Drunkards'.

The dancers appear in metallic looking costumes possibly intended to represent 'prozodezhda', or production clothing, associated with Constructivist design in

⁵⁰ *Le Temps*, (Juin 15 1927).

⁵¹ In an interview with the author, February 1996. See Appendix 13.

Russia⁵². They present stilted, puppet-like gestures. Woizikovsky's raised arm gesture may indicate that some kind of mime is involved, and it is difficult not to think immediately of the puppet 'Petrushka'⁵³ on seeing his turned in knees. Yet there appears to be a very different movement emphasis and dynamic from the soft, 'boneless' Petrushka; here the movement is stiff and angular, and is easily reconciled with some of the movement descriptions given by critics when referring to the first part of the ballet⁵⁴. This is further discussed in relation to the possible influences on Massine's choreography, in Chapter 3.

2.4.3 Photograph 6 (See Appendix 6)

This is a group picture of the four principal dancers together, from left to right: Tchernicheva, Lifar, Massine and Danilova posed as two couples. Judging from the Paris program, the four principals did not appear together at any time in these pre-factory act costumes in the actual ballet.

However, we can again see here something of the characterizations and movement style. They wear boots or flat shoes and the costumes of 'types'. Hat brims turn up provocatively, arms are on hips or thighs and there is a sense of camaraderie and lively good spirits, with flirtatious interactions between the men and women. There is very direct eye contact between the characters and an 'equality' of grounded strength between the sexes. We can also see here a full view of the anchor around Massine's neck and appreciate the 'joke' of its balletic 'legs'.

⁵² See section 1.4.3.5 re drawing E where Jakulov's annotations refer to 'prozodezhda'

⁵³ 'Petrushka' was a Diaghilev Ballet Russes production of 1911 in which choreographer M.Fokine broke away from the conventions of the classical technique in favour of authenticity to dramatic character. His puppet, Petrushka, danced by Nijinsky, has been immortalised in many photographs with turned in knees.

⁵⁴ For example, The Daily Telegraph, (July 5th 1927), describes 'physical jerks' and 'abrupt movements'.

2.4.4 Photographs 7, 8 and 9 (See Appendix 6)

These three photographs show Lifar and Tchernicheva in the costumes of their duet, 'Le Beguin', (The Fleeting Romance), at the beginning of Act 2. The patterned jackets and caps, which resemble calf skin, the plain dress and trousers, Tchernicheva's neck scarf and their calf-length lace up boots can all be clearly seen. This duet is described in several reviews and as already explained, some critics refer to them as the 'Apache' dancers⁵⁵. Again there is a 'slavic' style to their poses. Their costumes attracted a great deal of attention in the reviews and were described by one critic⁵⁶ as in marked contrast to the other costumes for their comparative richness and elegance. They appear to relate to one of Jakulov's surviving costume sketches. (See Drawing H). The scene was enjoyed by several critics, who found it comparatively charming in comparison with the rest of the ballet. It appears to have been an almost music hall style entr'acte before the start of the scenes in the factory. It is difficult to interpret their role in the ballet but this is further discussed in Chapter 4.

2.4.5 Photographs 10, 11 and 12 (See Appendix 6)

These three photographs show the four principals in their factory act costumes. In Photograph 10 the cape, caps and jacket are gone revealing that Danilova wears a tie and blouse without sleeves and Massine is wearing the 'leather' apron of the factory act. Interestingly, Danilova does not wear the apron that is worn by Tchernicheva (see Photograph 12), and by the Lifar and Massine. This was possibly omitted simply for the photographs. Massine however, is still wearing his sailor's anchor and it is possible that these characters were supposed to retain an element of their pre-factory work identities in the second act. A scene in which the Sailor is transformed into a worker by changing his clothes on stage, described in the 1925 scenario, was abandoned by the 1927 production, but the theme of transformation may have been retained to some extent. In the 1925 scenario the Sailor struggles

⁵⁵ See for example Pierre Lalo in Comœdia, (op cit.) in Appendix 7, end of second paragraph.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

against the demand to work to reach the heroine, but finally they come together through work. Slight costume differences, might have been used to visually represent the inner struggle of the characters from the representatives of organised labour in the factory. The development of theme from the 1925 materials to the 1927 production is discussed in Chapter 4.

The severity of facial expression here is in marked contrast to the pre-factory act photographs. The style of the make up, shown particularly clearly in Photograph 10, with the sharpened emphasis given to the lips, adds to the dramatic look of the characters. The arm gesture of Massine and Danilova appears to suggest a pendulum swing in keeping perhaps with the mechanical nature of the movement for the factory act described in the reviews.

Photographs 11 and 12 show the dancers wielding the giant hammers from the factory act. Tchernicheva's hammer appears slightly smaller and lighter than those wielded by the men indicating there was some distinction between the quality of labour from the women and that of the men. Lifar now has a naked torso and wristbands. Again the severity of facial expression is notable. The involvement with labour appears to disconnect the couples from their previously joyful interactions. The 1925 scenario and Massine's description of the ballet⁵⁷, indicate, although in different ways, that in Act 2 there was a degree of 'drama' between the characters, as well as mimetic and abstracted movement depicting labour and machinery. We can glimpse something of this perhaps in Photograph 12 where Tchernicheva appears to confront Lifar, halting the action of his hammer and engaging him in eye contact, whereas in photograph 11 the hero and heroine, (Massine and Danilova) appear distinctly disconnected, staring in opposite directions and forming a counter-balance in terms of their actions.

2.5 The Costumes

The largest collection of surviving costumes for Le Pas d'Acier is held by the National Gallery of Australia, (NGA). A list describing the collection is reproduced in Appendix 5. The NGA's holding is however, far from complete; it is restricted to the costumes of the corps de ballet as workers, with one costume for a peasant. The study has not been able to locate other surviving costumes.

Very few costume sketches appear to have survived, but those that the study has located are discussed above under 'Drawings'. Judging from accounts of Jakulov's apparent approach to producing numerous sketches of costume designs to other works⁵⁸ and their relative absence for Le Pas d'Acier, it is likely that many have been lost or are held in unknown private collections. Fortunately, the black and white photographs, discussed above, provide information on the costumes of the four principal dancers and for three other characters whose costumes are not held by the NGA.

Where there is an absence of visual material, review descriptions frequently provide at least some costume information. For example, the Devils are described as dressed as burlesque firemen in copper helmets and blue smocks⁵⁹. Some further information has been provided by Dame Alicia Markova in an interview with Richard Buckle⁶⁰ where she recalled how difficult it was to move mechanically up and down the ladders with one booted and one bare foot. In an interview for this study, (see Appendix 13) Dame Alicia also recalled her costume for Act 1 in the scene entitled 'Le Chat, La Chatte et Les Souris'. Confirming that the dancers in this scene were not dressed as cats or mice, she described peasant dress with thick

⁵⁷ See Massine's description of his own role where he "used strenuous character movements to suggest the Slav temperament and the conflict in the mind of a young man torn between his personal life and his national loyalty". Massine, (1968) p.171-2. (Reproduced in Appendix 5).

⁵⁸ Aladzhakov (1971) notes that Jakulov loved to sketch costumes and usually produced whole series of them.

⁵⁹ Described by The Daily Mirror, (July 5th 1927), p.2. See Appendix 7.

⁶⁰ Buckle (1979) 1993 edition, p.486.

grey stockings, tweed skirts, shawls with kerchiefs on their heads and laced up boots on their feet.

According to the Paris program (See fig. 1.1) the costumes were made under the partial direction of Jakulov's wife, Natalia. The general division of the costumes indicated on Drawing E (see Appendix 3), would appear to have been carried through to the realized ballet. From review descriptions we can also recognize the costumes depicted in Jakulov's surviving sketches.

The costumes are complex in terms of interpreting their aesthetic intention. They appear to represent thematic elements of the ballet as well as adhering to a particular stylistic approach. There is certainly a concern with social realism and a utilitarian aesthetic in the costume designs, but there is also an element of the burlesque. In Drawing E, Jakulov appears more concerned with social realism. He mentions a particular period (the NEP) in Soviet history, and lists costumes as 'working clothes', 'labour clothes' and 'Sunday Bests'. He refers also to 'improvisation' which the study has interpreted as referring to improvised dress in a time of poverty and scarcity. Yet however realistic this may have been in terms of the setting of the ballet, it is also a visually amusing and theatrical choice of illustration (see drawing G2). With the Sailor's costume (see drawing G2) a use of asymmetry, that is again very theatrical, emerges and gives a sense of a transitional character. This is further discussed in Chapter 4.

An added complication to the costume designs is the probable influence from Russian Constructivism of 'prozodzhda', - 'production clothing'. As already discussed Jakulov refers to 'prozodezhda' on drawing E but it is difficult to locate possible examples of it in the surviving sketches, costumes, or review descriptions. However, as already noted, photograph 5, showing two dancers in metallic suits, may well illustrate the presence of this influence in the realised designs. They have a clearly utilitarian aspect and the mass produced quality of 'ready-mades'; they would also seem to function as protective clothing that could be 'industry' specific.

FIGURE 1.1

LE PAS D'ACIER

1920
(CRÉATION)

Ballet en deux tableaux de SERGE PROKOFIEFF et GEORGES IAKOULOFF
Musique de SERGE PROKOFIEFF
Constructions et Costumes d'après les Maquettes de GEORGES IAKOULOFF
Chorégraphie de L. MASSINE
Les Costumes sont exécutés sous la Direction de Mmes N. IAKOULOFF et A. YOUKINE
Les Constructions exécutées dans l'atelier de M. D. KAMISCHOFF, à Paris

*Les deux tableaux de ce ballet présentent une suite de scènes résumant deux aspects de la vie russe :
les légendes du village et le mécanisme de l'usine.*

<p style="text-align: center;">PREMIER TABLEAU</p> <p>I. Bataille de Baba-Yaga avec le Crocodile Mlle Vera Petrova, MM. Tcherkas, Efmow, Domansky, Kochanovsky, Petrakevitch, Borovsky, Gaubier</p> <p>II. Le Camelot et les Comtesses M. Léon Woizikovsky Mlles Thamar Gevergeva, Dora Vadimova, Henriette Maikerska, Sophie Orlova MM. Lissanevitch, Pavlow, Hoyer, Ladré, Cieplinsky, Ignatow, Strechnew, Hoyer II, Romow.</p> <p>III. Le Matelot et les trois Diables M. Léonide Massine MM. Jazvinsky, Fedorow, Winter MM. Tcherkas, Efmow, Domansky, Kochanovsky, Petrakevitch, Borovsky, Gaubier</p> <p>IV. Le Chat, la Chatte et les Souris Mlle Vera Petrova M. Thadée Slavinsky Mlles Savina, Markova, Miklachevka, Kouchetovska, Evina, Jassevitch. MM. Lissanevitch, Pavlow, Hoyer, Ladré, Cieplinsky, Ignatow, Strechnew, Hoyer II, Romow</p>	<p>V. La Légende des Buveurs M^{re} Léon Woizikovsky, Nicolas Efmov, Constantin Tcherkas. MM. Domansky, Kochanovsky, Petrakevitch, Borovsky, Gaubier.</p> <p>VI. L'Ouvrière et le Matelot Mlle Alexandra Danilova M. Léonide Massine</p> <p>VII. Ensemble Par tous les Artistes</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DEUXIÈME TABLEAU</p> <p>VIII. Le Béguin Mme Lubov Tchernicheva M. Serge Lifar</p> <p>IX. Passage des Ouvriers M. Lissanevitch, Pavlow, Hoyer, Ignatow, Strechnew, Hoyer II</p> <p>X, XI, XII. L'Usine M^{re} Alexandra Danilova, Lubov Tchernicheva, Vera Petrova. MM. Léonide Massine, Léon Woizikovsky, Serge Lifar, Thadée Slavinsky.</p> <p><i>Les Ouvrières :</i> Mlles Thamar Gevergeva, Dora Vadimova, Henriette Maikerska, Sophie Orlova. Mlles Savina, Soumarokova, Branitska, Chamié, Markova, Fedorova, Zarina, Klemetska, Miklachevka, Kouchetovska, Slavinska, Obidennaia, Barash, Evina, Matveeva, Jasevitch.</p> <p><i>Les Ouvriers :</i> MM. Tcherkas, Efmov, Domansky, Kremnew, Jazvinsky, Fedorov, Winter, Lissanevitch, Pavlow, Kochanovsky, Hoyer, Cieplinsky, Petrakevitch, Ladré, Borovsky, Hoyer II, Ignatow, Strechnew, Gaubier, Romow.</p>
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Programme of the Paris premiere.

Source: Kochno Collection, Archives de le Bibliotheque-Musée de l'Opera de Paris.

FIGURE 1.2

MONDAY EVENING, JULY 4th, 1927.

OVERTURE.

"Russian and Ludmilla" *Glinka (1819-1857)*

Michael Ivanovitch Glinka was born at Smolensk and died in Berlin; he was, however, thoroughly cosmopolitan in the varied environments of his life. To him before all others must be attributed the foundation of a nationalist movement in Russian music, a movement which sought to imbue into Russian composition the melodic and rhythmic traits of the folk music of the Russian people. His first opera "A Life for the Tsar" produced at Petrograd in 1836, first gave unified form to the national aspirations. In "Russian" and "Ludmilla" this patriotic impulse achieved a more developed form. The popular traits of Russian musical expression there found an even more distinctively stylistic quality.

FIRST PERFORMANCE OF

LE PAS D'ACIER

Ballet, in two Tableaux, by Serge Prokofeff and Georges Iakouloff.

Music by Serge Prokofeff.

Constructions and Costumes after Designs by Georges Iakouloff.

Choregraphy by L. Massine.

Costumes executed under the direction of Mmes. N. Iakouloff and A. Yunkine.

Constructions executed in the studio of M. D. Kamischoff in Paris.

The two Tableaux of this ballet present a series of scenes in which are summarised two aspects of Russian life: the stories and legends of the countryside, and the mechanism of the factories.

FIRST TABLEAU.

Scene I.

Mlle. VERA PETROVA, Mm. TCHERKAS, EFIMOV, DOMANSKY, KOCHANOVSKY, PETRAKEVITCH, BOROVSKEY, GAUBIER.

Scene II.

M. LEON WOIZIKOVSKY, Mlles. THAMAR GEVERGEVA, DORA VADIMOVA, HENRIETTE MAIKERSKA, SOPHIE ORLOVA, Mm. LISSANEVITCH, PAVLOV, HOYER, LADRE, CHEPLINSKY, IGNATOV, STRECHNEV, HOYER II.

Scene III.

Mm. LEONIDE MASSINE, JAZVINSKY, FEDOROV, VINTER, TCHERKAS, EFIMOV, DOMANSKY KOCHANOVSKY, PETRAKEVITCH, BOROVSKEY, GAUBIER.

Scene IV.

Mlle. VERA PETROVA, M. THADEE SLAVINSKY, Mlles. SAVINA, MARKOVA, MIKLACHEVSKA, KOUCHETOVSKA, EVINA, JASEVITCH, Mm. LISSANEVITCH, PAVLOV, HOYER, LADRE, CHEPLINSKY, IGNATOV, STRECHNEV, HOYER II.

Scene V.

Mm. LEON WOIZIKOVSKY, NICOLAS EFIMOV, CONSTANTIN TCHERKAS, Mm. DOMANSKY, KOCHANOVSKY, PETRAKEVITCH, BOROVSKEY, GAUBIER.

Scene VI.

Mlle. ALEXANDRA DANILOVA, M. LEONIDE MASSINE.

Scene VII.

Ensemble.

SECOND TABLEAU.

Scene VIII.

Mme. LUBOV TCHERNICHEVA, M. SERGE LIPAR.

Scene IX.

Mm. LISSANEVITCH, PAVLOV, HOYER, IGNATOV, STRECHNEV, HOYER II.

Scenes X., XI., XII.

Mmes. ALEXANDRA DANILOVA, LUBOV TCHERNICHEVA, VERA PETROVA, Mm. LEONIDE MASSINE, LEON WOIZIKOVSKY, SERGE LIPAR, THADEE SLAVINSKY.

Workgirls—Mlles. THAMAR GEVERGEVA, DORA VADIMOVA, HENRIETTE MAIKERSKA, SOPHIE ORLOVA, SAVINA, SOUMAROKOVA, BRANITSKA, CHAMIE, MARKOVA, FEDOROVA, ZARINA, KLEMETSKA, MIKLACHEVSKA, KOUCHETOVSKA, SLAVINSKA, OBIDENNAIA, BARASH, EVINA, MATVEEVA, JASEVITCH.

Workmen—Mm. TCHERKAS, EFIMOV, DOMANSKY, KREMNEV, JAZVINSKY, FEDOROV, VINTER, LISSANEVITCH, PAVLOV, KOCHANOVSKY, HOYER, CHEPLINSKY, PETRAKEVITCH, LADRE, BOROVSKEY, HOYER II, IGNATOV, STRECHNEV, GAUBIER.

SYMPHONIC INTERLUDE

(a) Overture "Turandot" *Wagner*

(b) "Rhythmic Dance" *Балетная Симфония*

Programme of the London première.
Source: Victoria and Albert Theatre Museum, London.

As such they fulfill the basic requirements of ‘prozodezhda’ as defined by Varara Stepanova in 1923⁶¹. They also form an obvious contrast to ‘improvised’ clothing.

3. The Music

“If you want proof of the great propagandist importance of ‘Le Pas d’Acier’ you only have to run over the press comments that have been devoted to it in London and Paris. Prokofiev is promoting our cause in the West. It is our musical outpost!”

V. Meyerhold.⁶²

It is beyond the scope and expertise of this study to carry out a musical analysis of Prokofiev’s score or discuss its relationship to Constructivism in musical terms. However, the study has attempted to research the place of the music in the collaborative and formative development of the ballet and consider its relationships to the design, choreography and scenario/s. It has also considered its potential and problems as an information source and the problems it presents as a primary source material.

At the outset it is necessary to consider exactly what is meant here by ‘the music’ as a primary source. In comparison to the choreography and design, the music has been the most enduring part of Le Pas d’Acier. It consists of a written score that has been staged in three different productions of the ballet, in addition to concert hall performances. There have been several recordings, some of which are readily available today. Technically, only the original manuscripts can be classified as primary source material. Clearly all productions of the music are interpretations to some extent and have to be considered as such.

Archivists consulted did not know the whereabouts of Prokofiev’s original, hand written, manuscripts, or if they have survived. However, the first edition of the full

⁶¹ Vavara Stepanova was one of the founding artists of Russian Constructivism. Her seminal article on clothing design, in which she defined ‘prozodezhda’ appeared in the journal LEF (1923). See Lavrentiev (1988) p.79.

⁶² Attributed to V.Meyerhold by Pozharskaya and Volodina, (1990)p.246. In a slightly different translation this quotation also appears in Seroff (1969) p.194, where it is attributed to an introductory speech by Meyerhold at a Prokofiev recital in the Radio Theatre Moscow on 17th November 1929.

score, by Boosey and Hawkes, (which would have been approved by Prokofiev) is kept at the Prokofiev Archive in London and was examined. This score is clearly marked into eleven sections, though no titles are given.

In listening to the music however, the study faced the problem of ascertaining the authenticity of today's available recordings.⁶³ With the help of a professional musical conductor⁶⁴, the study compared the first page of each section of the first edition printed score to the corresponding parts of the music on various productions available today⁶⁵. The purpose of this comparison was simply to confirm that the section divisions on recordings available today were as on the original score. The expert guidance provided included judgements as to whether the orchestration of the different productions was at least reasonably authentic. The results of this basic analysis and advice confirmed the study's own preference for the USSR Ministry of Culture Symphony Orchestra production of 1986 conducted by Gennadi Rozhdestvensky⁶⁶. In terms of the section divisions, only a minor difference could be detected concerning the starting point of section 11 on this recording and, as the later parts of the score were written to be presented without a pause, this was felt to be an unimportant detail.

As a result of this analysis the study was reasonably confident that it was listening to a recording of the music that at least presented the sections in the same order and with basically the same divisions, as the first edition of Prokofiev's published

⁶³ In this respect it is interesting to note that Prokofiev blamed the failure of *Le Pas d'Acier*, when it was performed in Moscow in 1928, partly on the fact that it had been conducted by Vladimir Chavitch "a provincial conductor with a limited range who was of course incapable of guaranteeing the work's success" Robinson (1998) p.274, letter from Prokofiev to Miaskovsky, July 9th 1928.

⁶⁴ A Russian conductor, Mr Brian Schembri, who trained under Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, very kindly studied the score with the author and enabled this analysis.

⁶⁵ There have undoubtedly been earlier recordings that the study has been unable to locate. For example, in a letter of 1932, Prokofiev refers to a recording for gramophone that "took such absurdly fast tempi in certain parts that I don't really know what sort of music this record will produce." Letter to Nikolai Miaskovsky, July 27th 1932 in Robinson, ed., (1998) p.304. Prokofiev adds: "Actually, I'm going to talk with London today and ask them to put 'Steel Gallop' on sale not in complete form, but cutting out the parts that he took too fast". The conductor was Coates. Unfortunately, there does not appear to have been a recording made with the conductors who interpreted the score at the 1927 performances (Desormière and Goosens in Paris and London respectively).

score. It was then possible to consider each section in relation to both Prokofiev's section titles,⁶⁷ (and action descriptions of the 1925 scenario), and the corresponding section divisions and scene titles given on the Paris programme. Review descriptions of the scenes of the 1927 ballet enabled a limited form of comparison with the 1925 materials. Although this is outside of the remit of the study, it was necessary to try and understand as much as possible about the qualities and themes of Prokofiev's music and how it relates to the 1925 scenario and the 1927 production, not only because Prokofiev and Jakulov worked together on the ballet's conception, but because the set design was so integral to the action as well as that thematic conception

Recordings available today have a slightly confusing variation of section titles; while keeping broadly to Prokofiev's section titles, they are not consistent and there are notable departures. Interestingly, none of the recordings examined refer to 'The Arrival of the Train', a scene that was dropped by the ballet, but remains on Prokofiev's editions of the musical titles as Act 1 section 2. The USSR Symphony Orchestra production has simply replaced this title with 'Procession of the Burghers' (a title which does not appear on any of the source materials) but, as stated above, the music remains consistent with Prokofiev's section 2. However, with one recording, the current EMI CD version of the Igor Markevitch production of 1954, a section appears to have been wrongly titled⁶⁸. Section 6 of the musical

⁶⁶ Recorded in the USSR by Melodiya, OCD 103, Olympia, 1986.

⁶⁷ The 1925 section titles are reproduced in Appendix 2. The Prokofiev archive also holds a sheet dated 29th July 1927, (i.e. after the Paris and London performances) that lists the subheadings of the music with an explanatory note (see Appendix 2B). Also, a letter from Prokofiev to Derzhanovsky of April 1928 again provides the music's section titles and this is reproduced in Appendix 4. The main differences between the headings of 1925 and those produced by Prokofiev in 1927 and 28 are that the first section has changed from 'The Passage of the Silhouettes' to 'Arrival of the Participants', and that section four, originally 'The Appearance of the Swindler's, Theft and Pursuit' has become 'Sweetsellers and Cigarette Vendors'.

⁶⁸ This recording is a selection only, not the full score. It is supposedly a reproduction of the version conducted by Igor Markevitch, produced by Columbia for the Diaghilev Exhibition in 1954. The study has not located the original 1954 recording. Markevitch composed and conducted for Diaghilev and is described by Boris Kochno as "Diaghilev's last disciple" Kochno, (1971), p.179. He was the composer of Massine's ballet *Ode* from 1928. It might be expected therefore, that this would be the most 'authentic' recording. Prokofiev's letters make it clear that Markevitch was not greatly respected by Prokofiev but there is nothing to indicate that Prokofiev was critical of his abilities as a conductor. It maybe that the original Markevitch recording is of

score corresponds to section 6 of the USSR Symphony Orchestra production, and both this recording and Prokofiev's musical titles refer to this section as 'The Sailor and the Worker Girl'. This was also the title of scene 6 of the Diaghilev ballet. The EMI recording adopts the variation of this title that appears on Prokofiev's section titles of 1927, 'Le Matelot au bracelet et l'Ouvrière,' but the music does not correspond with section 6 of the score and is in fact section 5, entitled by Prokofiev as 'The Dance of the Orator' in 1925 and 'The Orator' in 1927 ('Les Légende des Buveurs' in the Diaghilev ballet).

The ballet scenario of 1927 was divided into twelve sections, as opposed to the eleven sections of Prokofiev's score, but it can be seen from the organisation of the programme, that the ballet presented the last three sections of the music, (that are played without pause), as four scenes. Therefore, with the score and the scene titles of the Paris program all surviving, it is possible to connect sections of the music with descriptions of the action. The basic timings of scenes, phrases and their likely dynamics and qualities begin to emerge, enabling cross-referencing with other information sources.

As the musical titles and the 1925 scenario have survived, it is also possible to consider the different interpretations made of the music during the course of the development of the Diaghilev production. Given the date of the piano and orchestrated scores (Autumn 1925 and early 1926), it is reasonable to conclude that Prokofiev wrote the music with the aim of realising, in musical terms, the ideas and themes, if not the exact scenario, for 'Ursignol'. Some minor adaptations to the 1925 scenario took place after Diaghilev saw it, and before the piano score was written⁶⁹. Some further changes – again after Diaghilev was consulted – were made to the piano score, before the orchestrated version was completed in early 1926⁷⁰. It is unlikely however, that these changes are the ones that we see reflected in the

the full score and is an 'authentic' production but certainly the current CD version is only a selection and appears to be misleading in terms of the titles given to the musical sections.

⁶⁹ Jakulov in an undated letter to Koussikov (see Appendix 4 section A) writes that Diaghilev made "a few unimportant corrections" to the scenario that he and Prokofiev had worked out together.

scene titles given on the Paris programme of 1927⁷¹, which almost undoubtedly result from the entry of Massine into the collaborative process as choreographer and director in 1927⁷².

Ballet scores are often re-interpreted by different choreographers, but a detailed musical analysis may be able to argue that some interpretations of the score are closer to the intentions of the composer than others. Prokofiev had a facility at 'programmatic writing' (music that suggests a series of scenes or action). In an essay on Prokofiev the film maker Eisenstein wrote⁷³: *"For a long time I could not understand how he contrived, after viewing a sequence two or three times, to catch the emotional spirit, the rhythm and structure of the scene so as to be able the very next day to produce its exact musical equivalent"*. There is clearly a variety of possible associations in even the most representationally intended composition. There is nothing in the source material to indicate that Prokofiev intended his music to exactly illustrate action or that he was particularly attached to any one scenario. Above all Le Pas d'Acier was not a ballet that was concerned with detailed plot, but with a series of scenes that would suggest certain themes and ideas. For example, in a letter to Nikolai Miaskovsky of August 4th 1925, Prokofiev writes: *"...in a few days I'm going to sit down to work on a new ballet for Diaghilev; it will be simpler than 'The Buffoon,' with less plot and more symphonic development."*⁷⁴

However, the presence of the 1925 scenario and the fact that it was co-written by Prokofiev just prior to writing the music, invites an attempt to place the action of this original scenario with the music. To some extent this might be said to facilitate

⁷⁰ Prokofiev (1960) p.66.

⁷¹ For example, if this is not the case it is difficult to explain the presence of the train on Jakulov's model.

⁷² The research findings indicate that after the initial burst of activity to produce the music, designs and scenario in 1925 and orchestration of the score in January 1926, nothing further happened in terms of the ballet's development until Diaghilev finally announced his decision, in February 1927, to stage the ballet. Massine was then appointed as choreographer and director in late March 1927, and rehearsals began with Prokofiev present in April. Jakulov did not arrive until late May.

⁷³ Sergei Eisenstein, 'P-R-K-F-V' in Prokofiev I (1960) p.253.

⁷⁴ Robinson ed. (1998) p.259.

an understanding of the music, and also the dynamics and qualities of the action as it was envisaged in 1925. The question arises as to how far Massine's realisation of the ballet departed from the original concept and if in doing so it departed in any significant way from the intentions of the music. In a letter to Derzhanovsky of May 12th 1928, (see Appendix 4), Prokofiev claims "*in Diaghilev's production there was a lot which did not comply with my wishes*". Yet the source material indicates that Prokofiev was present at the rehearsals of the ballet from the beginning, and in his autobiography Massine claims to have worked intensively with him⁷⁵.

We know that in searching for the musical approach Prokofiev returned to a Russian idiom. He recalls in his autobiography that in writing the music he changed his approach from his Quintet and Second Symphony, turning towards a Russian musical idiom, "*not the idiom of Afanasyev's fairy-tales, but one that could convey the spirit of modern times*". According to Massine, he was inspired in this "*by the tales of the legendary Bogatyri, the heroic founders of Old Russia*". It is possible therefore, that it was during the writing of the music that the seeds were sown for the direction the ballet would take once Massine became involved⁷⁶. One of Prokofiev's biographers, Victor Seroff argues that the music for Le Pas d'Acier relates more to Stravinsky's Sacre du Printemps and Les Noces than it does to any Soviet influence. Certainly, Prokofiev wrote the music before he had visited post-revolutionary Russia and it is not difficult to hear its debt to Stravinsky in the first section of the work.

The music's radicalism lay primarily however, in its use of industrial rhythms and evocations. Drawing inspiration from urban and industrial sources had begun earlier in the century with the Futurists who incorporated the sounds of modern technology into their compositions. In Le Pas d'Acier, Prokofiev does not use literal factory sounds; as in Honegger's Pacific 231 (the nameplate on locomotives

⁷⁵ Massine (1968) p.171-172 "Together Prokofiev and I went through the music again and again until the ballet began to take shape".

⁷⁶ In the Diaghilev production act 1 is concerned with the legends of old Russia, something that is not mentioned on the 1925 scenario.

drawing heavy, high-speed trains), first performed in Paris in May 1924, the score musically evokes machine rhythms. Pacific 231 is approximately 6 minutes long and Honneger's notes for this work, refer to "*The quiet breathing of the engine at rest, its struggle to get under way, the gradual increase in speed leading to the lyrical or emotive state of the 300 ton train hurtling through the darkness at 120 an hour*"⁷⁷. Like Honneger's Pacific 231, Le Pas d'Acier has been described as a piece of "descriptive realism"⁷⁸ but there is an important difference between the two works. Prokofiev does not appear to have conceived his music in such clearly representational terms; rather he was concerned with broad themes of transformation of the old Russia into an industrialised force and the musical realisation of these ideas, dynamics and qualities. As R.A. Leonard⁷⁹ has pointed out the industrialised Russia that Prokofiev sought to evoke, did not yet exist except as a vision and ideal.

It is clear that in 1927 the industrial rhythms and evocations were 'unmusical' to the ear, perhaps enhancing the sense of the factory as an inhumane place. Yet today, any dissonance appears mild; the celebratory nature of the second act is as difficult to miss as the unbearable qualities described by some of the contemporary critics are difficult to hear. In addition to the industrial references and rhythms, the music in the second act repeats sections of act 1 that have been identified with characters and themes. For example the sailor and the worker girl, is faintly repeated as an undercurrent, full of pathos, in section 9, 'The Factory'. It is not difficult to interpret this in terms of loss and it clearly corresponds to the section of the 1925 scenario where the hero tries to reach the heroine. This is followed by a section called 'Hammers' in which the thundering rhythms become more overt but are interspersed with sections that refer back to the characters of the first act. Prokofiev begins the closing scene by repeating the first scene 'Entry of the Participants'. In the 1925 scenario this corresponds to the scene where the hero and heroine come down to the foreground and through operating the colourful wheels with pedals shown on the model, begin the whole movement of the set. This would

⁷⁷ From notes accompanying the EMI classics CD, 1991.

⁷⁸ Leonard, R.A (1956) p.307.

seem to indicate a resolution, a sense of empowerment through work, and a sense of the characters from act 1 in control in the factory. In the 1927 production however, the mass Machine Dance of the finale transforms the workers into machine parts. The potentially celebratory quality of the music would almost certainly be easier to sense in conjunction with the original scenario than with the 1927 interpretation. The viewing context in which the ballet was interpreted is discussed in Chapter 3, and the differences between the 1925 materials and the 1927 production are explored in Chapter 4 and in Appendix 14.

As noted in the introduction, the music, described by several Western critics as Bolshevik propaganda, was, ironically, condemned in the Soviet Union in 1929⁸⁰ as having been written in ignorance purely to amuse the Western bourgeoisie. It is possible perhaps that analysis of the music with the 1925 materials would enable a fuller critique of Prokofiev's approach and intentions.

4. Written Records

Surviving contemporary written records include the original scenario and musical outline from 1925, contemporary letters from the creators concerning the work, its development and rights, the programmes from Paris and London in 1927, brief references in Prokofiev's Soviet Diary of 1927, an interview with Diaghilev in London in 1927, interviews with Jakulov for Soviet publications in 1928, and the newspaper reviews.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ It was attacked by the Association of Proletarian Musicians and in the first issue of its journal, 'Proletarskii muzykant' (Moscow 1929-32) Prokofiev's works were criticised. As a result of these attacks the Bolshoi Theatre decided against staging the ballet. It had already been performed three times at concert halls in Russia and was defended by Vsevolod Meyerhold.

4.1 The Musical Outline, Scenario, and Jakulov's Notes, Sent to Diaghilev by Prokofiev on August 11th 1925. (See Appendix 2A)

A copy of the original scenario and musical outline, when the ballet had the working title of 'Ursignol', was found in the Prokofiev Archive in London amongst Prokofiev's correspondence for 1925. According to the archivist, the originals are kept by members of the Prokofiev family. It is thought that these are unpublished documents and no previous references to them have been found. Copies are reproduced in Appendix 2A with translations from the original Russian produced for the study by Margaret Jones.

The first of the enclosures is entitled "'Ursignol' Musical outline". It breaks the first act down into eight scenes including a prologue. The eighth musical section is labeled as an 'Interval' and entitled 'Rearranging the Set'. This act of the music was later reduced to seven scenes, with the 'interval' scene 'Rearranging the Set' becoming section seven⁸¹. Prokofiev supplies the timing of each of the eight scenes and gives descriptive titles. In comparison with the 1927 ballet the only consistency is the title 'The Sailor and the Worker Girl' for scene 6. On the musical outline of 1925, the title is 'The entry of the sailors and the dance of the sailor with the worker girl.'

Prokofiev also supplies the characters for the prologue and act 1. They consist of sailors, commissars, swindlers, an orator, firemen, a worker girl, cigarette sellers, speculators and citizens.

The second page of enclosures, entitled "'Ursignol' Pastorale" gives a fairly detailed account of the envisaged action in each of the scenes, often detailing particular movements. The concern is markedly with characterization and the development of an overall theme. It is also clear from this that the 'interval'

section, 'Rearranging the Set', was intended to be a scene in the ballet where the dancers, as firemen "*with plastic movements*"⁸², rearranged the set for the second act in the factory to part of Prokofiev's score. The study has concluded that this did not occur in the Diaghilev production. A newspaper discussion of the 1931 production⁸³ by American dance critic, John Martin, reveals that the 1927 Diaghilev production did not play the music all the way through without an intermission. Martin states that the interval occurred after section seven of the music⁸⁴ and, according to the Paris programme, Massine used section seven, the 'interval' section of the music, for a scene entitled 'Ensemble'. Prokofiev notes in his autobiography⁸⁵ that Diaghilev used his 'Divertissement' as an intermezzo dance in between the two scenes of Le Pas d'Acier.

The prologue is described as a 'passage of silhouettes from left to right', which presumably took place behind a gauze. Each character is described in terms of type, i.e. sailor, frightened lady, bandits and so on. The nature of their action is given and sometimes the movement quality. Act 1 is given as starting with the arrival of the train (section two of the music). Presumably it was envisaged that a gauze, giving the effect of the silhouettes in the prologue, would have been raised up like a second curtain, but this kind of detail is not provided. However, the characters of the first act clearly emerge and their basic actions and interactions are established. This scenario provides a good account of the intended action of the first act and a strong indication of its intended dynamics, qualities and thematic concerns. Some specific dances are identified, including a 'bartering dance' and the dance of the sailor and worker girl, described as a '*first stylized acquaintance...they dance together without coming into contact with each other.*' Such details provide the

⁸¹ See Prokofiev's section titles of 1927, Appendix 2B.

⁸² See last two lines of typed page 2 – Appendix 2A

⁸³ New York Times (April 31st 1931). This review is also of interest in stating that Massine planned to stage the Diaghilev version as an important part of the repertoire he planned to present in New York in the following season with a company made up of former Diaghilev dancers. Although this staging did not happen it is interesting to note that according to a reliable critic, Massine's intentions were to present the ballet in the US.

⁸⁴ The musical titles produced by Prokofiev in 1927 and 1928 (see appendix 2B and Appendix 4) entitles section 7 of the music 'Reconstruction of the Decor'. In the 1927 production section 7 of the music is entitled 'Ensemble'.

⁸⁵ Prokofiev (1960) p.75

opportunity for comparison with review descriptions of the realised ballet. The study's comparison is worked through in Appendix 14 and discussed in Chapter 4.

It is particularly interesting that the most controversial scene⁸⁶ of the realised ballet 'The Hawker and the Countesses' is not part of this initial scenario. The germ of its development however, is detectable. Although there are no Countesses as such in the 1925 scenario and no specific mention of an exchange of clothing for food, hungry women with items for bartering are identified. A handwritten note, presumably by Prokofiev, refers to two women in lampshades as amongst them, which are noted on Jakulov's handwritten manuscripts that accompany this document. As already noted, in the 1927 production the four Countesses wore lampshades for hats.

Amongst the enclosures with the typed scenario for act 1 are pages of handwritten manuscripts by Jakulov in Russian. Above the written text on page 1 of this script, there are a few very rough sketches that appear to show the dancers on a construction, possibly the mobile stairs of other drawings and the model, with other dancers perhaps climbing a rope ladder. As usual Jakulov's writing proved difficult to decipher, but the majority of the text is readable and has been translated for the study. (See Appendix 2A). Jakulov entitles the act 'The Market'. The prologue of silhouettes does not appear here but scene 1 is described as the arrival of the train and women in lampshades are described as well as the other characters and situations of the typed scenario. Some descriptive phrases are identical to those of the typed scenario and it is clear that these notes form its basis. Jakulov also details the number of men and women under types, i.e. sailors, swindlers, citizens, speculators.

The next two pages of Jakulov's manuscript (pages 3 and 4) are extremely vague. They appear to be the most cursory of notes. A prologue is referred to, as is a scene of 'changing the set'.

The nature of these documents substantiates Prokofiev's account of the scenario's construction in his autobiography⁸⁷. He writes: *"My job consisted in putting in order the rather haphazard material Yakulov had given me and arranging it in the form of musical numbers in a harmonious succession leading to a culmination"*.

Archived with this material is a typed page entitled 'Ursinol' Contents of the second act". (See Appendix 2A - typed page 3). The letter containing the enclosures of August 11th 1925 however, promises the scenario for the second act in a few days time and this page is not mentioned on the letter's list of enclosures. The study has concluded that it has most probably been included with this material because it was written very soon after the August 11th letter, as indicated in the letter itself. There is however, no accompanying letter to give a precise date to this page.

The description of the second act is particularly exciting in terms of understanding the function of some of Jakulov's set parts. It is also clear that although the action details are not as worked through as for act 1, the action emerges in relation to the use of set parts. The act begins, not with a duet as in the Diaghilev production, but with a short solo where the sailor is transformed into a worker. It is clear that the main emphasis of act 2 from the point of view of the set design is the working of the set. The vision is very much of a factory at work, with a use of hoisting tackle and with actual machine constructions in motion along with the rest of the set. A fairly complex use of lighting effects and space are indicated and, interestingly, the finale is described as featuring the lights of advertisements on the set. Review descriptions of the finale give no indication that this took place in the realised ballet. These 'advertisements' were presumably intended to be Soviet style poster art of the period.

⁸⁶ This scene, in which a Countess exchanges parts of her clothing for food, was seen as brutal by some critics. In particular André Levinson and Diaghilev's former designer, Alexander Benois, were outraged. Levinson's account is reproduced in Appendix 7 and Benois' in Appendix 10.

⁸⁷ Prokofiev (1960) p.65-66

It is particularly interesting to note the significant narrative differences between the content of the 1925 scenario and the realised ballet of 1927. In addition to the differences already discussed, in the 1927 ballet the narrative focus on the Sailor and the Worker Girl appears to have been weakened when compared to that of the 1925 scenario. Another duet rivals that of Massine and Danilova in terms of the love theme and, according to the reviews, this second pair, danced by Lifar and Tchernicheva, were a lot more attractive with the most pleasing choreography⁸⁸. Lifar and Tchernicheva's duet, entitled 'The Fleeting Romance', replaced the Sailor's solo of the 1925 scenario, where he is transformed into a worker by changing his clothes on stage, as the first scene of act 2. It is clear that as characters they do not have the same symbolic status as the Sailor and the Worker Girl in terms of referring directly to nationally celebrated ideals of the Revolutionary epoch. It is interesting therefore, that the 1927 production introduces two un-named characters, and gives them a focus that overshadows the former centrality of the Sailor and the Worker Girl. It may be that they had a particular meaning in the context of Soviet society during the NEP years. As discussed in Chapter 4, the ballet refers very clearly to social types including 'former people', disenfranchised people from classes that were abolished by the revolution. The comparative wealth of their costumes, as opposed to the rags of the former Countesses, may indicate a particular class or type.

It would appear that in the realised ballet the weakened focus on the hero and heroine, the loss of scenes that were key to the 1925 scenario, and the emphasis on the dancers as machine parts produced a far more ambiguous message and one that very easily fell in line with Western preoccupations concerning the de-humanisation of Man through the machine and fears concerning Communism. Interestingly, Vincente Garcia-Marquez records in his biography of Massine (1996) that Massine depicted in *Le Pas d'Acier* "*a world in which human emotion was stifled*"⁸⁹. He credits his source as a conversation with Boris Kochno in 1989. This description is

⁸⁸ For example, *The Daily Telegraph*, (July 5th 1927), p.12, describes the duet between Tchernicheva and Lifar as "*Brilliantly danced, it was the only human moment in the ballet.*" Several other critics also commented on their costumes as the most attractive in the ballet.

⁸⁹ Garcia-Marquez V. (1996) p.196.

upheld by many of the reviews. Elements of this can be found in the 1925 scenario for act 2, for example, the hero, striving to reach the heroine, is at first dragged into work by other workers. Massine's realisation of the ballet however, appears to have moved significantly away from the 1925 scenario, stressing the mechanical aesthetic and the dehumanisation associated with anti-communist propaganda as well as with liberal intellectual responses to industrialisation. This is further discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, and the differences between the two scenarios are explored in Appendix 14.

This scenario, along with other surviving materials from the ballet's developmental progress, isolate particular moments in the ballet's development leaving the nature of the connecting threads to be deduced and interpreted. What is clear is that this is an important piece of source material enabling a greater understanding of Jakulov's and Prokofiev's initial conception and approach. What is clear is that Prokofiev's music and most of the surviving materials relating to Jakulov's designs, were composed alongside this basic scenario and relate directly to it. It should not be concluded however, that the scenario itself represents Jakulov and Prokofiev's final intentions. Jakulov's letter to Prokofiev of September 1st 1925 (see below) makes it clear that he and Prokofiev were still working on the scenario after this material was sent to Diaghilev. The study's analysis of the model, discussed in Chapter 4, also indicates that some changes to this scenario had already taken place by the autumn of 1925. It is however, extremely interesting to have it as the ballet's initial scenario and to be able to compare it to descriptions of the ballet's realisation in 1927. Unfortunately, there appears to be insufficient evidence to come to firm conclusions as to the parts played by Prokofiev, Jakulov, Massine and Diaghilev in the changes made to this scenario.

4.2 Additional Musical Documentation (See Appendix 2B)

Musical section titles, produced by Prokofiev were found at the Prokofiev Archives in London. The sheet of section titles and explanatory note of 1927 is reproduced

and translated in Appendix 2B. A list of section titles was also sent in a letter to Prokofiev's friend and promoter in Moscow, Derzhanovsky, in April 1928. A copy of this letter is reproduced in Appendix 4.

These section titles are useful as an indication of how the music developed in conjunction with the original scenario of 1925. The slight differences between the titles supplied to Diaghilev in 1925 and the titles of 1927 perhaps reveal the nature of the minor adaptations referred to by both Prokofiev and Jakulov, that occurred after Diaghilev responded to the scenario. They make it clear however, that in writing the music, Prokofiev kept closely to the original musical titles and scenario sent to Diaghilev in 1925. There can be no doubt therefore, that the changes to the scenario reflected by the Diaghilev production came after the music was written.

4.3 Letters (See Appendix 4)

A number of letters have been located dating from the period of creation and performance that refer to Le Pas d'Acier. Some of these, located at the Prokofiev Archive in London, appear to have been unpublished. Other letters, from private collections, have been found reproduced in various publications. Copies of all the letters found by the study are reproduced with translations in Appendix 4.

4.3.1 Letter from Prokofiev to Diaghilev, 11th August 1925. (See Appendix 4 Section A).

A copy of an unpublished letter from Prokofiev to Diaghilev dated 11th August 1925 was found at the Prokofiev Archive in London. It is typed in Russian. The purpose of the letter is to enclose the scenario of act 1 with its musical outline, characters, some set descriptions and sketches. These enclosures are reproduced in Appendix 2A and are discussed above. As referred to above, the letter states that they (Prokofiev and Jakulov) "*will finish the second act in 4 days*" and send it to Diaghilev immediately. No other letter, containing material for act 2, has been

found in the archive. However, grouped with this letter was a sheet entitled '*Ursignol*' *Contents of the second act*. It is probable therefore, that this has been detached from its letter and put with the August 11th enclosures at some point in its archival history.

This letter clearly helps with the dating of material belonging to the initial development of the ballet. Also, in this letter Prokofiev asks Diaghilev "*not to settle the issue of the director before our meeting at the end of September.*" According to Boris Kochno⁹⁰, Diaghilev tried to obtain a Soviet director, approaching both Meyerhold and Tairov via Jakulov in the autumn of 1925, whereas Jakulov had recommended Larionov. It maybe that it is to these plans that the letter refers.

4.3.2 Jakulov's Letter to Koussikov (See Appendix 4, Section B)

The text of a letter from Jakulov to his friend, the poet, Koussikov, is published in an exhibition catalogue from Strasbourg in 1969⁹¹. This text has been reproduced in the original French, with the study's own English translation, in Appendix 4, section A. The original letter is from a private collection and has not been located. It is probable that the letter has additional parts, if only a signature, and/or address, that were not reproduced in the exhibition catalogue.

No date is provided on the text of the letter as published. The study's research however, indicates that it almost undoubtedly dates from 1925, when Jakulov was in Paris negotiating with Diaghilev and meeting with Prokofiev to discuss the ballet⁹². Research shows that Koussikov was also in Paris meeting with Jakulov at

⁹⁰ Kochno, B. (1971) p.264

⁹¹ 'Les Ballets Russes de Serge Diaghilev', L'Ancienne Douane, 15th May – 15th September 1969, p.231. The date of the letter is not given. It is referenced as coming from the President of La Société des Amis de Georges Yakoulov.

⁹² Jakulov was in Paris in 1925 exhibiting work at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs. His entry in the exhibition is recorded in *Notes et Documents*, (May 1967) p.33. His presence in Paris is confirmed by Ilya Ehrenburg (1963) p. 91, in his autobiographical account for 1925. Also see Prokofiev (1960) p.65.

this time⁹³. The letter concerns the Russian writer, Ilya Ehrenburg⁹⁴, and Ehrenburg's autobiography reveals that he was in Paris during 1925, but returned to Moscow in the Spring of 1926⁹⁵. Given the contents of the letter, i.e. the mention of having concluded the value of the commission, and the use of the present tense for "*Prokofiev writes the music*", it seems very unlikely (even allowing for the peculiarities of Jakulov's writing style⁹⁶) that this letter could date from 1926 or 1927. It has clearly been written after Diaghilev has seen the sketches and scenario for the ballet with a railway station scene. As discussed above, this research has revealed that such a scenario was sent to Diaghilev on 11th August 1925. In a letter of October 12th 1925 Jakulov asks Prokofiev to "*remember Ehrenburg and his complaints*" (see below). Presumably these are the same 'complaints' as referred to in this letter to Koussikov. The study suggests therefore, that this letter dates from around August – September 1925.

The letter's main purpose appears to be to inform Koussikov that he is not to be involved in the production. It appears that Jakulov had led him to believe that he would be involved, and is writing to explain how he has come to be excluded. The letter also reveals something about the nature and problems concerning the involvement of Ehrenburg. Several sources indicate that Diaghilev was intent in involving Soviet collaborators⁹⁷. It is probable that he saw Ehrenburg's role as contributing to the scenario. The implication of the letter is that Prokofiev and Jakulov had increasingly backed away from Ehrenburg's involvement and possibly resented his influence with Diaghilev. The early involvement of Ehrenburg however, is clear, as is the fact that Jakulov, Prokofiev and Diaghilev were actively planning the ballet without the initial involvement of a choreographer.

⁹³ On the 30th June 1925 Koussikov held an evening for artists devoted to Jakulov during which Jakulov spoke on a wide range of aesthetic issues. See *Notes and Documents* (Mai 1967) p. 33.

⁹⁴ Ilya Ehrenburg (1891-1967) Russian writer and novelist imprisoned for revolutionary activities in 1908. He escaped to Paris where he worked as a journalist, returning to Russia in 1917. He went back to Paris as a correspondent.

⁹⁵ Ehrenburg, (1963), vol 3, p.90 ff

⁹⁶ The study has faced particular difficulties in deciphering not just Jakulov's hand writing, but his meaning which is often obscure. As an Armenian, this letter, written in French, was not written in his mother-tongue.

This letter has been useful in terms of elucidating the background of the ballet in leading the research to Ehrenburg and to 'Le Rotonde'. The letter refers twice to 'Le Rotonde' as if to a group of people. Jakulov is undoubtedly referring here to a Parisian café in Montparnasse that was a fashionable meeting point for artists and intellectuals of the avant garde during the 1920s. The café is mentioned several times in Ehrenburg's memoirs⁹⁸. Ehrenburg describes how he frequented the café in 1925 discussing the international exhibition with old friends, including Jakulov, many other noted Russian artists then in Paris, and Fernand Léger who was to design the 1948 version of the ballet. We know from Prokofiev's memoirs that the ballet was worked out with Jakulov in a Parisian café during 1925. It was not however, 'Le Rotonde', as Prokofiev describes it as being a tiny café, some half-hour outside of Paris on the banks of a river.⁹⁹

An interesting aspect of this letter is the reference to a dispute with Ehrenburg, and to a change of setting from the Moscow flea market to a railway station. These parts of the letter are open to a degree of interpretation largely because it is difficult to be sure of Jakulov's emphasis in at least one key sentence and also because the letter has a possible sub-text. To consider the possible sub-text first, it appears that Jakulov is at some pains to convince Koussikov (who was possibly of some influence, and perhaps with 'Le Rotonde') not only that Ehrenburg is excluded, but was excluded before he made any significant contribution. For example, he states: *"I created all materials at the time of conversations with Prokofiev and Diaghilev"*. The reader has, I think, to ask why Jakulov makes this statement. Given that he goes on to describe the problems with Ehrenburg at some length, it is perhaps that Jakulov was becoming concerned about potential disputes over 'authorship'. He writes: *"Now Ehrenburg says that it is he that dreamt up the railway station scene in place of the one that in my version had the overall title of the Soukharevka (Moscow flea market)...Le Rotonde is in uproar"*. This sentence

⁹⁷ See for example, Kochno, B. (1971) p.264

⁹⁸ See for example, Ehrenburg, (1963), p.90

⁹⁹ Prokofiev (1960) p.65. During the summer of 1925 Prokofiev was living outside of Paris in Bourron-Marlotte, Seine et Marne – described by Prokofiev as a quiet and picturesque little town

is open to more than one interpretation. It maybe that Jakulov is simply revealing that Ehrenburg was responsible for a change in setting to the railway station (a setting which is particularly clear on the model because of the presence of the train, and is referred to many times in the reviews¹⁰⁰.) Jakulov is perhaps simply complaining that Diaghilev, in showing his notes to Ehrenburg, enabled Ehrenburg to make this claim, sent 'Le Rotonde' into uproar and created a potential problem concerning authorship¹⁰¹. It is perhaps more likely however, that Jakulov is objecting to the claim itself, implying not only that Diaghilev had caused this problem by discussing his notes with Ehrenburg, but that Ehrenburg's claim is unfounded. Is there perhaps a degree of indignation in the sentence "*Now Ehrenburg says that it is he that dreamt up the railway station scene...*"? Unfortunately, there is no mention of this affair in Ehrenburg's autobiography. It would appear likely however, that Jakulov had been talking about the ballet and discussing possibilities with other Russian artists possibly just prior to working the ballet out in detail with Prokofiev.

However, it is reasonable to conclude that, whatever interpretation is made of this letter, Ehrenburg was involved to some degree in the early development of the ballet and may have influenced the railway station setting. It is certainly clear that Ehrenburg made a claim to this effect. The scenario sent to Diaghilev on August 11th, however, containing Jakulov's handwritten notes, has the overall title of a Market for Act 1 and features a scene with the arrival of a train and a platform. A dual location appears to have been present from the outset. Prokofiev's typed notes refer to this scene as "the station".¹⁰² However, the annotations on Drawing A(1)

about two hours from Paris. He wrote to Nikolai Miaskovsky from there on August 4th 1925 saying he would be there until October. Robinson, (1998) p. 260.

¹⁰⁰ It is clear from the reviews that the presence of signals on stage indicated a railway station to many reviewers but that this was not abundantly overt or obvious. The Daily Telegraph records "...the gates and semaphores appeared to suggest a railway good's yard". The Daily Mirror noted "railway signals", but the Boston Evening Transcript, that published a detailed description, writes only of the setting of act one as indicating a work-place that is closed for the day. (See Appendix 7).

¹⁰¹ According to Edward Braun (1969) p.192-3, Ehrenburg had in 1922, declared: "*Away with the author! Theatre shouldn't be written in the study, but built on the stage.*" (Ehrenburg, I. A vsyotaki ona vertitsya, Moscow-Berlin, 1922) but two years later (ie. c.1924) he defended his novel, The Give us Europe Trust, against Meyerhold's adaptation.

¹⁰² See Appendix 2A typed page 3 – first line.

show that the themes of the railway and a market place are merged, as in the 1925 scenario. Jakulov's handwritten notes accompanying the 1925 scenario refer specifically to a bazaar that takes place behind gauzes in Act 1, as well as to the arrival of the train.

Another interesting aspect of the letter is the reference to Prokofiev having "ousted" Kochno¹⁰³ as well as Ehrenburg. This is not referred to in Kochno's accounts and no reference to it has been found elsewhere. It may however, be an indicator of poor relations between the 'Soviet's' and company members described by Serge Lifar¹⁰⁴.

Although this letter refers for the most part to background 'politics' that remain obscure, it does make interesting references to working methods. The implication is that Prokofiev and Jakulov felt Ehrenburg would have taken a more literary approach to establishing a text as the basis of the ballet and that this would have needed adaptation for the theatre. Jakulov's comments indicate that Ehrenburg was worried by the fact that there might be changes to his scenario, that his name might be associated with something over which he did not have control.

Although this letter appears to have a primarily 'diplomatic' purpose, it makes interesting references to the background to the 1925 scenario. Jakulov writes: *"..Prokofiev and I (him especially) were of the opinion that we must first provide the necessary material for the ballet, the music and designs, and to compose the scenario afterwards..."* In fact it is clear that Prokofiev did not write the music until he had produced a reasonably detailed scenario and that Jakulov created his designs in constant relationship to an idea of the action that, even at the model stage, related closely to the earlier scenario. However, the whole attitude towards the scenario was possibly as a tool in the creative process that is perhaps open to

¹⁰³ Boris Kochno, Diaghilev's secretary from 1923, librettist and writer on ballet. Kochno was extremely influential in the company and was the holder of a great deal of company archive material which later became the Kochno Collection at the Archives of the Paris Opera. He was an important source of information for contemporary and later historians.

¹⁰⁴ Lifar, (1970) p.55. See also Lifar, (1940) p.449 ff.

constant adaptation; this might not have worked in the same way with a text by Ehrenburg. The study's conclusions are that Jakulov finds the set in the action, but also the action in the set, and that the model itself represents an adaptation of the working idea of the action. (This is discussed in Chapter 4). Prokofiev may have used the 1925 scenario in a similar way, ie. as something that structures and forms the creation of the music but is also itself re-structured and re-formed by the creative process of writing the music.

4.3.3 Jakulov's Letter to Prokofiev of September 1st 1925.

(See Appendix 4 Section C)

This is an unpublished letter from Jakulov to Prokofiev, found at the Prokofiev Archive in London. It is handwritten by Jakulov in Russian. Jakulov's notes outlining the basic sections appears to be confirming the material of the August scenario. However, it is also clear that for Jakulov at least the scenario is still considered to be 'in progress'. He writes: "*That only leaves the entr'acte, which will finally become clear after the construction of the model, on which I have started.*" The model was clearly a three dimensional means of exploring the problems of the dancer's constructing the set in the entr'acte, and coming to a solution.

Jakulov writes that he expects "*to finish all the preliminary work (the sketches, the model, the production plan) in the next 2 weeks*" This letter therefore clearly dates the model and positions it within the developmental progress of creating the ballet.

In this letter Jakulov refers directly to the train writing that it is to be "*a locomotive which will be moved by people*". This moment in the action is depicted in drawings A(1) and A(2). Unfortunately, Jakulov does not make clear the means by which this is to be done on the sketches, and the production plan he refers to in this letter has not been found.

4.3.4 Jakulov's Letter to Prokofiev of October 12th 1925. (See Appendix 4 Section D)

This unpublished letter was found amongst correspondence of 1925 at the Prokofiev Archive in London. It is signed by Jakulov and is written to Prokofiev in Russian. Jakulov's handwriting is, as usual, extremely difficult to decipher but in this letter the problems of his style have also created problems with translation and his meaning is particularly obscure¹⁰⁵ in parts. He obliquely refers to a person referred to only as "*the beard*", who appears to have the job of keeping Jakulov in touch with Diaghilev and is clearly held in some contempt by Jakulov. The whole tone of the letter suggests that there is some conflict between Jakulov and Diaghilev, or at least between Jakulov's ambitions for the production and the pressures upon him that are coming either directly from Diaghilev and/or from other members of the company. Jakulov appears to be confident that Prokofiev shares his position and views. The letter is confusing however, because it refers both to 'Diaghilev' and to 'S.P.' (which would normally infer 'Serge Pavlovich' – ie. Diaghilev) and sometimes in the same sentence. It seems that Jakulov anticipates that the forthcoming meeting with 'S.P' will result in a fight, or struggle; at least this is the study's tentative interpretation of "*a second round of the dog's wedding*". Perhaps Jakulov means that the production is bringing together parties that would naturally fight each other, that there is notable antipathy perhaps, or that there is an incompatibility of viewpoints. Jakulov claims to have put off his meeting with 'S.P. in order to "*force the enemy*" into revealing his position and that this has been accomplished. It is not clear if it is Diaghilev himself who is seen as the enemy, but if 'S.P' is Diaghilev then this would seem to be the most obvious interpretation.

It is clear that Jakulov feels the ballet is under threat in various ways from unsympathetic people. His anxieties about the production process, which he

stresses “*could spoil everything*” are particularly clear. This may relate to the planned appointment of a director which Prokofiev asked Diaghilev to postpone until their meeting at the end of September in his letter of August 11th 1925. Jakulov argues that he and Prokofiev need to put up a united front, and work more closely together if they are to avoid being “*controlled*”. It is also clear that a problem has arisen regarding the model. Jakulov refers to having taken Diaghilev to see the model, but he goes on to complain about the making of the model as if it is not yet built. It appears that the model is to be made with people who Jakulov feels “*know nothing about the theatre, and who know even less about my work and such an exotic thing as our ballet*”. He finds this “*unthinkable*” but then appears to accept the situation as “*a pity*.” It maybe that Jakulov made a rough model which was to be built into a fully working model for demonstration purposes and for the scene builders. The study finds this unlikely however, not only because the importance of creating the model as a means of solving the nature of the entr’acte and act 2 is clear, but because Jakulov produced detailed models for his previous sets.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps more likely, is that Jakulov is referring to plans regarding the building of the actual set, ie. realising the model, and perhaps realising the action implicit in the model’s conception of the ballet. He gives a clear sense that the production process was thought to be close. The question arises as to why Jakulov is so worried. It is clear that Jakulov feels the ‘exotic’ nature of the ballet is under threat due to the production plans. It maybe that this letter relates to plans for the production that threaten Jakulov’s conception of the ballet.

This letter is also interesting in terms of what it reveals about the collaborative process. From the letters and enclosures found at the Prokofiev archive, it can be seen that Prokofiev was well aware of Jakulov’s conception and designs while writing the music and had first co-written the ballet’s scenario before turning his attention to the musical score. It is clear from this letter however, that Jakulov had

¹⁰⁵ This letter was shown to a native Russian as well as to a translator; both encountered the same problems with the handwriting and with the meaning of some of the phrases which was felt to be obscure in Russian as well as in English.

¹⁰⁶ This is clear from accounts of his work in Kostina, (1979) and Aladzalov (1971) discussed in Chapter 3.

not heard the music even after completing his designs and expresses his disappointment about this to Prokofiev. Yet he does not complain about his lack of involvement with a choreographer. In noting that Prokofiev has not worked through the model and the sketches with Jakulov, the implication seems to be that Jakulov and Prokofiev are still in control of the action but that this is under threat because they are not seen to be working together. Overall, this letter appears to indicate Jakulov's concern about how the ballet's conception will be realised in production.

Although we cannot know the relationship of Diaghilev's plans in 1925 to those of 1927, we do know that the 1927 production departed from the action and setting of the model and the 1925 materials to some extent. This letter is at least an indication that Jakulov may not have entirely supported those departures.

4.3.5 Letters of Jean Cocteau¹⁰⁷ to Boris Kochno of June 1927 (See Appendix 4 Section E)

Two letters were sent to Boris Kochno by Jean Cocteau immediately after the premiere of the ballet in Paris in June 1927. They are reproduced in Kochno (1971). The originals have not been located.

These letters refer to an incident that, according to Kochno¹⁰⁸, took place backstage in the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt, Paris on the night of the première. Kochno claims that Vladimir Dukelsky, a composer and close friend of Prokofiev, overheard Cocteau criticising the choreography and mistook the target of his attack.

¹⁰⁷ Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) was a French poet and writer who contributed influential work to a variety of mediums including film and ballet. He wrote the scenario for Diaghilev's ballet Parade in 1917 and remained a close associate of the company. He was a leading member of the surrealist movement.

¹⁰⁸ Kochno, (1971), p.264-5.

The letters are of interest for two reasons in particular. Firstly, Cocteau makes it clear that he blamed only Massine for turning “*something as great as the Russian Revolution into a cotillion-like spectacle within the intellectual grasp of ladies who pay six thousand francs for a box*”. Secondly, these letters draw attention to backstage tensions that are referred to in non-contemporary eye-witness accounts discussed in Chapter 2. Dukelsky, a Russian émigré living in Paris, and the composer of ‘Zephyre et Flore’ for Diaghilev of 1925, escaped from the theatre, according to Cocteau, “*under a hail of jibes and laughter from a small crowd of musicians and dancers.*” Cocteau concludes that the incident was “*inevitable*”. In the second letter, he refers rather sardonically to the murder of a Russian called Woikoff delaying a Soviet Embassy Garden Party, and its final exclamation “*Poor Lenin*” implies perhaps, that Cocteau feels the ballet, like the Soviet regime itself, is something of a betrayal. He appears to have found hypocrisy in Dukelsky’s criticism of Parisian frivolity, and betrayal in Massine’s portrayal of the Revolution.

Cocteau was a close associate of the company, and the address given on the second letter situates him as staying in the same street as Prokofiev during the Paris performances. It maybe that this letter reflects a degree of ‘back-stage’ knowledge regarding the influence of Massine on the final outcome of the ballet. It is interesting that Cocteau isolates Massine in terms of responsibility. Equally however, it may simply reflect a personal opinion, animosity or loyalty. However, in combination with Prokofiev’s comments elsewhere¹⁰⁹ concerning the dissatisfaction of himself and Jakulov with the production, and Kochno’s statement that Massine was given the role of the ballet’s director as well as choreographer¹¹⁰, the evidence for Massine having played a particularly influential role in adapting the original scenario begins to mount.

¹⁰⁹ See letter to Massine 2nd July 1927, letter to Massine November 1st 1927, and letter to Derzhanovsky, May 12th 1928 (Appendix 4).

¹¹⁰Kochno (1971) p.264.

4.3.6 Letter from Prokofiev to Alfred Bloch, 21st June 1927. (See Appendix 4 Section F)

This unpublished letter is handwritten by Prokofiev in French, and was found at the Prokofiev archive in London. It concerns the allocation of the percentage shares in the ballet between the three creators. Massine's share is taken partly from Prokofiev's share and partly from Jakulov's share and the letter specifies that the percentage to be deducted for Massine is only for the performances given with his choreography. This would seem to indicate that Prokofiev was envisaging other productions of a ballet that he still perceived as belonging jointly to himself and Jakulov.

The largest share of the ballet (75%) is allocated to Prokofiev of which 15% is set aside for Massine. Jakulov receives 25% of which 5% is set aside for Massine.

Prokofiev's letter to Massine of November 1st 1927 (see below) also relates to the percentage shares of the ballet and further elucidates the basis of this allocation.

A second declaration, giving greater shares to Massine, followed in December 1927. (See Bulletin de Déclaration below and in Appendix 4 K)

4.3.7 Prokofiev's Letter to Massine of 2nd July 1927. (See Appendix 4 Section G)

This unpublished letter is typed in Russian and was found at the Prokofiev Archive in London. It appears to be in response to pressure from Massine that Prokofiev finds unwelcome. It is clear that Massine has some kind of plans for the ballet that is a cause of disagreement and that Prokofiev is allying with Jakulov.

It is probable that this represents the beginnings of Massine's quest for a greater share of the ballet's percentages and of his plans for the ballet that resulted in the adaptations apparent from December 1927 and the second declaration (see below).

4.3.8 Prokofiev's Letter to Jakulov of 29th July 1927. (See Appendix 4 Section H)

This unpublished letter is handwritten in Russian and was found at the Prokofiev Archive in London. It encloses some clippings of the English reviews (not archived with the letter) and refers to a proposal, (no doubt to stage the ballet in Moscow), from the Russian theatre director, Tairov. He reminds Jakulov that Diaghilev will only agree to a production in the USSR if asked by Lunacharsky. It makes no mention of the disagreement with Massine.

4.3.9 Prokofiev's Letter to Massine, 1st November 1927. (See Appendix 4 Section I)

This unpublished typed letter in Russian was found at the Prokofiev Archive in London.

The letter is concerned with the royalties for the ballet. It is clear that Massine has made a request for a greater share and that Prokofiev feels he needs to be reminded of Jakulov's rights to be consulted. It explains the percentage share out of the ballet exactly, noting that Prokofiev and Jakulov have half the subject share each, on top of which Prokofiev has the musical share. Interestingly, no mention is made here of any share to Jakulov for the design. With reference to the percentages given in Prokofiev's letter to Alfred Bloch of 21st June 1927 (see above) the weighting of these shares can be appreciated with the greatest share being for the music¹¹¹.

¹¹¹ 75% of the percentage shares went to Prokofiev and 25% to Jakulov. From these shares 15% of Prokofiev's share was set aside for Massine and 5% from Jakulov's share. However, from this letter it would appear that Jakulov's share is only for his part in writing the scenario. It looks as

Prokofiev refers to Jakulov being “*very unhappy with the changes made to the subject which he devised.*” It is possible that these ‘changes’ refer to the departures from the 1925 scenario and are an indication that Jakulov was not happy with the Diaghilev production. However, Prokofiev is probably referring to changes that Massine planned and implemented after the Paris and London performances. The programme of the Opera House performance in London for December 27th 1927, (see fig. 1.3) indicate that adaptations had been made and from this point on Massine is credited as co-author, whereas previously he was simply credited as choreographer. Despite Prokofiev’s refusal to agree to Massine’s wishes in this letter, it would appear from the new declaration of percentage shares of 27th December 1927, (see below) that Massine won the argument or was at least victorious in achieving his aims.

4.3.10 Prokofiev’s Letter to Derzhanovsky, April 22nd 1928. (See Appendix 4 Section Ji)

This typed letter in Russian was found in the Prokofiev Archive in London. The letter is concerned with plans for concert performances of the music in Russia in May 1928. It contains the eleven section headings of the ballet which remain consistent with the original titles and the 1925 scenario.

4.3.11 Prokofiev’s Letter to Derzhanovsky, May 12th 1928. (See Appendix 4 Section Jii)

This typed letter in Russian was found at the Prokofiev Archive in London. It is in response to a request for literary material on the ballet. It is clear from Prokofiev’s published letters¹¹² that there were several plans for a production of Le Pas d’Acier

if the design brought with it only a payment (referred to in Jakulov’s letter to Ehrenburg) and not a percentage share in the ballet.

¹¹² See Robinson, (1998)

FIGURE 1.3

VILLE
Archiv
Serge
LAL

A L'OPÉRA

LE PAS D'ACIER

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in Moscow during 1928-9. This letter predates the criticism of the ballet that emerged from the Association of Proletarian Musicians in 1929 that led to the cancellation of the Bolshoi's planned production¹¹³ and the condemnation of the ballet.

Interestingly Prokofiev notes in this letter that there was a lot in the Diaghilev production that did not comply with his wishes. Unfortunately, he provides no details. This may support the possibility that the changes from the 1925 scenario arose largely from Massine, and were not entirely welcomed by Prokofiev.

4.4 Prokofiev's 'Soviet Diary 1927'.

Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union as a visiting celebrity in 1927 after an absence of nearly 9 years. The unpublished diary was left in Paris with friends when Prokofiev returned permanently to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. It was then found by his son, Oleg Prokofiev, in 1989, and published in 1991. Unfortunately it has very few references to Le Pas d'Acier but it provides some points of useful background information.

The diary makes clear for example, that Prokofiev was in Moscow from January 1927 until the end of March when he left for Paris. This supports Massine's account of starting work on the ballet with Prokofiev in Monte Carlo in very late March or early April of 1927¹¹⁴. Most importantly Prokofiev records that Diaghilev

¹¹³ See Seroff (1969) p.181ff and Robinson (1998), various letters. On 14th November 1929 Prokofiev attended an audition of Le Pas d'Acier given to the directors of the Bolshoi and the members of Russia's Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM). Auditions were critical examinations of a composer's work followed by discussion which would then determine the fate of the work. RAPM had already published to the effect that Prokofiev was an enemy of Soviet culture, and that he would not embrace 'realism'. However, the journal 'Contemporary Music' had referred to Le Pas d'Acier as a "revolution in ballet" and they supported the directors of the Bolshoi, so Prokofiev agreed to attend the audition. It was, writes Seroff, a "rather stormy" occasion. RAPM were openly antagonistic. Despite Meyerhold's support and Prokofiev's defence of his work, the ballet's performance was not allowed. The magazine 'Proletarian Music' (no.6 1929) attacked Prokofiev and condemned Le Pas d'Acier as "*a flat and vulgar anti-Soviet anecdote, a counter-revolutionary composition bordering on Fascism*".

¹¹⁴ Massine (1968) p.171.

only decided to stage the ballet in February 1927 and that this put a stop to plans to stage it at the Marinsky Theatre, as one of three ballets in an evening devoted to Prokofiev, as Diaghilev had exclusive rights¹¹⁵. This substantiates the idea that the ballet was put 'on hold' after its music, scenario and designs were produced in 1925. Prokofiev's only other note concerning the ballet is to mention that in the planning of 'Ursignol' (spelt 'Oursignol' in the translated diary), Diaghilev had not been able to decide between the designers Yakulov and Rabinovich¹¹⁶. It is also clear that in February 1927, Jakulov was in Tiflis but was in contact with Diaghilev and Prokofiev concerning the forthcoming production¹¹⁷.

4.5 The Performance Programmes

The Paris and London Programmes for the premieres in June and July 1927 are shown in **fig. 1.1** and **fig. 1.2**. Interestingly, they differ in terms of the amount of information provided. The Paris audiences enjoyed a far greater degree of scene explanations than did their London counterparts. It maybe that the company wished to avoid the tendency of the Paris critics to look for the scene descriptions in the action of Act 1 and complain of a lack of clarity. Perhaps they hoped that the London critics would respond more immediately to the scenes on stage without seeking a narrative explanation. If so it failed, as it was obvious to the London critics that dramatic action was involved in each scene and without scene titles they were if anything more confused than their Paris counterparts. In terms of reconstruction, the Paris reviews are more helpful in placing particular actions in particular scenes because of the scene titles. However, the London reviews are sometimes particularly helpful in other ways. For example, in searching for the intention of a scene, critics sometimes tell us something more about how a scene actually looked than critics who were influenced in their descriptive terms by the programme notes.

¹¹⁵ Prokofiev (1927) p.92.

¹¹⁶ Artist and designer Isaak Rabinovich was a pupil of Alexandra Exter. He designed several notable avant garde productions of the era.

¹¹⁷ Prokofiev (1927) p. 102.

It is not clear why the 1927 production introduced this element of folktale and moved away from the more overt social-realism of the 1925 section titles. The reviews make it clear however, that the 1927 titles on the Paris program bore no obvious relationship to what was happening on stage. There was, for example, no literal portrayal of a Baba Yaga or Crocodile. The study's interview with Dame Alicia Markova, (see Appendix 13) confirms that the scene entitled 'The Cats and the Mice' was not literally presented as cats and mice. The Paris and London programmes describe the ballet as a work in two acts that summarise "*the stories and legends of the countryside, and the mechanism of the factories.*" This idea of act one is a clear departure from the 1925 scenario, yet accounts of the production are unanimous in not being able to find any references to legends and could not make sense of the action.

In looking at later programmes from the archives of the Paris Opera, it became clear that some changes were made to the ballet late in 1927. The programme for a performance at the Paris Opera, 27th December 1927, (see fig. 1.1) reveals that in addition to slight differences in the numbers of dancers in some scenes, more substantial adaptations were introduced to Scene III and to the start of the factory scenes following Scene VIII. Scene III originally featured Massine, Javinsky, Fedorow and Winter with seven other male dancers; on the program of 27th December, the seven other dancers are no longer listed. The program now lists only eleven scenes, instead of twelve, and the missing scene is the original scene IX 'Passage des Ouvriers' which was found particularly weak by several critics. From this point on Massine is also now listed as co-author, as opposed to purely choreographer. Later research finds at the Prokofiev Archive, made it clear that these changes corresponded with a second 'Bulletin de Déclaration' (see below) giving a greater percentage share of the ballet to Massine.

4.6 The Bulletin de Déclaration, 27th December 1927. (See Appendix 4 Section K)

A copy of this document was found at the Prokofiev Archive in London. There is a note in Prokofiev's handwriting on the reverse; this is reproduced and translated from French along with a copy of the Bulletin in Appendix 4.

This bulletin credits Massine as co-author with Prokofiev and Jakulov. His share is increased by 10% to 30%, with an equal reduction of 5% in the shares of Prokofiev and Jakulov. Massine now has a greater share in the ballet than Jakulov (30% to Massine, 15% to Jakulov, 55% to Prokofiev). When read in conjunction with the original declaration and Prokofiev's letter to Massine of November 1st 1927, it would appear that Massine has won his battle for co-authorship and that Jakulov's percentage represents only the authorship share of 15%, which he now holds equally with Massine and Prokofiev. However, this would appear to relate only to the second version of the ballet with Massine's adaptations shown on the programme of 27th December 1927 (see fig. 1.3)

4.7 Contemporary Interviews and Jakulov's Autobiographical Account (See Appendix 8)

The study has located two contemporary interviews concerned with the ballet. The first of these appeared in the Observer on July 3rd 1927 and featured Diaghilev promoting the production prior to the premiere on July 7th. The second, by Jakulov, appeared in a Soviet theatre journal, Rabis, in June 1928 corresponding with concert performances in Russia of Prokofiev's music. Jakulov's short autobiographical account of the ballet appears to have been written shortly before his death in 1928.

4.7.1 Newspaper Interview with Diaghilev (See Appendix 8 A)

An interview with Diaghilev appeared in The Observer on July 3rd 1927 prior to opening night in London. This interview reports that Diaghilev saw Le Pas d'Acier as the most important new ballet the company had produced since Stravinsky's Les

Noces. He speaks of the Paris triumph, which is in marked contrast to the later recollections by some company members. Of course, Diaghilev was no doubt involved primarily in a publicity exercise here, but he makes many interesting comments about the intentions of the work and draws attention to the complexity of the set which calls into question any notion that the set was radically simplified in performance, as suggested by the study's interview with Dame Alicia Markova¹¹⁸.

4.7.2 Jakulov's Interview with 'Rabis'. (See Appendix 8 B).

In June 1928 Prokofiev's score was played in Moscow, including a performance at the Glinka State Central Museum of musical culture¹¹⁹. At this time Jakulov was himself in Russia and talked about the ballet in an interview published in the Soviet journal 'Rabis'. This was shortly before his death.

The article responds to the question, apparently being asked in Russia at the time, as to why Le Pas d'Acier had not been included in the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theatre. Jakulov refers to the ballet's 'sensational success' in Paris and seeks to explain Diaghilev's motivation and concerns. He sees Le Pas d'Acier as a venture into "*urbanized industrial classicism*" and sees an "*internal Constructivism*" in Russian works, even when Constructivist techniques are not utilized, lacking in Western theatre. He identifies Diaghilev's intention as being to establish the landmark of the new Russian Theatre in the West, and to open up new pathways for choreography. The sense is not of Constructivism as a complete break with the past, but as a development, and of Diaghilev, not as simply in pursuit of the 'new' but as continuing to draw on a new phase of Russian sources in the evolution of the company.

Unfortunately Jakulov gives very little descriptive detail of Le Pas d'Acier in this interview. He does however, confirm that which the annotated drawings indicate

¹¹⁸ See Appendix 13.

¹¹⁹ From information supplied by Elizabeth Souritz, sent to the author in 1996.

was of central importance to his conception of the work by referring to rotating gears, flywheels and lights that move with the choreography. He also makes it clear that dancers both operated machinery and represented machinery choreographically. Jakulov also indicates here that the ballet has no simple political message. He refers to the background of the ballet as the enthusiasm of the revolutionaries against the deformation and disintegration of the old regime but he refers also to the “pathos” of organised labour. The aim of the ballet appears to have been to symbolically present a complex moment of history, a transition from breakdown and chaos to a new order. There is a sense of creative engagement with a complex and highly significant historical ‘moment’ in which a new future is being forged.

Jakulov confirms here that the music, sketches, scenario and libretto were composed at the same time, and describes elements in the music and its transition in style. The musical concept of the ballet is given here in terms of a transition from “*national melodies permeating the revolutionary slogans*” to the unity of the industrial theme.

4.7.3 Jakulov’s Autobiographical Account

Jakulov’s autobiographical material has been compiled in various forms and appears to consist of writings, exhibition details, and notes, rather than material written specifically as an autobiography. It is written in Russian and the section relating to the period of Le Pas d’Acier is entitled ‘My Artistic Activity from 1918-1928’. The study has not been able to access the original texts. It has however, located reproductions of his account of Le Pas d’Acier in Aladzhalov (1971) and Kostina (1979). When requesting a copy of the autobiographical writings from the Jakulov archive in Erevan, the study was supplied only with the material contained in the Aladzhalov and Kostina books and was advised that this was his entire autobiographical account.

The coverage of Le Pas d’Acier is virtually identical to that of the interview in Rabis discussed above.

4.8 The Reviews (See Appendix 7)

The study has made an extensive search for newspaper and journal reviews. These have been collected together and are reproduced, with translations into English, in Appendix 7. The study began with the selection of English reviews collected by Nesta Macdonald¹²⁰ in the 1970s and by checking secondary sources for quotations and references. Each of these sources was then located and collected together with other reviews found by the study through research at the British Newspaper Library and the British Library. As no single source for an extensive international collection of reviews for the Diaghilev productions yet exists, it was necessary to locate and search contemporary newspapers and journals. The study has attempted to be as exhaustive as possible but faced the problem of identifying potential contemporary sources, particularly with regard to foreign publications. It has not been possible to obtain copies of some of the French papers that research indicates did carry reviews. These are: L'Éclair (Paris), La Renaissance (a Russian language paper published in Paris), L'Excelsior (Paris), and Les Dernières Nouvelles (Paris). It is highly likely that searching in French newspaper archives would produce more reviews than the study has been able to locate. Reviews do not appear to have been carried in Moscow papers but some reviews published in Russian in Paris have been located. Major American papers, including the New York Times, were searched for reviews (sent from Paris or London correspondents) largely without success. However, one lengthy and detailed review was found in an American paper, The Boston Evening Transcript. Again, further research in American archives may produce more material.

However, the study has produced a substantial collection of reviews, many of which are not previously referred to by Macdonald or other secondary sources. The reviews provide a rich source of information about the ballet in performance, about how it was perceived and about the critical attitudes and approaches of the

¹²⁰ Macdonald (1975).

time. All the reviews that it has been possible to trace are reproduced in Appendix 7.

Newspaper critics writing on dance in the late 1920s were most often music critics rather than specialized dance or theatre critics¹²¹. This, in addition to the fact that Prokofiev was the most famous of the collaborators, led to a concentration on the music in the majority of the reviews. By comparison, the work appears to have attracted little attention from journals of theatre, art or design; it would seem to have been perceived very much as Prokofiev's new work. Nevertheless, many of the reviewers were very experienced critics of Diaghilev productions; their appreciation of dance as a theatre art had indeed been formed by the company. They were well able to identify the work's innovation and departures and evaluate its aesthetic worth by the informed criteria of the time. Research indicates that drama reviewers paid a great deal of attention to Diaghilev productions and that there was not the degree of specialism amongst critics as occurs today. Many of the critics reviewing Le Pas d'Acier would almost certainly have seen the productions brought from Russia by Tairov's Kamerny Theatre in the early 1920s and would therefore, have seen Jakulov's designs for Girofle Girofla (discussed in Chapter 3). They would also most probably have seen contributions from Russian Constructivism at the 1925 Paris Exhibition. It is unlikely however, that many, if any, would have seen the more extreme experiments being conducted by Soviet theatre in Moscow in the 1920s. In addition to the problem of how far the critics were familiar with the aesthetic position of Jakulov, the ballet's political dimension and its context in being created and performed in Paris and London, is an important consideration in interpreting the reviews.

In addition to evaluation, the reviews are an extremely important source of descriptive information of how the ballet looked in performance. They pose however, the constant challenge of interpretation. For example, what one critic may describe as a wheel, may be a disk to another, a flashing signal to yet another, a

¹²¹ Sayers, (1987) 'A Study in the Development of British Dance Criticism', unpublished MPhil thesis.

semaphore to another. As Jakulov's design features overhead wheels and 'wheels' that are potentially disks and signals of varying kinds, it is often particularly difficult to clearly identify which part of the set is being described. Critics of course, are rarely, if ever, simply seeking to provide an observationally detailed description; they describe largely for other purposes, such as to evoke and to support an evaluation. Descriptions are always highly selective in a short review space and function usually to evoke the critic's particular response and attitude. Reviews are therefore, a particularly complex source of information and their use by the study has required detailed analysis. Even when description is the objective of the critic, it is the result of his/her individual perception and descriptive terms. The reader is therefore, always interpreting an interpretation.

However, the reviews do provide some descriptive material that can be recognized and substantiated both by other reviews or descriptive sources, as having a likely relationship to Jakulov's sketches or model. In addition to confirming some specific details, they also give information on the qualities of the set's overall impact and impression on contemporary viewers. Overall, the reviews have both influenced and confirmed the study's research findings that the production set was most probably an adaptation of the model rather than a more radical departure. They have also influenced the study's conclusions that the set design's spatial complexities were realised through the interaction of light and gauze. This is fully discussed in Chapter 4.

The study has identified the following visual elements as the ones that are most repeatedly identified in the reviews, and they are also those elements that are most frequently referred to in the non-contemporary accounts discussed in Chapter 2:

- 1) Rostrums or platforms; multi-leveled performance.
- 2) Wheels; revolving wheels; wheels moving in time to action.
- 3) Hammers and hammering.
- 4) Pistons, puffing smoke.
- 5) Flashing lights, different colours, light signals.
- 6) Mechanical movement by dancers

- 7) Ballet reaching a crescendo or powerful climax with the set in movement.
- 8) Ladies in rags.
- 9) Men in grey-green.

Of these items, only the pistons are definitely not a part of the 1925 materials. However, in puffing smoke there is a sense in which elements of the absent steam train may have emerged in the 1927 production. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

It is notable that parts of the set are often identified; for example, platforms, pistons, wheels, signals, lights. When set parts are described however, it is the action of a set part, rather than its surface appearance that tends to attract attention. This indicates the success of the set as a Constructivist design¹²², but limits the potential use of the reviews in reconstruction. For example, many reviews tell us that pistons puff, but not one tells us what they looked like or where they were on the set. However, the reviews are particularly helpful in terms of understanding how the set was experienced. Judging from review descriptions, it would appear that it was through movement and light that the performance set transformed itself from what the critics saw initially as a grey drab set, into a powerful evocation of a factory forge. Jakulov's model shows the set parts, but in terms of reconstruction the set's depth effects, its dynamism and clearly powerful effects on the spectator need to be found. This is further discussed in Chapter 4.

The context of review 'descriptions' also has to be taken into consideration. For example, In comparison with many of the highly decorative works of the Diaghilev company, the set for Le Pas d'Acier may have seemed a lot more drab and uninteresting than it would to an audience used to non-decorative sets and bare stages. In addition the novelty of moving parts and lighting effects might perhaps have detracted from describing other factors relating specifically to the nature of the stage objects.

¹²² The approach of Constructivist stage design is discussed in Chapter 3.

In terms of evaluation, the contemporary reviews do not support the idea that the ballet was dismissed as a failure, that emerges in later accounts. Although many reviews saw the first act as a failure, it is clear that the second act was a powerful and successful evocation. The study's use of the reviews as an information source for the action and set of the ballet appears in Appendix 14.

5. Conclusions

In terms of Le Pas d'Acier, the lack of clear 'records' from the past, i.e. source material specifically intended as a recording, gives rise to a heightened sense of how important chance and arbitrary factors are in terms of what forms the source materials for a performance work. The question arises as to how much of the work is 'lost', how much 'found', how much can be deduced and how much depends upon interpretation?¹²³.

The question of reconstructing the set design is particularly complex in the case of Le Pas d'Acier. As we are without visual records of the actual set, it is necessary to interpret descriptions of the performance set by referring to the model. This is not unproblematic given that the production set was almost certainly an adaptation to an extent that is not easy to clearly determine. The relationship of the model to the performance set therefore, needs first to be interpreted. These issues are discussed in Chapter 4.

The study has concluded that the located source material enables an interpretation of the relationship of the model to the performance set, and enables an interpretation of the essential elements of Jakulov's designs. While it does not allow for an exact replication of the production set, it illuminates the design process and raises questions as to which point in that process may have given rise to the most 'authentic' set. This is also discussed in Chapter 4.

This chapter has attempted to identify and discuss the nature of the source material located and the study's basic interpretations of that source material. One of the most obvious things that the primary source material enables is a chronology of the creative and collaborative process. By placing items chronologically some source materials become less obscure, and aspects of their original function, and relationship to the work in progress and in performance, can be deduced. The primary source material is also revealing in terms of the nature of the collaborative process and certain conclusions might be drawn from this. The source material breaks down as belonging to different interactions between the creators. Firstly, there is the material produced by Prokofiev and Jakulov in the absence of a choreographer in 1925, and then there is the material relating to the ballet after Massine became involved in 1927. This is particularly notable given that the set design is integral to the action. The source material indicates that Prokofiev worked closely with Jakulov prior to writing the music but that Jakulov had not heard the music, or consulted with Massine, in creating the designs. It also indicates that Massine worked closely with Prokofiev but not necessarily with Jakulov. Indeed a handwritten note from Prokofiev to Jakulov, from nearly half way through the rehearsal period, pleads: "*Come soon or it will be too late*"¹²⁴.

Perhaps the most enriching possibility provided by the primary source material, is the comparison it enables between an original conception, in evidence in the 1925 scenario and materials, and the realised ballet. Ironically, the nature of the remaining source material makes it easier to study the unrealised ballet than the actual production. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion however, that the key to understanding this ballet lies not with seeing its original performance, if such a thing were possible, but in understanding its stages of evolution from its conception by a designer and composer through to its birth via its choreographer / director. It could be argued therefore, that 'authenticity' in terms of 'reconstruction' would be

¹²³ See for example, Archer and Hodson in 'Ballet's lost and found', Adshead & Layson ed.s, (1994) p.99: "How much of a ballet has to be missing for it to be considered lost? And how much has to be recovered for it to qualify as found?"

¹²⁴ A copy of this note written in Monte Carlo, dated 29th April 1927, to Jakulov in Moscow, was found at the Prokofiev Archive in London.

best achieved, not by attempting to reproduce the work in performance, but by engaging with the source material and entering into the interpretative process.

The indications of the research findings are that Massine inherited the basis of a ballet that had been developed by a designer and musician and that he then re-interpreted the material choreographically, in his own terms. It would appear that Massine retained Jakulov's basic ideas and drew creatively on them as well as on those of Prokofiev. In doing so however, he almost certainly departed from the original conception as well as making his own distinct contribution, particularly in his development of the 'machine dance' as a central part of the ballet. In act 1 however, there appears to have been a lack of resolution in Massine's adaptations, as if the process of transforming the 1925 materials had not been fully accomplished leading to the confusion experienced by the critics. The really interesting question is perhaps why the 1927 production moved away from the original scenario with its relatively direct exposition of dramatic action. In Act 2 however, Massine appears to have found a way of interacting with the original source material, and with the designs, that produced a coherent and powerful choreographic statement.

To conclude this chapter, one of the most obvious things to have emerged from the examination of the source material, is the extent to which the reading of each item depends upon relating it to other items and upon a knowledge of other material. To categorize and separately examine primary source material, non-contemporary eye-witness testimony and contextual sources, helps manage the information and identify theoretical issues arising. However, in practice, all items of source material clearly inform the interpretation of each other, crossing categories and types. The following chapter examines the nature of later testimony as source material and as support for interpretations of source material; Chapter 3 then looks at contextual material.

Chapter 2:

The Nature, Problems and Interpretation of Non-Contemporary Testimony

1. Introduction

This chapter is concerned with descriptions, explanations and other accounts of the work from participants and eyewitnesses that are *non-contemporary* to the work, i.e. published in the years after the work's last performance in 1929. This creates a potentially large and varied category ranging from material that may have come from detailed notes taken when the ballet was in development or performance, through to living memory over a time span of nearly seventy years. It includes therefore, accounts from the creators, performers, back-stage witnesses, historians and a range of other spectators.

In an attempt to organise this material, this chapter has four sub-categories. In the first sub-category, it discusses autobiographical and biographical accounts written by participants and eyewitnesses who were company members at the time. In the second sub-category, it considers accounts by eyewitness historians, including material from the company's own historian, Boris Kochno who was Diaghilev's secretary and company librettist during the period of Le Pas d'Acier. In the third sub-category, it looks at the nature of other spectator accounts, and finally, in the fourth sub-category, at accounts from living memory elicited by the study. With the exception of the last material type, this chapter is therefore, concerned with previously published testimony that has formed the 'primary history' of the work. This chapter discusses these accounts in terms of the information they provide, and considers the perspectives they bring to the work.

2. Autobiographical and Biographical Material from Participants and Eyewitness Company Members. (See Appendix 10)

With few exceptions, the memoirs produced by members of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes tend to be personal accounts by former 'stars'. As Le Pas d'Acier was largely an ensemble ballet, it is perhaps not surprising that it has comparatively little coverage in company autobiographies. There are several reasons, aesthetic and political, why the ballet was problematic for company members. As discussed in the introduction the company was a focus point for White Russian émigrés in the West, and Serge Lifar's account, discussed below, gives examples of how the ballet's Soviet connections caused problems within the company¹. In addition to the problem of the ballet's politics, it departed radically from the classical technique; it gave little opportunity for principal dancers to excel in individual roles, and presented the company in unflattering, utilitarian costumes. The nature of the material that does emerge, has to be considered against this background as well as within the general nature, concerns and unspoken agendas of the autobiographical and biographical approaches.

All three of the ballet's creators have left accounts of Le Pas d'Acier in autobiographical writings. Jakulov's autobiographical account was written no later than 1928, the year of his premature death, and is therefore contemporary to the work in the study's terms and discussed in Chapter 1. However, his comments on Le Pas d'Acier are also quoted in this chapter with reference to the autobiographical accounts of Prokofiev(1953) and Massine (1960).

Of those who danced in the ballet, Alexandra Danilova refers briefly to the work in her autobiography (1986), but an actual account of the ballet emerges only in the writings of Serge Lifar, in his autobiography (1965) and in his biography of Diaghilev (1940). However, Diaghilev's régisseur, Serge Grigoriev records details of the set and production in his memoirs (1953), and dancer Lydia Sokolova who saw the production in 1928 refers to the work in her autobiography (1960). A brief account has also been found in the memoirs of the conductor Eugene Goossens (1951).

¹ See in particular Lifar, (1940) p.447

2.1 Serge Prokofiev's Autobiographical Account (See Appendix 10 – Section A)

Prokofiev's autobiography was published in Moscow in 1956 after his death. It is not clear when it was written but it ends in the late 1930s. The compiler's preface refers to the context that produced Le Pas d'Acier in the following terms:

"Not all of Prokofiev's musical experiments were successful. The development of his talent in pre-Revolutionary years was adversely affected by the modernistic influences prevalent in all branches of Russian art at that time. Greater still were the obstacles he encountered during the years he spent abroad. In that period, he has confessed, there were times when he feared that he was losing his individuality as an artist."

The unacceptability of Modernist aesthetics, including Constructivism, in Stalinist Russia and the previous condemnation of the ballet by Soviet authorities in 1929, form an unmentioned background to Prokofiev's testimony. It is difficult to interpret if and how this may have influenced his writing on the ballet. He provides however, a vivid account of his collaboration with Jakulov.

Prokofiev begins with his excitement at having been told by Diaghilev that the new ballet could be in his own style on a Soviet theme, an opportunity described by Prokofiev as like *"a fresh breeze"*. In discussions with Jakulov, they assumed, he writes, *"that the important thing at this stage was not to provide mere entertainment but to show the new life that had come to the Soviet Union, and primarily the construction effort"*. Quoting Jakulov's account in 'Rabis' (1928), the ideological fervor of the moment comes across powerfully, with a sense of contrast between the old and decayed and the *"the uplifting influence of organised labour."* *"The idea was Yakulov's"* he writes, but it is not difficult to appreciate how a Soviet theme provided Prokofiev with the opportunity to both return to a Russian source of inspiration and pursue new musical form. Prokofiev gives some indications of the departures represented by his musical score. He writes that he turned toward a

Russian musical idiom but one that could “*convey the spirit of modern times*”. He describes “*the second radical change*” as a shift from chromatic to the diatonic.

Prokofiev’s account consists of memories relating to the creative process, which produced the music in 1925. He discusses the work almost totally in terms of his collaboration with Jakulov and clearly locates Jakulov as the dominant force behind the ballet’s concept. Prokofiev describes his role in the development of the scenario as that of organising Jakulov’s material. He writes: “*My job consisted in putting in order the rather haphazard material Yakulov had given me and arranging it in the form of musical numbers in a harmonious succession leading to a culmination.*”

As in Massine’s account, (see 2.2 below) Prokofiev is not concerned with providing details of the work itself but, by isolating and focussing on particular aspects, he identifies his view of the key elements. His focus on the hammers and moving wheels echoes the descriptive emphasis of many of the contemporary and later eyewitness accounts. Prokofiev is however, a little more specific than most accounts regarding the moving wheels, writing: “*a revolving of transmission belts and flywheels*”, and adding “*a flashing of light signals*”.

Like Massine, Prokofiev focusses on the climactic finale. This part of the ballet was the most highly evaluated in the contemporary reviews. He writes of everything leading to “*a general creative upsurge*” which he situates at the moment when dance groups are operating machines and imitating machines choreographically. It should be noted that Prokofiev is describing here the intentions of the ballet at the time of writing the scenario with Jakulov in 1925. He does not give any indication that this differed in any way from the ballet in performance, but given the autobiographical context, this does not necessarily mean that this is also a description of the realised ballet. It is particularly interesting to note that he recalls the idea of dancers depicting machines choreographically as part of his description of Jakulov’s idea of the ballet during their collaboration in 1925, as this was a much celebrated feature of Massine’s choreography in the reviews. The 1925 scenario refers only to the operation of machines, and not to the choreographic depiction of machinery. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, Jakulov’s drawings suggest that he also envisaged the dancers moving like machine parts. (See for example, appendix

2, drawing A (1) where Jakulov's annotations refer to '*Dance of the wheels and levers, depicted by the movements of arms and legs*'.)

Prokofiev also makes the following observation: "*It was easy to see,*" he writes, "*that the libretto had been written not by a playwright but a painter guided by his visual impressions.*" It is interesting to consider how this may have affected the ballet, and how the nature of the work as 'spectacle' could potentially have come into conflict with its highly politicised subject matter. Prokofiev has made it clear they felt it was important not to provide "*mere entertainment*" and the 1925 scenario has a clear ideological and moral perspective. However, the involvement of Ehrenburg in the early stages indicates that a libretto "*written by a painter guided by his visual impressions*", was not Diaghilev's original intention. Jakulov's later stress on the dangers involved in the production process² of something as "*exotic*" as this ballet, appears to be indicative of a recognition of potential problems. Diaghilev's identification of the need for a Soviet director, and his failure to achieve this, may also be an important factor in the way the ballet developed.

Prokofiev ends his account by noting: "*Like all Diaghilev productions it was magnificently staged and was a great success*". He adds that Stravinsky hated the hammering on stage and that the "*whiteguard press*" saw it as Bolshevik, but that "*the youth were in ecstasies.*"

2.2. Leonid Massine's Autobiographical Account (See Appendix 10 – Section B)

Massine's autobiography was published in 1960. His account of the ballet is brief but, by isolating and focussing on particular aspects in his description, he identifies his interpretation of the ballet's key points and these can be compared to the 1925 materials, as well as to other accounts.

Massine's descriptions of the ballet identify four main aspects: firstly, the intention to show the ideals of the new Soviet regime; secondly, two contrasting scenes

² See Jakulov's letter to Prokofiev 12th October 1925, Appendix 4, p.44.

showing the “*countryside*” and “*the virility of Communist youth*” respectively; thirdly the wheels and pistons moving in time to hammering movements; fourthly, a multi-level composition involving a welding of scenic and bodily movements.

This idea of contrast is not specifically mentioned in the 1925 materials, and the emphasis would appear to be more on transformation. Jakulov’s account in Rabis, however, quoted in Prokofiev’s account, stresses a contrast between the old society and the new. Diaghilev’s account in his interview of July 3rd 1927, (see appendix 8, section A) introduces a further variant, identifying the contrast as between leisure and labour.

Ignoring Jakulov’s role in the conceptual development of the ballet, Massine writes that the ballet was Prokofiev’s vision, and that Prokofiev wanted: “*to show how the Revolution had been the culmination of centuries of oppression; how the new regime was now encouraging ideals of equality, discipline and work which would lead to national progress and knowledge.*” As discussed in Chapter 1, it is clear that Massine worked far more closely with Prokofiev during rehearsals than he did with Jakulov, if indeed he worked directly with Jakulov at all. However, Massine introduces a politicised terminology with words such as “*oppression*”, and “*equality*”, that is notably absent from Prokofiev’s autobiographical account as well as from the descriptive terms of the 1925 scenario³. What is described by Massine as about “*oppression*” and “*equality*”, is described by Jakulov as about “*decay*” and “*enthusiasm*”. Jakulov wrote: “*The ballet has two acts: the period of the breaking up of the old way of life, its deformation, and the enthusiasm of the revolutionaries against the background of the disintegration of the old and the pathos of organised labour ‘The factory at work’.*”⁴ In his autobiographical writings however, Jakulov was more overtly political, stating that the ballet “*symbolises the powerful leap from the chaos of the start of the revolution to socialist construction*”⁵, and claims that the ballet was a representative of “*the ideology of the new Soviet culture...*”.

Prokofiev emphasises the less overtly political ideal of construction, and in his note

³ American critic, John Martin, writing about a new production of the ballet in New York in 1931, refers to the original and states: “*According to Massine, the production was in fact a sort of choreographic transcription of the October Revolution.*” New York Times (April 26th 1931)

⁴ Jakulov (1928) Rabis p.5 Prokofiev’s autobiography gives a slightly different rendering of this and attributes it to the Moscow arts magazine Zhizn Iskusstva, see Prokofiev (1960) p. 65-66.

accompanying the musical section titles of 29/07/1927 (see Appendix 2B) Prokofiev claims the ballet did not touch on political life. He writes that following instructions from Diaghilev: “*Prokofiev chose as the setting for his action Soviet Russia in 1920 and, without touching on political life, presented in Le Pas d'Acier a series of scenes of an everyday nature, showing both town and country life.*” The different emphases of these creator accounts are interesting and may reflect different contextual pressures. It may be that Massine is giving an accurate impression of Prokofiev’s intentions at the time. It is interesting to note that Massine claims Prokofiev told him the music was inspired by the legendary Bogatyri, the heroic founders of Old Russia. This was possibly the source for the notion of referring to the legends of the countryside in act 1, as described on the Paris and London programs.⁶

Massine gives some indication of his approach to characterisation, referring to an inner struggle within his character of the Sailor/Young Worker. He writes of “*the conflict in the mind of a young man torn between his personal life and his national loyalty.*” The original scenario of 1925 locates the Sailor (after he has transformed into a worker) as in despair at not being able to reach the heroine in the factory scene. It describes a visually dramatic moment where he “*tries to get to her...is in despair because he cannot reach her*” and is separated from her “*by empty space and the gauze*”. Massine’s reference to this character may indicate that this scene, or something similar, featured in the 1927 production. None of the reviews or other descriptions however, refer to this kind of narrative with regard to the Sailor /Young Worker.

Massine refers to the finale as consisting of a large ensemble section in front of the platforms and of welding “*together the scenic and bodily movements*” which presumably refers to the imitation of machine parts by the dancers frequently described in the reviews. As discussed in Chapter 1 section 4.1, this appears to be a

⁵ Aladzhhalov, (1971), p. 191.

⁶ The London programme reads: “*The two Tableaux of this ballet present a series of scenes in which are summarised two aspects of Russian life: the stories and legends of the countryside, and the mechanism of the factories.*” This is also reflected in the Paris programme’s section titles such as

significant departure from the 1925 scenario. In the latter, the finale begins by the hero and heroine running forward to the front of the stage. The hero and heroine *“dance together on pedal apparatus, while at the same time the whole factory is set in motion”*. As discussed in Chapter 1 the resolution offered by the finale in the 1925 scenario invites a very different reading of intentions than a resolution where the workers are transformed into machine parts.

Review descriptions indicate that Massine’s choreography was probably indirectly influenced by Meyerhold’s system of biomechanics, and the ‘Machine Dances’ of Nicolai Foregger, this is discussed in Chapter 3. The reviews note in particular Massine’s use of automatic, puppet like movements for some of the characters, and extraordinary acrobatic stunts. Unfortunately, Massine does not refer to any of this in his account. In terms of describing the choreography, Massine provides only a few small pieces of information. He mentions the dancers Danilova and Nikitina⁷, noting that they were particularly quick, *“to grasp the rhythmic movements I wanted and the essentially Russian theme suggested by Prokofiev’s music”*. Massine also refers to his own role as the Young Worker, indicating his interpretation of the part and the kind of movement used. *“I used strenuous character movements to suggest the Slav temperament”*. Also in terms of the choreography, Massine provides some information on the climax of the ballet, writing that while the wheels and pistons on the rostrums were moving in time to the hammering of the workers, he positioned *“a large ensemble group in front of the rostrums, so evolving a multi-level composition which welded together the scenic and the bodily movements”*. He describes this climax as of *“overwhelming power”*, something confirmed many times by the reviews. The possible departures from the 1925 scenario that this represents in terms of the action have been discussed above. However, the description also points to adaptations to the set design itself. Pistons for example, do not appear in any of the material produced by Jakulov that the study has located. This could perhaps indicate a change in emphasis from circular motion to that of

Baba Yaga and the Crocodile even though it is clear that the actual ballet did not represent in any obvious way actual stories or legends.

⁷ Alice Nikitina danced the role of the worker girl created by Danilova in some later performances of the work.

back and forth thrust which may, in turn, have contributed towards a more mechanical realisation of the factory⁸.

Massine stresses that the scenes were to be contrasting, and that wheels and pistons moved in time to the hammering movements of the factory workers. Interestingly, Massine refers to moving set parts "*on the rostrums*". He writes: "*The wheels and pistons on the rostrums moved in time to the hammering movements...*" This reads as if there were both wheels and pistons on the platforms, as opposed to just a central wheel on the front of the platform shown on the model. Descriptions of the set generally point to unspecified wheels or disks as moving in time to the hammering of the workers. The study considered whether Massine might have meant *the overhead wheels and the pistons-on-the-rostrums moved in time to the workers' hammering*'. However, the account of Serge Grigoriev (see below) supports the interpretation of Massine's description as referring to wheels and pistons positioned on at least one of the platforms.

Massine mentions that the Constructivist set was to be integral to the composition, but the question arises as to how Massine and Jakulov interpreted this ideal. As has already been discussed, Jakulov's designs indicate the set was integral to the action as an apparatus for performance as well as being capable of movement. Massine clearly had to find a choreographic realisation of this approach. The set itself dictated a multi-leveled and multi-layered spatial organisation, but the emphasis of Massine's account indicates that he took the idea of making the set integral to the composition further, by "*welding together the scenic and bodily movements*". The relationship of this to Jakulov's original conception is debatable and much could depend upon context. There is a clear and significant difference between the imitation of a locomotive's wheels and levers in the excitement of act 1, and the emulation of machine parts as the climax of act 2 at the end of the ballet.

⁸ There are several representations of circular motion in Jakulov's set, all of which are dynamic and playful. For example, see Jakulov's depiction of three women on the step ladders with circular swing apparatus in drawing D. This is discussed in chapter 3.

2.3 Serge Lifar's Biographical and Autobiographical accounts (See Appendix 10 – Sections C and D)

Serge Lifar's main accounts of Le Pas d'Acier occur in his biography of Diaghilev (1940) and his memoirs (1965). Lifar danced one of the leading roles in the ballet and he went on to choreograph his own version of the work in 1948. However, Lifar's narrative accounts are mostly concerned with explanation and background details; he does not attempt to describe either his own role or the ballet in performance.

In both the autobiographical and biographical accounts, Lifar locates the invitation to Prokofiev to write the ballet as in 1926. Prokofiev's autobiographical account, Kochno's account discussed below, and primary source material discussed in Chapter 1 make it clear that this is a mistake and that the year was 1925. His assertion that the ballet's theme was a story by the Russian writer Leskov, about a steel flea, is not substantiated by the surviving primary source material, or by any other source⁹ that the study has located. However, Diaghilev notes in his interview of July 3rd 1927 (see appendix 8 section A) that the subject of the ballet changed many times. It maybe that Lifar is referring to something that was considered between the 1925 material and the 1927 production. However, Lifar's assertion that the use of hammers to beat out the rhythms of the music in the finale was Diaghilev's idea, in May/June 1927, and happened by accident as a result of some of the corps doing it as a joke in a rest between rehearsals, is certainly misleading. A study of the 1925 scenario shows that the use of hammers to beat out the rhythm of the music by the dancers in the finale was envisaged from the beginning. The scenario describes at first silent work with hammers and then two dancers beating with them "*loudly in time with the indications in the score*", followed by "*the other workers with the smaller hammers*" who "*also beat rhythmically*". Lifar's account of this incident may be an indication of the production's approach to, or departures from, the earlier scenario; Diaghilev could perhaps have re-introduced the idea late on in the rehearsal period without the dancers realising its origin. Lifar notes in his

⁹ Interestingly however, according to Richard Buckle, Diaghilev's father knew Leskov and one of the characters in Leskov's 'Anecdotes of Archiepiscopal Life' was based upon Diaghilev's grandfather. See Buckle, (1979) p.544 n1. It is possible that Diaghilev, or any one of the creators, may have

biography that they had the “*outline*” of Le Pas d’Acier at the start of rehearsals in 1927, but given Diaghilev’s comment that the subject of the ballet had been changed many times, this may not have been the 1925 scenario. However, given that there is no evidence of Jakulov and Prokofiev working on the ballet since late 1925 (apart from Prokofiev’s orchestration of the score in January 1926), the study has concluded that this “*outline*” is likely to have been materials from 1925. It is perhaps most likely that the changes Diaghilev refers to began with Massine’s entry into the collaborative process and most probably also involved Diaghilev¹⁰.

Lifar groups Le Pas d’Acier as part of the period when there was no longer “*the least effective collaboration with painters and musicians*”. He includes Jakulov in the “*endless succession*” of artists who “*received their orders and carried them out, without taking any real part in the life of the ballet.*” The indications are that Jakulov resisted the controlling forces he sensed all around him from the company and sought a greater degree of collaboration¹¹. Jakulov’s absence during the rehearsal period appears to have been purely circumstantial. When Diaghilev finally chose to stage the production Jakulov had significant commitments in the Soviet Union and it was increasingly difficult for artists to travel abroad. Nevertheless, it does appear that Jakulov did not play a major part in terms of collaborating with Massine and bringing the ballet to life. It is also clear that the ballet was conceived and developed without input from a choreographer.

Lifar gives a detailed account of the ballet’s progress in terms of dates and when particular individuals arrived. Although Lifar is wrong to date the conception of the ballet as 1926, which leads him to over emphasise the importance of Prokofiev’s return to Moscow, the dates provided for the rehearsal period fit well with other material and perhaps come from a diary. He records the rehearsal period as beginning in late March/April in Monte Carlo with Prokofiev arriving almost immediately. He notes that the “Soviet people” arrived in May, “*and we began to receive such unusual visitors as Ehrenburg and Yakulov*”. If this is correct, then it is

suggested a theme from Leskov in developing the scenario and that this has gone unrecorded elsewhere.

¹⁰ The evidence from Lifar and other sources such as Diaghilev’s own interview with the Observer, indicate that Diaghilev took a particular interest in Le Pas d’Acier.

¹¹ See Jakulov’s letter to Prokofiev, 12th October 1925, reproduced in Appendix 4, p.44.

interesting to note Ehrenburg's involvement at this stage as well as very early on in the creative process. Lifar notes that P.G. Koribut Kubitovitch and V.F. Nouvel refused to have anything to do with them. He writes that there was "*still a great deal to do in connection with the new ballet*", that the theme was the Leskov story of a steel flea and that "*Diaghilev, Massine, Yakulov and Ehrenburg in turn went to considerable trouble to adapt it for the stage*". The study has concluded that Lifar may be confusing many different events and times in this account, but that it could be an indication of how the ballet had been treated and of how surviving source materials may only reveal particular moments in a complex evolution.

Lifar's account of the London premiere where the audience waits in silence until the Duke of Connaught¹² begins the applause, which he sees as saving the honour of the company, may also be a distortion of events¹³. The reviews make no mention of this and give the impression of an immediate enthusiastic response from the audience, as does the account of the conductor, Eugene Goossens. Goossens writes: "*...as the curtain fell the audience burst into a stupendous ovation*"¹⁴. Lifar himself was presumably behind a descending curtain if and when the audience waited for the Duke to lead the applause. The most likely source of this anecdote is Diaghilev as according to Aladzhakov¹⁵, Lev Lyubimov quoted Diaghilev describing the same event. It is probably therefore, a retelling of an anecdote. Whether or not it has a basis in fact, it points to the nature of potential problems with narrative accounts.

2.4 The Account of Serge Grigoriev (See Appendix 10 – Section E)

Serge Grigoriev was Diaghilev's *regisseur* for twenty years; he was a first hand observer of company productions from the earliest seasons until the final

¹² According to Grigoriev (1953) p.240, the London season was under the patronage of the Duke of Connaught. This anecdote may reflect concerns over the possible affect of Le Pas d'Acier on his and other patronage.

¹³ Richard Buckle (1993) p.492, repeats this account and so apparently accepts it. The study has taken into account Buckle's in depth knowledge of the period and the persons involved. He was not however, an eyewitness to the performance and for this particular incident he sites no source other than Lifar.

¹⁴ Goossens, (1951), p.246-247.

¹⁵ Aladzhakov, (1971) p.196, quoting Lev Lyubimov's account of a conversation with Diaghilev in: Lyubimov, L. Na chuzhbine, (SP, Moscow, 1963, pp.175-176).

performances. Dame Alicia Markova considers his accounts, published in his memoirs of 1953, to be the most authoritative account of company productions ¹⁶.

Grigoriev's first references to Le Pas d'Acier confirm the accounts of the ballet's development given in several other sources. He recalls Diaghilev's wish that the choreography be in keeping with the Constructivist design and that he had hoped to involve the Soviet choreographer, Goleizovsky.

Grigoriev mentions that he was shown a photograph of the set they were to use for the ballet. This is most probably the black and white photograph of the model that has survived in Diaghilev collections (see fig.0.1). This is the only reference to a photograph of the model that the study has found. Grigoriev's reference to it indicates that its function was probably to inform those involved in rehearsals about the set. Interestingly, Grigoriev does not mention seeing the model itself.

Grigoriev's description of the set provides further evidence of differences between the model and the performance set. Although Grigoriev does not give a detailed description of the set, he does clearly seek to refer to its basic parts and there is no mention of a train. However, he also writes that the scenery remained unchanged, but this contradicts other descriptions which specifically note the addition of the over head wheels for act two and/or other changes to the set for the second act¹⁷. It may be that Grigoriev simply means that the main set for the first act remained in place for the second act and was not sufficiently concerned with descriptive detail to mention the additions. Interestingly, there are very few clear references to overhead wheels in the reviews¹⁸; perhaps they were not as large and visually dominating on the performance set as they appear on the model. Grigoriev also describes only one "very high rostrum" in the centre of the stage. (Paris critic, André Levinson, also wrote in the singular in respect of the platforms, writing of 'a platform placed above the ground'¹⁹.) However, it is clear from numerous reviews and other

¹⁶ From an interview with the author, see appendix 13.

¹⁷ For example The Daily Telegraph July 5th 1927 notes: that in the "second tableaux... wheels appeared over the railway signals..." The Boston Evening Transcript, July 23rd 1927 records for act 2 "The barriers have been removed; the red screen is stripped away."

¹⁸ In addition to The Daily Telegraph, André Levinson refers to "some disks suspended from the hanger" in Comoedia, (Juin 9 1927).

¹⁹ Comoedia, op.cit.

descriptions, that there were two platforms on the performance set, presumably as in the model, and Massine's description in his autobiography further confirms this.

Grigoriev also records that there were a number of wheels, pistons and levers positioned on the front and sides of the rostrum. This helps clarify the description in Massine's autobiographical account discussed above (see 2.1 above). It is interesting to note that Grigoriev notes the wheels, levers and pistons on the rostrum as built of plain, unpainted wood²⁰. The model does not show pistons or levers on the front platform. It does however, show a solitary wheel positioned on the front of the rostrum but this wheel is painted. It can be inferred from the reviews that at least some parts of the performance set were painted²¹, although in general it is very difficult to be certain as to what effects came from painted décor and what from the use of projected or inner light. This is further discussed in Chapter 4. It must be noted that Grigoriev does not mention the brightly painted constructions shown on the model. Grigoriev's only references to colour are to the grey backcloth and from lighting. This may be evidence for an unpainted set, but the study has concluded that it is most probably simply a reflection of Grigoriev's sense of the set as bare, dismal and undecorative in relation to other Diaghilev productions.

Grigoriev states that Jakulov designed the set "*as long before as 1920*", which is contradicted by documentary material dating Jakulov's designs as no earlier than 1925. This could simply be a typographical error, but the stress of "*as long before...*" would seem to indicate more than the two year gap of 1925-27. It may be that Grigoriev confused the sub-title of the ballet '1920', which appeared on the Paris program, (see fig. 1.1) with the date of its creation; if so this was an error shared with some of the French critics²². (The subtitle does not appear on the London program). This is perhaps an indicator that Grigoriev's account may be

²⁰ It is established knowledge that wood was a common material in Russian Constructivist works. Wood was used extensively in Russia at this time as it was plentiful and other materials were scarce. In addition, because of the need to minimise weight but ensure stability for these moving constructions wood would almost certainly have been selected over metal or other materials.

²¹ For example, it is difficult to see how so many of the critics would have identified 'railway signals' if constructions had been unpainted. Also the Boston Evening Transcript, July 23rd 1927, refers specifically to red and white fences and a red screen (although the red screen could have been a lighting effect).

dependent more upon memory than clear and detailed notes, and/or that his knowledge of the background to Jakulov's designs was restricted.

Grigoriev clearly holds the view that Jakulov's set was a misguided venture. He writes that it was "*crammed with objects of various kinds so that it was almost impossible to move.*" Grigoriev does not seek to explain Jakulov's intentions, nor does he give a critique of his approach. He renders however, his lack of sympathy with both this particular set and what he terms "*the so called Constructivist style*".

Grigoriev dismisses Le Pas d'Acier with 'Mercure' as ballets that were "*not at all liked*". He writes that "*there were no protests, but neither was there any enthusiasm.*" This judgement is not supported by an examination of the reviews and other accounts²³. The ballet continued to be performed, he writes, "*on account of Prokofiev's music*". This could well be factual, but it is clear that Grigoriev's account is largely evaluative, with descriptions that serve to support that evaluation. It is evident from Grigoriev's memoirs as a whole that his aesthetic allegiance was with Fokine and with story-ballets. He was less than sympathetic to Massine's style²⁴ and his dislike of the designs for both La Chatte and Le Pas d'Acier, is apparent²⁵. Grigoriev's account has to be read therefore, with an awareness of his aesthetic and political positions, which did not well dispose him towards this work.

Grigoriev provides however, another interesting detail, writing that as His Majesty's theatre was not available, the London season had to take place at The Prince's instead. He writes that The Prince's was "*a theatre I always disliked on account of its shallow stage and general lack of space*". This lack of space is substantiated by W.A. Propert, discussed below in section 3.2. It is not difficult to appreciate that the size of the stage space would have a dramatic effect on Le Pas d'Acier and might necessitate adaptations involving the set. Unfortunately, Grigoriev does not explain

²² For example, Robert Dézarnaux, wrote in La Liberté, (9 Juin 1927): "... Le Pas d'Acier was written in 1920". However, Pierre Lalo, in Comoedia, (Juin 9 1927), understood the meaning of the subtitle. He wrote: "*It is the date of the action*".

²³ For example, Boris Kochno (1970), p.265 also records that the ballet did not provoke any protests but adds that it was "*a unanimous success*".

²⁴ Grigoriev, (1953) p.127; he describes Fokine's ballets as simple, clear and beautiful and Massine's as "*complicated, mannered and dry*".

²⁵ See, for example, his account of first seeing Gabo and Pevsner's Constructivist designs for La Chatte (1927): *ibid* p. 238.

if and how this affected the production, or if there were adaptations to the Paris set for the London performances.

2.5 The Account of Eugene Goosens. (See Appendix 10 – Section F)

Eugene Goosen's was the conductor at the London premiere of Le Pas d'Acier. His autobiography, published in 1951, gives a brief account of the ballet, concentrating on the anticipation of demonstrations and Diaghilev's behaviour in bringing a revolver into the auditorium. This may simply indicate Diaghilev's awareness of the possibility of trouble given the political sensitivity of the ballet's subject matter and that it was being presented very soon after England's General Strike of 1926.

Goosens however, interprets the gesture as a sign of Diaghilev's hopes for the stir the ballet would cause. The choice of an anecdotal approach may perhaps indicate that Goosens did not take the ballet very seriously, though he refers to it as "*an exciting affair in Prokofiev's best manner*." Unfortunately, this account tells us nothing about Goosens's view of the music or his recollections of the production itself.

2.6 Alexandra Danilova's Autobiographical References.

Alexandra Danilova created the role of the Worker Girl in Le Pas d'Acier²⁶. Unfortunately however, she makes only scant reference to the ballet in her autobiography (1986). She states simply that it "*was very Soviet in style*"²⁷. The only other reference to the work is a caption of a photograph of herself with Massine as: "*Le Pas d'Acier not a great success*". It is a great pity that Danilova does not expand on these comments, for she was amongst Diaghilev's last recruits from the USSR; she would most probably have seen at first hand the Soviet experiments in dance before joining the company in 1924. She was therefore, one of

²⁶ Although Danilova was still alive at the outset of this study, she was of a great age (born 1903) and efforts to contact her through intermediaries, and directly by letter, proved fruitless.

²⁷ Danilova, (1986), p.92.

the very few company members who could have known and described the ways in which the ballet was 'Soviet' in style.

2.7 The Account of Lydia Sokolova (See Appendix 10 – Section G)

Lydia Sokolova danced with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes from 1913-22. She was the first English dancer to join the company. Her autobiography (1960) gives only a very short account of the ballet but with some description of the set and action. Sokolova saw the ballet for the first time in 1928 at His Majesty's Theatre. She would therefore, have seen the second version of the ballet, following Massine's adaptations of December 1927 discussed in Chapter 1 section 4.5.

Interestingly, she selects to describe, as does Alexander Benois, (see below section 4.2) the incident of the starving aristocrats from the first scenes of the ballet, calling it a "*regrettable episode*". Like Benois, she sees the ballet's intentions as to mock the old regime and glorify industrial labour in line with Soviet ideals. Her disapproval of the aesthetic as well as the politics is apparent throughout. She notes for example, that the ballet "*gave a chance to the designer Jakulov to indulge a real orgy of 'constructivism'.*" The choice of words "indulge" and "orgy", reveal a great deal about Sokolova's attitude towards the ballet and are in keeping with the views of for example, Grigoriev and Benois.

3. Writings by Eyewitness Historians (See Appendix 11)

The accounts of eyewitness historians correspond with the early development of dance writing as a specialism in the twentieth century, which arose in response to the impact of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes on Western culture. As most newspaper critics at the time were music specialists, accounts from the very few emerging specialist dance scholars are of particular interest²⁸. Amongst the first generation of

²⁸ An account of *Le Pas d'Acier* by the French dance critic, André Levinson, who exerted a great influence on the development of dance criticism and historiography, is included with the contemporary reviews in Appendix 7, p.85 ff

writers who were formed on the Diaghilev works, two, Cyril Beaumont and W.A. Propert, have left eyewitness accounts of Le Pas d'Acier. Their relative detachment from the company means that their spectator perspective is paramount, whereas the accounts of Diaghilev's secretary and company librettist, Boris Kochno involve explanation from backstage knowledge.

3.1 Accounts by Boris Kochno (See Appendix 11)

Boris Kochno, the son of a colonel in the Hussars, left Russia after the Revolution, in 1920, and joined Diaghilev in 1923 as his friend and secretary. He wrote many of the scenarios for ballets of the Le Pas d'Acier era, beginning with Les Fâcheux of 1924 and including Les Matelots of 1925, La Pastorale of 1926, La Chatte of 1927 (written under his pseudonym, Sobeka), Ode of 1928 and Prodigal Son of 1929.

Given Kochno's prominence as a librettist in the company at the time of Le Pas d'Acier it is possible that he would have been the obvious choice to write the next new ballet. However, Kochno claims that Diaghilev wanted to obtain an entirely Soviet team and only gave the choreography to Massine when he had failed in his attempts, in which case he would have been an unlikely choice of librettist. Yet, as noted in Chapter 1 section 4.3.2, Jakulov, in his undated letter to Koussikov (see Appendix 4) notes that he and Prokofiev were responsible for "ousting" both Kochno and Ehrenburg as potential writers of the scenario.

Kochno's coverage of Le Pas d'Acier in Le Ballet²⁹ (1954) is not extensive and does not contain any illustrations or photographs. The text is reproduced, with the study's translation, in Appendix 11 section A 1. Unlike his later account of the ballet, (1970), Kochno adopts the perspective of a spectator, concentrating entirely on description and appraisal of the performance. Its description of the ballet is brief but interesting in terms of the details it provides. This account contains one of very few descriptive references to act 1 of the ballet, noting that the 'crocodile' of the first scene consisted of six dancers in overcoats and caps. With regard to the second

act Kochno refers to the movement of groups at the front of the stage and up on the platforms as “*spread out like a drive belt*”; one of the very few comments on the work that allows an insight into the means by which the movement of the dancers and that of the set was qualitatively integrated. He also refers to Jakulov obtaining curious depth effects, which appears to have gone un-noted elsewhere. He writes that the ballet was “*doubly Soviet*” in that “*it drew its inspiration from the revolutionary picturesque*” and applied the approaches of Constructivism and Russian theatre. This is discussed in Chapter 4. Kochno describes Massine’s choreography as “*highly original*” but unfortunately he does not elaborate on this with any description beyond that of the “*drive belt*” mentioned above, and does not say how the ballet involved the approaches of Russian theatre.

Kochno’s work Diaghilev and Les Ballets Russes, published in 1970 documents the Diaghilev ballets, including Le Pas d’Acier. This account is reproduced in Appendix 11 section A 2. In addition to his text, Kochno provides two letters written immediately after the premiere by Jean Cocteau. These letters are reproduced in Appendix 4 and have been discussed in Chapter 1 section 4.3.5. Kochno also illustrates the text with drawings and photographs from his collection.³⁰ These are now in the Kochno Collection in Paris and copies have been included in Appendix 3 and 6. In addition, he reproduces the black and white photograph of the model set, also part of the Kochno Collection, that appears in this study as fig.0.1.

Kochno’s chapters in this lavishly illustrated book, provide accounts of works from a ‘back-stage’ perspective including details of the collaborative processes, anecdotes and explanations. Consequently, his account of Le Pas d’Acier in this work is notably different from that of the earlier work Le Ballet. The descriptive points of Le Ballet are not repeated and are replaced with a ‘biographical’ emphasis on the narrative of the work’s development from the company perspective and in relation to Diaghilev.

²⁹ Le Ballet has an original lithograph by Picasso on the cover, has become a collector’s item and is now a rare book but copies are held in major collections.

The chapter on Le Pas d'Acier begins with subtitling that credits the authorship of the work to Massine as well as to Prokofiev and Jakulov. Interestingly it refers therefore, to the later version of the production, not to the first performances³¹. Kochno begins his account with Diaghilev's state of mind in the early 1920s, pointing to his homesickness, his interest in the developments within Soviet theatre and art, and his enthusiasm for news from friends visiting from Soviet Russia. Kochno's choice of anecdote however, tends to imply that any enthusiasm for Soviet art of the period was misguided. He recalls: "*On his arrival, Mayakovsky had talked euphorically of the new Russia's cultural progress and its artistic achievements, but then he discovered contemporary Western art. Back in Moscow, he wrote me a letter signed 'Your poor provincial, Mayakovsky.'*" However, he goes on to note Diaghilev's enthusiasm for the Soviet theatrical experiments he had seen when Tairov's Kamerny Theatre visited Paris from Moscow in 1923, where he saw the Constructivist sets of Jakulov and Alexandra Exter, and his interest in the productions of Meyerhold. He thereby roots Diaghilev's plans for a 'Soviet' ballet within this artistic context but he does not explain why it took Diaghilev two years to commission a score from Prokofiev. The answer is perhaps partly that Diaghilev was uncertain of potential interactions with artists in the Soviet Union³², and perhaps also that it took the success of the Constructivists at the International Exhibition in Paris in 1925 (where Jakulov was a prize winner) to re-fuel Diaghilev's interest.

Recording that Diaghilev commissioned Prokofiev to write the score in 1925, Kochno goes on to note that Jakulov had asked for Larionov to be appointed as stage manager but that Diaghilev wished to appoint a Soviet theatre director as well as a Soviet choreographer. He confirms also that Jakulov was commissioned by Diaghilev in Paris in 1925, and that originally Prokofiev called the ballet 'Ursignol', "*parodying the title of Stravinsky's 'Rosignol'*".³³ He notes also that Jakulov was

³⁰ The sale of his considerable collection in 1975 enabled it to be placed in the Archives of the Paris Opera where it forms the Kochno Collection.

³¹ Massine is credited only as choreographer on the programmes for performances up until December 1927 when he begins to be credited as co-author with Prokofiev and Jakulov.

³² See Kochno (1971) p.233 regarding a letter from Diaghilev of 1924 : he writes "The Bolsheviks are wooing me by the way..."

³³ See Introduction p.1 – 2.

used as an intermediary between Diaghilev, Tairov and Meyerhold. Kochno also states that Diaghilev gave the directorship, as well as the choreography to Massine.

Kochno notes that the ballet aroused “*considerable curiosity*”, but gave rise to no protests and was “*a unanimous success*”. He gives no descriptive detail however, and finishes his account with the two letters from Cocteau which are discussed in Chapter 1. These provide interesting comments from Cocteau and are an amusing anecdote, but they also serve to illustrate Kochno’s point that the ballet gave rise to nothing more than a back stage scuffle between Cocteau and Derzanovsky which was in any case the result of a “*misunderstanding*”. Kochno establishes in this text the basic narrative of the ballet’s development, and in his conclusion reflects the unfulfilled expectations of the ballet in terms of its potentially provocative subject matter and associations, that arise in several other accounts.

3.2 The Account of W.A. Propert (See Appendix 11).

W.A. Propert was an English doctor and writer on the arts. He was the first recorder of the Russian Ballet in England. He wrote two accounts of the company in book form, the second of which, published in 1931, deals with the company during the period of Le Pas d’Acier. Propert’s main account of the ballet is reproduced in Appendix 11 section B.

Propert’s account gives little description, his emphasis is more on evaluating and situating the work within the development of the company. The descriptions he does provide however, are vivid and tend to refer to aspects of the work not described elsewhere. He gives descriptions of a few moments of action that, with reference to the scene titles of the Paris programme, can be attributed to particular sections of the ballet. In common with so many other accounts, he writes that the meaning of the first act was not apparent from either the clothes or the action.

Propert’s account gives a comparatively detailed appraisal of the set’s general nature and influences. His is one of very few accounts to recognise Jakulov’s pivotal role in the development of the ballet. He praises Jakulov, crediting him as

the inspirational force behind the ballet. Propert notes that Jakulov had worked with Meyerhold in Moscow where *“he had recognised, if he hadn’t also suggested, the psychological value of bare walls as a background for the display of the finest acting”*. He goes on to note:

“In Le Pas d’Acier the bare walls and the heavy timbers had had to be modified to suit the needs of a travelling company, and a most efficient compromise had been arrived at. His model for the setting shows how much more he relied on balance of form than on surface decoration. In this he was at one with his later compatriots. The four-square simplicity that had marked ‘Renard’ and ‘Les Noces’ and the geometrical intricacy of ‘La Chatte’ find in Le Pas d’Acier its full and final expression. In the ballet that followed, the painters came into their own again, and the reign of the architects was ended.”

Propert appears to be saying that the language of Constructivism (bare walls and heavy timbers), rather than Jakulov’s actual design, was modified to meet the needs of a touring company. But given the nature of the set, as shown on the model, with heavy timbers supporting large overhead wheels, it is possible that he is referring to differences between the model and the performance set. Interestingly Propert states that the model (rather than the set itself) *“shows how much more he relied on balance of form than on surface decoration”*.

Earlier in this book Propert gives a rare account of performance conditions, noting how cramped was the stage at the Prince’s Theatre where Le Pas d’Acier’s London performances were given. Like Grigoriev, Propert notes that the Prince’s Theatre was *“the most unsuitable they ever danced in, where the edges of the scenes were always cut off, and the dancers in the bigger ballets were handicapped by the shallowness of the stage.”* Unfortunately, he does not explain if and how this affected Le Pas d’Acier.

Unlike many later accounts of the ballet in secondary sources, Propert clearly sees the ballet as significant, noting it as a point in the evolution of the company. He writes:

“He (Diaghilev) often went faster than we could follow, and we would tell him plainly we thought he was wrong, and would demand the recall of Fokine and a reversion to the manner of the pre-war ballets. But he was inflexible, and at last

taught us that ballets like 'Cleopatra' and 'Thamar' were not flowers of a perfected art, but rudimentary stages in the evolution of a very complex organism. He was on a road that had already led him to 'Scheherazade' to 'Le Sacre', and on past 'Les Noces' to the 'Pas D'Acier and Ode...'

In agreement with the majority of the reviews and other accounts, Propert concludes that the first act was confused and as a result the ballet could not be said to be entirely successful, but he notes:

"There is no parallel to that final scene, with the revolving lights, green, red and white, flashing down on the triple tier of shining, half-naked bodies, as the young workmen answered with the swing of their great hammers the thundering rhythms of the orchestra. If only the first half of the ballet had been as clear and purposeful as the last, what a wonderful invention the whole would have been!"

Propert also notes that the ballet *"stands alone in its defiant audacity; and when Prokofieff reappears in 1929 we shall find him chastened to orthodoxy and content to serve the dancers rather than to master them"*.

3.3 The Account of C.W. Beaumont (See Appendix 11 section C)

C.W. Beaumont was an English dance historian and bookseller. Like Propert, he was one of the first to record the history of the Russian Ballet in England. Beaumont was scholarly in his approach and actively strove to record for posterity, giving detailed observations of the works he saw. He did not include a detailed description of Le Pas d'Acier in his major work, the Complete Book of Ballets³⁴, although he lists Le Pas d'Acier under the section he calls highly sophisticated, cerebral work, demanding from the spectator a considerable knowledge of the modernist idiom. He writes: *"Of this group 'Les Matelots and Le Pas d'Acier are the best, but I should qualify the last selection by the addition – second scene."*³⁵ A description of Le Pas d'Acier is included in his book of 1940, The Diaghilev Ballet in London, and this account is reproduced in his memoirs, Bookseller At the Ballet, published in 1975, under the 'Annal for 1927'. His accounts here may or may not have come from detailed notes taken at the time; neither work makes this clear.

³⁴ C.W. Beaumont (1937 and revised edition 1949).

Beaumont's account of the ballet reads very like a contemporary review, and possibly was written at the time of seeing the work. Like Propert, Beaumont shares with the contemporary reviews the general judgement that the first act was confused and confusing but that the second act was powerful and interesting. Beaumont provides some descriptions of the first act, referring to costumes and action but the majority of his description relates to the second act. He gives some very interesting movement description which is unusual, referring to the particular use of body parts and how isolated movements were built up to suggest different kinds of machines. From his detailed description of sections of movement it can be appreciated how the dancers appeared to turn into machines. He writes:

"There were isolated movements which gradually built up into one huge machine, now of this type, now of that. Arms weaved, swung, and revolved; feet pounded the floor; even bodies took part in the movement, swinging from the waist in different arcs and at varying angles. The dancers massed, divided, strung out into line, and, with arms outstretched sideways, sharply turned their hands up and down, flat to the audience, which action ingeniously suggested a flashing lamp; this flashing, arranged in changing patterns, was most effective."

This, particularly when read alongside Pierre Lalo's³⁶ similarly detailed description of the dancers imitating machines and machine parts, gives a powerful indication of Massine's choreography and how he realised the ballet's finale.

In terms of set description however, Beaumont tells us very little. He describes "*a series of platforms of varying heights*". This sounds as if more than two platforms were on stage, but this is not substantiated elsewhere. Beaumont may have been including the top of the mobile stairs as a platform, as was intended in the 1925 scenario. Beaumont goes on to state that "*in the second scene, signal discs, wheels and pulleys were introduced*"; this is helpful in terms of establishing what was not on stage in the first act, and further challenges Grigoriev's claim that the set remained unchanged. Although Beaumont does not specify overhead wheels, the study has concluded that this description most probably substantiates the description of The Daily Telegraph that wheels appeared over the railway signals in the second

³⁵ *ibid* p.839

³⁶ Pierre Lalo, Comoedia, (Juin 9 1927).

act³⁷. Unfortunately Beaumont gives no actual description of the wheels or the signal discs he mentions. As in the contemporary reviews, it is notable that it is the action of the set, rather than its surface appearance that is the focus of description. At the climax of the ballet Beaumont describes “*signal discs snapping on and off, and wheels spinning faster and faster. At this point the curtain fell to a frenzied outburst of applause.*”

Beaumont’s evaluation of the ballet is similar to Propert’s but he emphasises Massine’s contribution rather than Jakulov’s. He writes:

“The second part of this ballet made a considerable impression on me and renewed my admiration for Massine’s rare ability to contrive movements appropriate both to the theme of the piece and to the rhythm of the music, and then to combine the component parts into one vast orchestration of sound and expressive action, increasing in intensity until the conclusion was attained.”

Interestingly when Beaumont reproduces this account in his memoirs of 1975, he omits his final conclusion, which in the 1940 publication reads:

“It is rather extraordinary that the second part of Le Pas d’Acier has never been revived, for not only is it complete in itself, but it is certainly the best example of what might be termed the ‘machine ballet’ that I have so far seen.”

In his memoirs of 1975, Beaumont claims that his edition of a work originally published in 1716, was an influence on Le Pas d’Acier³⁸. The book is Gregorio Lambranzi’s ‘Neue und Curieuse Theatralische-Tanz-Schul’ which contains over 100 engravings by J.G. Puschner. One of the drawings in particular, showing blacksmiths at a forge with hammers, is certainly easy to relate to scenes from Le Pas d’Acier. (See fig. 2.1). However, as Beaumont did not publish the book until

³⁷ The Daily Telegraph, July 5th 1927, p12. “*The second tableaux however, was so unmistakably monopolised by the workers, whilst wheels appeared over the railway signals, which stoutly maintained their places on each side of the stage..*”

³⁸ Beaumont (1975) p.378.

FIGURE 2.1



From Beaumont's 1928 edition of Lambranzi's Neue und Curieuse Theatralische-Tanz-Schul (1716).

1928, when a copy was apparently given to Massine by Diaghilev³⁹, it is difficult to see how it could have been an influence. Even if Massine saw earlier proofs, the idea of the hammer scene is present in the 1925 scenario. This is perhaps an error in Beaumont's text; he may have meant that the work was an influence on Massine's 'Ode' of 1928, as there is one engraving in the book that closely relates to a photographed scene from that work (see fig. 2.2)

4. Other Spectator Accounts

One of the difficulties in locating spectator accounts is that so many eminent figures of the time could potentially have seen the production and referred to it in their writings. For example, the Soviet Minister for culture, Anatole Lunacharsky saw the ballet in Paris and refers to it in his writings. He praises Jakulov as giving the production "*an original, authentic, Russian flavour*" and recalls that the enthusiastic audience called Jakulov back eight times⁴⁰. The study has attempted to examine as many likely sources as possible but has had to limit research in this respect.

Research indicates that Jakulov was well known and respected amongst artists of the avant-garde in Paris at the time. However, the study has found only three spectator accounts (i.e. other than reviews, company memoirs, or the accounts of eye-witness dance historians); all three accounts are by artists, two by artists closely associated with the company, but only one account, from Natalia Goncharova and Michael Larionov, gives a description of the set.

4.1. The Account of Goncharova and Larionov (See Appendix 12 A)

Natalia Goncharova and Michael Larionov were Russian painters and theatre designers who had worked on several productions for Les Ballets Russes from 1914 through to the 1920s. Research indicates that Jakulov was a friend of both and

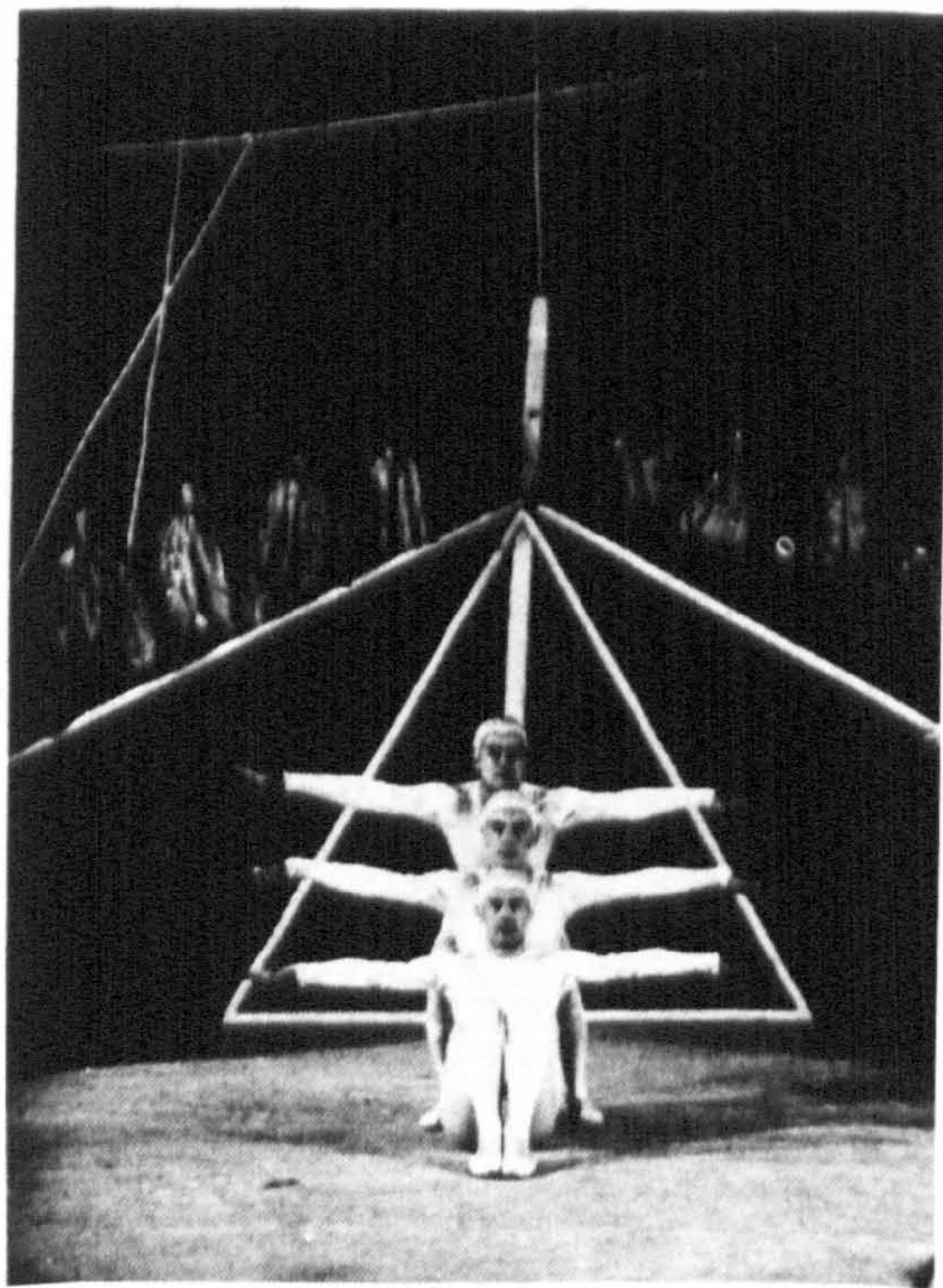
³⁹ According to Beaumont Diaghilev gave a copy each to Balanchine, Massine and Lifar. He also claims the book was an influence on one of the Cochran reviews.

⁴⁰ A.V. Lunacharsky, "Politics" and "Public". Krasnaya panorama, 1928, no.33, August 12th p.9-10. Russian dance historian and curator Elizabeth Souritz kindly provided this reference and it was translated for the study by Margaret Jones.

FIGURE 2.2



From Beaumont's 1928 edition of Lambranzi's Neue und Curieuse Theatralische-Tanz-Schul (1716).



Massine's Ode (1928). Source: Kochno, (1971) p.260

spent time with them during his visits to Paris⁴¹. According to Kochno⁴², Jakulov suggested that Larionov be involved in the staging of Le Pas d'Acier⁴³.

In their description they make an interesting reference to the symbolic use of the stage space locating the “*old society*” as moving on the surface of the actual stage, and connecting the factory to the “*second stage*” which is described as “*resting on two uprights in the centre of the main stage*”. There is little evidence elsewhere to support such a particular and symbolic use of the stage space. However, the contextual support for its possibility in terms of Jakulov’s approach to stage design is discussed in Chapter 3. It is interesting to consider this possibility, particularly in conjunction with the start of the finale in the 1925 scenario where the hero and the heroine come down to “*the foreground*”. The music for the start of the finale, entitled ‘Closing Scene’, starts with a repetition of music from the ballet’s first scene entitled ‘The Entry of the Participants’. If we accept Goncharova and Larionov’s interpretation of the stage space, then the use of space, as well as the music, could be making a direct reference back to the characters from the pre-factory act. Unfortunately, descriptions do not contain enough detail to be sure how Massine used Prokofiev’s musical reference back to the characters of the first act at the start of the finale.

Larionov and Goncharova describe machine tools and equipment towering above this second stage and around it. This most probably refers to the levers, pistons, and wheels described by other observers. Around the second stage, Larionov and Goncharova describe “*signaling installations and lighting devices, flaring, oscillating and flashing with colours and fire*”. Although different qualities in terms of the use of lights can be inferred from review descriptions, this is the only account that clearly attributes three distinct uses; flaring, oscillating and flashing. The lighting devices are perhaps the “*mock lighting devices*” described by Jakulov as coming down from above in Drawing B, (see Appendix 3) which are in turn presumably the “*revolving wheels that light up*” also described and indicated on Drawing B and along the top front of the model. Larionov and Goncharova’s

⁴¹ Aladzhalov (1971) p.201.

⁴² Kochno (1971) p.264.

description separates signaling installations from the lighting and the signaling installations are perhaps the wheels with intersecting colours shown on the model. As these are described separately from lighting devices, it seems likely that they were painted with moving parts as on the model. It is interesting to note that several accounts describe signaling and signals rather than the emphasis on machines (i.e. a milling machine) described in the 1925 scenario. This is further discussed in Chapter 4.

Larionov and Goncharova finish their account by describing a “*maelstrom of uninterrupted movement*” which they conclude “*symbolised thought and contemporary industrial civilisation.*”

4.2. The Account of Alexander Benois (See Appendix 12 B)

Painter and set designer, Alexander Benois, was associated with Diaghilev from the formation of the art magazine Mir Iskusstva in 1899 and was artistic director of Les Ballets Russes until 1911. He designed several sets for the company including Giselle (1910), Petrushka (1911), and Song of the Nightingale (1914). He was not a supporter of Diaghilev’s later experiments. For example, he described the set for La Chatte as “*a set of glass instruments from a laboratory built by a maniac.*”⁴⁴ He found, what he describes as “*Diaghilev’s other ultra-modern and ultra-snobbish ballets, ‘Le Renard’, ‘Les Matelots’, ‘Le Train Bleu’, etc.,*” as being “*equally senseless in their ugliness.*”⁴⁵ Le Pas d’Acier is described as the most stupid and affected of all, and as repulsive.

Benois’ attack on ‘Le Pas d’Acier’ is however, almost entirely on political grounds. His hatred of the Bolsheviks is undisguised and his outrage is levied at the subject matter of the ballet rather than its form. He clearly reads the ballet as many, but not all, critics did, as a glorification of labour and industrialism, rather than as a

⁴³ Larionov had been involved in the choreography and direction of Prokofiev’s Chout in 1921 and Jakulov may have envisaged a similar role.

⁴⁴ Benois, A. (1953) p. 381.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

'Metropolis'⁴⁶ - like analysis of Man enslaved by the unrelenting demands of the Machine. In a sense therefore, he lends support to the idea that the ballet's Soviet themes were realised in production rather than being confused or compromised as some of the newspaper reviews suggest⁴⁷.

Benois' response is similar in both kind and force to the reaction of Paris's leading dance critic, André Levinson⁴⁸, who, like Benois, was a white Russian émigré, and like Benois, was totally opposed to the kind of aesthetic departures this work represented. Benois, like Levinson, was particularly incensed by the scene of the Hawker and the Countesses. In Benois's words this scene sneered "*at the defeat of the bourgeoisie. On the stage, among the representatives of the 'class that was vanquished' there tramped about unfortunate ladies of society, who, in the days of famine and need, endeavored to sell at the market those remnants of their belongings that had not yet been stolen by the Bolsheviks!*" Benois explains this in terms of the "*cynical zeal of the authors and producers*".

However, it has been noted in Chapter 1 that this scene differed in performance from the original 1925 scenario and does not appear as a section title of the music. It is possible therefore, that this scene owes more to Massine than to Prokofiev and Jakulov⁴⁹. Prokofiev comes under particular attack from Benois not just for his music but for his Soviet associations. He writes: "*his imitative music ...hissed and whistled like a foundry...he acted with perfect consistency by returning to the USSR where he has continued to prosper ever since.*"

⁴⁶ Silent film by Fritz Lang, 1926, in which the down trodden worker is seen as the sacrificial victim of industrial capitalism. Industrialisation here is seen as far from the liberating force of Bolshevik ideals. The possible influence of *Metropolis* on Massine's realisation of *Le Pas d'Acier* and the viewing context it created in terms of depiction of workers in the factory, is discussed in chapter 3.

⁴⁷ See for example *The Daily News* July 5th 1927, p.7. The critic, 'A.K.' writes: "*The impression it all gives of human beings crushed into nothingness by a relentless machine is remarkable...*", and "*Perhaps it is a tractate against the Russian Revolution. If so it is very powerful*".

⁴⁸ See André Levinson's review in *Comœdia*, Juin 9 1927.

⁴⁹ Historian Richard Buckle reaches a different conclusion, see Buckle, (1993), p.489. He suggests that Diaghilev may have had reservations about this scene but, having given Jakulov "a free hand", he may not have wished to tamper. Buckle unfortunately does not refer to his sources for this conclusion. The study has found no evidence of Jakulov as the dominant force in the actual staging of the work. Given the comparatively gentle treatment of this scene in the earlier materials, and the fact that Massine was appointed director, not Jakulov, it is difficult to see the basis of Buckle's conclusion.

Given that several accounts present the ballet as having failed to upset anyone, Benois' account is important in providing an insight into the sensitivity of the ballet's subject matter and the outrage it was capable of producing, particularly amongst the Russian émigré community. In addition, Benois points to an important issue that needs to be considered in relation to the ballet; did it or did it not portray a clearly Revolutionary Soviet ideological message? Massine's staging appears to have presented a more ambiguous representation of Workers in the factory than the 1925 scenario indicates; the ballet's failure to elicit protests could perhaps be partially explained by such ambiguities of message. Benois' account suggests that in fact the ballet was entirely successful in conveying Revolutionary ideals, mocked the representatives of the bourgeoisie and enshrined Soviet ideals relating to work. It is possible however, that Benois' fury may have got the better of his judgment, for Levinson's lengthy review indicates that the ballet lacked a clear message. He writes of "*a poor drama, undecided between enthusiasm for Bolshevism and bitter irony. Only the musician was carried away in depth by the material, for the rest, is it a homage or a parody?*"⁵⁰ This is further discussed in Chapter 3.

4.3 The Account of K.A. Somov (See Appendix 12 C)

Konstantin Andreevich Somov was a painter and graphic artist. A member of the World of Art group, he was a Russian émigré who lived in Paris from 1924. He was a theatre lover and saw most of the Diaghilev productions noting his reactions in diaries and letters to his sister. Somov's letters and diaries were published in Moscow in 1979 and contain some references to his responses to seeing Le Pas d'Acier⁵¹. Unfortunately, the diaries as published contain only extracts. The account of Le Pas d'Acier shows several points of missing text. Given the place of publication the original diaries may be held in Moscow; given the nature of the account however, they are unlikely to contain detailed description.

The abridged account provides very little information. It reveals Somov's dislike of the work, but, unlike Benois, Somov indicates only aesthetic reasons rather than

⁵⁰ Comocdia, Juin 9 1927.

⁵¹ This is most probably material that was written at the time in 1927. However, as this material was unpublished until much later it has been included in this chapter.

political objections. Jakulov's set is described as an "*abomination*", and Prokofiev's music as a "*din*". He notes however, that the work was a "*huge success*" and that "*oddly*" there were "*no protests, whistles or boos*". Interestingly, he credits Mayakovsky amongst the collaborators, which would appear to be a straightforward error.

5. Living Memory

Given the time span involved since the last performance of the ballet, recollections of Le Pas d'Acier in living memory are an increasingly unlikely possibility. The study was fortunate however, in being able to experience, if only in a very limited capacity, the problems in eliciting and dealing with material from memory after a considerable period of time has elapsed.

As detailed in the introduction, research was undertaken to try to find and contact living members of the production team or audience. Two sources were found: Dame Alicia Markova joined the company in 1925 at the age of 15 and danced in the corps of Le Pas d'Acier in the scene of the cats and mice in act 1, and as a worker in act 2; dance critic/historian Joan Lawson was present at the opening night of the ballet and was taking class with members of the cast at the time. Dance historian Nesta Macdonald also saw the ballet in London when she was aged 13, but has only very vague recollections. She spoke of "*an impression in my mind's eye, especially of the dancers – as machines – ... not exactly Imperial syllabus...*"⁵²

The methodology adopted was to present photographs and particular questions to try and 'jog' memories of the production. The process was extremely educative in terms of the problems involved with memory over such a long period of time. The interviews with Dame Alicia and Joan Lawson occurred early on in the research process when the study was pre-occupied with apparent discrepancies between the model and review descriptions of the performance set. The study had hoped that living memory, even over so long a time gap, would be able to definitively answer

⁵² From a letter to the author, 16 November 1995.

such questions as to whether or not there was a train on stage. However, the study's two eyewitnesses provided contradictory answers. Dame Alicia did not recall the train, and was almost certain that it was not a part of the performance set, whereas Joan Lawson was equally certain that it was on stage.

In general, the indications from this very limited research were that memories of how something was experienced are more lasting than memories of how something looked. As a spectator, it was more difficult for Joan Lawson to focus on the right work, and Dame Alicia found it easier to remember qualities of movement and her costume than she did details of the set. Theoretically, it is possible that certain areas of knowledge outside the immediate area of dance historical research could be drawn upon to aid the particular problems of eliciting memories for the purposes of reconstruction. The study was aware that 'asking the right question' was potentially even more crucial here than in archive research. Under ideal circumstances and with the help of the music more information could almost certainly be elicited from Dame Alicia Markova and perhaps also from Joan Lawson. The study was very restricted as to how far it could pursue this research.

5.1 Interview with Dame Alicia Markova (See Appendix 13 A)

Dame Alicia kindly looked at material sent to her and agreed to be interviewed. An account of this interview is reproduced in Appendix 13, a copy of which was also sent to Dame Alicia. The material viewed by Dame Alicia included the black and white photograph of the model set, some of the photographs, and some of Jakulov's drawings.

Dame Alicia had some clear recollections of performing in the work, and recalled the great emphasis on rhythm. She was particularly clear as to how far the ballet departed from the classical technique. Asked about its relationship to other ballets and to Massine's style, Dame Alicia felt that elements of the work might relate to the development of Massine's symphonic ballets and also mentioned Massine's 'Rite of Spring' (1920) in which Dame Alicia had danced the Chosen Maiden, taking over the role created on Sokolova. In terms of the movement qualities, Dame

Alicia remembered it as very mechanical, showing no emotion. She remembered the corps in groups at the end of the ballet moving mechanically. She stressed however, that the dancers did not think of the dancing in act 2 as a 'machine dance', but as intricate and interwoven steps. Dame Alicia recalled however, large basically classical leaps for her entrance with Vera Petrovna in the scene of the Cats and Mice in act 1. She confirmed there was no actual representation of either Cats or Mice, and that they were peasants with thick grey stockings, tweed skirts, shawls and kerchiefs on their heads and big lace up boots on their feet. She added that the cast loathed the costumes finding them drab and unattractive. Dame Alicia was also able to identify the dancers in photograph 5 which enabled the study to attach the characters, costumes and mechanical action/movement it presents to the scene of the drunkards in act 1 of the ballet. Their mechanical movement may perhaps indicate that these characters are revolutionaries, or representatives of the transition to the new society, whereas Dame Alicia's peasant scene with its large basically classical leaps perhaps used character dance to represent the old society. As this had not occurred to the study at the time, it was not put to Dame Alicia.

Dame Alicia did not recall having been given any visual imagery by Massine or of having any ideas about the ballet explained to her. Instead she recalled Massine as mostly silent, simply demonstrating what he required, and while she could recall Prokofiev at rehearsals, she had no memories of Jakulov. With regard to the set, Dame Alicia felt that it was much simpler than as shown in the material supplied and was almost certain that the train was not on stage. Dame Alicia recalled only the platforms and flashing lights. It was clear however, that recalling the set was more difficult for Dame Alicia than recalling her experience of the choreography.

It has to be remembered that Dame Alicia may well never have seen the ballet from the auditorium and may have experienced the set only from the point of view of performing on it in the scenes in which she appeared. However, had Dame Alicia ascended and descended rope ladders, she would perhaps have been likely to remember it. The ladder Dame Alicia recalled having to go up and down with one bare and one booted foot, in conversations with Richard Buckle⁵³, was perhaps the

⁵³ Buckle, (1979), p.486.

fixed stairs as she did not recall the rope ladder in this interview. However, other sources indicate that the rope ladder and the gauze, which Dame Alicia also could not recall, were part of the performance set.

5.2 Correspondence and Conversations with Joan Lawson (See Appendix 13 B)

Joan Lawson sent her initial recollections of the ballet to the author in a letter of November 20th 1995. She later sent further comments and was interviewed twice on the telephone in February 1996.

Joan Lawson's initial response (letter of 20th November 1995) came before she had been shown photographs of material relating to Le Pas d'Acier. From the synopsis she provided, (see Appendix 13 B), it became clear that she was confusing Le Pas d'Acier with a later Massine work, Union Pacific (1934), a ballet based on the building of America's Union Pacific Railroad. However, her memory of talking about the ballet with Massine, and of Tchernicheva and Astafieva hating it, may well refer to Le Pas d'Acier.

Despite the fact that Joan Lawson's material confuses Union Pacific and Le Pas d'Acier, it was decided to reproduce the material in an Appendix because her comments are of interest in a number of ways. For example, Joan Lawson's confusion of the two works drew the study's attention to Union Pacific and the similarities between the two works. According to Cyril Beaumont, in scene 1 the workmen use rigid figures to form the sleepers and the rails and swing their arms in imitation of the action of hammers and spanners. In a later scene two trains "*puff in from opposite sides*"⁵⁴.

Joan Lawson's second letter, of January 24th 1996, was written after she had been shown photographs of the model of Le Pas d'Acier and other material. She did not recall any parts of the set moving until the end when lights spun around at varying speeds with different colours. She did not recall dancers moving set parts as central to the action and could not recall anyone using the step ladders although she

⁵⁴ Beaumont (1949) p.922-4.

mentions a conversation with Grigoriev and Tchernicheva when they recalled Massine and Woizikovsky swooping down into a pas de deux. However, in a telephone conversation after this letter, Joan Lawson still maintained that the train was on stage in Le Pas d'Acier and recalled laughter in the audience as the train moved away from the 'cloud' painted on the gauze. However, no other evidence has been found to substantiate this. It is perhaps possible, that this again has some relationship to Union Pacific.

6. Conclusions

Overall the above accounts provide some interesting descriptions of the set and the ballet in performance. It is interesting to note how certain focus points emerge while other aspects of the work, parts of the set, moments in the action, remain relatively or totally undescribed. These focus points tend to be the same as those in the contemporary reviews. There is a similar emphasis on platforms, wheels, signals, hammering in time to the music, flashing lights, pistons, mechanical movement. Although descriptions tend to give only a very general impression and lack detail, they help identify the major components of the set and provide evidence of how the set was experienced.

In this chapter, the study has attempted to examine each account as an information source. These accounts are however, of interest beyond the provision of evidence or information. While most of the accounts contain some descriptive elements relating to for example, the collaborative process, the performance, the set, the choreography, the costumes, spectator response, the actions of those involved, they also naturally impose a narrative perspective that is influenced by acts of interpretation and evaluation. For example, it is notable how accounts often stress one particular member of the collaborative team. For Larionov and Goncharova, writing as they are about design, it is Jakulov's ballet: "...in 1927, in *Le Pas d'Acier* Jakulov brought to the stage....." For Beaumont, writing as a dance specialist, the focus is on Massine's contribution. The most vivid account of the collaborative process comes from Prokofiev, and this is the only account, (other than those of Jakulov himself, that have not been published in the West), to give an indication of Jakulov's intentions. Other narrative explanations of the work emerge most clearly

in the accounts of Lifar and Kochno, both of which focus on Diaghilev's motivations. Judging by the surviving documentary evidence, Kochno gives the most reliable basic reconstruction of events from inspiration through to spectator response but he brings to it, as does every account, the perspective and emphasis of the teller. What emerges in all the accounts is not just the description or reconstruction of events but the construction of the narrative based upon viewpoint and involving selection and emphasis. There is therefore, witting and unwitting testimony, text and subtext.

In collecting accounts together a fairly broad spectrum of perspectives emerges from which it is possible to gain an overview of dominant features and identify areas of agreement, disagreement and even silence. There is however, comparatively little attention in these accounts to the work as a compositional whole and this continues in later historiography of the ballet. It is interesting to consider how the idea of ballet as a collaboration between equal parts tends to break down in terms of its description depending on narrative perspective.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the above accounts is the conflicting views of the ballet they give rise to, and again this arises not simply from diverse evaluations but from the narrative constructions. Beaumont, Propert, Larionov and Goncharova, have clearly evaluated the work quite highly and their perspective is rooted in description and analysis of the work from the point of view of specialist spectators. However, some of the more intriguing questions about the ballet derive from the accounts of company members, from the 'back-stage' perspective. For example, Lifar constructs a narrative whereby the ballet's 'Soviet' associations cannot really be taken seriously. He writes for example, that Diaghilev was a revolutionary in terms only of art, and that he "*could never have been a revolutionary, or feel anything but contempt and hatred for Marxism with its clumsy, utilitarian approach to aesthetics.*"⁵⁵. When this is read in conjunction with descriptions of Diaghilev's hopes for a furore at the premiere and his disappointment that none arose, it is not difficult to find a possible basis for Brinson and Crisp's cursory dismissal of the ballet as "*a late unsuccessful flirtation with*

⁵⁵ Lifar (1940) p. 445.

Soviet ideals”⁵⁶. The question arises as to whether or not this is a valid judgement, and to what extent this perspective provides a full and fair account of the work.

Kochno (1971) provides a clear basis for Diaghilev’s interest in pursuing a Soviet style staging, even if the narrative slightly implies this was misguided. However, Kochno, like Lifar, Grigoriev and Goosens, constructs a narrative that establishes the expectation that the ballet would prove provocative and its failure to evoke the expected storm. The effect of this is to convey a sense of the ballet’s failure, even when Kochno and Goosens point to the ballet’s popular success. The question arises as to how far the ballet’s significance, value and artistic success, depended on its being ‘revolutionary’, and on its capacity to challenge Diaghilev’s audiences. The first question that needs to be answered however, is did it challenge? To what extent can we rely on the judgements of the above accounts in this respect ?

Overall, many of the accounts discussed in this chapter are problematic for several reasons and it is clear that, as with all source materials, the position of the ‘teller’ has to be carefully considered. The politics of the ballet has to be seen as an important issue in this respect. Many of the accounts derive from Russian émigrés who may have had personal reasons to be passionately anti-Soviet. Several of the accounts of Le Pas d’Acier discussed in this chapter emerged in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, during the general period of the ‘cold war’ and including the years of specific attacks on artists and intellectuals thought to be communist sympathisers from the Un-American Activities Committee. It is perhaps unlikely that these factors have had any direct affect on accounts of the ballet, but to a certain extent there is a continuously politicised context surrounding this ballet from its performances in 1927, through its condemnation in the USSR and into the era which gave rise to the majority of accounts. Similarly, the account of Jakulov in the Soviet Union of 1928 and the later account of Prokofiev, written and published in a U.S.S.R which had rejected its past links with modernism, have to be considered within their political-aesthetic context. The politics of Le Pas d’Acier, both in terms of its association with ‘Bolshevism’, and as a non-classical, experimental work not identified as part of the mainstream developments of choreography in the twentieth

⁵⁶ Brinson and Crisp (1981) p.86

century, may have affected its accounts in history and add to the problems involved in reading accounts particularly in respect to overall narrative perspectives and evaluations.

In secondary sources the ballet's most detailed accounts have emerged within the literature of dance studies in relation to Les Ballets Russes in general, or in specific biographies. One of the main accounts of the ballet in secondary sources emerges in Richard Buckle's biography of Diaghilev⁵⁷. Buckle creates in this work a narrative of the ballet that is similar in approach to Kochno's account (1971). Like Kochno and Lifar, Buckle situates the ballet chronologically and narratively in relation to the company and Diaghilev's motivations. It begins therefore, with Diaghilev's commission to Prokofiev, and ends with Diaghilev's disappointment at the ballet's failure to evoke an outraged response, noting, as does Kochno (1971), that the "*only real row that took place was between Cocteau and Dukelsky in the wings*".⁵⁸ Lynn Garafola takes a similarly Diaghilev centred focus in her study of the company, she writes:⁵⁹ "*Le Pas d'Acier stands out as one of the few ballets of the middle and late twenties that fully commanded Diaghilev's interest*". Garafola departs however, from the narrative approach of Kochno and Buckle; avoiding the issue of the ballet's apparent failure to create a furore, she considers instead its possibly damaging effect on relations between Diaghilev and his aristocratic patrons. Vincente Garcia-Marquez provides a more recent account of Le Pas d'Acier in his biography of Massine; as a result of the context, the focus shifts away from Diaghilev. In conversation with Kochno, Garcia-Marquez elicits description of Massine's choreography rather than details of Diaghilev's involvement and motivations. He writes that Kochno recalled that Massine "*devised a new choreographic lexicon that pictured, through expressive mehanical movements, a world in which human emotion was stifled*."⁶⁰ In seeking choreographic details Marquez turns to the account of Beaumont and quotes also some of the very supportive London reviews. As a result the narrative that emerges is a positive sense of the ballet as innovative as well as successful.

⁵⁷ Buckle, (1979).

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p.490

⁵⁹ Garafola (1989) p.249.

Clearly the accounts discussed in this chapter could be used to support different narrative perspectives and different evaluations. The most important question therefore, is how to interpret them as a whole. In terms of understanding what happened to Jakulov and Prokofiev's original conception as it materialised in production, several key questions emerge. For example, did it result in the critical disinterest Grigoriev claims and if so why? Was it the "unanimous success" Kochno claims, and if so why? A decision has to be made as to how to interpret these narratives, and how to balance them against other information, such as Diaghilev's own interview concerning the work in 1927.

There are several interesting contradictions in terms of narrative accounts of the ballet's reception. Prokofiev's account for example, sees not a failure to elicit passionate response, but a work that disgusted Stravinsky, received an anti-Bolshevik press and provoked the youthful audience to "*ecstacies*". In Lifar's account of 1940, Diaghilev's unease about the response is seen not as secret hopes for a furore, but as a genuine fear for Lifar's life. "*What he feared, what really made him uneasy, was a feeling that the white Russians might begin shooting and so kill me*". However, according to Lifar "*there were no bursts of enthusiasm, nor indignation either. The new ballet simply did not appeal to Paris audience.*" Diaghilev's secret hopes however, soon begin to emerge, Lifar writes: *Diaghilev was deeply disappointed, and assured us that our audience had 'no backbone' and that it was pure cowardice which made them afraid to protest. Nor did the Press pay much attention to our new ballet.*" Yet in his 1965 account Lifar records that the ballet "*provoked a political scandal and quarrels about the new theory of 'theatrical constructivism' applied for the first time to a ballet – and in Paris before Moscow.*" (The full text of these accounts is reproduced in Appendix 10).

In terms of the ballet's reception at the time, factors affecting Le Pas d'Acier are likely to be complex and answers are perhaps unlikely to be found purely through an analysis of accounts and documentary material. Lynn Garafola has suggested that the ballet "*dramatised the conflicting interests that shaped the identity of the*

⁶⁰ Garcia-Marquez (1996) p.196

*Ballets Russes in its final days as well as the political considerations that now intruded on all things 'Soviet'.*⁶¹ Pointing to how England was very “*anti-Bolshie*” following the general strike of 1926, she writes that “*one is tempted to find politics in Lady Courtauld’s categoric refusal to ‘join’ Diaghilev in ‘any plan’ for the coming year.*”⁶² Yet, Diaghilev continued to stage Le Pas d’Acier up until his death in 1929. Appendix 9 lists the Paris performances of Le Pas d’Acier from 1927-1929 showing that it was amongst the most performed of the company’s works at this time and that of the five new ballets of 1927 only La Chatte and Le Pas d’Acier were given at the Paris Opera and only La Chatte and Le Pas d’Acier were still in performance in 1929. However, it is perhaps, as Konstantin Somov notes, “*odd*” that the ballet did not cause the expected furore. Critic H.T.Parker begins his review of the London premiere⁶³ by noting how women, wearing placards warning against the influence of Soviet Moscow, had marched only a few evenings before along the same streets where taxis and cars deposited Diaghilev’s distinguished audience for the premiere of Le Pas d’Acier. It is clear that at the time staging a work which had a Soviet setting, involved a Soviet artist, and put the workers in a factory on stage was touching on some of the most sensitive issues of the time. The reviews and some of the accounts indicate that there was a certain level of outrage; but it is clear that the ballet was generally popular with audiences. The question has to be asked therefore, why it did not elicit a significant level of protest and why it appealed to audiences. This is further discussed in Chapter 3.

In attempting to ‘find’ Le Pas d’Acier the study has so far concentrated on primary source materials from ‘documentary’ sources through to accounts of the ballet from participants and eyewitnesses. In the following chapter, the study seeks to explore contextual sources as a means to theorising the background to the ballet’s conception and realisation.

⁶¹ Garafola, op.cit p.249

⁶² *ibid*

⁶³ The Boston Evening Transcript, July 23rd 1927

Chapter 3:

In Search of Context

*“Actors! Directors! Don’t look for inspiration.
There is but one teacher: The Machine!”¹*

1. Introduction

This chapter is drawn from the study’s research into the contextual background of Le Pas d’Acier. It concentrates on situating Jakulov’s set for Le Pas d’Acier within Soviet theatre of the 1920s by attempting to identify major influences to which it relates. It aims to provide a context for the interpretation of Jakulov’s designs, and to locate work that could potentially inform reconstruction of the ballet’s set design. It explores two main focus points. It seeks to identify the main elements of Soviet theatrical Constructivism in relation to Le Pas d’Acier. It also considers the nature of Jakulov’s oeuvre and development² in terms of works that relate to the aesthetic and approach of Le Pas d’Acier.

The possibility of a spectacle resembling Le Pas d’Acier dates back to the early 1920s. The development of Constructivism in the arts of the U.S.S.R coincided with renewed contact with the West following the disruption of World War 1, the October Revolution, and the Civil War. As American jazz, and other aspects of American culture, began to reach Moscow, the vibrancy of Russian artistic developments was again a subject of growing interest in the West. According to Kochno, Diaghilev was struck by the innovative stagings brought to Europe by Tairov’s Kamerny Theatre in the early 1920s, where he saw the designs for example, of Alexandra Exter and Jakulov. In 1924 however, he was also

¹ Nicolai Foregger, ‘Experiments in the Art of Drama’, reproduced in The Drama Review 19, 1975, p.76

² This is limited by the lack of materials on Jakulov in the West. The study has worked largely from material contained in Aladzhalov (1971) and Kostina (1979) acquired from the archive in Erevan, and from materials contained in the three volumes of Notes et Documents.

considering an American jazz ballet with a factory setting by John Alden Carpenter. He wrote to Boris Kochno³:

“Carpenter is asking whether the décor and all the rest couldn’t be assigned to a Russian Bolshevik painter because, in his work, he is ‘not far from Bolshevism’. I find this notion amusing. The Bolsheviks are wooing me, by the way. The catalogue of their exhibition here starts out with my name”.

Diaghilev’s talks with Carpenter came to nothing in terms of a collaboration with Les Ballets Russes, but the ballet was realised as Skyscrapers at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, in 1926, and there are some interesting parallels with ‘Le Pas d’Acier.’ The theme of Skyscrapers was the transition from play to work, and the final scene, set in a factory, featured blinking lights and traffic signals at either side of the stage, and shadows of workers swinging hammers in an insistent rhythm.⁴ Diaghilev however, rejected American jazz and his own ‘factory’ ballet was rooted in the theatrical innovations of Soviet Russia.

As already noted, Diaghilev commissioned Prokofiev and Jakulov in 1925; this was a significant year in terms of the presence of Soviet artists in Paris. In his memoirs, Ehrenburg identifies 1925 as the year when many Muscovites gathered in Paris for the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts. He recalls Jakulov’s presence, along with Mayakovsky, Melnikov, Sterenberg, Rodchenko, Rabinovich, Ternovets. He writes: *“Talking to them I felt at home, as though I was back in the Moscow of 1921.”*⁵ Ehrenburg was generally depressed, going to the Rotonde or the Dome everyday in Montpanasse, and sensing a displaced avant-garde that had lost the revolutionary vigour of its pre-wars years. The Russian visitors lifted his spirits and he recalls that the Russians were also the highlight of the International Exhibition. Amongst the French exhibitors, he notes that the pavilion designed by Le Corbusier stood out, but that the chief attraction of the

³ Letter to Boris Kochno from Diaghilev in Venice, dated 1924, reproduced in Kochno (1970) p.223.

⁴ According to Verna Arvey (1941) p.289, Diaghilev had commissioned this ballet from Carpenter in 1924, asking for a ballet dedicated to the modern city. It was, she writes, Diaghilev who was responsible for suggesting the ballet lack a story in favour of scenes reflecting contemporary American life.

⁵ Ehrenburg, I. (1963) p.91

exhibition was the Soviet pavilion built by the young Constructivist architect K.S. Melniko. He writes:

*“Like many things produced by our Constructivists and LEF people, the pavilion could not claim to be an assertion of Utilitarianism: the staircase was difficult to climb, slanting rain penetrated the building. It was an expression of the romanticism of the first revolutionary years”.*⁶

Ehrenburg notes that most of the exhibits were by ‘left’ artists, including scale models of Meyerhold’s and Tairov’s productions, constructions by Rodchenko, textiles by Popova, and posters by Lissitzky. Ehrenburg writes of how the Parisians regarded Soviet art as the most advanced and how the films of Eisenstein and Soviet theatrical productions by Tairov and Vakhtangov were of great interest in Paris.⁷ As the Soviet Union emerged from the chaos and bloodshed of Civil War, and American culture and American jazz rejuvenated post-war Europe, ‘snobs’, according to Ehrenburg, praised everything Soviet and were dubbed *bolchévisants*. The level of understanding as to the realities of life in Soviet Russia probably did not run high. Ehrenburg characterises the Soviet ‘snob’ by quoting a tennis champion who said to him *“I hear money’s been abolished in your country. That’s splendid! I hate having to reckon my expenses.”*⁸ Ehrenburg gives us perhaps, an insight here into some of the reasons why Le Pas d’Acier was enthusiastically received in Paris and London by the youth of the day. In order to understand the creative impulse and influences operative within Le Pas d’Acier however, it is necessary to find its Soviet context.

2. Construction and the Machine Aesthetic

“It was to be a ballet of construction” wrote Prokofiev in his autobiography, reflecting on his collaboration with Jakulov in 1925⁹. In 1924 Huntley Carter had asked:

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Eisenstein’s film The Battleship Potemkin was shown in Paris in 1925, and in the same year, his first film, Strike was a prize winner in Paris.

⁸ Ehrenburg, I. (1963) p.95

⁹ Prokofiev, S. (1960) p.65

“What is this new thing – construction – which is actuating and inspiring the new men, actors, producers, poets, painters, sculptors, writers and indeed, all in the different departments of Russian thought and activity?”¹⁰

Carter then identifies Construction as:

“ – building – utility – the Machine – the new conception of the Machine – as a moral and constructive factor – the worker as a master of the machine, reproducing its sounds and movements which to him are a second nature – the working out of a constructive background subordinated to him, scenery as a material aid...”¹¹

As a work of construction, Le Pas d’Acier would fall into Huntley Carter’s fourth period of Revolutionary theatre in the Soviet Union. This follows the third period of “semi – relief” when acrobatic performance began and the influence of circus was apparent. Carter notes that there was a heroic aspect running through all the periods, based on patriotism and that there was also laughter, *“directed at the vanities, follies, and weaknesses of the old and new order alike.”¹²* However, in the fourth period:

“The workers now enter upon the real business of construction. They become preoccupied with mechanical problems, chiefly the problem of a mechanical structure according to which the New Russia is to be built. They use machine forms and tools on the stage as symbols of the new industrial civilisation”¹³

Carter stresses that construction is an all encompassing ideal and vision of society and finds its presence in the work of theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold:

“His object now is to extract and communicate the machine spirit or to promote machinolatory...Briefly he sees society as a moral machine; he sees the actor as an essential part of the Machine, with movements to correspond, he sees the background as an essential part of the actor; he sees the thing to be extracted and communicated by both as the machine spirit.”¹⁴

Posters of the 1920s readily associate revolutionary development with modernisation, change and mass education; they were a constant call to Soviet

¹⁰ Carter, H. (1924) p.69

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid* p.88

¹³ *ibid* p.87-88

¹⁴ *ibid* p.71-72

citizens to support the revolutionary construction of the new Russia¹⁵. Even chocolate bars carried the cultural message of construction. For example, **fig. 3.1(a)** shows Rodchenko's packaging designs for 'Our Industry' sweet wrappers (1924) and even they carry images of trains and industrial machines. The early 1920s, the years of the New Economic Policy which allowed limited private enterprise, finds the arts intrinsically involved in the formation of the new order and with a degree of autonomy that was to be eroded after Lenin's death in 1924 and the rise of Stalin¹⁶.

Le Pas d'Acier relates to the complex idea of 'construction' in several ways. The music, the designs, the movement and the scenario all relate to the transformation of Russia to an industrialised nation and a new revolutionary society. The characters are not individuals but representative types. The Sailor for example, was a common figure in Russian revolutionary art and posters. (**Fig. 3.2** shows three images of the Sailor in a changing aesthetic context from Tatlin's portrait in 1912 through to a strident sense of physical power in the photo-montage style of 1926). In Meyerhold's production of D.E. (1924) for example, Sailors, doing gymnastics appear, as do Commissars giving speeches.¹⁷ The types featured in Act 1 of the 1925 scenario are part of a society undergoing fundamental change; they are about to be transformed into workers in an industrialised Russia. The asymmetrical costumes which appeared to divide the dancers in half, with for example, one bare leg, or one booted leg as in the character of the Sailor, must have emphasised this sense of transition.

The setting itself, just sufficiently representational to suggest a railway station in Act 1, embodies this theme of change, movement and progress. The train, which appears in the 1925 scenario and in Drawing A, is a frequent image for progress and modernity in Soviet posters and art of the period. **Fig. 3.1(a)** shows its rather cheerful presence on Rodchenko's sweet wrappers of 1924, noted above. In Pimenov's 'For Industrialisation', (1927), however, shown in **fig. 3.1(b)**, it is the

¹⁵ See for example, White, S. (1988)

¹⁶ Interestingly, 'Stalin' is a pseudonym that translates as 'The Man of Steel'; his rise to power corresponds with the period in which Le Pas d'Acier, or 'The Step of Steel', was conceived and produced.

¹⁷ Hedgebeth, L. (1975) p.35

FIGURE 3.1



(a) Rodchenko, packaging design for 'Red October, Our Industry' sweets. 1924.
Source: Kahn - Magomedov (1995) p.205-206.



(b) Pimenov, 'For Industrialisation', 1927.
Source: Vaughan James (1973), plate 111.



(c) Pimenov, Poster, 1930. 'Achieving the 5 year plan in 4 years'.
Source: Kahn - Magomedov (1995) p.391.

FIGURE 3.2



Detail from Vladimir Tatlin's 'The Sailor', 1912.



V.Khodasevich, Magazine Cover for 'Red Panorama', 1927.
Source: Kahn - Magomedov (1995) p.199



A.Lavinski, Poster for 'Battleship Potemkin', 1926.
Source: Kahn - Magomedov (1995) p.199

engine at the heart of the modern factory. Fig. 3.1(c) shows a Soviet poster (1930), also by Pimenov, with the train charging through the old ways of life, including drunkenness and religion, depicted by some 'characters' on the railway line; a theme which has interesting parallels with Le Pas d'Acier.

Transformation and construction are central themes of the 1925 scenario. For example, the central character, 'the Sailor' has a scene devoted to his transformation into a worker, in which he changes his clothes on stage. An 'interval' scene is devoted to the physical rearrangement of the set by the dancers who construct the factory setting. In the 1925 scenario the chaos of post-revolutionary Russia is also a vehicle for featuring the 'old' types. Drunkards, swindlers, speculators, and other representatives of self-interest and personal power, people the first part of the ballet, but the presence of the train on stage would have emphasised the sense of pending change and progress¹⁸. The second act presents the image of organised collective labour devoted to a common purpose, production and more broadly 'construction'. However, as previously discussed, the 1927 production did not feature the train, the Sailor's on-stage transformation, or the onstage reconstruction of the set. The audience was directed to see the characters in Act 1 in terms of Russian legends and the two acts in terms of the rural and the factory. There appears therefore, to have been a shift in emphasis away from the themes of transformation and construction, towards stressing contrast.

However, in the 1925 scenario and the 1927 production the dominance of images of the machine and of industry in Act 2 is very clear. Overhead wheels attached to transmission belts, pace out the new mechanised life in the factory and giant hammers were perhaps intended to forge New Man as well as the age of steel¹⁹.

¹⁸ As well as being a symbol of modernity and progress, 'propaganda trains' were also a feature of revolutionary and post-revolutionary life, taking news and revolutionary ideas out to the people from the cities.

¹⁹ The Daily Herald, (July 5th 1927), p.5 describes how in one part of act 2 a dancer lies under the hammers, and The Empire News (July 10th 1927), p.3 writes of dancers swinging against each other's chests. This is not specifically mentioned in the 1925 scenario and so appears to have been introduced later.

The idea of construction relates to the creation of a new future that will bring Russia out of illiteracy, poverty and inequality to be an industrialised world power. The extent of Jakulov's vision in respect of 'construction' is perhaps best reflected in drawing E which envisages the stage space as a giant architectural structure with dancers working on all levels, like ants. Something of the visionary qualities of the era's 'realism' that is so much a part of the style of Russian Constructivism, is communicated in this drawing. Although producing a set for a touring company to perform on small proscenium stages, must have seriously curtailed the possibilities of the design, it would most probably have been possible to get the effect of hundreds of workers using the 45 dancers. By 1925 the visual power of people as mass was emerging in Sergei Eisenstein's films.

However, although the ballet is loosely set in the period of economic chaos and hardship following the Civil War, and there is a degree of 'realism', in the 1925 materials, Jakulov appears to take a rather playful and theatrical approach to theme and subject matter. This theatricality and the importance of optimism and involving the audience in a sense of shared creative involvement, also needs to be understood within the context of Soviet theatre of the 1920s. This is discussed in section 4 below.

Jakulov's set for Le Pas d'Acier embodies and relates to the ideals of construction in complex ways. To at least some extent, these can be found through analysis of the designs in the context of Soviet theatrical Constructivism.

3. Russian Theatrical Constructivism

Constructivism is dated as arising from the work of the Russian sculptor and painter, Vladimir Tatlin, so called because from around 1913 Tatlin began to produce abstract 'constructions' made from industrial materials such as wire, metal and plastic. The term Constructivism however, was not coined until 1921 when it was used to define constructions from materials with a notable industrial affiliation by artists who rejected aesthetic decorative aims in favour of

utilitarianism and social purpose.²⁰ Meyerhold was a frequent visitor to early Constructivist exhibitions²¹ and his ideas of anti-illusionism in the theatre, and a theatre for the people, formed the basis of Constructivism in the theatre.

3.1 Liubov Popova, The Magnaminous Cuckold (1922), and Defining Theatrical Constructivism

The study has paid particular attention to the work and approach of Liubov Popova's set for Meyerhold's production of The Magnaminous Cuckold (1922)²², as it is frequently cited as amongst the clearest proponents of Soviet theatrical Constructivism²³, (see fig. 3.3).

Set in a mill, The Magnaminous Cuckold was a farce and not a work of socio-political propaganda or concerns. The set however, was a landmark in the development of a new approach to staging. It consisted of a free standing construction within bare walls and was conceived functionally, as an apparatus for performance. It was made of plain wood, "*which looked as though it had just left the carpenter's hands*"²⁴, though parts of it were painted in black and red. The abstracted elements of a mill were apparent:

*"The elements of a mill are transformed into platforms, revolving doors, ladders and scaffolding with a large wheel over the set that turns at different speeds during the action according to the kinetic value of movement on stage."*²⁵

Popova's manuscripts and designs have become better known in the West through the publication of recent Russian research in English, notably the work of Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) who reproduce some of her writings, as well as many of her designs. In these texts Popova's path from cubism, through non-

²⁰ Lodder, C. (1980) p.2

²¹ Bablet, D. (1977) p.100

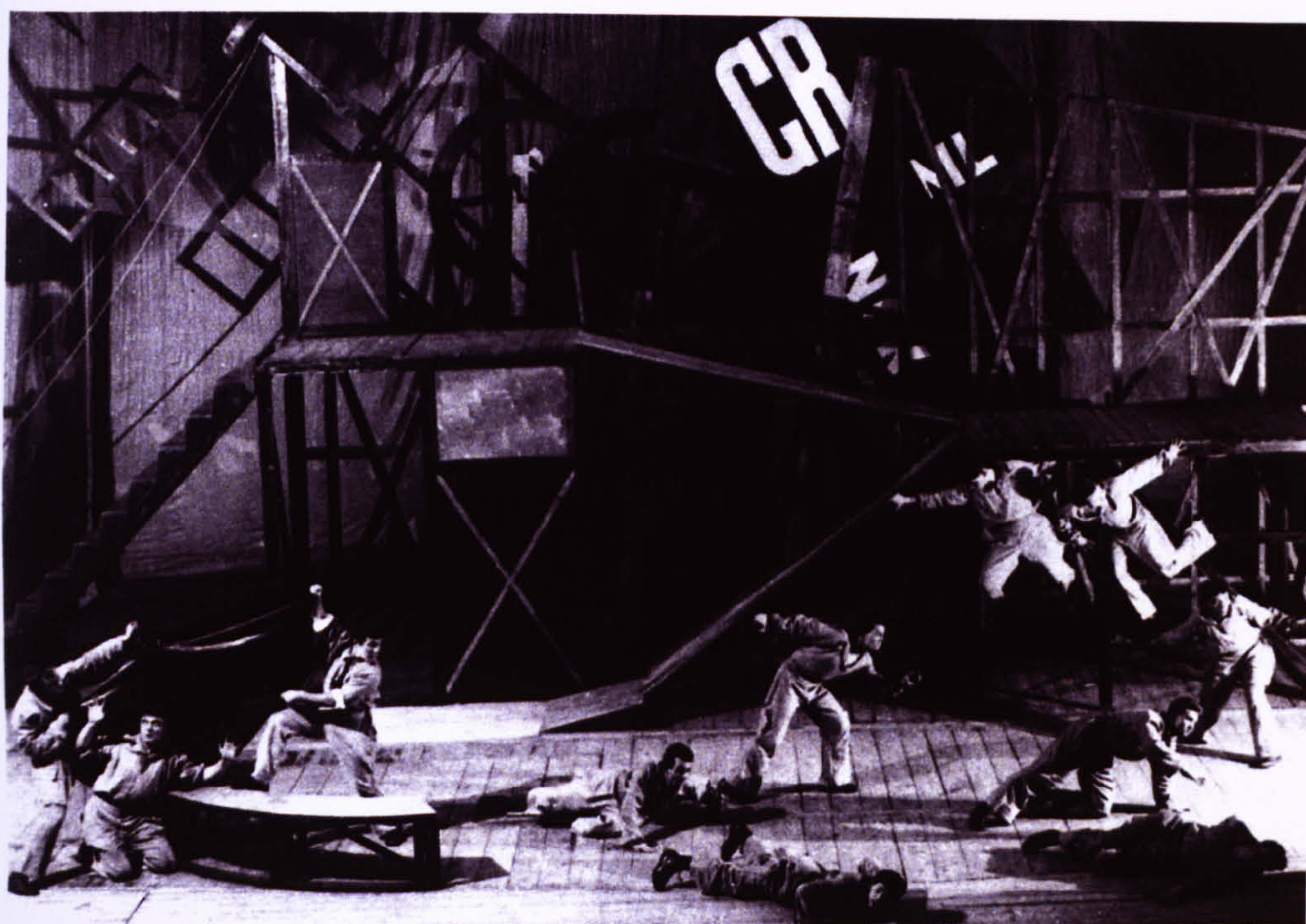
²² A play by Fernand Crommelynck, whose name in abbreviated form appears on the central wheel of the set.

²³ For example, Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.217 write: "*Popova's productions in Meierhold's theatre are a benchmark in the history of theatrical Constructivism: all that went before them is its prehistory; all that went after, its development and continuation.*" They also note (p.254) that in 1922 the journal Zrelishcha, referred to Popova as "*the Mother of Constructivism*" ..

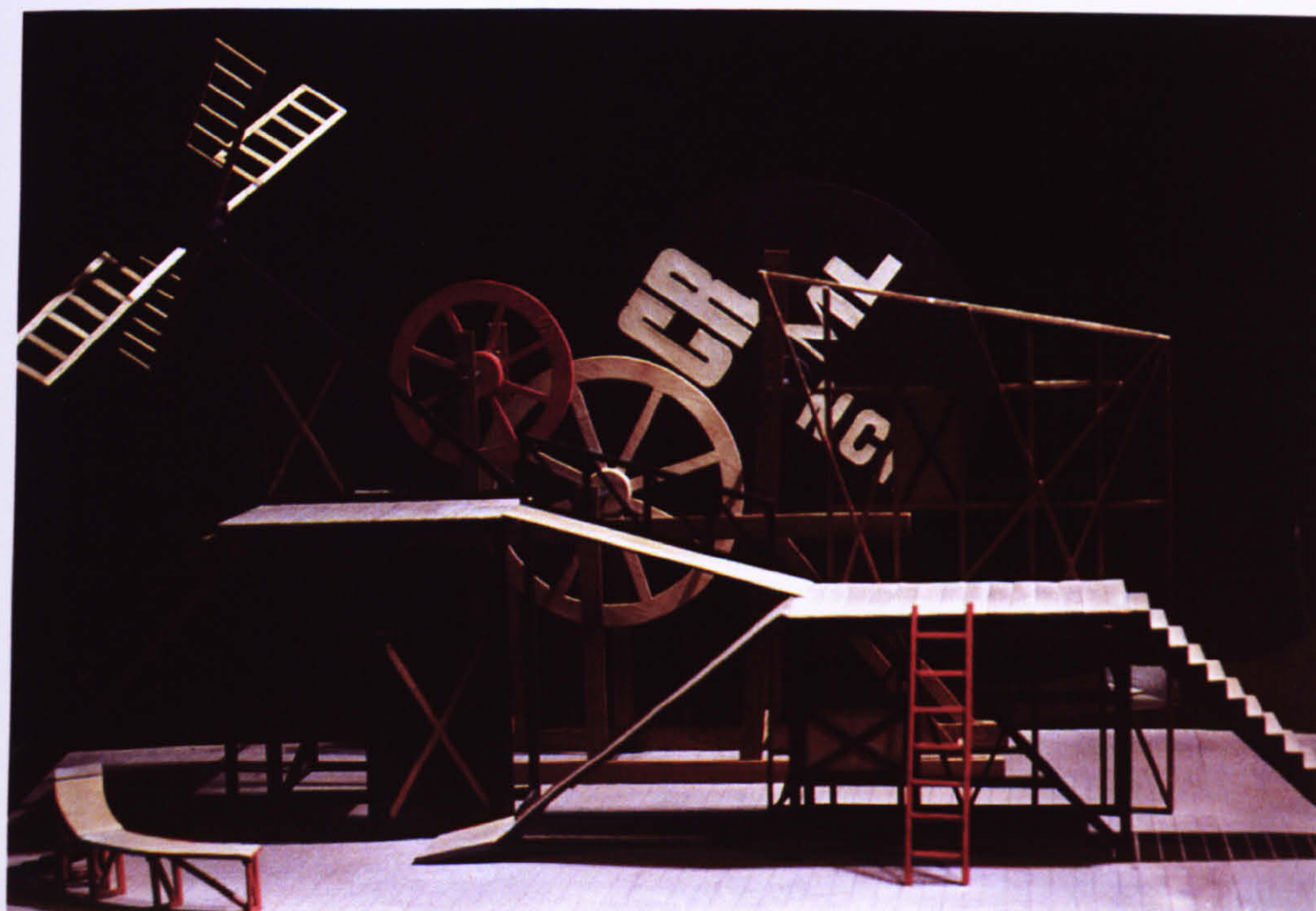
²⁴ Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.252

²⁵ *ibid*

FIGURE 3.3



Popova's set for The Magnanimous Cuckold (1922). Source: Van Norman Baer (1991) p.65



Reconstruction n.d. Source: Van Norman Baer (1991) p.146

objectivity to Constructivism emerges. Her rejection of the idea of the artist as inspired creator, towards the notion of the artist as constructor, engineer and designer clearly emerges. Her manuscripts voice the Constructivist ideal of artistic work as a solving of technical and theoretical, rather than aesthetic, problems²⁶. Popova's manuscripts stress that the aim of her designs for The Magnaminous Cuckold was to move away from aesthetic principles towards design as the most efficient solution to production requirements.

In her introduction to the INKHUK²⁷ discussion of The Magnaminous Cuckold, Popova sets out the basic principles of her endeavour, pointing out that the production itself did not entirely realise them. These principles can inform a definition of theatrical Constructivism but they also point to the reasons why the term contains an inherent contradiction.²⁸ Popova's main point is that her desire is to translate the problems of design "*from the aesthetic to the production plane*". She identifies the fundamental criterion of her approach as "*utilitarian adaptability*" and sets this in opposition to the "*resolution of any formal-aesthetic problems such as the question of colour or volume, or the organisation of the theatrical space.*" Formal elements, such as the use of colour, must be purely "*necessary material parts.*"²⁹

Several leading artists who were associated with Constructivism, such as Popova, Stepanova and Vesnin turned from the studio to the theatre around 1920. Christina

²⁶ According to Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.251, when Popova planned her installations for theatre productions, she had already worked on the technical problems involved. Approaching her work very much like an engineer or scientist, she had designed and built a device called a 'formovarioator' out of laths, that allowed her to see a three dimensional design before it was actually built.

²⁷ Institut khudozhestvennoi kultury (Institute of Artistic Culture). This discussion followed Jakulov's claim at the premiere that Popova was guilty of plagiarism. The INKHUK discussion cleared her of this charge. See Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.251.

²⁸ Braun E, (1969) p.184 writes: "*In the theatre, whose whole allure depends on the associative power of the imagination, every venture by the Constructivists led to an unavoidable compromise of their utilitarian dogma and each time demonstrated the inherent contradiction of the term 'Theatrical Constructivism'*"

²⁹ These quotations come from Popova's paper 'Introduction to the INKHUK Discussion of the Magnaminous Cuckold', reproduced in Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.378-379. Of course the context of Popova's statements has to be taken into account; although the early 1920s appears to have been a fairly liberal time for the arts in the Soviet Union, the demands for 'political correctness' on the arts was still a significant factor. See, Brovkin. V. (1988).

Lodder's study of Constructivism locates how theatre provided a 'micro-environment' for the exploration of Constructivist ideas.

*"The theatre acted as micro-environment in which it was possible to explore spatial and material structures which could act as prototype components of a new, completely Constructivist environment."*³⁰

It is clear however, that in practice theatrical criteria were equally if not more important. The validity of the idea of the theatre as a micro-environment for Constructivist explorations must not lead to a definition of theatrical Constructivism that is non-performance, and basically studio based; if it does the temptation to see theatrical Constructivism as a weakened and impure form of the movement, mounts. This relates directly back to divisions within the movement itself as to whether theatre was a valid forum for Constructivism and to the location of sets as compromising the principles of Constructivism³¹. Theatre sets of the era are no doubt better understood when seen in relationship to the influence of Constructivism, rather than from an approach that seeks exemplars of Constructivism in the theatre. It is clear that the aesthetics and ideals of the Soviet theatre to some extent countered, as well as embraced, the non-aesthetic, utilitarian ideals of Constructivism.

Popova admitted that in her set:

*"...the pure resolution of the issue did not work out because (1) it was hard for me at the start to reject outmoded aesthetic customs and criteria, and (2) I was hindered by a condition of an aesthetic order, that the action bore a farcical, visual character and made it impossible for me to consider the action merely as an ongoing work process, and this to a significant degree lent everything the aesthetic character of the visual action."*³²

Sarabianov and Adaskina have concluded that:

³⁰ Lodder, C. (1983) p.174.

³¹ Cheyeny, S. (1927) p. 858 notes for example, that Rabinovitch's skeletal colonnade for *Lysistrata*, was seen as compromising the principles of Constructivism because of the curved features at their top, and that he was accused of romanticising.

³² *ibid*

“..the theatre itself, which Meierkhold’s experiments had to quite a strong degree abstracted and mechanized but which had by no means been deprived of its acting and visual essence, interfered with the renunciation of the theatre for the sake of abstract action.”³³

Popova’s attempts to suppress the aesthetic aspects of theatre, appear to have made a substantial contribution to the emergence of a new successful theatrical aesthetic and a new stylistic vocabulary for theatre design. Care however, needs to be taken with the word ‘new’. Jakulov accused Popova of plagiarism at the premiere, and this sparked the INHUK investigation. Although Popova was entirely cleared, Jakulov’s accusations point to how collaborative and evolving innovation is in practice. The tendency to search for definitive moments in the development of the avant-garde must not conceal the complex nature of Soviet theatre during the 1920s.

In Popova’s designs and manuscripts a complex intermingling of intellectual formal concerns with utilitarian social purpose emerges. The Magnanimous Cuckold, an absurd and very un-intellectual farce, with a formal-analytical set and a highly stylised approach to theatre, is itself a manifestation of the complex forces at work in the theatre of its time. The Soviet theatre of the 1920s emerges as in constant relationship to fundamental issues concerning the nature of theatre in the new social fabric. The artist-intellectual was engaged in redefining him/herself as well as finding new structures and approaches for the design of Soviet life. Intensely intellectual analysis co-exists with the recognition that theatre must be unintellectual and that the arts in general must serve the new ruling class, the proletariat, while at the same time presuming to transform them into ideal Soviet citizens.

However, The Magnanimous Cuckold and Popova’s manuscripts on the principles behind her Constructivism in the design, serve as a useful means of defining the basic aesthetic, stylistic vocabulary, approach and ideals that form theatrical Constructivism. As such they provide a useful means of comparing Jakulov’s approach in Le Pas d’Acier and identifying the basis of his Constructivism.

³³ Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.251

3.2 The Magnaminous Cuckold and Le Pas d'Acier: Some Basic Points of Similarity.

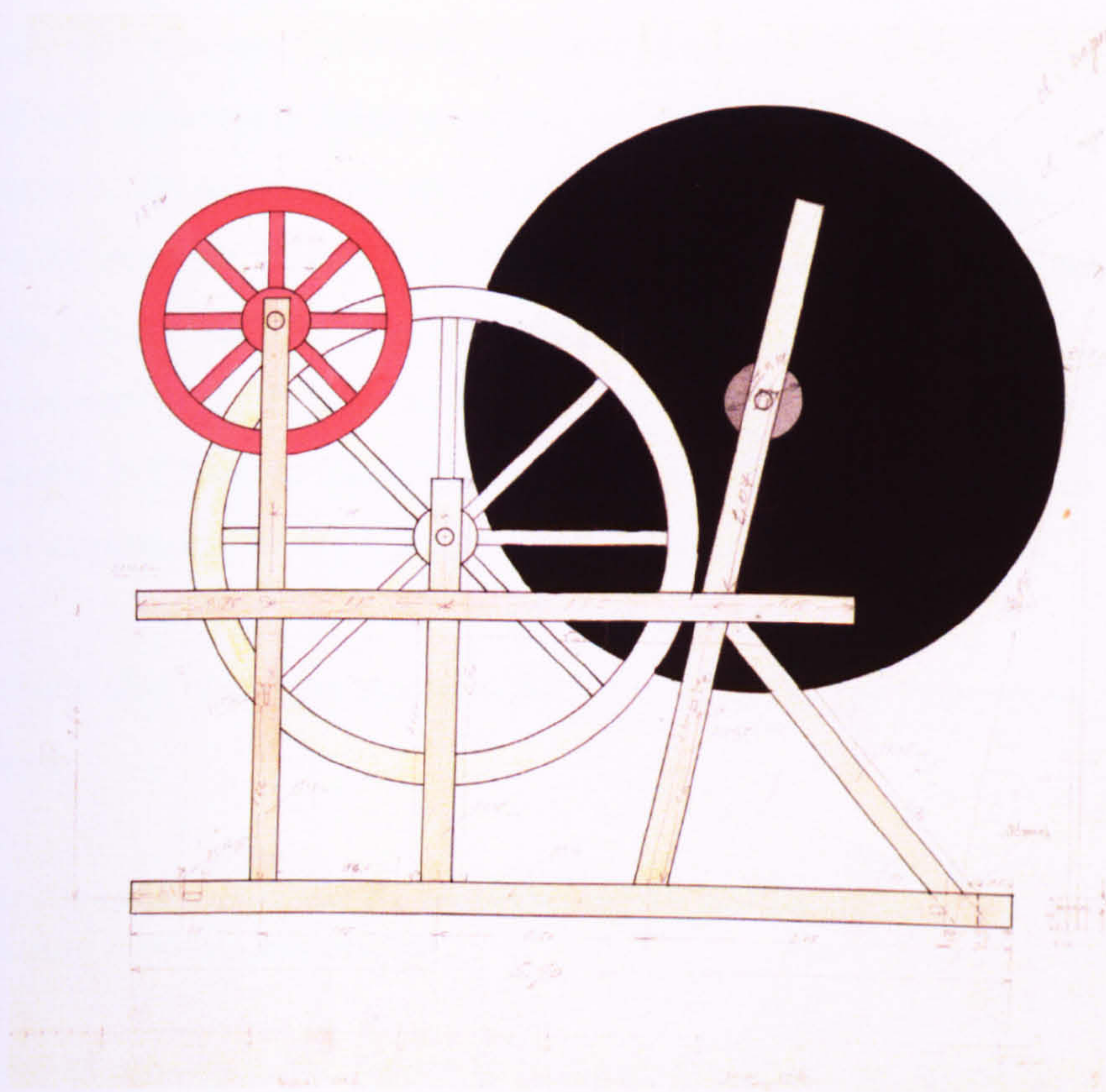
There are many points of similarity between Popova's designs for The Magnaminous Cuckold and Jakulov's designs for Le Pas d'Acier. At the most basic level, both sets follow non-decorative, functional principles. Both are abstracted skeletal frameworks for performance consisting only of objects that are involved in the action. Both follow geometrical and industrial approaches to design. Both sets are elevated off the stage space with their own platforms and stairs, and there is a shared concern with linear geometrical configuration and planar interactions in three dimensionality. There is also a basic structural similarity between components of the two sets as both designs revolve around the same principles, i.e relating to the industrial mechanism of interconnecting wheels and crankshafts. Fig. 3.4 shows a detail of this aspect of Popova's set design. It also shows how Popova uses three wheels as the centre piece of the set, as does Jakulov, and how these wheels are visually differentiated, from small bright red, through central natural wood to large black at the back. This dynamic approach to form and colour in the construction of the object is also very much a feature of Jakulov's set. (This is further discussed in Chapter 4). The forms of platforms, wheels, mechanisms and scaffoldings emerge during the 1920s as the basic language of Constructivism in the theatre.

Popova stressed that material elements must be used not only scenically but also actively, kinetically: "*linking their work with that of the whole action*".³⁴ There is therefore, a very specific point of similarity between Popova's large wheel that moves in relation to the quality of the action on stage, and Jakulov's large overhead wheels that move on their transmission belts to pace out the work in the factory. Popova's approach, like that of Jakulov, reveals a fundamental concern with movement and dynamism in terms of the interaction of the set and action. Popova notably refers to "*the score of the action*"³⁵ rather than to narrative scenes:

³⁴ From Popova's introduction to the INKHUK discussion, 1922. Reproduced in Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.378-9 from manuscripts held in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

³⁵ *ibid*

FIGURE 3.4



Popova's design for construction, The Magnaminous Cuckold (1922).
Source: Van Norman Baer (1991) p.147

*“...into the general score of the action the movement of doors and windows, the turning of wheels, which with their movements and speeds were supposed to accentuate and raise the kinetic meaning of each moment of the action.”*³⁶

Sarabianov and Adaskina's research indicates that Popova was particularly concerned that the audience's attention be turned away from “*the academic study of the design's elements*”, towards “*the real utilitarian purpose*”³⁷.

Popova's concerns with economy of means, functional interaction with the action and expediency is also apparent in Jakulov's work on Le Pas d'Acier. As discussed in Chapter 1, the annotations on his drawings refer to these principles several times (see for example, Drawing B). In presenting the set developmentally through the action, (from what the critics describe as drab and grey to the pyrotechnical excitement of the finale), Jakulov also stressed the set's function to a large extent. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, descriptions invariably concentrate on the set in action as opposed to describing its surface appearance.

Popova's manuscripts also reveal her concerns for theatre's social, educative and agitational functions:

*“The theatre's new production is not the depiction of life but the exemplary illustrative organisation of life and people...”*³⁸

Theatre must above all convey to the viewer his/her part in the new organisation and approach. The idea of ‘creativity in process’ and its effects upon the viewer, is touched upon in Sarabianov and Adaskina's study. They write of The Magnaminous Cuckold:

“The incisive viewer consciously perceived or unconsciously sensed the bold, lively rhythm of the action, felt behind the strange –peripeteia of the theme the true significance of the young, provocative, gay, and human production. He was not called upon to suffer through questionable actions and words born of a vaguely pathological psychology but was drawn into the very process of merry alienation, of acting joie de vivre in a psychological drama. Popova's sets and costumes (the work uniforms) in which the actors were dressed embodied very well the spirit of

³⁶ ibid

³⁷ ibid p.216

³⁸ ibid p.252

creativity-in-process, which as such demanded the viewer's inclusion and full participation."³⁹

This idea of the audience's involvement with the 'merry alienation' of staged production is perhaps the key to understanding Jakulov's celebratory finale, with its flashing lights and accelerating décor. The audience was no doubt intended to feel uplifted by the power, creativity and transformation of the factory scene, and as a result by the construction effort itself. The question is whether Massine's choreographic interpretation affected this approach. As will be discussed in Chapter 4 the 1927 production appears to move further towards the realistic evocation of a factory than is apparent in the 1925 materials.

The processes of abstraction and restraint of Popova's Constructivist approach to The Magnanimous Cuckold interacted well with the anti-naturalism of the theatre of the period. While theoretically serving a utilitarian ethos, Constructivism in the theatre enabled the intensification and amplification of the theatrical elements. Jakulov's model set for Le Pas d'Acier for example, reveals how a comparatively restrained use of colour can intensify the power and sense of that colour as an element in its own right. Popova wrote of how formal elements, such as the use of colour, must be purely "*necessary material parts*" but that does not appear to have impaired the realisation of their theatrical and visual potential. Sarabianov and Adaskina note that in her theatre work Popova:

*"...supplemented the material reality of her architectural structures with the dynamics of brilliant spotlights and projectors."*⁴⁰

They trace this back to a preoccupation with "*ideal models of the delicate, pure-energy architecture of force lines and fields*"⁴¹ in her studio work of 1921 and to the central motif of the ray-cable that appears in her earlier work. They describe the 'ray cable' as:

³⁹ *ibid* p.252-3

⁴⁰ *ibid* p.250

⁴¹ *ibid.*

“a form that is incorporeal and spiritual, almost immaterial, but at the same time strictly constructive and architectonic”.⁴²

It is clear that the formal language and concerns of the architectonic, the constructive and the mechanical were both liberating and developmental to the anti-naturalist theatre of the era. Overall, Popova’s aims in her designs for The Magnaminous Cuckold, represent the move away from the abstract-formal approach in art, that emerge in the cubo-futurist inspired stagings of Tairov from around 1917 onwards, towards a formal-analytic⁴³ approach. Later in this chapter, Jakulov’s particular concerns and use of light and space will be discussed in an attempt to illuminate how his approach may relate to this ‘formal-analytic’ theatre. This in turn helps provide an interpretative context for reading the set of Le Pas d’Acier.

If architectonic and constructive principles inform the approach of Soviet theatre in the 1920s, the arc shapes, rectangles and complex planar interactions of non-objective studio art informed its stylistic vocabulary. In entering the realms of design, however, Constructivism required the artist to turn back to the world of real objects. As Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) point out, Popova’s drawings of 1921 reveal how she “*back-tracked from creating non-objective form to depicting a real object.*” In The Magnaminous Cuckold and in Le Pas d’Acier the stylistic vocabulary of non-objectivity is observable, but the process of abstraction relates to a real object, (a mill in the case of The Magnaminous Cuckold, and a railway station in Le Pas d’Acier). In both productions the elements of the real object are discernable.

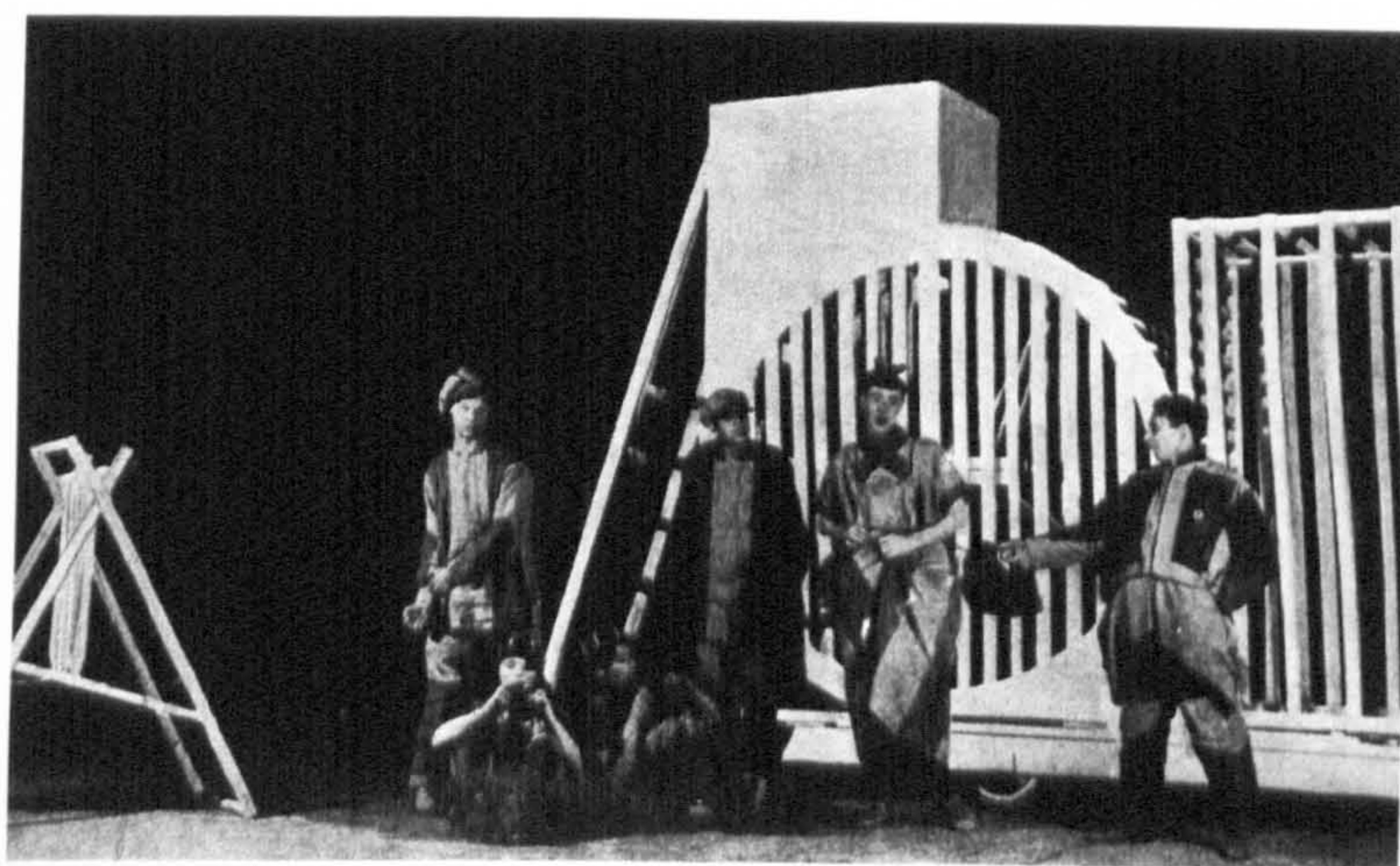
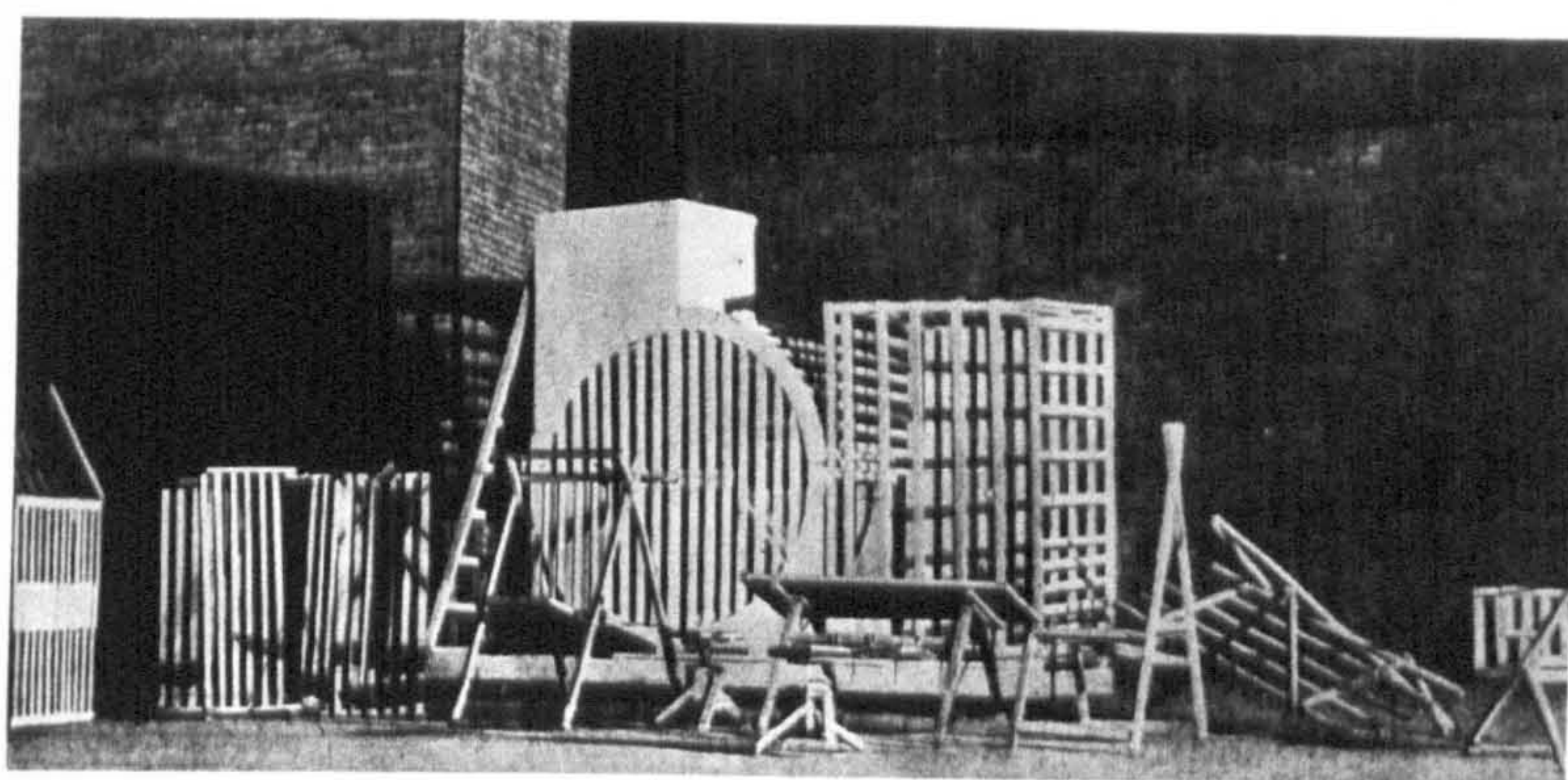
In 1922 Vavara Stepanova’s set for Meyerhold’s production of The Death of Tarelkin (see fig. 3.5) introduced further innovations to the model of Constructivist staging with “*portable mobile mechanisms*”⁴⁴ as opposed to the large singular construction of Popova’s Magnaminous Cuckold. Stepanova’s designs went further into utilitarian abstraction, presenting a purely skeletal framework as instruments for the actors to transform into whatever the action

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ The study adopts these terms from Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.215-6

⁴⁴ Rudnitsky, K. (1988) p.95

FIGURE 3.5



Stepanova's designs for The Death of Tarelkin (1922).
Source: Fulop-Miller and Gregor, (1930), figs. 338 and 339.

required. Although they both suggested and formed real objects they were not so clearly abstracted from them. Meyerhold produced this work as a “*circusized*” play and the set, painted white, was basically highly adaptable circus props. Again the movement of the set was an important feature.

“The central feature in this production was the fact that the actor performed with mobile, living objects which themselves were able ... to perform.”⁴⁵

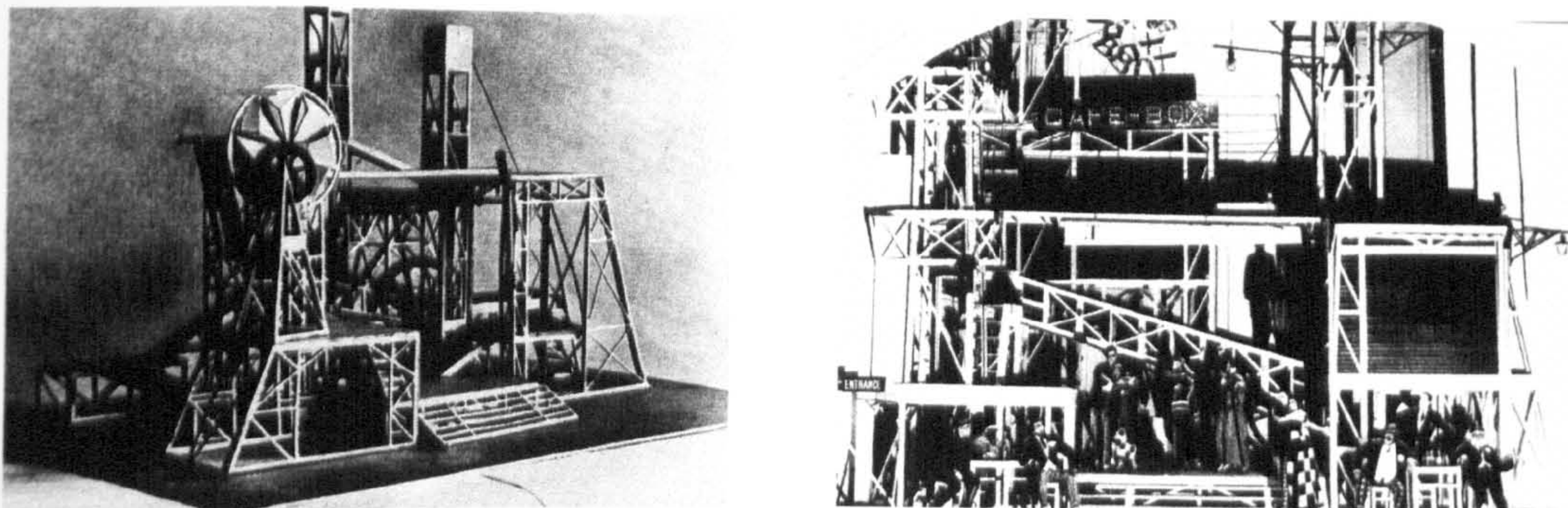
Jakulov’s mobile constructions can be easily related to this idea of performing décor.

In a set by the architect Alexander Vesnin’s for The Man Who Was Thursday (1923), (see fig. 3.6) versions of Popova’s wheel, scaffolding, ladders and platforms emerge but without the representational element. The aspiration here appears to be towards a complex and elaborate structure with interconnecting moving parts, that is comparable to Jakulov’s original aims for the mechanism for Le Pas d’Acier’s set, shown on Drawing B. Vesnin’s multi-tiered and skeletal structure owes much to the formal language established by The Magnaminous Cuckold, but in its verticality, scale, height and approach it is more architectural. Christina Lodder points out that Vesnin’s set took a vital step towards realising Constructivist theories of architecture as defined by Moisei Ginzburg’s writings of 1923 and 1924⁴⁶. Lodder defines the all important features of the new Constructivist architecture as “*functional, economic and asymmetrical in organisation.*” These principles can be found in Jakulov’s set for Le Pas d’Acier. The important difference however, is that where the basic structure of Vesnin’s set could be transferred from the theatre to an architectural design for the street, Jakulov’s set for Le Pas d’Acier, like Popova’s set for The Magnaminous Cuckold, is inherently a theatrical setting.

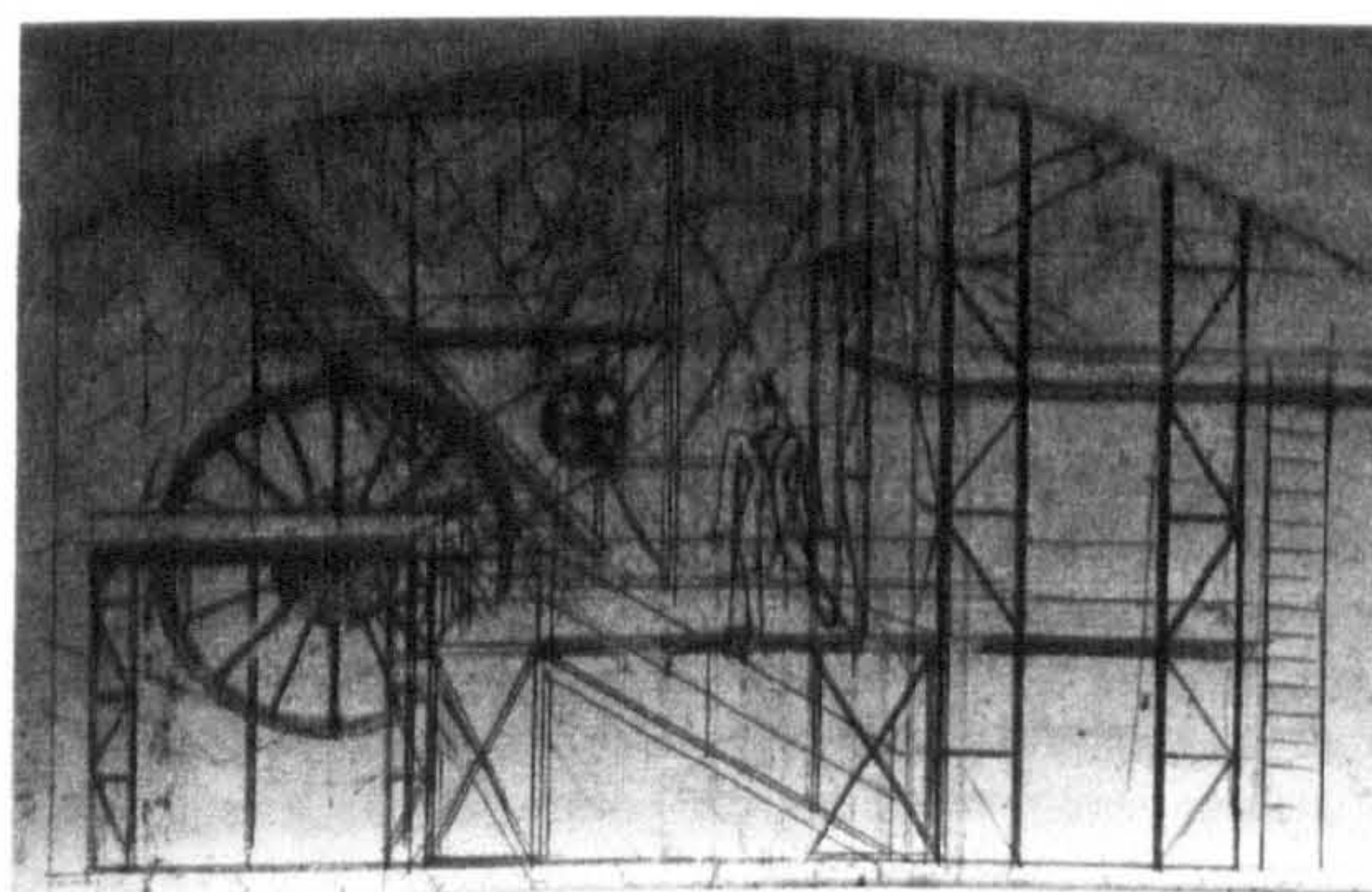
⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ Lodder, C.(1983) p.244 identifies Moisei Ginzburg as the theoretician of architectural Constructivism. He wrote Rhythm in Architecture (1923) and Style and the Epoch in 1924 which Lodder alleges “*laid the theoretical foundations of architectural Constructivism*”.

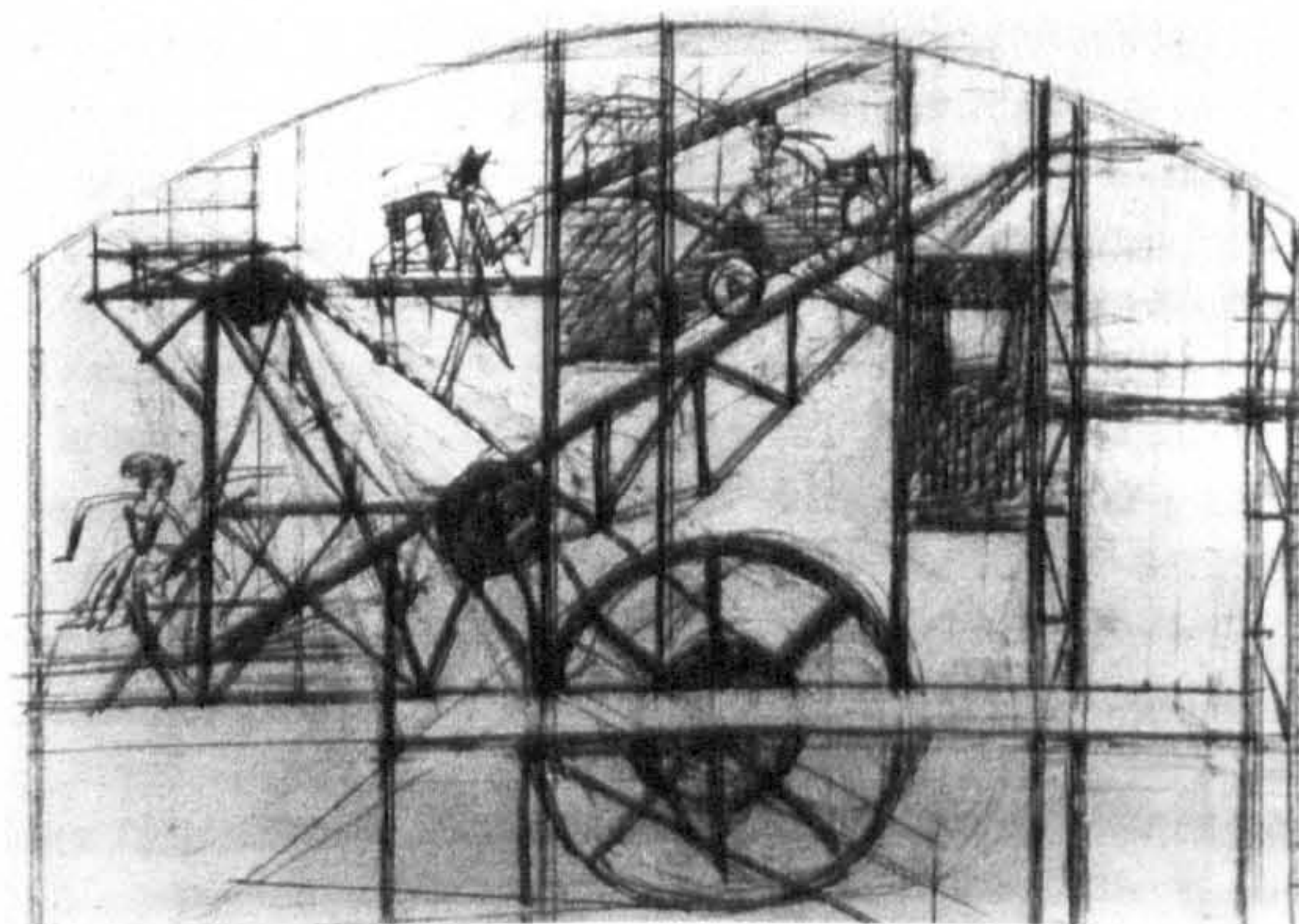
FIGURE 3.6



Vesnin's model set for The Man Who was Thursday (1923) and in performance.
Source: Kahn-Magomedov, (1995), p.216.



669



Vesnin's sketches for The Man Who was Thursday (1923).
Source: Kahn-Magomedov, (1995), p.217.

3.3 Constructivist Costume Design and Le Pas d'Acier

Popova's manuscripts also discuss costume design and her approach in The Magnaminous Cuckold, was again of seminal influence. Popova developed three basic principles under the 'ideological section' of her syllabus on 'Costume as an Element of Material Formation':⁴⁷

- 1) *Costume as a material element of the performance in conjunction with other material elements.*
- 2) *Costume in conjunction with the laws of biomechanics and speech.*
- 3) *Costume as a production object of material formation ... based on the utilitarian principle.*

With regard to her solutions for 'The Magnaminous Cuckold' Popova writes:

*"The elements of analysis had to be sought intuitively; thus there were the modern elements of the acrobat, athlete, sailor, military worker, agitator, and so forth. In addition, the costume was intended for the actor's daily ordinary life and work and therefore had to be utilitarian both for this purpose and to replace all other clothing, so that it was necessary to add, for example, an overcoat, and so forth. In all the costume was intended for seven or eight sorts of types of work."*⁴⁸

Popova also writes of her "*disinclination*" to distinguish between the costumes for the men and women, "*it just came down to changing the pants to a skirt or culottes.*"⁴⁹

Popova's solution was an adaptable, general purpose, utilitarian work suit, known as 'prozodezhda'. This can be seen in **fig 3.7**, showing the male and female versions of the suits for The Magnaminous Cuckold.

It is interesting to note in the above quotation how Jakulov's characters relate to Popova's 'modern element', such as the 'military worker', 'sailor' and 'agitator'. Jakulov would also have considered the acrobatic, athletic requirements of the set

⁴⁷ This list is taken from Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.215. They are quoting from manuscripts held by the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow dated 1921.

⁴⁸ *ibid* p.379.

⁴⁹ *ibid*

FIGURE 3.7



Popova's Work Uniforms for Actors no. 2 and 4. 1921.
Source: Sarabianov and Adaskina, (1990), p.224



Popova's Work Uniforms for Actor no. 7. 1921.
Source: Sarabianov and Adaskina, (1990), p.246

in his 'utilitarian' costumes. It is also clear that Jakulov's male and female costumes tend to be basically the same with simply a skirt and trouser version. (See Photographs 7 and 8). However, there is an eccentricity in some of Jakulov's designs, such as the asymmetry of the Sailor's costume. In others there is both character specificity, and realism. For example, it is clear that one of the costume designs is an almost exact copy of the real clothing worn by the Red Army. (See Drawing G2 figure on the right).

Jakulov appears to have three or four distinct approaches working side by side in Le Pas d'Acier's costumes. Firstly, there are realistic character costumes; secondly, there is this extraordinary use of asymmetry; thirdly, there is this idea of 'improvised' clothing, as in the Countesses with colourful rag clothes and lampshades for hats; fourthly, there are the metallic looking suits shown in Photograph 5. The latter may well be Jakulov's version of 'prozodezhda'⁵⁰. In addition to possible similarities between the two approaches to 'prozodezhda', the use of the naturally dynamic cape is also common to both productions, though in Le Pas d'Acier it is not part of the 'prozodezhda', it is worn by the Sailor. Although the utilitarian ethos of Popova's approach is very clear, Sarabianov and Adaskina's research indicates that she conceived of the object and its form in many aspects concentrating on construction, colour, texture, rhythm, linear and volumetric qualities, as well as movement in space.⁵¹ These aspects are clearly in evidence in Jakulov's designs.

It is important to understand 'prozodezhda' as an approach to costume that evolved alongside Meyerhold's approach to theatrical production.⁵² Meyerhold's approach demanded special clothing as did the work of acrobats, or gymnasts. The idea of the circus artist was at the heart not only of Meyerhold's approach to theatrical production, but was also the point of departure for Popova's approach to costume.⁵³ However, in Meyerhold's theatre utilitarianism and functionality had a clearly theatrical aspect, and in terms of costume this could imply more than

⁵⁰ As discussed in chapter 1, the annotations on drawing E appear to refer to 'prozodezhda'.

⁵¹ *ibid* p.215.

⁵² Sarabianov and Adaskina stress however, that Popova's approach to costume was worked out at the GVTM in 1921 and not for The Magnanimous Cuckold of 1922 as is sometimes held.

⁵³ Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.215.

simply allowing freedom of movement or providing an all purpose suit for the actor. Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) write⁵⁴:

“Meierkhold’s biomechanics had an ideartistic significance as well – to magnify the actual scale of the acting, its visual forms, and its graphic idea. While abandoning the ‘psychological personality’, that is, character, for magnified images, Meierkhold’s theater was resurrecting the ancient devices of the theatrical mask, trying to create new ‘social masks’.”

It is in this concept of magnification and of theatrical-social masks, that we can perhaps find a key aspect of Jakulov’s approach. When seen in this light, the costume of the Sailor for example, becomes not just an interpretation of the Sailor as a transitional character, but an amplified presentation for a particular kind of performance; the costume embodies, and amplifies the Sailor’s theatrical realisation in performance. It is clear that the costume would be particularly effective in emphasising gesture and movement.⁵⁵

Although the ‘prozhedzha’ has the clearest parallels with Constructivist ideals, the use of costume to exaggerate in a burlesque manner was common in the Soviet theatre of the era. It appears for example in Meyerhold’s D.E. of 1924 where the costumes have been described as:

“fright wigs, large shoes, floppy bow tie, pork pie hat – more reminiscent of clowns than of actors. With other characters, entire scenes were built about bright colorful costumes that gave attention to fine details. Only the stagehands were in the traditional Meyerhold costumes of blue-flared pants and blue shirts made from a light material.”⁵⁶

Several descriptions of Jakulov’s costumes describe ill-fitting clothes and odd shoes that could relate as easily to burlesque theatre as to the ‘social realism’ of impoverished Russians. A similar potential duality can be found in terms of the apparent adherence to the principle of economy of means. If the costumes shown in Photograph 7 and Photograph 12 for example, are compared, it can be seen that

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ Vavara Stepanova emphasised these aspects in her ‘prozodezhda’ which were designed to: “demonstrate and emphasise the inflexions and movements of the individual parts of the human body”. See Larentiev, A., (1988) p66.

⁵⁶ Hedgbeth, L. (1975) p.28

only the surface garments have been changed as the characters move from Act 1 to Act 2. Yet there is also an element here perhaps of the 'quick change' associated with circus and the burlesque.

In general, the mixture of different approaches in Jakulov's designs would serve to further 'alienate' the audience from any illusion of reality, prompting them to recognise signifiers of location and period, but also remember they are witnessing a theatrical event.

3.4 The Move to Realism

By 1923-4 Soviet theatre was moving towards 'realism' and mass spectacle. Cinematography was also exerting a notable influence. These developments emerge very clearly in Meyerhold's production of The Earth in Turmoil (1923) designed by Popova. This took Meyerhold's theatre further into the propaganda play and into real space.

*"In the theatre bicyclists and motorcyclists sped down the aisle...A model airplane flew over the hall (there wasn't room for a real one), a real truck drove on stage...."*⁵⁷

Lodder sees the production as part of "*the reassertion of the real object*",⁵⁸ and as the "*death knell for Constructivism in the theatre*"⁵⁹. There were no props in The Magnaminous Cuckold, whereas props from the real world abound in this production. Objects listed include: a coffin, a small machine gun, weapons, bicycles and typewriters. Screens for projected slogans feature on the set and projected film was also used.⁶⁰ A model crane was used on stage in this production as a real one was too heavy to use on stage, but in the open-air performances a real crane was used. Plywood shields were attached to it bearing posters, and screens were used for projected film clips and slogans and to give the episode titles.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Sarbianov and Adaskina (1990) p.256

⁵⁸ Lodder, C. (1983) p.175, section title.

⁵⁹ *ibid* p.180

⁶⁰ See the plan for the production reproduced in Lodder, C. (1983) p.175-196.

⁶¹ Sarbianov and Adaskina (1990) p.257

There could perhaps be elements of this move towards 'realism' in the materials produced by Jakulov in 1925 with the idea of a train on stage for example, and a use of hoisting tackle and advertisements flashing onto the set. Yet, as will be discussed in the next chapter, Jakulov's designs also emphasise theatricality. In Le Pas d'Acier the process and presence of abstraction is retained as the organising principle of the design, and representation is realised in wholly theatrical terms, for example, with the use of gauzes and lighting, and through the use of giant hammers.

However, if Jakulov's design for Le Pas d'Acier is not part of the return to the real object, the question remains as to its relationship to Constructivism. Jakulov's set is not so much a visual/intellectual celebration of an object's internal properties, as a celebration of the object's function and potential theatricality. The question is perhaps, not was Jakulov's set Constructivist, or even to what extent was Jakulov's set Constructivist, but how does Jakulov's set relate to Constructivism and how has he resolved the tensions between different influences affecting theatre design at the time. Lodder writes:

*"The Constructivist system of organising form became expressed in skeletal angular structures, in rectangularity, simplicity, economy of line and material and a geometric solution to surface arrangements."*⁶²

It is not difficult to find all of these stylistic elements in Jakulov's set, but it is unlikely he ever aspired to serve a totally utilitarian dictate, unless a pre-defined theatricality is that 'utilitarian' dictate. To find a fuller context for Jakulov's set it is necessary to look at some particular aspects of Soviet theatre and their interactions with Constructivism.

⁶² Lodder, C. (1983) p.180

4. From 'Circusization'⁶³ of the Theatres to 'Jakulovisation'⁶⁴ of the Theatres.

The avant-garde's fascination with circus, cabaret and the 'low' arts began well before the 1920s⁶⁵. However, the 'circusization' of the theatres in the early 1920s was a particular phenomenon, relating to the development of the 'eccentric'⁶⁶ actor and the ideal of theatre as accessible to the uneducated masses of Soviet society. Its height has been identified as 1922-3 with Meyerhold's production of the Death of Tarelkin, and Eisenstein's 'Wise Man' and Do You Hear Moscow in 1923⁶⁷. After this the preoccupation with circus began to give way to a concentration on music hall. However, it is clear that 'circusization' interacted with Constructivism in many of the influential and defining works of the 1920s. Denis Bablett, for example, emphasises that in addition to the anti beauty aesthetics of Constructivism the contemporary attraction for the circus was also important.

*"....the circus had a unique spirit and a powerful appeal to the popular audience. Here was an art based on theatricality, on a fresh and direct image that was not emasculated by psychological analysis, an art that required perfect mastery by its performers. While the 'eccentric' actor was assimilating the techniques of clowns, stuntmen, and trapeze artists, the constructivist stage designer was enchanted with the scenic elements and properties of the circus."*⁶⁸

Jakulov's sense of theatre is particularly evident in his designs for Princess Brambilla, (1920), in which he also performed, and Lecoq's operetta Girofle-Girofla (1922) both given at the Chamber Theatre Moscow. His sets for these productions have much in common with the circus. Bowlit has remarked: ⁶⁹

"Yakulov's set and costume designs for these two spectacles seemed destined more for the circus or 'happenings' than for the conventional stage: Yakulov used chance, coincidence, intuition, resulting either in remarkable success (as in

⁶³ This term is used for example, by Rudnitsky, K. (1988) p.94

⁶⁴ See Aladzhalov (1971) p.88. He takes the term from an article published in 1932: 'The Jakulovisation of the Theatres', Zrelishche 1932, no.23 p14-15

⁶⁵ See Bowlit, J. (1984)

⁶⁶ The term 'eccentric' appears a great deal in reference to styles of performance in the Soviet theatre during the 1920s. It appears to date from the popular 'Americanised' comedy of Sergei Radlov who combined music hall, clowning, vaudeville and slapstick and called it 'eccentrism'. See Gordon, M. 'Russian Eccentric Theatre: The Rhythm of America on the Early Soviet Stage', in Baer, N. (1992) p.115-126

⁶⁷ Rudnitsky, K, (1988) p.97

⁶⁸ Bablet, D. (1977) p. 100

⁶⁹ Bowlit, J. exhibition catalogue, (1972-4) p. 317.

Girofle-Girofla) or in abrupt failure (as in *Signor Formica* of 1922). This element of guesswork imbued Yakulov's art with a spontaneity and immediacy that appealed to a broad public. As he once said 'Art exists for the ignoramus. The greatness of art lies in its right to be illiterate.' ⁷⁰

Bowlit claims that Yakulov thought of the theatre as a mass circus performance and that he tried to emphasise the basics of theatre particularly "*the principle of perpetual motion, the kaleidoscope of forms and colours.*" ⁷¹. It is not difficult to find these attributes in descriptions of his designs for *Girofle Girofla* (1922), in which Yakulov devised an approach that bears some comparison with *Le Pas d'Acier*. Nick Worrall points out how important movement was to the whole design and quotes one Russian source as noting "*Even the accessories and properties danced...*" ⁷² Bowlit writes:⁷³

"...in Girofle-Girofla, Yakulov resorted to an involved system of kinetic 'machines' which 'moved forward some parts, removed others, rolled out platforms, let down ladders, opened up traps, constructed passageways'. This crazy, chaotic spectacle.... could not fail to evoke mirth and it was the most popular entertainment in Moscow in 1922."

The circus element is also discernable in Yakulov's designs for *Le Pas d'Acier*. The playful element of the colourful mobile constructions spun by the dancers, the revolving inner gates on the 'railway signal', the flashing lights, the rope ladder and the giant chair/stepladder all relate to circus imagery and have a potential for the burlesque. At the same time it can be 'magically' transformed by lighting effects and gauzes into a railway station, a market, and a factory forge. This is further discussed in Chapter 4.

The popularity of Yakulov's work in Moscow during the 1920s led to the term the 'Jakulovisation' of the theatres. In order to try and understand the scenic approaches and concerns that Yakulov brought to *Le Pas d'Acier*, the study has looked at descriptive material relating to his other works from the period.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, quoting Yakulov from: *Teatralno-dekoratsionnoe iskusstvo za 5 let*. Kazan, 1924. p.15.

⁷¹ *ibid*

⁷² Worrall, N. (1989) p.41 quoting M Lyubomudrov, *Problemy teorii i praktiki russkoi sovetskoi rezhissury 1917-25*, Leningrad, 1978, p.147.

⁷³ Bowlit, *op.cit.* p.317.

4.1 In Search of Jakulov's Approach to Set Design

The reader is referred back to the introduction for an explanation of sources for Jakulov's work, and to Appendix 1 for a short general biographical account of his life and work.

Jakulov was first and foremost a painter. Although he was an extremely popular theatre designer of his era, and was associated with Constructivism from its earliest stages, he never abandoned easel painting. According to descriptions, his paintings, which are barely known outside Russia, are highly theatrical and reveal an intense concern with colour and light. His biographer, Elena Kostina, describes his *"fiery, acutely individualistic subject matter and almost fantastical use of colour."*⁷⁴ She continues:

*"Yakoulov's innate gift of colour was enhanced by a rare gift of spatial vision. In his sketches and paintings he transformed the streets and squares of cities into an arena of mass action; a whole kaleidoscope of faces flashes in the cafes and at the races. Here there were as many human types and characters as one finds on the theatrical stage."*⁷⁵

It is generally agreed that Jakulov was an eclectic whose work resists easy classification⁷⁶. His Armenian origins and interest in Japanese and Persian art, combined with the influence of Cubo-Futurism, Orphism and Constructivism, and he did not give his artistic allegiance entirely to any one movement. Kostina stresses his concern with the continuity of Russian art and that he did not reject the past in his search for new forms. He saw art in terms of *"collectivism in creation"*⁷⁷ acknowledging mutual influences, and attacking 'imitativeness' which always claimed rights of authorship and refused to acknowledge ancestry. He situated himself with such artists as Sapunov, Krymov, Kuznetsov, Larionov and Sarian but strove to develop his own creative technique.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Kostina, E. (1979) p.5

⁷⁵ *ibid* p.11, quoting Jakulov from *Zhizn iskusstva*, P-M, 1924, no.3 p.7

⁷⁶ See for example, Bowl, J. (1979) p.316

⁷⁷ Kostina, E (1979) p.6

⁷⁸ *ibid* quoting Jakulov, G. 'Iz dnevnika khudozhnika' *Zrelishcha*, M. 1923, no.69, p.6

Jakulov did not begin designing for the theatre until after the revolution. However, Kostina has pointed out how his paintings prior to this constantly turned to themes associated with the theatre, to masquerade, fairground side shows, and featuring characters of the commedia dell'arte.⁷⁹ Kostina also notes how he used every possible means to acquire spatial depth.

*"He used spiral, concentric and frieze constructions, achieving with them a complex light and colour development of form."*⁸⁰

Jakulov's first major work in three dimensional space brings him to the forefront of an emerging Constructivism with his designs for the Café Pittoresque⁸¹, in Moscow in 1917. The café was a meeting place for the intellectual avant-garde. Jakulov produced a design in red, yellow and orange planes, and commissioned several other artists, including Tatlin and Rodchenko, to contribute mobile constructions and accessories.⁸² It was described by Ehrenburg as like *"a beautiful toy in the hands of grown-up people."*⁸³ Nikolai Lakov writes:

*"The interior space of the Café Pittoresque struck young artists by its dynamism. There were all sorts of fantastic configurations made out of cardboard, plywood and fabric; lyres, wedges, circles, funnels, spiral constructions. Sometimes light bulbs were inside these solids. All this was interfused with light, everything revolved, vibrated – it seemed that the whole decoration was moving. All these things were hanging from the ceilings, from the corners and from the walls."*⁸⁴

This no doubt relates to the tradition of 'mobile décor' that began with cubo-futurism in the 1910s and is seen in so many different works through the 1920s⁸⁵.

Aladzhalov notes that the decorative form Jakulov discovered in devising the Café Pittoresque informed his stage design for his first theatre set, Tairov's production

⁷⁹ Kostina, E. (1979) p.11

⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁸¹ Jakulov had overall responsibility for the designs of the Café's interior, but he commissioned other artists of the avant-garde to design some of the mobile constructions featured. According to Kostina (1979) p.14, Jakulov made a chandelier out of sheet metal which rotated and reflected coloured light from the side. This was reputedly the first use of mobile design features.

⁸² Bowlt, (1979) p.38

⁸³ Ehrenburg, I. 'A vse-taki ona vertitsya', Berlin, 1922, p.26.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Bowlt, J. (1984) p. 125. Lakov was one of the collaborators on the project.

⁸⁵ For example, in Balla's *Fireworks* (1917), in Picasso's *Parade* (1917) and his *Mercure* (1924), in the theatrical designs of Leger, in the work of Oskar Schlemmer and the performance experiments of Sonia Delaunay.

of Claudel's L'Echange (1918). Jakulov featured a three dimensional, skeletal scenic installation that has been described as the theatre's "*first interpretations of Constructivism.*"⁸⁶ The critic Abram Efros wrote how only the outline of structures was retained, but Kostina notes, "*it was an outline which had lost neither its descriptive shape nor its clearly expressed decorativeness.*"⁸⁷ Jakulov's approach was non-abstract; there was conventional representation of subject, and the designs were also expressive of theme and emotion. Aladzhhalov notes restraint in the use of colour. The set was made of plywood and tin-plated sheet metal and reacted sensitively to light, and "*paint was replaced by light effects*".⁸⁸ The importance of designing with light appears to have been central to Jakulov's approach from his earliest stage designs.

Jakulov's complex use of light and colour on stage emerged more fully in the work Kostina sees as the production that revealed the true Jakulov, Tairov's production of Princess Brambilla (1920)⁸⁹. Based on the stories of E.T.A Hoffman, the work appears to have resembled a harlequinade. The 'baroque' dynamism of the set saturated with colour and ornamentation can be seen in **fig.3.8**. It is clear from descriptions however, that this set was not purely a painted décor. Aladzhhalov writes:

*"Jakulov built his design on spiral rhythms, with the dynamism of a vortex, reminiscent of a typhoon. Everything was designed to this rhythm: the architectural shapes, the painting, the costumes, and the light."*⁹⁰

He notes also that "*all the component parts merged together in a single surge of energy.*"⁹¹

⁸⁶ Efros, A. 'The Artists of the Kamerny Theatre', (1934), p.27, quoted in Kostina (1979) p.15

⁸⁷ Kostina, (1979) p.15

⁸⁸ Aladzhhalov, (1971) p.2

⁸⁹ Interestingly the Soviet choreographer, Kasian Goleizovsky referred to Princess Brambilla as a "*genuine, beautiful ballet*". See Goleizovsky, K 'The Old and the New' (1922) translated and reproduced in full by Banes, S. (1983) p.73

⁹⁰ Aladzhhalov, S. (1971) p.67

⁹¹ *ibid* p.68

FIGURE 3.8



Jakulov's set design for Princess Brambilla (1920).
Source Van Norman Baer (1991) p.67



Jakulov's set design for Princess Brambilla (1920).
Source Van Norman Baer (1991) p.66

It is clear that by 1920 Jakulov had developed theatrical techniques that were peculiarly effective in terms of creating a sense of dynamism even without moving set parts. Aladzahalov notes that following Princess Brambilla:

*"Jakulov became a very popular artist. The strength of the impact of his set designs became the most powerful, most impressive force in theatrical productions."*⁹²

Apparently his designs were described by Ehrenburg as *"dazzlingly fabulous,"*⁹³ and Kostina also notes their dynamism, along with the asymmetrical décor. She writes that the set was constantly changing colour *"as if it were alive"*: She continues:

*"A particular luminescence was achieved by having the light pass through filters of various colours then fall on the three-dimensional parts of the set, which had been painted with a thin layer of silver and gold foil. This conferred on the whole scene a fantastical luminescence which seemed to come from within the dynamically constructed form."*⁹⁴

Although in a very different style, Jakulov may have used similar technical effects in Le Pas d'Acier. Descriptions reveal how the set appeared to come to life at the end of the ballet, and it is clear that this was achieved largely by lighting effects, as well as with moving set parts. This sense of animated décor, appears to date back to Jakulov's earliest theatre sets even though these were static in themselves.

In looking at reproductions of Jakulov's set for Princess Brambilla, it is easy to find parallels with the work of one of Tairov's other leading designers, Alexandra Exter. Exter's sets were full of visual dynamism and rhythm, and her use of colour was also very influential. Bablet writes of her décor for Phedre:

*"This dynamic décor, as a parallel to the dramatic action, reflected the emotional and aesthetic values of the play and made the spectator sensitive to its special attributes."*⁹⁵

⁹² *ibid*

⁹³ *ibid* quoting Ehrenburg, I. (1961) p.590

⁹⁴ Kostina, E. (1979) p.16

⁹⁵ Bablet, D. (1977) p.93

This is central to the aesthetics of Tairov's anti-naturalist theatre, in which the influence of Adolphe Appia and Edward Gordon Craig can be found. In Famira Kifared of 1916 for example, Exter used raised platforms and different levels that gave a rhythmic organisation to the stage space bringing together influences from the stage designs of Appia with the influence of cubism.⁹⁶ Bablet has described Princess Brambilla as "*a fairyland under cubist influences*",⁹⁷ and as an "*expressive construction in which the representational vision was retained although somewhat distorted.*"⁹⁸

Jakulov's next designs were to abandon the decorative and evocative style of Princess Brambilla in favour of a much more Constructivist aesthetic. Girofle-Girofla was another production for Tairov in 1922, (discussed later in this chapter) but it is clear that Jakulov had also been involved with Meyerhold. Aladzhalov writes:

*"At the beginning of the 1920s the two greatest stage artists, Jakulov and Meyerhold, were drawn together by the fundamental positions which they held on questions of the construction of Soviet theatre...they both defined the meaning and role of the artist in the contemporary theatre in the same way, they both regarded the spectator as an active element in the performance, and they were both striving to provide the actor with the most suitable and comfortable stage for the play."*⁹⁹

Jakulov designed three productions for Meyerhold, Hamlet (1920-1), Mystery-Bouffe (1920 – unrealised), and Rienzi (unrealised).¹⁰⁰ All three productions appear to have been halted or cut short for different reasons¹⁰¹, and according to

⁹⁶ *ibid* p.92

⁹⁷ *ibid*

⁹⁸ *ibid* p.93

⁹⁹ Aladzhalov, (1971) p.68. The sense of the designers importance to contemporary stagings is reflected in the witty comment attributed to Jakulov: "*As long as there are sets by Jakulov there will be plays*" (quoted by Aladzhalov, p.73).

¹⁰⁰ Jakulov's designs for Rienzi were finally realised in a production at the Zimin Theatre in 1923.

¹⁰¹ Aladzhalov, S. (1971) p.73 Rienzi for example was stopped because of money problems and the closure of the theatre. Jakulov's designs however, were used for I.Prostorov's production at the Zimin Theatre. Mystery-Bouffe appears to have been stopped because of disagreements between Jakulov and Meyerhold. Jakulov, like Exter, designed several unrealised productions during the 1920s. The economic crisis and turbulence taking place in Russia at this time no doubt has much to do with this. Although, Aladzhalov's account is very vague in this respect and there is some implication that Jakulov's turbulent personality may have produced problems on at least some occasions. It is not clear for example, why his first ballet, Carmen in 1923, produced by Michael Mordkin, planned to tour to America was stopped. Aladzhalov notes that several announcements were made of productions featuring Jakulov's designs that did not emerge, and in general it appears that much of Jakulov's theatrical work has been lost. Jakulov himself noted (Teatr i zhivopis GKG

Aladzhalov the once close relationship between Jakulov and Meyerhold fell into mounting disagreements that resulted in them going their separate ways¹⁰².

Nevertheless, Aladzhalov's descriptions of Jakulov's designs for Meyerhold enable insights into Jakulov's developing techniques and theatrical approach. It is particularly notable, that for all three productions Jakulov worked via preliminary sketches followed by the production of a model reflecting his architectural approach, and most probably also his approach to solving the problems of staging.

Jakulov's set for Hamlet (1920-21) retained conventional representation to a certain extent. For example, a back drop was used showing a fragment of Elsinore.¹⁰³ However, the set was three dimensional, architectural and abstracted, allowing for multi-locations within the one setting. The set had platforms, walkways and stairs and according to Aladzhalov the stage architecture achieved "*a hidden kinetic energy*" due to the arrangement of the compositional lines, that strained into the distance.¹⁰⁴ Again, "*painting with light*"¹⁰⁵ was a central feature of Jakulov's approach. Aladzhalov writes: "*Jakulov used light-filters rather than paints to achieve the colouring of the design*".¹⁰⁶ The study has found these same basic ingredients (ie. a representational element; an abstracted, architectural approach with platforms and stairs; multi-locations within the one setting; an inherent kinetic energy, and the central importance of light in the realisation of the design) in Jakulov's designs for Le Pas d'Acier. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

It is clear from Jakulov's unpublished article of 1925, 'Theatre and Painting'¹⁰⁷ that he did not approach set design purely as a functional solution to staging problems, but as metaphor. Jakulov resisted the idea of a general Constructivist

Erevan, f.164 267, p.1-17, quoted by Aladzhalov, (1971) p. 75 that "*the quest for universal forms of set, however suitable they might be for tragedies, drama and comedy, was fatal for many productions.*" It is not clear why this was so.

¹⁰² See Aladzhalov, op.cit. p.71

¹⁰³ ibid p.70

¹⁰⁴ ibid

¹⁰⁵ Aladzhalov, op.cit. (p.71) refers to this as Jakulov's own term but does not give a source.

¹⁰⁶ ibid

¹⁰⁷ This article is of particular interest as it was written in Paris during 1925 when Jakulov designed Le Pas d'Acier. Aladzhalov, op.cit. p.204 records that it has 6 sections, which, in translation from the Russian are: 1) Introduction, 2) The Eccentric Theatre 3) The Concentric Theatre, 4) Opera, 5) The Theatre of the Heroic and Pathos, 6) Tragic Theatre. According to Aladzhalov, Jakulov did not have time to publish it as he had to leave Paris abruptly on hearing of his wife's arrest in the Soviet Union.

stage design, (see for example, fig. 3.9) showing a general setting for a revolutionary play). Jakulov saw Constructivism as always conditional, “*as the organisation of a given space in given conditions and for a given purpose.*”¹⁰⁸ In ‘Theatre and Painting’ Jakulov discusses his designs for Oedipus, and The Eternal Jew,¹⁰⁹ stating that although they are both tragedies they require different types of staging. He sees Oedipus as a monotragedy, concerned to reveal the individual rather than the masses and “*therefore the sets must match the development of the internal psychological process taking place within the hero.*”¹¹⁰ This is a potentially complex notion to unravel, for Jakulov does not say that the sets must mirror or reflect the inner state of the hero, he says ‘match’. Aladzhhalov notes that in The Eternal Jew, where there was more conventionality in terms of representation, “*the structure at the centre of the set embodied Mount Sinai, but did not imitate it.*”¹¹¹ The idea of sets kinetically matching the quality of the action was established with The Magnanimous Cuckold, and Jakulov could perhaps be implying something similar here. It would appear however, that Jakulov tended to combine the language and material approaches associated with Constructivism with a basically metaphorical approach. This emerges more clearly in his designs for Oedipus.

The set for Oedipus featured: “*monumental architectural forms, made from natural plywood which was coloured by light filters.*”¹¹² Jakulov appears to have employed however, a symbolic use of the stage space. Like Le Pas d’Acier, Jakulov set Oedipus on three levels. Jakulov described these levels as¹¹³:

“the first, in which King Oedipus is on the balcony of his palace, standing out high above the city, full of self-satisfaction; the second, when King Oedipus comes down to the level of ordinary mortals; and the third in which King Oedipus is reduced to the obscurity to which he has been brought by his inexorable fate. Here we see a gradual decline, from the highest to the very lowest level.”

¹⁰⁸ *ibid* p.75. Aladzhhalov is quoting M. Shaginyan, ‘Georges Yakoulov’ Ob armianskoi literature i iskusstve, (Erevan: AN Arm. SSR, 1961, pp.152-159)

¹⁰⁹ Oedipus was staged by A.Kramov at the Korsh Theatre, and The Eternal Jew was staged by V.Mchedelov at the Jewish Habima Theatre. Both are early 1920s productions, but the study has not found exact dates.

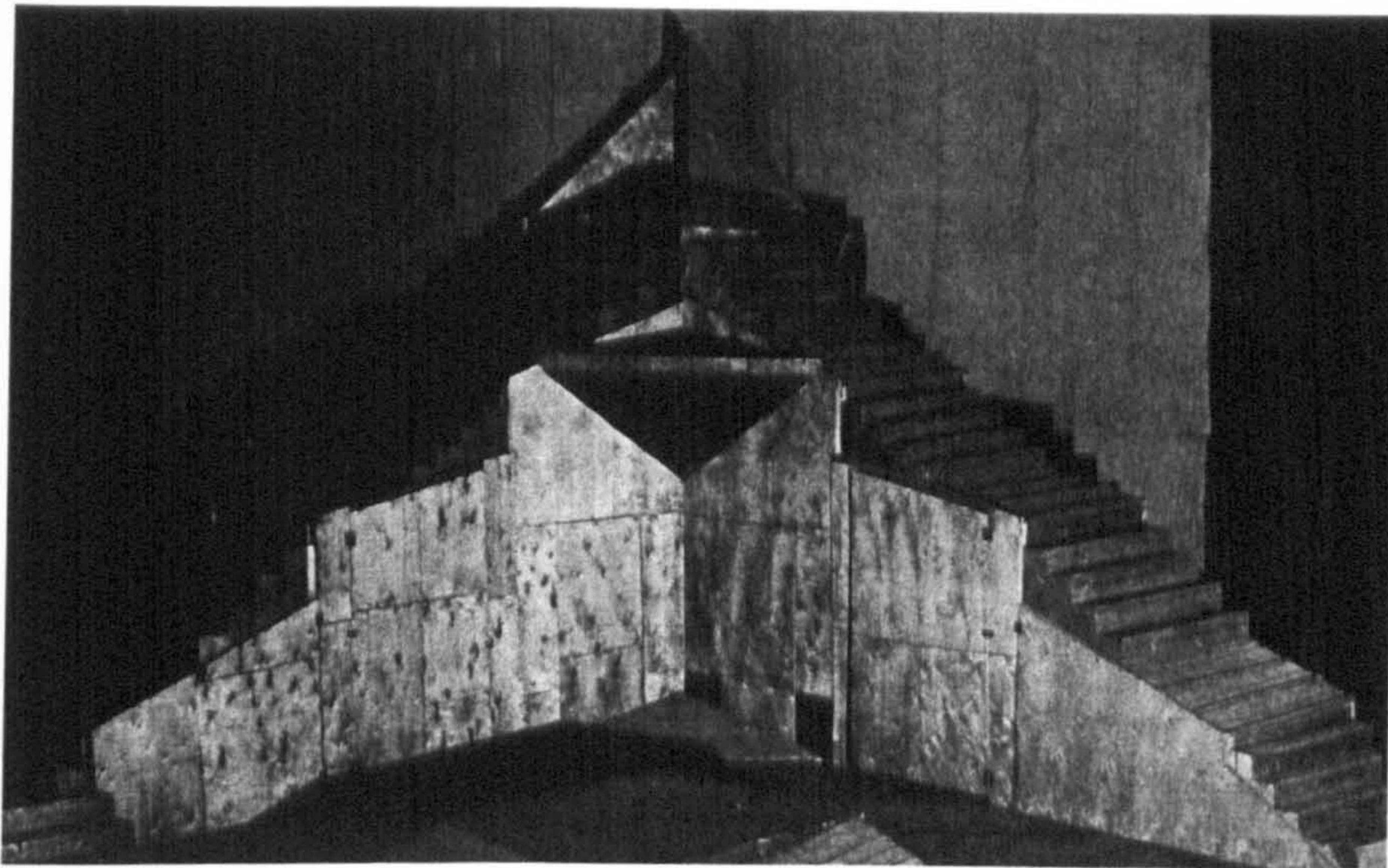
¹¹⁰ Aladzhhalov *op.cit.* p.77 quoting Jakulov, Teatr i zhivopis, GKG Erevan, f.164 267, p.1-17.

¹¹¹ *ibid.* p.78

¹¹² *ibid* p.77

¹¹³ *ibid*

FIGURE 3.9



A stage design for any revolutionary play. (Date and designer not given.)
Source: Fulop-Miller and Gregor, (1930), fig.330

In the Eternal Jew the condition was reversed, as he rises up from the bottom levels of existence in search of redemption. As noted in the previous chapter, Larionov and Goncharova's account of Le Pas d'Acier suggests a similarly symbolic use of the stage space.

However, in Girofle-Girofla (1922) a burlesque farce, Jakulov moved, further towards the functional sets of theatrical Constructivism. (See fig. 3.10) The décor becomes clearly organised around the requirements of the actor. Aladzhlov writes that this production demonstrated the principle of the 'self-sufficient actor' and that Jakulov:

*"...combined the form he had discovered in 'L'Echange' with the colourful carvinal atmosphere of 'Brambilla'."*¹¹⁴

Nick Worrall's research identifies folding ladders, screens, revolving mirrors, trap doors and acting accessories as part of the set of Girofle Girofla, which he sees as reminiscent of Meyerhold's production of Tarelkin's Death¹¹⁵. Girofle Girofla was amongst the most popular works of Soviet theatre in appealing to the 'common man'¹¹⁶. Efros wrote that with this production Jakulov found a form that was more influential than his earlier approaches, that the Stenberg brothers continued his technique, and that it was a great influence on other young designs in a wide range of theatres.¹¹⁷

Aladzhlov notes that the essence of Girofle-Girofla lay in the transformation of the set and refers to the design as structures that were "*highly coloured fabrications of a theatrical nature.*"¹¹⁸ He notes that its form was akin to the structures used in Jakulov's earlier designs for L'Echange, but that they had taken on another form and meaning – that of forms in movement. He writes:

¹¹⁴ *ibid* p.79

¹¹⁵ Worrall, N. (1989)

¹¹⁶ According to John Bowl, (1984) p. 126 Anatoli Lunacharsky, Minister of Enlightenment claimed that Jakulov gave the common man the chance to take up his right to relax after the hard days of the Revolution.

¹¹⁷ Aladzhlov (1971) p.79

¹¹⁸ *ibid*

FIGURE 3.10



Jakulov's set for *Girofle-Girofla* (1922).
(Presumably a model reconstruction?).

*"But they changed not externally, not for their own sake, as they had done at one time in 'Salome', but, so to speak, to serve a purpose. They worked with and for the actor. Before our very eyes they provided what the progress of the action required."*¹¹⁹

Bablet refers to Girofle-Girofla as an example of a less ascetic and more colourful Constructivism than was the approach of Tairov's Kamerny Theatre.

*"Jakulov's scenery blended the atmospheres of the cabaret and circus to achieve rapid and continual shifting scenes that contributed to the light, spirited movement of the action. The scenic structure provided the actor at every moment with the accessories and 'acting instruments' he needed. Some kind of screen opening here and there through a system of trap doors, a few staircases, mirrors and ladders that appeared and disappeared – nothing more was required for Tairov's acrobat-actors to perform..."*¹²⁰

The set was clearly an apparatus for performance with platforms that could be rolled out, ladders that could be lowered, hatches, and constructed passageways. There were items placed purely for the actor to utilise, such as a point of support for a tightrope walk.¹²¹ Aladzhalov concludes:

*"This was real theatrical constructivism, multicoloured, alive and generous – unlike that graveyard of bare, grey benches which had come to be known as 'pure constructivism' which negated Jakulov's technique. Girofle Girofla became a 'model production'."*¹²²

Bablet sees the Kamerny productions as establishing a new form of Constructivism *"that employed symbolic elements and at the same time maintained a certain aestheticism."*¹²³ These productions by Tairov were mocked by Mayakovsky as *"sweet Futurism for ladies"*¹²⁴, but they established, argues Bablet, that *"Constructivism could be applied for decorative purposes."*¹²⁵ On the surface, this is a contradiction in terms, but it points to the complexity of interactions operative in the Soviet theatre of the period and the need to see productions on their own terms and in relation to a distinctly theatrical context.

¹¹⁹ *ibid* p.80

¹²⁰ Bablet, D. (1977) p.110

¹²¹ See Aladzhalov (1971) p.81

¹²² Aladzhalov (1971) p.81 quoting A.Efros (1934), Khudozhniki Kamernogo teatra p.36

¹²³ Bablet, D. (1977) p.111

¹²⁴ quoted in Bablet, D. (1977) p.111

¹²⁵ Bablet, D (1977) p.111

Jakulov's affinity with the carnivalesque appears to have reached a peak in Girofle-Girofla. It was a marked feature also of the less successful Signor Formica (1922). It provided perhaps a vibrant outlet for Jakulov's abilities with light and 'magical' stage effects, and his love of highly theatrical stagings. Similar techniques however, appear to have been a part of his approach, even when not working in the burlesque style.

In 1923 Jakulov's designs for Wagner's Rienzi were finally realised at the Zimin Theatre. It is described as a monumental, grand and magical¹²⁶ set by Aladzhlov, and reproductions (see fig. 3.11) show an architectural construction that appears to ascend in tiers up the height of the stage space and is similar to the conception shown in one of Jakulov's drawings for Le Pas d'Acier (see Drawing E).

Aladzhlov describes the model as four tiers high and composed of platforms, walkways, stairs, arches and other elements which fitted together precisely¹²⁷. He writes that it was made from plain plywood which had been polished with sandpaper. It received colour purely through light filters from a special piece of lighting apparatus. Aladzhlov writes:

*"Jakulov loved to use various textures, and he introduced them in their natural form, as a constituent part of his design. For example, he made frequent use of 'real' materials, such as wicker, white tin-plate or unpainted plywood, showing up their texture using coloured rake lighting....He showed that 'an architectural set allows itself to be inlaid with various materials which respond in different ways to the light.'"*¹²⁸

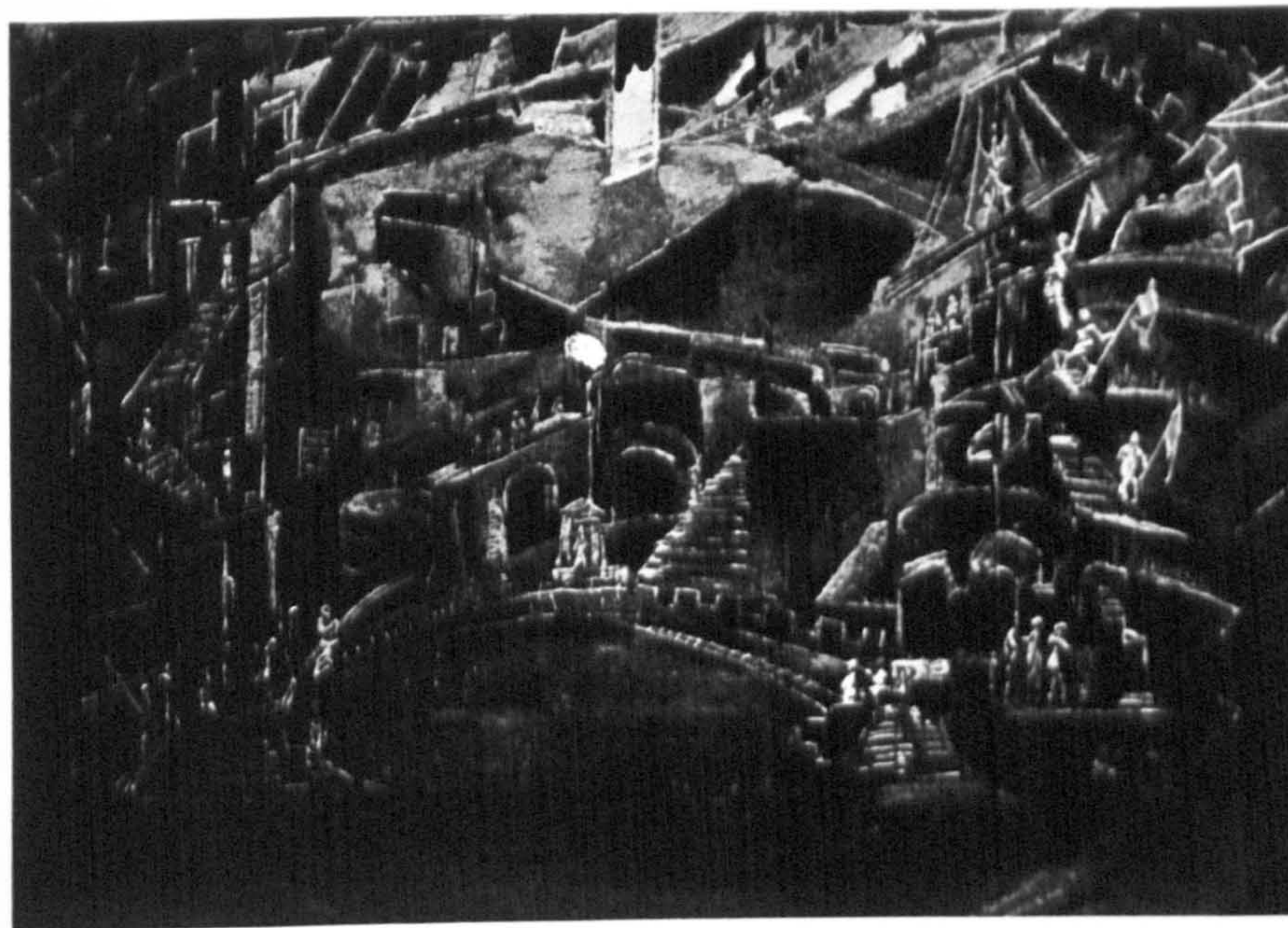
It is clear that Jakulov's sets form a complex theatrical interaction with the influences of Constructivism. However, Jakulov's work on Le Pas d'Acier was more than simply the design. As discussed in Chapter 1, Jakulov was also the driving force behind the scenario and his designs reveal how the concept of the action was integral to the designs themselves.

¹²⁶ Aladzhlov (1971) p.82-83

¹²⁷ *ibid* Aladzhlov notes that sent for an exhibition to Paris, it could not be shown because it was so complex it could not be assembled without Jakulov.

¹²⁸ *ibid* p.66 quoting Jakulov, Teatr i zhivopis (op.cit)

FIGURE 3.11



Jakulov's design for Rienzi. Source: Fulop-Miller and Gregor, (1930), fig.295

Jakulov wrote:

*"Artists now want to assume responsibility for constructing the whole theatrical concept. ... The main objectives of art are to go out and reform life...Now in the theatre the artist will use a combination of colour and architecture and the structure of the human form."*¹²⁹

To fully appreciate Jakulov's designs, we must also look for the qualities of the action, or choreographic approach that they invite and allow. His designs invade, structure and organise the performance space to an extraordinary extent. To find the context for Jakulov's conception of the interaction of set and movement, and the ideas Massine may have drawn on in responding to the challenge of choreographing for such a set, it is necessary to look to the Soviet theatre's approach to movement.

5. Finding the Ballet's Conception in terms of Constructivist Approaches to Movement and Dance.

Elizabeth Souritz has noted that during the 1920s many Soviet choreographers worked with Constructivist artists¹³⁰. They came not from the academic theatre, but from the proliferation of dance studios that followed the revolution. For example, Kasian Goleizovsky's Chamber Ballet had from 1921-5 experimented with 'eccentric dance' using Constructivist sets¹³¹, such as his work *Faun* (1922) which was performed on platforms and stairs painted neutral white to emphasise the anti-decorative aesthetic.¹³² In 1923 Balanchine brought the influence of Goleizovsky to the West and to Diaghilev. In his manifestos the relationship between Goleizovsky's search for new form and Constructivist décor is clear. He writes:

"The stage on which a ballet performer arranges his movement is the keyboard of his art.....every unexpected turn, bend, rise, step,should serve as an object for

¹²⁹ *ibid*

¹³⁰ Souritz, E. (1980) p.112-137

¹³¹ Souritz notes for example, some unknown designs held at the Bakhrushin Theatre Museum consisting of free standing constructions made of laths, string, trapezes, rope ladders and objects that resemble the wheels and levers of a gigantic machine. These date from 1922 and were for Goleizovsky's 'Sarcasms' set to Prokofiev. See Souritz, E. (1980) p.114

¹³² *ibid*

reflection, as a chance to amplify (intensify) his movement, as a possibility for some kind of new achievement. The ballet dancers, like the ballet master himself, should rejoice at every unexpected obstacle on his keyboard, because such an obstacle is, in truth, not an obstacle but the possibility for some kind of new achievements."¹³³

This is notably different from Grigoriev's perspective, (discussed in the last chapter), in complaining of the cluttered set for Le Pas d'Acier, which left little room to move.¹³⁴ This is the context in which Jakulov's set was designed; the context that produced the experiments of Meyerhold and Goleizovsky. The idea of amplification and the set as interactive with the performer relates very closely to the ideas of Meyerhold. Goleizovsky worked with Meyerhold, choreographing for example, dances in D.E. (Give Us Europe!) but his best known work of the period was a ballet, Joseph the Beautiful (1925) which was choreographed on a stage filled with stairs and platforms.¹³⁵ A surviving photograph, (see fig. 3.12) shows the dancers holding hands strung out in a mass formation over and around the set showing the connectedness of movement and set design; the construction literally supports and enables the image of the dancers in space.

Just as Constructivist stagings and physical ideals were influencing the development of choreography, it is clear that movement and dynamics were central concerns and organising principles of the Soviet dramatic theatre during the 1920s. The written word became subservient to the visual and dynamic principals of the action and design in so many productions¹³⁶. For example, Huntley Carter gives a very interesting account of how speech and gesture were used by Meyerhold's production of the Earth in Turmoil:

*"Semaphoric speechflashes out phrases like poster phrases, giving them a finished rhythmic appearance of their own. The method of delivering the text is determined by the agitational effect which the actor must think of first of all. Gesture rests on a similar principle."*¹³⁷

¹³³ Goleizovsky, K 'The Old and the New' (1922) translated and reproduced in full by Banes, S. (1983) p.71

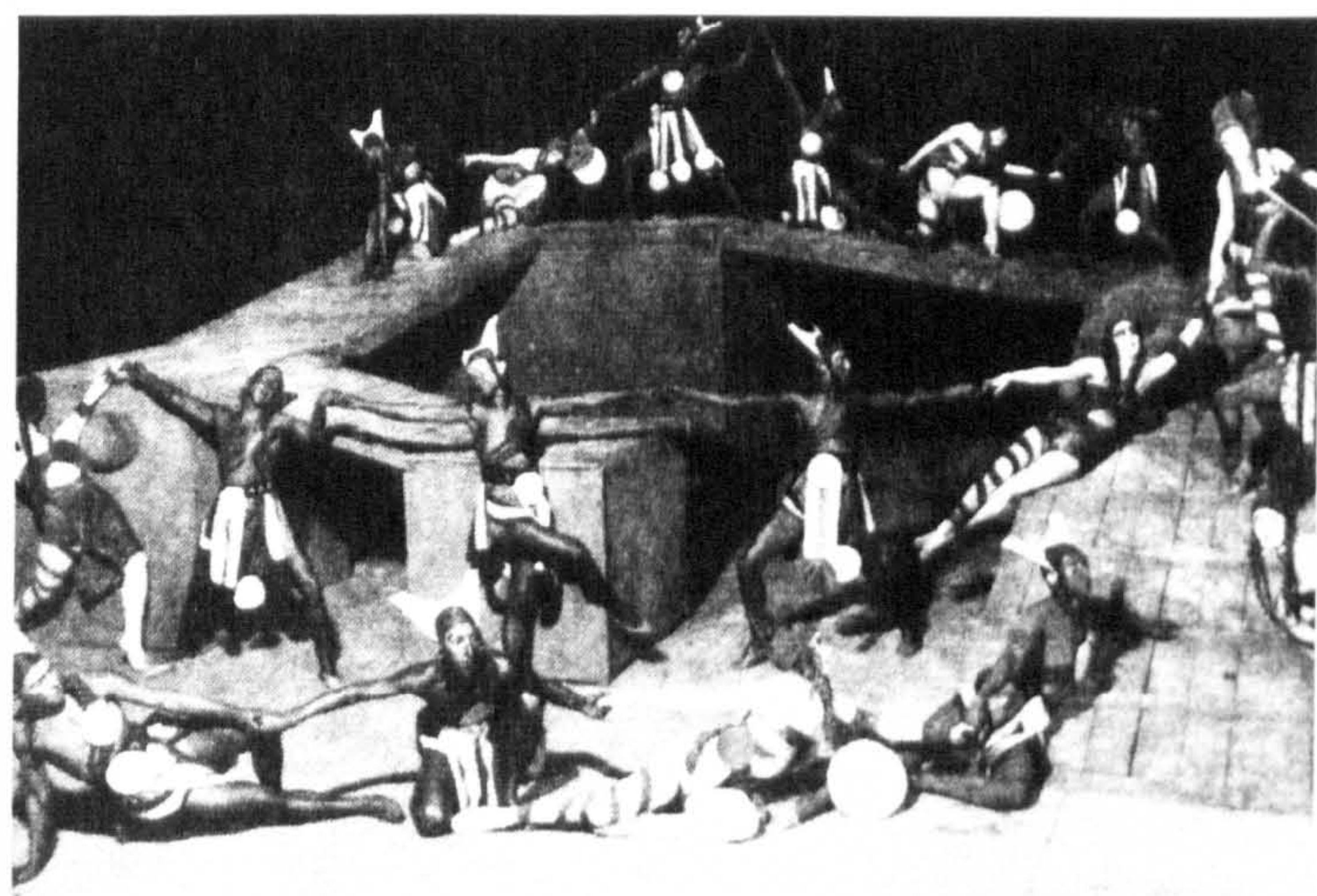
¹³⁴ Grigoriev, S. (1953) p.237.

¹³⁵ Banes (1983) p.66

¹³⁶ For example, when Meyerhold staged The Earth in Turmoil (1923) he asked Popova to break the play down into dynamic episodes in a sequence; the idea was of the text as convenient vehicle for the production's own agendas, to be treated arbitrarily. See Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.256.

¹³⁷ Carter (1924) p.78

FIGURE 3.12



The set for Goleizovsky's ballet Joseph the Beautiful, 1925.
Source: Van Norman Baer, (1991) p.131

This approach may owe something to Futurist experiments prior to the 1920s¹³⁸ as well as the sense of theatre needing to reach and enthuse the illiterate masses. It is clear however, that the more experimental wing of the Soviet theatre presented movement in some highly stylised ways. The renewed stress on the physicality of the actor, combined with Constructivist stagings, invited a choreographic approach to performance. In addition the emphasis on the machine provided an obvious source of inspiration for movement. It is clear from Jakulov's annotations on his sketches that he had a particular conception of the movement for Le Pas d'Acier in mind. In drawings D (1) and D(2) he links separate dances with parts of the set, such as 'dance with pedals'. Similarly in drawings A(1) and A(2) he depicts the 'dance of the wheels and levers' in connection with the entry of the train. In drawing C he notes that:

"The movements of the dancer are accompanied by the movements of parts of the set, to give an impression not of abstract ballet movements but of useful work."

The 1925 scenario indicates that other dances were envisaged, perhaps as 'character' dances; for example the 'dance of the orator' is listed as is 'the dance of the sailor with the worker girl'. The scenario also refers specifically to a 'bartering dance'. Movement is briefly described even when not in connection with a set part. The Sailors enter for example, "at a running war like pace"; Sweet and Cigarette Sellers "gallop and spin"; the Orator "turns like a propeller". The nature of the first interaction between the Sailor and the Worker Girl is specified as "dancing together but without coming into contact with each other". The interval scene where the scene is rearranged into a factory is specified as "with plastic movements," and so on. The scenario description of movement in the factory scene stresses only work actions on machines and balletic action. The first scene with the hammers is described as "exclusively balletic, without any noise" Later it is noted that the first blow on the pedal that sets the factory in motion is "a ballet leap".

¹³⁸ Malevich's Victory Over the Sun (1913) experimented with speech. Just as the body was broken up into geometrical planes by the costumes, speech was organised by the principle of 'zaum', or 'beyond the mind' in an attempt to directly communicate the speakers internal state and this would often break down into abstract or emotive sound. See Benedetti, R. (1984) p.18. Benedetti's reconstruction shows how the costumes also affected the broken up, 'jerky' movement, and his

From review descriptions and later accounts of the ballet discussed in chapters 1 and 2, Massine appears to have approached the movement in three distinct ways. Firstly, there is a highly stylised movement present in Act 1, described by the critics as 'jerky' and 'epileptic'¹³⁹. Secondly, there was a use of a 'character' dance based on slavic folk dance, in evidence in the photographs and in Massine's autobiographical account. Thirdly, there is the 'machine dance' of the finale, where dancers imitated the movements of machine parts.

The question for the study has largely been how Massine's treatment of the movement was likely to have supported or conflicted with the ballet's overall conception? The two main approaches to movement associated with Constructivism in the theatre are Meyerhold's Biomechanics and the Machine Dances of Nicolai Foregger¹⁴⁰. It is important to look briefly at these in order to situate the general context in which Massine's solution to integrating the dance with the set, and finding a suitably 'Constructivist' approach would have taken place.

5.1 Meyerhold's Biomechanics

Meyerhold established his studio of bio-mechanics in 1921 when he became Director of the newly established State Higher Theatre Workshop in Moscow. Edward Braun notes the first public performance as 1922 and cites Meyerhold's initial concern to "*advance biomechanics as the theatrical equivalent of industrial*

research indicates that as young artists, Stepanova, Popova and Exter were involved with the production.

¹³⁹ See for example, The Saturday Review, 16th July 1927, p.91-92, and the Daily News, July 5th 1927 p.7

¹⁴⁰ There were of course many less well known contributors to the context that produced these two leading figures. Nicoletta Misler's research, (1996) p.180-181, reveals: "*That Soviet rhythmic must serve the movement of the social rather than the individual body had been clear since at least 1919 when Alexandrova had oriented much of the program of her Institute towards the issue of collective movement, especially those employed in the labor process and their musical-rhythmic accompaniment to the rhythmitization of gestures. At the All-Russian Conference of Scholar-Workers in 1919, the Institute instructors had demonstrated a series of rhythmitized movements of labor (the blow of a hammer, the sweeping action of a mower) and the same year initiated a survey course to train rhythmists for the Red Army.*"

time-and-motion study".¹⁴¹ Meyerhold compared his system to the American experiments of F.W.Taylor, known as 'Taylorism'.¹⁴² Mikhail Kolesnikov writes:

*"The exact, analytic reproduction of every motion, the coordination of body movements and the spoken word, and attention to geometric, linear motions were biomechanical principles. In this way, biomechanics was directly connected to the constructivist aesthetic and the machines that it deified."*¹⁴³

Kolesnikov describes how Meyerhold's actors worked closely together so that the audience saw not single bodies in space but multiple-bodied characters¹⁴⁴.

*"It was felt that this new acting technique, which involved groups of actors, would eventually facilitate harmonic interactions of large groups offstage; thus these plays were to have been the first step in the creation of future mass theatre."*¹⁴⁵

According to Huntley Carter (1924), Meyerhold's bio-mechanics was the application of ideas associated with Construction to the actor.

*"It assumes that the actor is a rather wonderful engine composed of many engines. The new problem of the theatre is how to get this engine in full motion, with all its parts – muscles, sinews, tendons, representing flexible piston rods, cylinders, etc., working at their full capacity and moreover, conveying their proper meaning according to the message sent by the brain along the spinal cord and great system of nerves."*¹⁴⁶

This association with economy of means, work, and a scientific approach is expressed by Meyerhold's own writings on biomechanics. However, biomechanics

¹⁴¹ Braun, E. (1969), p.183

¹⁴² Frederick Winslow Taylor, (1856-1915) was an American industrial engineer, who originated scientific management in business. As a foreman of a steel plant he developed time-and-motion studies and developed detailed systems to gain maximum efficiency from factory workers and machines. Braun (1969) p183 concludes however that the link with Taylorism was superficial and exaggerated.

¹⁴³ Kolesnikov, M. 'The Russian Avant-Garde and the Theatre of the Artist', in Baer, N. Van (1992) p.90

¹⁴⁴ The idea of a multiple-body as opposed to several dancers arranged in space as single bodies, can sometimes be observed in the work of Balanchine. For example, his 'sunray' arrangement of the legs of three different dancers around Apollo, (Apollo, 1928) look like the arrested movement of a single leg rising through arabesque. A similar use of dancers in the same pose at different levels, giving the impression of a single movement arrested at different points in time and space, can be seen in Nijinska's ballet *Les Noces* (1924).

¹⁴⁵ Kolesnikov, M. 'The Russian Avant-Garde and the Theatre of the Artist', in Baer, N. Van (1992) p.90

¹⁴⁶ Carter (1924) p.70

was based on a physiological study of the human body and also served the ideals of the actor as a physically perfected, acrobatic performer. Braun has noted:

*"...The Magnaminous Cuckold, for all its modernist exterior, was a revival of the spirit, and in good measure, the letter, too, of the commedia dell'arte."*¹⁴⁷

Biomechanics was in opposition to the intellectual, emotional and psychological stress of the actors of the Moscow Art Theatre working in the tradition of Stanislavsky. The training of the body was meant to liberate the actor to have under his control a trained body-mind that can be fully expressive, like a keyboard on a piano.

*"Biomechanics has a social purpose. Its principles are being applied to the physical organisation of the workers, to whom the actor, especially in the circus, where precision, dexterity, steel nerves, courage daring, judgement, engineering exactitude, and long rigid training are necessary, becomes a demonstration of the ideal organised human body and its mechanism."*¹⁴⁸

Carter points to the complexities of situating these ideas and that they derived more from futurism and Marinettism, than they did from Marxism. Theoretically, there are clear parallels with the ideas of Taylorism and with Soviet ideals of physical culture¹⁴⁹. In practical terms however, the acrobatic physicality of the new actor appears to have related also to Meyerhold's study of the Commedia dell'arte enabling the element of the burlesque that was a common feature of his stagings.

However, K.Rudnitsky argues that the biomechanical exercises as we know them today from film fragments, do not reveal the most important element of Meyerhold's system, rhythm. He writes:

"Through biomechanics Meyerhold turned rhythm into a component of the performance which created form and also gave it content. The rhythmic organisation of a role entailed the impulsive-reflexive link between thought and

¹⁴⁷ Braun, E. (1969), p.185

¹⁴⁸ Carter (1924) p.70-71

¹⁴⁹ The interconnectedness of Soviet arts, politics and physical culture is in evidence in the title of one of the contemporary journals, *Zrelishche*, which called itself a weekly journal of (in translation from Russian): 'Theatre, Music Hall, Circus, Mass Action, Physical Culture and Cinema.'

movement, emotion and movement, speech and movement. In The Magnanimous Cuckold rhythm was everything."¹⁵⁰

Meyerhold stated in a lecture on biomechanics:

*"If we observe a skilled worker in action, we notice the following in his movements: 1) an absence of superfluous, unproductive movements; 2) rhythm; 3) the correct positioning of the body's centre of gravity; 4) stability. Movements based on these principles are distinguished by their dance-like quality; a skilled worker at work invariably reminds one of a dance; thus work borders on art."*¹⁵¹

Although Massine would not have seen Meyerhold's productions he shared many of the influences that went into their practical realisation. For example, the influence of the *commedia del'arte* is apparent in Massine's work¹⁵²; he would also have been aware of the eurythmics of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze that may have been another influence on Meyerhold's system. It is unlikely that Massine would have conceived of the choreography for Le Pas d'Acier in terms of biomechanics, but he may well have been influenced by his idea of its importance in the search for appropriate form. As is discussed later in this section, the reviews note an unusually acrobatic choreography, with movement many of the critics found strange and lacking in aesthetic value. A virility of gesture and emphasis on 'masculine', very physically taxing movement is also in evidence in review descriptions.

In terms of Massine's realisation of the finale however, there is a clear model in the Machine Dances of Nicolai Foregger . Jakulov was reputedly close to Foregger,¹⁵³ and Forregger's approach was extremely popular in Moscow in the early and middle 1920s and readily associated with Constructivism.

¹⁵⁰ Rudnitsky, K. (1988) p.94

¹⁵¹ From 'The Actor of the Future and Biomechanics, a report of Meyerhold's lecture in the Little Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire, 12 June 1922, in Ermitazh, Moscow, 1922, no.6, pp.10-11. Reproduced in Braun, E. (1969) p.198.

¹⁵² In for example, Le Femmes de Bonne Humeur, (1917). See Garcia-Marquez, (1996) p.84

¹⁵³ Chepalov, A. (1996) p364

5.2 Foregger's Machine Dances

A. Chepalov's research indicates that Foregger's dance resembled ballet but incorporated the aesthetics of mass physical culture. He writes:

*"Dynamic, symmetrical compositions, fashioned by Foregger from muscular, pliant bodies, answered (or were intended to answer) the demands of a proletarian culture."*¹⁵⁴

Foregger saw his 'Machine dances' as *"an experiment of Constructivism in form and movement"*¹⁵⁵ and Chepalov situates Foregger's work as Constructivist dance, describing it in the following terms:

*"At the junction between 'Eccentrism' (a mix of circus performance, slapstick, and Expressionist theater) and utilitarian 'Thingism', Constructivist dance or plastic movement possessed a strong social underpinning: precise movements and gestures calculated to perfection were meant to provide the audience with an image of a new world rejecting the bourgeois nations of Europe and America."*¹⁵⁶

However, it is in the descriptions of Foregger's Machine Dances and the review descriptions of Massine's 'Machine Dance' finale, that particularly clear similarities emerge. Foregger developed a program called 'Machine Dances' that resembled a music hall show and was very influential.

*"To an accompaniment which imitated the swelling noise of a factory, a similarity to a complex mechanism was created from human bodies. The combined action of the rhythmic movements created the impression of working machines, of pistons, gears, transmission, and soon even an entire blacksmith's shop appeared."*¹⁵⁷

Chepalov describes one Machine Dance in a way that bears close comparison to the the descriptions of Beaumont¹⁵⁸ and Dézarnaux¹⁵⁹ of Massine's choreography:

*"...dancers...take tiny steps around imaginary axes, skirting the row of 'revolving shafts' like a ribbon, and thus imitating the operation of a gear."*¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ *ibid* p.363

¹⁵⁵ Rudnitsky, K. (1988) p.100 quoting Collection *Ritm i kultura tantsa* Leningrad, 1926, p.45

¹⁵⁶ Chepalov, A. (1996) p.362

¹⁵⁷ Rudnitsky, K. (1988) p.98, taken from Elizaveta Uvarova, *Estradnyi teatr: miniatyury, obozreniya, myuzikkholly*, Moscow 1983, p.62

¹⁵⁸ Beaumont, C. (1940) p.278-280 (see Appendix 11, C)

¹⁵⁹ Dézarnaux, R. *La Liberte*, 9 Juin 1927.

Chepalov notes also:

*"During a performance, the audience would be invited to guess which industrial 'mechanisms' were operating"*¹⁶¹

As Foregger did not travel abroad¹⁶², Massine could not have seen his work directly, as he did not return to Russia after leaving in 1914. However, he would almost certainly have known of it. Souritz notes that Foregger's Machine dances were known in the USA and that critics wrote that they *"carried the stamp 'Made in the USA'."*¹⁶³ They were extensively described for example, in the New York Times¹⁶⁴ under the heading *"Dance Machine Delights Moscow. Ballet Imitates the machine by Acrobatic Movements. Man Steel-Rolls Man. Girl Appears as Piece of Iron."*¹⁶⁵ A section entitled 'The Train', where dancers on a platform give the impression of a thundering locomotive, is also described as is a machine dance featuring a transmission where a chain of female dancers moved like a conveyer belt around two men. In another a dancer formed a saw, swinging to and fro in a convex motion and in another the dancers represented hammers, using fists for small hammers and forming a giant hammer by lifting up a female dancer and lowering her onto an 'anvil'.

Massine was himself associated with a certain mechanical approach¹⁶⁶, and he would have been familiar with earlier futurist experiments with machine inspired dance. For example, Giacomo Balla's Macchina tipografica (Printing Press) of 1914, realised in a private performance given to Diaghilev, consisted of twelve

¹⁶⁰ Chepalov, A. (1996) p.363

¹⁶¹ *ibid*

¹⁶² *ibid* p.361.

¹⁶³ Souritz, E. (1980) p.121

¹⁶⁴ Both Rudnitzky and Souritz (op.cit) refer to this article but neither gives a date. Both note however, that it was reprinted in the Soviet journal Zrelishcha no.68, 1923.

¹⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that the reviews describe a moment in Le Pas d'Acier where a dancer portrays a piece of iron coming under the hammer in the factory forge.

¹⁶⁶ See Garcia-Marquez (1996). He cites Massine as primarily responsible for introducing the mechanical aesthetics of angularity to classical ballet and details Massine's spatial explorations, his architectural approach and his exploration of the expressive potential of the corps as mass. His *Rite of Spring*, has been described as a precursor of Modern dance technique *"as if Massine wished to show the expressiveness and the constructive possibilities of the contrast between weight and lightness."* Massine's works were frequently described as angular, impersonal and mechanical.

performers each representing a machine part. They simulated pistons and a piston driven wheel and Massine would almost certainly have seen this¹⁶⁷.

In addition to the 'machine dance' of the finale, a mechanical approach also appears to have informed Massine's approach to the choreography of Act 1 and there are some interesting parallels between descriptions of Foregger's movement and review descriptions of Massine's choreography for Le Pas d'Acier. Carter for example, describes Foregger's movement in 'Mystery of the Isle of the Canaries' (1922-3) in the following terms:

*"Perhaps the best description of the actors would be Futurist marionettes, They were very much like mechanical dolls...and a sort of cerebral action ...I mean the action you get after a movement has been broken up by the brain."*¹⁶⁸

This gives the impression of movement under a strobe effect. Massine's movement in Act 1 is often described in the reviews as 'jerky' and by one critic as 'epileptic' The Daily News writes:

*"The dances.....are epileptic to a degree...What do all these twitchings and jerkings, these twistings of the human body into ugly and impossible positions signify?"*¹⁶⁹

It is clear from the reviews that Massine made significant departures from the classical technique in this ballet. It also appears that, successfully or not, he attempted to present an approach that closely related to the contemporary Soviet theatre. For not only was there a clear use of the Machine Dance, and mechanically inspired movement, there was also an element of acrobatics that relate particularly clearly to the circusized theatre of the Soviet Union, discussed in this chapter. One critic writes:

"Massine's arrangement of the dancers is equally startling. He has borrowed ideas from the knockabout comedians of the music-halls in order to transform

One critic from 1916 wrote for example: "Mr Nijinsky paid more attention to the puppet's soul and less to his mechanism than Mr Massine".

¹⁶⁷ Garcia-Marquez (1996), p.46ff, places Massine with Diaghilev during 1914 for example, at Italian futurist evenings and it is highly likely that he saw Balla's *Macchina tipografica* at that time.

¹⁶⁸ Carter, H. (1924)

¹⁶⁹ The Daily News, July 5th 1927, p. 7. Reproduced in Appendix 7.

human beings into factory gadgets. Dancers grip each other by the ankles in pairs, and roll over and under each other. Towards the end the movements become wilder and wilder. Smiths in leather aprons swing huge steel hammers upon each other's chests, and then beat upon the scaffolding while the corps de ballet twirl and tremble like shuttlecocks in a human loom."¹⁷⁰

The Soviet choreographer Goleizovsky wrote in 1922:

*"The leftist ballet masters are accused of making combinations and poses to which the eye is unaccustomed. It is said these are not dances but circus tricks."*¹⁷¹

Goleizovsky saw all movement as appropriate materials for ballet and it is now established that his gymnastic approach was an influence on Balanchine, whose athletic 'circus trick's' can be seen in for example, the human pyramid formations in La Chatte (1927).

Judging from review descriptions, physicality and 'mechanality' appear to have been paramount in Massine's choreographic approach; descriptions of a 'masculine', virile aesthetic celebrating labour appear as do many references to a strangely mechanical 'jerky' style. A study of the review descriptions alongside contextual study of the period, suggests that Massine resourced his choreography with the clear intention of representing the ballet's themes and aesthetics in terms authentic to the contemporary Soviet stage. Although in the absence of any records of his actual choreography, and with little surviving of Soviet stagings, we cannot judge how successful he was, the evidence is that he was emulating Soviet models. There is a clear contextual basis both for Jakulov having conceived of the dancer's imitating machine parts, as Prokofiev states, and for Massine's realisation. The more difficult question is whether there is a thematic basis, or whether in fact Massine's realisation in a Western viewing context undermined the thematic concerns of the ballet.

¹⁷⁰ Empire News, July 10th 1927 p.3. Reproduced in Appendix 7.

¹⁷¹ Golcizovsky, K 'The Old and the New' (1922) translated and reproduced in full by Bancs, S. (1983)p.71

6. The Viewing Context

Many theatrical works from the 1920s relate, thematically and/or formally to the socio-cultural importance of the machine, industrialisation and the position of the working class. Le Pas d'Acier however, appears to have been unique, even amongst Soviet theatrical works, for it combined a 'Constructivist' décor with music and movement influenced by the machine aesthetic, *and* a socio-political theme relating to the construction of the Soviet Union and its transformation through an industrialised working class. The context that produced Le Pas d'Acier in terms of its creative influences and the terms of its spectatorship, belongs to both East and West, to a short period of renewed interaction that was already coming to an end by the time Le Pas d'Acier was performed. The difficulties in accomodating Diaghilev's 'Soviet' ballet in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s indicates some of the complexites involved. In 1925 in the Soviet Union RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) came into existence and began to attack the intelligensia. It identified Meyerhold and Tairov as theatrical formalists. Its power and influence was to grow rapidly over the next five years. In addition, Souritz notes that by the end of the decade:

*"The time had passed when art had been a weapon of those who attacked and overthrew the old, who, in their dreams, turned to a Utopian world of rational organisation. The search was now for concrete reality, for psychological interpretation. Simultaneously there arose the need for art to be accessible, to be intelligible to the hearts and minds of the masses."*¹⁷²

By 1925 the Soviet theatre was moving away from Constructivism into a greater 'realism'. Ehrenburg had also shifted ground: He writes:

"I had already said farewell to Constructivism: The triumph of industrial beauty means death to industrial art. To copy a machine is more vulgar than to copy a rose, for in the latter case one is at least robbing an anonymous author. 'Left' art, which created true master-pieces, has quickly disintegrated. It set out to persuade people that nothing in the world remained but grain elevators, geometrical figures and naked ideas. The battle-cry 'Art into life' has hardly died down before this art itself is going...into museums".

¹⁷² Souritz, E. (1980) p.129

Ehrenburg's memoirs indicate that he had begun to lose faith with Constructivism as early as 1923 when he was reluctant to take up Meyerhold's suggestion to stage his novel 'Trust D.E.' as a mixture of a circus and a propaganda pageant. He writes: "*I was beginning to lose my enthusiasm both for the circus and for Constructivism.*" Ehrenburg's analysis suggests that by 1925 although Paris itself was in the grip of admiration for Russian Constructivism, its moment as revolutionary envisioning, had passed. He writes:

"From morning till night I wandered about Paris...what struck me was the mechanization of life, the speed of movement, the advertisements in lights, the stream of cars... the rhythm of life and its pitch were changing.....The first houses in the new industrial style were being built. Here was Constructivism, not on Rodchekno's drawing-board but in reality.I thought of Tatlin's constructions, of the enthusiastic Vkhutemas crowd. It was the same, and yet different. We had been discovering America – of course an imaginary one. But in the meantime the real America had come to Europe, not with the romantic pronouncements of the LEFs but with dollars, with hard calculation, with vacuum cleaners and the mechanization of human emotions." ¹⁷³

Later in his text on 1925, he notes Mayakovsky's comment on returning from America, that it was a good place for machines but not for men. Issues relating to the mechanisation of human existence and the class struggle were preoccupations on both sides of the future 'iron curtain' but the ideological and intellectual context, as well as the conditions of real life, were radically different. The dominant Soviet perspective, most probably held by Ehrenburg and Mayakovsky, would not have seen industrialism per se as the oppressor, but its ownership under capitalism and the exploitation of the worker. The theme of Le Pas d'Acier spoke directly to politically sensitive debate concerning the effects of industrialisation on the individual. In the Soviet Union industrialism was seen as the potential liberator from the country's dire economic and social circumstances. The debate in the Western intellectual tradition however, has tended to be divided between the conservative sense of threat posed by industrialisation, mechanisation and technology to the individual and his/her soul, and the liberal position of seeing such developments as the means to Man's liberation. While Marx himself was ambivalent about the affects of industrialisation in terms of its potential to both

¹⁷³ Ehrenburg (1963) p.92

liberate and alienate the individual, the attitude in the Soviet Union of the period by artists such as Foregger is clear:

“the machine is no longer an enemy, but friend and co-worker. It is beautiful, we should love it... I feel that physical culture has become a component part of everyone's consciousness”. N. Foregger: Koe-chto po povodu mody, c.1923.¹⁷⁴

A preoccupation with the machine in the 1920s is evident outside of the Soviet Union in for example the plays of Ernst Toller and Karel Capek. The tendency with these playwrights however, is to see the machine as an oppressor within an immoral society. Toller's Machine Wreckers for example is concerned with the Luddite riots in England and Capek's R.U.R¹⁷⁵ presented machine like human beings.

Rudnitsky writes:

*“Technology, industrialisation and the machine instilled fear in the Expressionist dramatists, for they perceived mechanisation as the means of depriving mankind of individuality, of turning him into a spineless, spiritless adjunct of the machine, a robot obedient to his capitalist boss. Soviet directors, on the contrary, regarded technology with admiration and hope since only industrialisation could lead the country out of devastation.”*¹⁷⁶

These writers are, as Huntley Carter points out in the Western conservative tradition of Ruskin¹⁷⁷. Carter notes:

“...there is another side to the Machine. It is a moral side, by which the Machine, if properly understood, transfers its power and qualities to those that use it, even magnifies their importance and exalts them.”

One of the interesting questions about the concept of Le Pas d'Acier, is how it relates to this debate, and it can be asked of the music, the designs and the choreography, as well as in terms of the ballet as a whole. One of the questions arising is how far Massine's choreographic interpretation in a conservative Western viewing context that is very clear from the reviews, undermined the

¹⁷⁴ Chepalov, (1996), p.363.

¹⁷⁵ Rossum's Universal Robots.

¹⁷⁶ Rudnitsky, K. (1988) p.100

ballet's original thematic intentions. For the study, this question has revolved around the design and understanding the design in terms of the ballet's overall thematic concept.

The reviews reveal an ambiguity of message that is interesting in itself. However, if this partially accounts for the ballet's difficulties in terms of critical response, it leaves the ballet's success and its enthusiastic ovations needing to be explained.

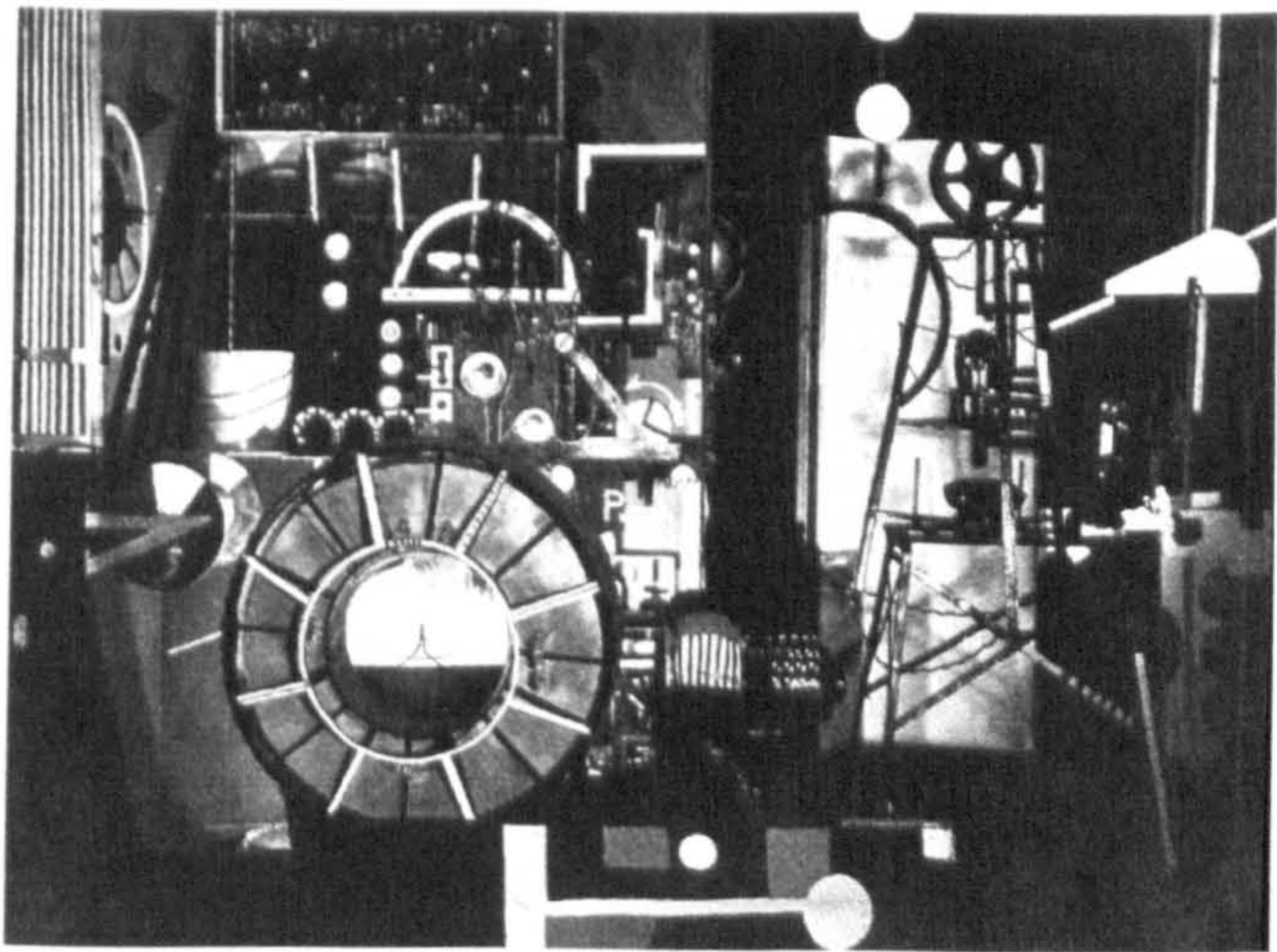
The visual success of the ballet largely appears to have resulted from the combination of Massine's 'machine dance' and Jakulov's pyrotechnical finale. The visually exciting potential of machine settings and/or the influence of a mechanical aesthetic, had been featured in several fashionable films in the West during the 1920s. For example, the French film L'Inhumaine with designs by Leger in 1924 (see fig.3.13 (a)) and Leger's film Ballet Mechanique, also 1924. Perhaps of particular significance was Fritz Lang's film Metropolis released in 1926. Based on a play by Toller, Metropolis shows Man enslaved by the machine in the service of industrial capitalism. Richard Buckle notes that the film may have owed something to Le Pas d'Acier¹⁷⁸ but in fact Metropolis was released earlier. André Levinson reviewed the film in Paris in April 1927¹⁷⁹ while Le Pas d'Acier was beginning in rehearsal in Monte Carlo. Massine may perhaps have seen it. The study has found it helpful to look at the images of machinery appearing in the film; it gives a powerful sense of the era's visual idea of a factory. It is interesting to note in particular the metallic surfaces, the use of arbitrary letters, the images of wheels, pistons and levers, and flashing signal lights. (See fig. 3.13(b)). Similar images recur later in Chaplin's film Modern Times (1936).

¹⁷⁷ John Ruskin, influential Victorian English art critic and reformer, supporter of the Pre-Raphaelites. He was very opposed to the effects of the industrial revolution, stressing art as spiritual, aesthetic and moral.

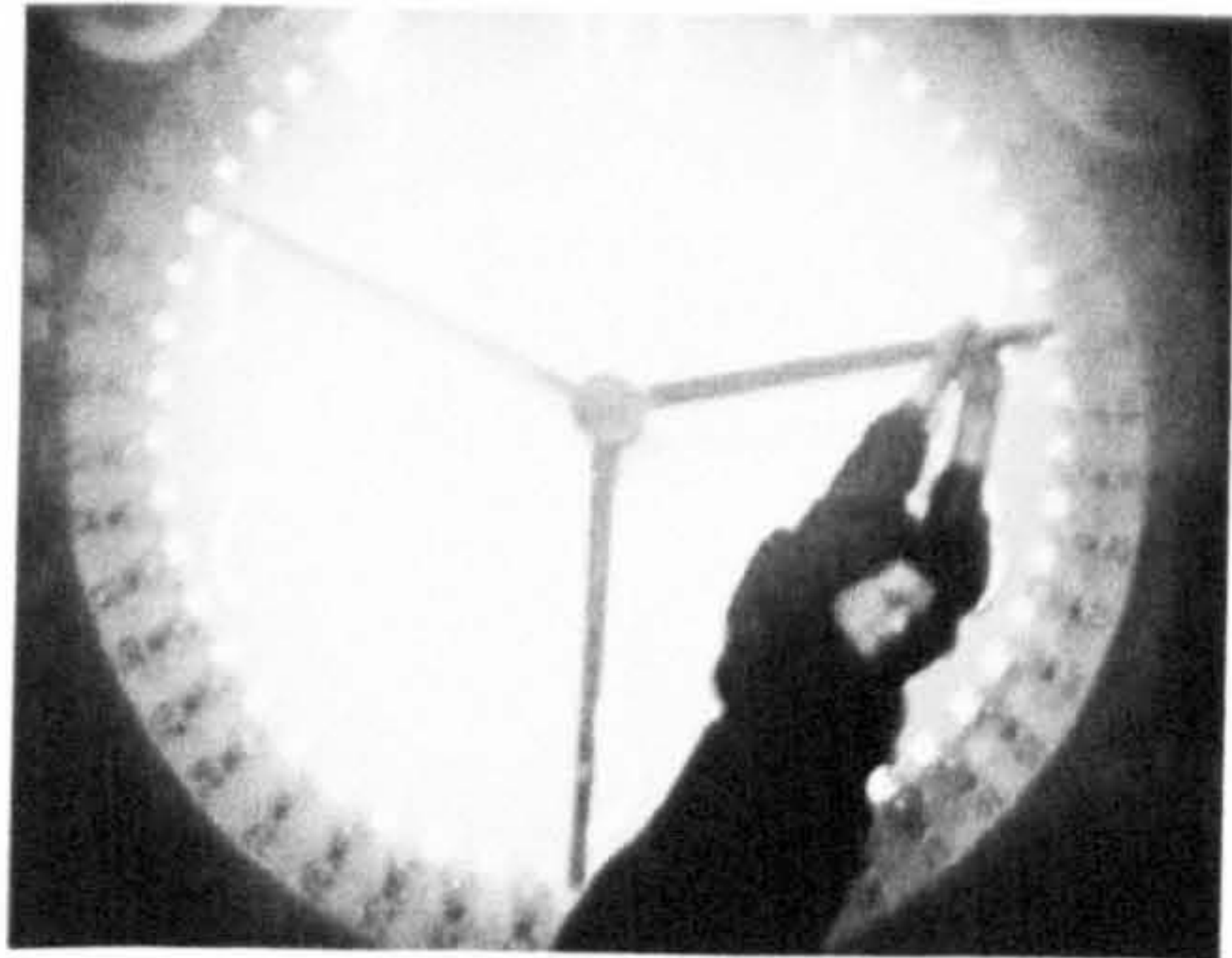
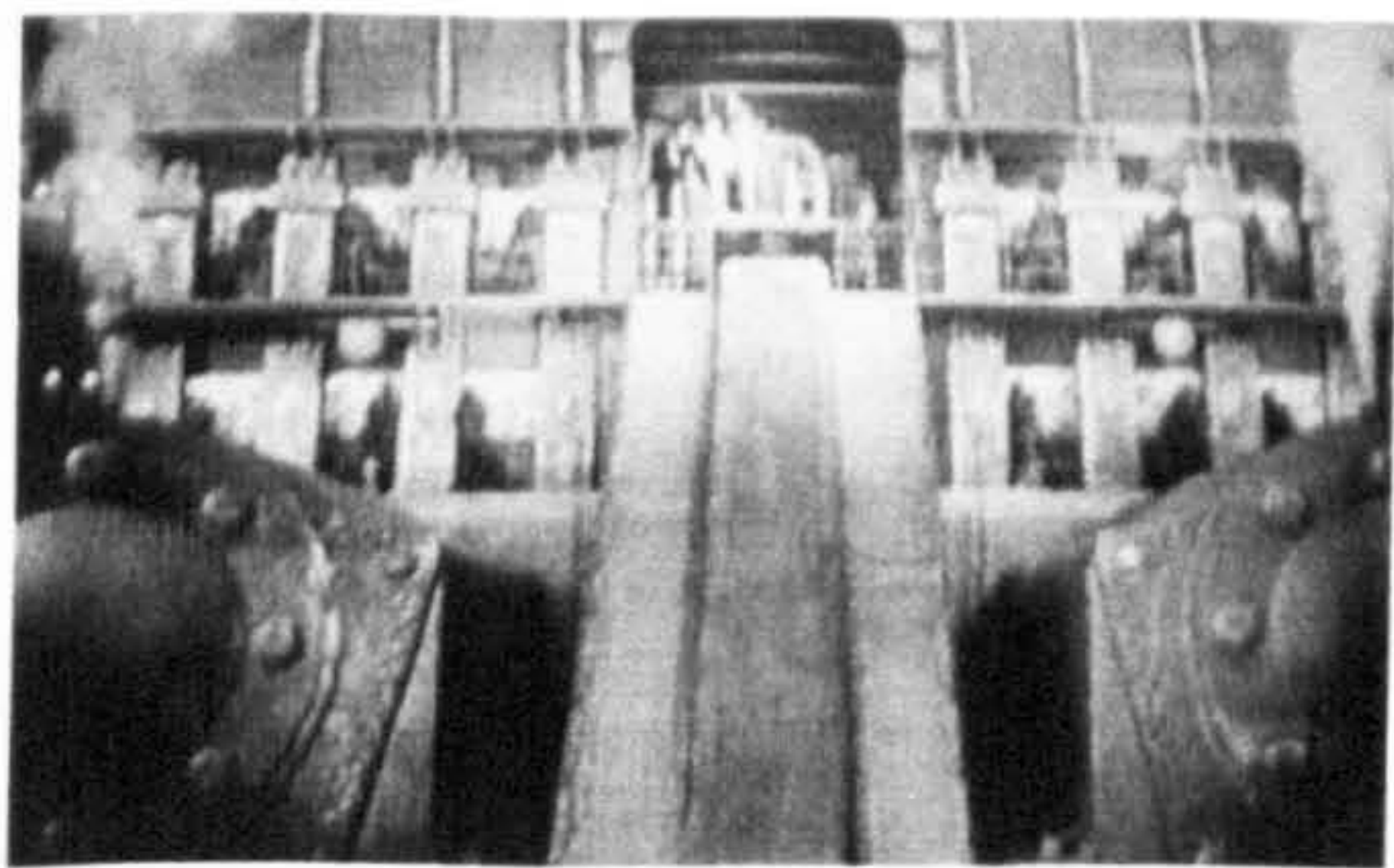
¹⁷⁸ Buckle, R. (1993), p.489-9

¹⁷⁹ Levinson, A. 'Le Myth de la Cité Moderne: Metropolis', La Vivant Le Cinema et Le Spectacle, Paris, April 1st 1927.

FIGURE 3.13



Leger's decor for *L'Inhumaine*, 1922.
Source: Musée National Fernand Leger, Biot.



Scenes from the factory in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, 1926.

7. Conclusions

Contextual study makes the 'Constructivism' of Jakulov's ballet apparent; it also however, makes the difficulties of the term as a precise indicator of style and approach, very clear. As John Bowlt has said, there was a plurality of styles in the early Soviet theatre and some inherent contradictions between theory and practice. He writes:

*"the rigorous economy of constructivism was the exception rather than the rule..... The tragedy of the Russian avant-garde onstage is that it hardly touched the audience for whom, ostensibly, it was intended. The new consumer of cultural invention was often ingenuous and illiterate and had little understanding of the complexities of cubofuturism and constructivism. Furthermore, the very denominator to which the proletarian public might have related directly – the human body – was often deformed, eclipsed, and lost from view."*¹⁸⁰

Jakulov's interaction with Soviet stagings of the 1920s, would appear to be profound and he clearly brought a complex heritage in this respect to Le Pas d'Acier. The problem for the ballet would appear to be largely contextual; in the West it was an attempt to transplant ideas and approaches from a Soviet context, and by the time the possibility arose of staging it in the Soviet Union, its moment was past.

Writing in 1930, Rene Fulop Miller and Joseph Gregor conclude that the West was influenced by Russian experimentation in the theatre in trying to escape from decline. They note however:

*"the later developments of the Russian theatre are too closely bound up with the Revolutionary hypothesis ever to be accepted by a bourgeois society; constructivism, bio-mechanics, the noise-band, acrobatic opera, are based on principles of the Bolshevik Revolution... The artistic consciousness of Europe had followed a very different line of social and intellectual development and will regard constructivism, bio-mechanics, the noise band and machine dancing as abnormal phenomena, interesting, but of no further significance."*¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Bowlt, J. in Baer, N. Van ed. (1992) p.80-81

¹⁸¹ Fulop Miller and Gregor (1930) p.77

The idea of the ballet as of interest, but lacking in significance, has certainly been the general historical verdict on the ballet in the West¹⁸².

One of the questions posed in this chapter has been whether or not there is a thematic basis in Jakulov's 1925 conception of Le Pas d'Acier for a Foregger style machine dance, as in Massine's finale. The study's interpretation of the 1925 scenario and materials is that Jakulov does not wish to celebrate mechanisation as much as the transformatory power of Man's interaction with mechanisation. Unlike some of the Futurist experiments, such as Balla's designs for Stravinsky's Fireworks, the set is incomplete without Man. *Use* is the organisational principle of Jakulov's set and his design serves the performer, rather than the performer acting as a vehicle for the design as for example, in some of Picasso's designs for Parade (1917). However, in the context of Soviet stagings of the time, against a background of Soviet ideals relating to the machine and Construction, Massine's 'Machine Dance' would not necessarily have conflicted with the humanism of Jakulov's original scenario. In a Western context however, the relatively clear social message of the 1925 scenario must have been made more ambiguous by Massine's finale and this is reflected in some of the reviews.¹⁸³

In terms of Constructivism and dance however, Jakulov clearly presents an exemplar of Soviet staging in many respects. He also appears to have succeeded in fulfilling Goleizovsky's requirements of 'Constructivist' design. In filling the stage space with obstacles, and effectively disallowing movement from the front to the back, Jakulov invited vertical, horizontal and planar uses of the stage space, which forced Massine into seeking a new approach, just as in Faun (1922) the stairs and platforms enabled Goleizovsky to find innovative vertical arrangements.¹⁸⁴ It appears from the reviews that in Act 1 either Massine failed to find an appropriate solution, or the critics did not fully appreciate the contextual references to experimental Soviet stagings. In Act 2 however, a highly successful

¹⁸² The context of Russian dance historian Elizabeth Souritz's research, enables a greater sense of the ballet's potential interest and significance to emerge. See in particular Souritz, (1980).

¹⁸³ For example, The Manchester Guardian July 5th 1927 p.14, says the ballet came close to Toller's 'Masse Mensche'.

¹⁸⁴ See Souritz (1980) p.114

interaction between performer and set was clearly found even if the socio-political message of the original scenario was lost.

The challenge for the historiography of Le Pas d'Acier is to understand the cultural and specifically theatrical context to which the work relates, to find its codes, representations and techniques. Jakulov's designs clearly relate to the thrust of twentieth century theatre that has opposed naturalism and the illusion of reality in favour of foregrounding the work's theatricality. What is perhaps particularly interesting about the designs for Le Pas d'Acier is how integral that theatricality is to the design of each and every object on stage, and the potentially different approaches to theatrical representation within the design. This will be more fully explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 4:

In Search of the Jakulov's 'Le Pas d'Acier'.

"The Constructive set is our stairs and floors, our walkways and crossings, which our muscles must overcome. And the wheels – these are the decorations themselves laughing and joking during the course of the action." Sergei Tretiakov.¹

1. Introduction

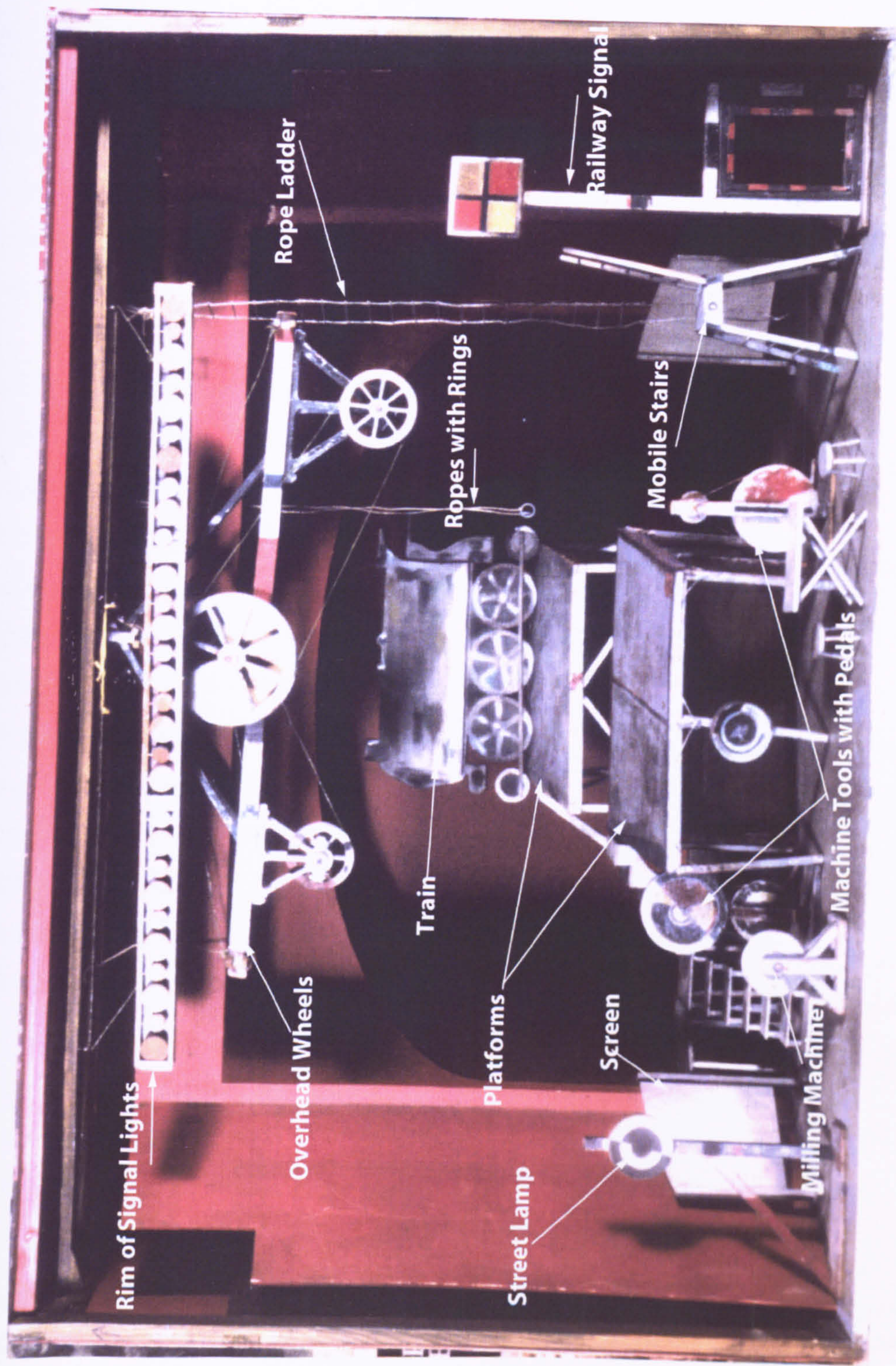
This chapter explores the development of Le Pas d'Acier's designs and concept from the 1925 materials to the 1927 production. It seeks to identify the basic elements of the ballet from conception to production, and interprets the probable differences between the model, (as the surviving visual record of the set) and the 1927 production. It discusses its explorations of Jakulov's designs seeking to identify the set's constitutive and contingent² features, and the relationship of the 1925 materials to the 1927 production. The exploratory analysis of source materials that forms the basis of this chapter has been compiled into an outline of the intended set / action from the 1925 materials, and an outline of the set / action of the 1927 production in Appendix 14. The reader is also referred to **fig. 4.1** for the study's naming of the set parts discussed below. This chapter also discusses the study's practical explorations in reconstructing Jakulov's set as a model and the problems and issues arising.

The main problem in terms of reconstructing Jakulov's set design is that we have no visual record of the performance set; it can only be deduced by interpreting source materials that relate to different stages in the ballet's creation. Jakulov's

¹ Quoted in Sarabianov and Adaskina (1990) p.253, from The Magnaminous Cuckold, Zrelishcha, no.8, 1922, p.12

² As noted in the introduction, the study has found it helpful to adopt the terms 'constitutive' and 'contingent' as used by Nelson Goodman (1981) to distinguish between aspects of an art work that are fundamental to the nature of the work, and aspects that are incidental and can be changed without endangering the nature of the work. Goodman's terms are used in this way by Roger Copeland in his keynote address to a conference on 'Perspectives in Reconstruction', at Rutgers University, USA, 1992.

FIGURE 4.1



Sotheby's photograph of the surviving model showing the study's labelling of set parts.

model set design is therefore, of vital importance to any attempt at reconstruction, as it is the only record of a complete design realised in three dimensions. However, the function of the set parts and how the set was to look in lit performance conditions are not self-evident from the model itself; interpretation is inescapable on even the most basic level. For example, the 1925 sketches and scenario refer to the train, not on the back platform as shown on the model, but as coming in from the right to the front of the stage. Does the model then simply store all the parts required for the two acts together in a convenient form, or did Jakulov re-think the scenario in constructing the model?

To elucidate the intentions of the model we can turn to descriptions of the performance set, but such descriptions also need to be interpreted. Critics or other eye-witnesses are rarely, if ever, attempting to provide a detailed record of the set and their descriptions are affected by their evaluative and interpretative perspectives. Even if the performance set was a replica of the model on a larger scale, the difficulty of ascertaining which set part is being referred to, remains. For example, the reviews make numerous references to wheels, disks and signals, but the model presents several possibilities as to which objects are being referred to. Using the model to interpret descriptions of the performance set, and using descriptions of the performance set to interpret the model, is in any case potentially misleading if the model was adapted and not simply replicated on a larger scale. In addition, we cannot be entirely sure that Jakulov intended all parts of the model to be an exact replica. He may perhaps, have modelled certain parts as representations of objects that were to involve light, or have modelled intended stage effects. For example, was the 'cloud' effect on the gauze to be painted as shown, or was Jakulov's intention an actual staged smoke effect that he simply illustrated on the model? Is the red background on the surviving model original, and if so was it the intended background colour of the set or a reference to the crimson light mentioned on the lighting plan? The model's intended function and the nature of the ballet's overall aesthetic, has to be interpreted in order to answer such questions.

In order to address such questions, the first priority was to come to an interpretation of the design process and the relationship of the model to the

performance set. This chapter begins therefore, with the study's conclusions regarding the place of the model in the design process.

2. Jakulov's Model in the Design Process

According to Aladzhalov, by early 1920 Jakulov had developed an approach to production of roughing out his ideas in general terms in his sketches, rarely developing them in detail, leaving this to the model.³ Surviving source materials indicate that this is how Jakulov approached Le Pas d'Acier. A study of Jakulov's drawings also reveals how he used drawing as an exploration and how the drawing process itself led to resolutions and clarifications. What is perhaps most striking is that his sketches reveal a concern with the set in action, with the structure and function of the set, rather than with its surface appearance. In Jakulov's designs the set and action are integral, in keeping with the Constructivist aesthetic. In 'reading' Jakulov's designs, we can to some extent 'find' the intended action in the function of the design.

In Appendix 14, section A, the study has attempted to work through the basic action envisaged by Jakulov's model in relation to the scenario and with reference to the drawings of 1925 that led up to the model. This process has enabled an interpretation of the relationship of the model to the original scenario and some of the sketches.

It is clear from source materials that the model was built some weeks after the initial sketches and the scenario⁴. It is also clear that the scenario was detailed only for act 1.⁵ A study of the model in relation to the 1925 scenario reveals departures from the original action plan, and helps situate some of the drawings in the developmental process. This is discussed in relation to the three main

³ Aladzhalov, (1971) p.69

⁴ Jakulov's letter to Prokofiev of 1st September 1925 refers to various problems that will be solved through the process of creating the model on which he had started. The scenario and other materials had been sent to Diaghilev with a letter from Prokofiev dated August 11th 1925.

⁵ When the scenario was sent to Diaghilev in August 1925, Jakulov and Prokofiev were still working on Act 2, and Jakulov planned to resolve the nature of the 'Reconstruction of the Décor' scene (and hence the final arrangement of act 2) via the construction of the model. See note 4.

sections of the ballet in the 1925 materials, (ie. Act 1, the 'entr'acte' and Act 2), below.

2.1 The Model and Act 1 of the 1925 Scenario

As discussed in the Introduction 3.2, the study's model was scaled to Jakulov's model via the production of a reverse perspective drawing. When attempting to reconstruct the action for act 1 described in the 1925 scenario, the study found that the train did not easily fit into the available stage space with the centrally placed platforms required by the ballet as a whole⁶. In addition it found that the train was smaller in relation to Jakulov's platform than is indicated by Drawing A which sketches out this scene⁷. It also found problems in relating the 'cloud' effect on the gauze to the scene, which although not necessarily a part of act 1, appeared to have an obvious likely connection to the idea of steam from the train.

When the train is placed on the back platform however, as in the model, a possible theatrical scene emerges. The elevated train would be thematically and visually evocative; it would also allow for the centralised platforms that emerge in all the other sketches and enable a use of depth effects. In addition, the 'cloud' effect on the gauze now makes visual sense as steam coming out of the bottom of the train. Also the use of two gauzes behind the front platform (shown on the black and white photograph of Jakulov's model) puts the train behind a gauze but in front of the painted scaffolding on another gauze; this has the potential to make the train appear to have come into the station. With lighting effects and the train behind a gauze, its emergence into the scene could be controlled and evocative.

⁶ Drawing A shows the platform over to one side with plenty of room for the train. The study considered whether Jakulov might have envisaged the platform being moved to the centre for act 2 but this seemed very unlikely given its considerable size. Also this is contraindicated by the later Drawing B showing the 'Reconstruction of the Décor' scene where the platform is central and Jakulov gives no indication that the position of the platform was to be changed

⁷ The study has concluded that Drawing A emerged early on in the design process during the development of the 1925 scenario and may predate Jakulov's firm positioning of the platform in the centre of the stage.

In the 1925 scenario, Jakulov envisages the train coming in from the right to the front of the stage in front of the 'railway signal' (as shown on Drawing A) with 'a dance of the locomotive wheels and levers' as the speculators spill off the train on to the forestage. If the study's interpretation of the model's intended use of the train in act 1 is correct⁸, then the action of the scene detailed in the scenario would need to be modified in relation to the new position of the train. However, the speculators could still 'ride' on the front bar of the train and on the back ladder attached to the train, as the train emerges through the gauze. Jakulov may still have envisaged the '*dance of wheels and levers depicted by the movements of arms and legs*' as taking place, but now on the back platform rather than on the train at the side of the front stage as in Drawing A. The speculators could then climb down the ladder at the side of the back platform (indicated on the black and white photograph of Jakulov's model), exit into the wings behind the gauze and come back on to join the citizens at the front of the stage. The study considered whether Jakulov may have envisaged an actual steam affect, but the painted cloud affect enables the set's overall balance between abstraction and representation to be maintained. It helps maintain an interesting balance in the scene between the potential for 'merry alienation' in the audience on the one hand, and the potential for visually dramatic evocation on the other. This is further discussed later in the chapter.

2.2 The Model and the Entr'acte

The 1925 materials refer to an entr'acte entitled 'Reconstruction of the Décor', which takes place in full view of the audience to a fast paced and rather celebratory section of Prokofiev's score. The details were not specified in the 1925 scenario which simply notes that the décor will be transformed into the factory scene by six dancers dressed as firemen. The top part of Drawing B shows this transformation in progress, and the bottom sketch shows the constructed factory in full operation in the finale. From these drawings Jakulov appears to be pursuing an elaborate and practically difficult rearrangement of the

⁸ A further indication that this is the correct interpretation came when the photograph of the existing model from Sotheby's was enlarged as this revealed the train to be on ropes coming

décor utilising pulleys, hoisting tackle and transmission belts, and moving a very large wheel across the stage space, up ladders, and on to the platforms to be mounted as the centre overhead wheel. In turn the wheel that is mounted on the centre of the front platform and referred to in Drawing D in connection with the '*dance that puts the set into operation*', appears to be being lowered from above, and in the bottom sketch it is attached to the over head wheels by transmission belts. The 'railway signal' and the 'street lamp' appear to have been disassembled, losing their tops.

Overall, the sketches on Drawing B evoke a powerful sense of construction and re-construction. The ambition is exciting and meaningful in terms of the overall theme of the 1925 materials in a number of ways. Firstly, it adheres to the anti-naturalism of theatrical Constructivism in having the set rearranged in full view of the audience. Secondly, it adheres to the principle of an adaptable set that can form solutions to different requirements, and with economy of means.

Thematically, it also physically enacts the idea of transformation from the old world to the new a theme which recurs in the first scene of the second act where the Sailor partially changes and partially adapts his costume on stage to transform himself into a worker⁹.

However, it is not difficult to imagine the potential problems arising if dancers had to literally fulfill the indications of Drawing B. Prokofiev's musical outline allowed only 2.5 minutes for the scene¹⁰, and the scenario specified only six dancers on stage to accomplish it. Jakulov acknowledged in a letter to Prokofiev that they were left only with the entr'acte to sort out and that this "*will finally become clear after the construction of the model, on which I have started.*"¹¹ For reasons discussed in the section 2.3 below, the study has dated Drawing B as later than Drawing D which explored Act 2 and it seems likely therefore, that

down from above, something that would not be necessary if the train was to be pushed onto the forestage and was simply stored on the model's back platform.

⁹ This scene did not take place in the 1927 production, but we can see from the photographs of the sailor's costumes for act 1 and 2 that they were a reworking of the basic elements rather than a complete change. (See Appendix 6 photographs 5 and 8). It is perhaps possible that the cape could have become the apron.

¹⁰ The actual score lengthened this slightly; current recordings are just over three minutes.

¹¹ Letter of 1st September 1925. See Appendix 4, section C.

Drawing B was a part of Jakulov's exploratory work of the 'entre'act' during the construction of the model. It may have come after the model with the intention of explaining the model's resolution. However, the study has concluded that the model almost certainly simplified the conception explored in Drawing B, coming to a solution that would address the spirit of Drawing B but also the practical problems involved. An alternative possibility is that Jakulov abandoned the idea of the 'entr'act' altogether during the construction of the model. All we can know for certain is that it did not take place in the 1927 production.

It is interesting to note that although a dancer can be seen pushing a big wheel at floor level in Drawing B, there is a slight suggestion of two dancers inside the wheel. The idea of dancers representing the wheel is perhaps embryonic in this drawing. Referring to the 1927 production, one critic described:

"..in one of the first scenes of the second act...an amazing sortie: the dancers get together in pairs, each one grasping the feet of their partner in their hands, and, forming a living and flexible hoop, they roll off into the wings on their backs..."¹²

2.3 The Model and Act 2 of the 1925 Scenario

In attempting to work through the outline of act 2 in the scenario with the model, certain departures from the original action plan again emerged. There are for example, not enough constructions on the model to fit in with the requirements of the scenario which demands a milling machine, two machines on either side of the front platform, and also 'pedal apparatus' for the hero and heroine. The evolution from the scenario to the model in this respect can be found in the drawings.

Drawing D, which predates the model¹³, shows the factory act. It vaguely indicates two wheel shaped machines linked by transmission belts to the overhead wheels behind two more detailed pedal apparatus. The annotations note the

¹² Vozrozhdenie, Paris, June 10th 1927. Translated for the study from Russian by Margaret Jones.

pedal apparatus as for ‘*the dance with pedals*’ envisaged in the scenario as where the hero and heroine come to the foreground to start the finale and set the factory in motion. On the model however, only the pedal apparatus are shown but they are more complicated, with two wheels rather than the singled wheeled constructions of Drawing D. In the process of sketching Drawing D, Jakulov is almost bringing two indeterminate background wheels (presumably the machines required by the scenario) and the pedal apparatus together into one object as they appear on the model. In the second sketch of Drawing B, also showing the factory, Jakulov shows these constructions with two wheels, and the annotations note them as ‘Machine Tools with Pedals’ which clearly combines the two sets of apparatus required by the scenario. This is how they appear on the model, and this indicates therefore, that Drawing B is later than Drawing D.

Although the idea of 2 ‘machines’ either side of the front platform, behind the pedal apparatus, have gone on Drawing B, the basic components of the 1925 scenario are still maintained. For example, we see in the bottom sketch, the scenario’s ‘*dance with pedals*’, and the ‘*dance with the wheel that puts the set into operation*’ as in Drawing D. The idea of the dancers on machines behind the pedal apparatus indicated on the scenario, appears to have been replaced with dancers climbing up ladders to the height of the stage space as was indicated on Drawing C. The model’s solution is not clear. It may have envisaged the original work on machines as being replaced with climbing on ladders and/or by ‘*the dance with the wheel that puts the set into operation*’¹⁴. Ladders are not presented on this side of the stage in the model, but Jakulov may have intended the rope ladder needed on the right for Act 1, to move to the left for Act 2.

The plain white construction at the front of the model is most probably the ‘Milling Machine’ described in the scenario as on the back platform for act 2.¹⁵

¹³See Chapter 1, 2.3.4. It was sent by Jakulov to Prokofiev on September 1st 1925, when Jakulov had started work on the model.

¹⁴This is not specifically mentioned in the scenario but is described in Drawing D and appears again in Drawing B.

¹⁵As the train occupied the back platform in the model (but was only needed for act 1) the ‘Milling Machine’ could presumably not be shown in its intended space.

2.4. Conclusions: The Model's Place in the Development of the Ballet.

The study's explorations with the 1925 materials indicate that the model modified the original scenario but adhered to its basic action, approach, organisation and themes. The model would have been Diaghilev's first chance to fully explore the detailed designs. He may well have interjected further suggestions and modifications, as was his normal practice, and as yet the designs had not been shown to the ballet's choreographer/director. Given the interactivity of the set, Massine's need to find a choreographic solution was almost inevitably going to require modifications to both the scenario and set.

The need to at least modify the scenario for act 1 that is apparent on the model, may have been the starting point for the departures of the 1927 production. Although the nature of the ballet's revised scenario for act 1, indicates there had been some more radical rethinking. This is further discussed below.

If, as the study has concluded, the performance set adapted the model an immediate question arises. Was the performance set further creative development of Jakulov's model, an adaptation arising from the collaborative process, a perhaps even compromised version resulting from staging problems, or the intervention of others involved in the production? Source materials do not allow a conclusive answer, but they indicate that it may have been something of all three. Unfortunately, Jakulov's degree of involvement with the 1927 production is not clear. Massine's claim to authorship and his autobiographical account of working with Prokofiev, not Jakulov, indicate that he had a significant degree of control over the final ballet. Prokofiev's note to Jakulov saying "*Come soon or it will be too late*" and his noted disapproval of elements of the Diaghilev production, could indicate that Massine was primarily responsible for the departures. Jakulov did not arrive at rehearsals until the company were already in Paris, approximately two weeks before the opening of Le Pas d'Acier, by which time rehearsals (without the set which was built in Paris) were well under way. Although it is clear from Drawing J on the theatre's notepaper that Jakulov was actively involved prior to the ballet's opening, it should be noted that the ballet's

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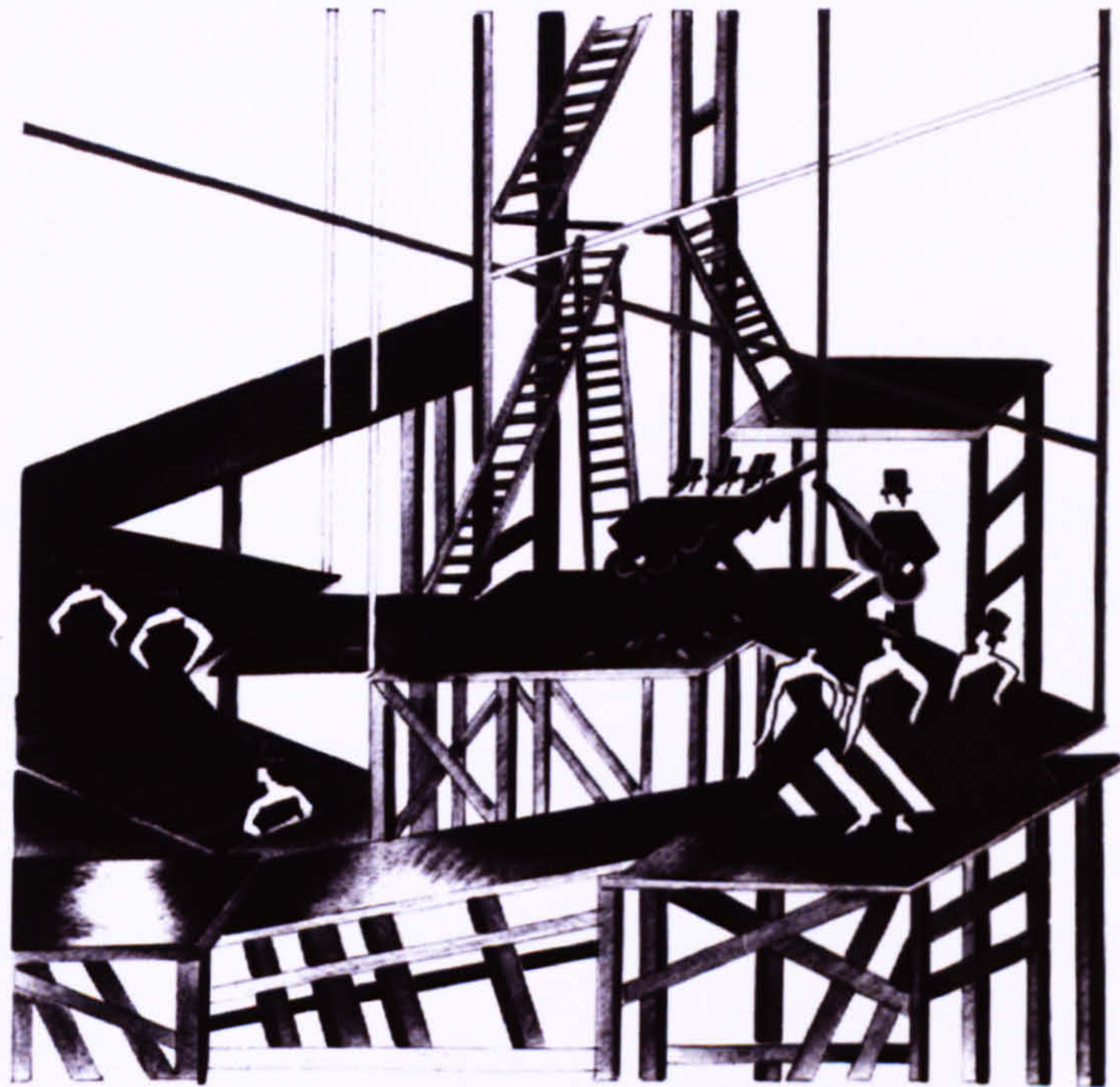
the platform and, in turn, serve to stress the physicality of the actor as opposed to his psychological or emotional representation or his vocal skills.

Jakulov's use of platforms in Le Pas d'Acier is simpler than many of the designs of the era. See for example, Alexandra Exter's conception for the unrealised Satanic Ballet of 1922, (See fig. 4.2) or the complex walkways and elevations of Vesnin's The Man Who Was Thursday (1923), (see fig. 3.6 in previous chapter) or El Lissitzky's design for I Want a Child (n.d) where the performance space is integrated with the auditorium, (See fig. 4.2). In Jakulov's approach the complexity, the sense of multi-layering and depth, appears to have been achieved through lighting and the use of gauzes, rather than the physical presence of complex levels.

A use of platforms is clearly a constituent part of Jakulov's design, and a central feature of the design concept from the sketches and scenario through the model to the 1927 production. They emerge as centrally placed early on in the design process and their positioning serves to divide the stage space, creating a central focus point leading up to the large central wheel. Around this dominant centrality, there is an asymmetrical arrangement of objects.

In terms of reconstruction, there is clear descriptive evidence of their central place on the performance set, and the study has found no reason to conclude that they differed in any way from as shown on Jakulov's model. However, on Jakulov's model the front platform bears only one central painted 'disk'. Yet review and other descriptions of the performance set point to pistons, wheels and

FIGURE 4.2



Scenic design by Alexandra Exter 1920s. Source: National Gallery of Australia.



El Lissitzky's set and auditorium design for I Want A Child (1928) reconstructed as a model by N.Kustow. Source: Van Norman Baer (1991) p.75.

levers attached to the platforms¹⁸. This has been explored on the study's model and is discussed below in section 5.1. The surface appearance of the platforms on the existing model is painted with a use of silver on the edges and legs and with a painted line dividing the front platform in half. There is also a triangle of black on the right side of the front platform that appears also on the earlier black and white photograph of the model taken in 1927. The study has found no descriptions of the surface appearance of the platforms on the performance set.

The study has built the platforms out of wood and worked with them in plain wood until the end, when in conjunction with decisions about the surface appearance of the set as a whole, discussed below, they were silvered, as on the model. With the cobalt through pure silver light, envisaged as coming from the sides and above, in Jakulov's lighting plan (see Drawing I), this would clearly give a metallic effect. However, in other lighting conditions, as would presumably be the case for Act 1, the platforms can appear a plain grey.

3.2 Mobile Constructions: Signals, Lights, Machine-Tools and Wheels.

3.2.1 The 'Railway Signal'

This front right construction is a strong presence in Jakulov's creative process from the sketches to the model. In drawing A it is depicted with a signal arm indicating the arrival of the train in the station. For this reason the study has called it the 'Railway Signal' but it is not referred to in the annotations or scenario. It loses its signal arm after Drawing A, is part of act 2 in Drawing D but appears to have its revolving top removed in the ent'ract of Drawing B.

This structure with a top that has clearly been pinned in place in a way that would allow it to be flipped around, is not specifically mentioned in the 1925 scenario but its potential and significance during the arrival of the train scene is

¹⁸ See for example, Massine (1968) p.171-2: "*The wheels and pistons on the rostrums moved in time to the hammering movements,*" and Grigoriev, (1953) p.240: "*On the front and sides of the rostrum were placed a number of wheels, levers and pistons, in plain unpainted wood.*"

clear. Drawing D suggests a potentially playful use of the revolving doors on the object's base, which consists of a rectangular shape with two inner revolving doors. This has the potential for burlesque, but could also be angled to interact with light or show action behind, or to create spaces within spaces which is a feature of the design as a whole. The inside of this structure is lost on the surviving model; from the black and white photograph it looks as if it might have been made of mica. If mica, then it may have been intended to represent a furnace door in act 2. It would also form a contrasting use of semi-transparent material to its stage counterpart, the 'Street Lamp' on the left side of the model that appears to have had a fabric or paper inside base (see 3.2.2 below).

The study has found no conclusive evidence of the 'Railway Signal' on the performance set. As mentioned above it is extremely difficult to be certain exactly which objects a critic is referring to when the theme of wheels, disks, signals and an association with railways can be suggested by several set parts. It may have been abandoned along with the train, but the production set evoked descriptions of railway signals and semaphore for many critics and this object is capable of evoking both of these associations. Appendix 14 B refers to evidence possibly supporting its presence on the production set and some evidence that might suggest the contrary. The study has concluded that it's visual relationship with the 'Street Lamp' is part of the set's overall balance, and part of a complementarity of objects in space. It fulfills therefore, several functions in addition to its original role as a 'Railway Signal' and whatever part in the action Jakulov envisaged for the base structure.

While it is possible that Jakulov addressed this balance of form in a different way on the production set, we can only know it now through the model. The evidence is that the 'Street Lamp' was in place on the production set and looked very similar if not identical to the one on Jakulov's model¹⁹. The study has concluded that the Railway Signal may have been replaced on the performance set with a factory chimney at the back, noted in two reviews.

¹⁹ See, for example, Eilcen Mayo's drawing from 1928 of Serge Lifar in Le Pas d'Acier, fig. 4.9

Fig. 4.3 shows the study's model of the 'Railway Signal'²⁰ as a plain wooden structure with the study's initial use of a metal inner door. This was then painted, as on the model, with imitation mica²¹ in the base. The study concluded that the other side of the inner doors, shown on the black and white photograph in **fig. 0.1**, was plain and not painted with signal colours as shown on the surviving model in **fig.0.2**. It also painted the other side of the top (not shown in any photograph and not described) as a version of the semaphore theme. This enables the Railway Signal to be very quickly adapted for the factory act. There is also the possibility that if the whole object is turned around it could easily become a set of doors without the post which disappears into the wings. The same thing could happen with the 'Street Lamp'. This would mean that a rectangle and a triangle with semi transparent material would protrude into the front plane of the stage space. There is no evidence for this in source materials, apart from the fact that Drawing B indicates Jakulov was exploring changing these objects for Act 2, but it is interesting to note how potentially adaptable these are as stage objects. Also the study became aware of how easily they could shift towards their abstract qualities or towards their representational aspects. In terms of the Railway Signal, the study's model deliberately roughened the surface appearance, in order to be in keeping with the quality of the overall setting as described by the reviews. If there is a balance in the set design between 'merry alienation' and its ability to lend itself to theatrical evocation, there is also an interesting balance between abstraction and representation.

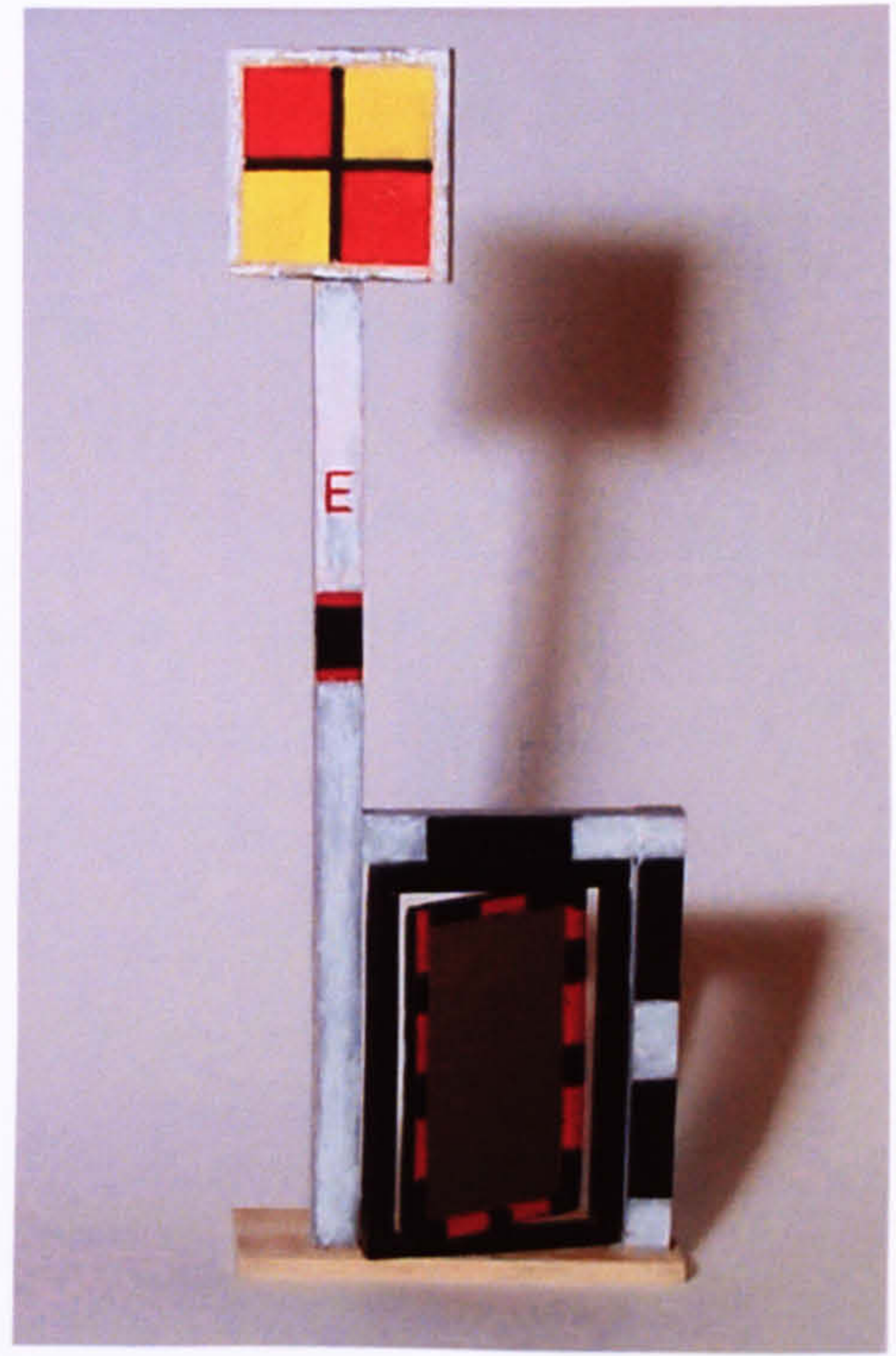
3.2.2 The 'Street Lamp'

As discussed above, this front left construction consistently appears in the sketches as a counterpart to the 'Railway Signal'. Together they frame the action in Jakulov's model and have a complimentary visual relationship. The study has come to think of the 'Street Lamp' as the 'feminine' construction with its round top and triangular 'skirt' filled with a delicate material that looks like paper. The

²⁰ The black and white photograph of Jakulov's model 'Railway Signal' shows a slightly different edge to the top and also a plain inner door when compared to the photograph of the existing model. The most likely reason for this is perhaps that the black and white photograph shows these parts facing the other way around.

²¹ The study used a plastic sample from Beyer Plastics.

FIGURE 4.3



The study's model of Jakulov's 'Railway Signal', in plain wood with tin plate interior door, and painted with imitation mica door.

‘Railway Signal’ by contrast appears more ‘masculine’ with its square top, its arrangement of rectangles and its sturdier centre piece. Jakulov appears to take a gendered approach to the arrangement of men and women workers in different areas of the stage space in parts of the 1925 scenario²². This possible use of contrast and/or complementarity in terms of gender perhaps takes another form in terms of the relationship of geometric balance and asymmetry. Although Jakulov has a very geometric organisation of the stage, a use of asymmetry runs through the design, for example in the overhead wheels and in the costumes.

Like the ‘Railway Signal’, the ‘Street Lamp’ is not named in any of the located materials, and is not indicated in the scenario. The study has taken the term from the 1927 reviews which make many references to a street light, street lamp, or lamp post²³. However, we cannot be certain that the item so described on the production is the same as the item identified by the study as the ‘Street Lamp’ on Jakulov’s model.²⁴ However, the art of the period suggests a contemporary association between dynamically intersecting circular forms, as on the top of the ‘Street Lamp’, and electric light. This is discussed in more detail below in reference to Jakulov’s ‘Machine Tools with Pedals’.

Unlike the ‘Railway Signal’ which appears in the drawings with its four squared top, the ‘Street Lamp’ always appears with an empty circle top. It does not acquire its black and white inner half circles until the model. While the simple empty circular top of the drawings might suggest a light, the dynamic intersecting semi-circles have the capacity for creating strobe like effects when set in motion. The study’s model has explored the visual effects of rotation and the potential for a visually dynamic stage effect, suggesting light, is clear. The study has attempted to show this photographically in **fig. 4.4**. At faster speeds (as would be required for the action of the finale), the semi-circles move almost into transparency with a halo like effect resembling electric light.

²² See Appendix 2A p.8 and p.11 in translation.

²³ See the study’s compilation of selected review descriptions in Appendix 14B.

²⁴ The study questions whether the object on Jakulov’s model is sufficiently like a street lamp to be so easily identified by several critics. Also *The Saturday Review*, 16th July 1927 p.91-92 notes it as like the factory chimney in being amongst the “sufficiently recognisable” objects on the set.

The 1925 materials do not indicate the function of the 'Street Lamp' other than the ideas it visually suggests. Like so many parts of the set, it is an abstracted object that retains the capacity for representational suggestion.

3.2.3 The 'Overhead Wheels and Transmission Belts'.

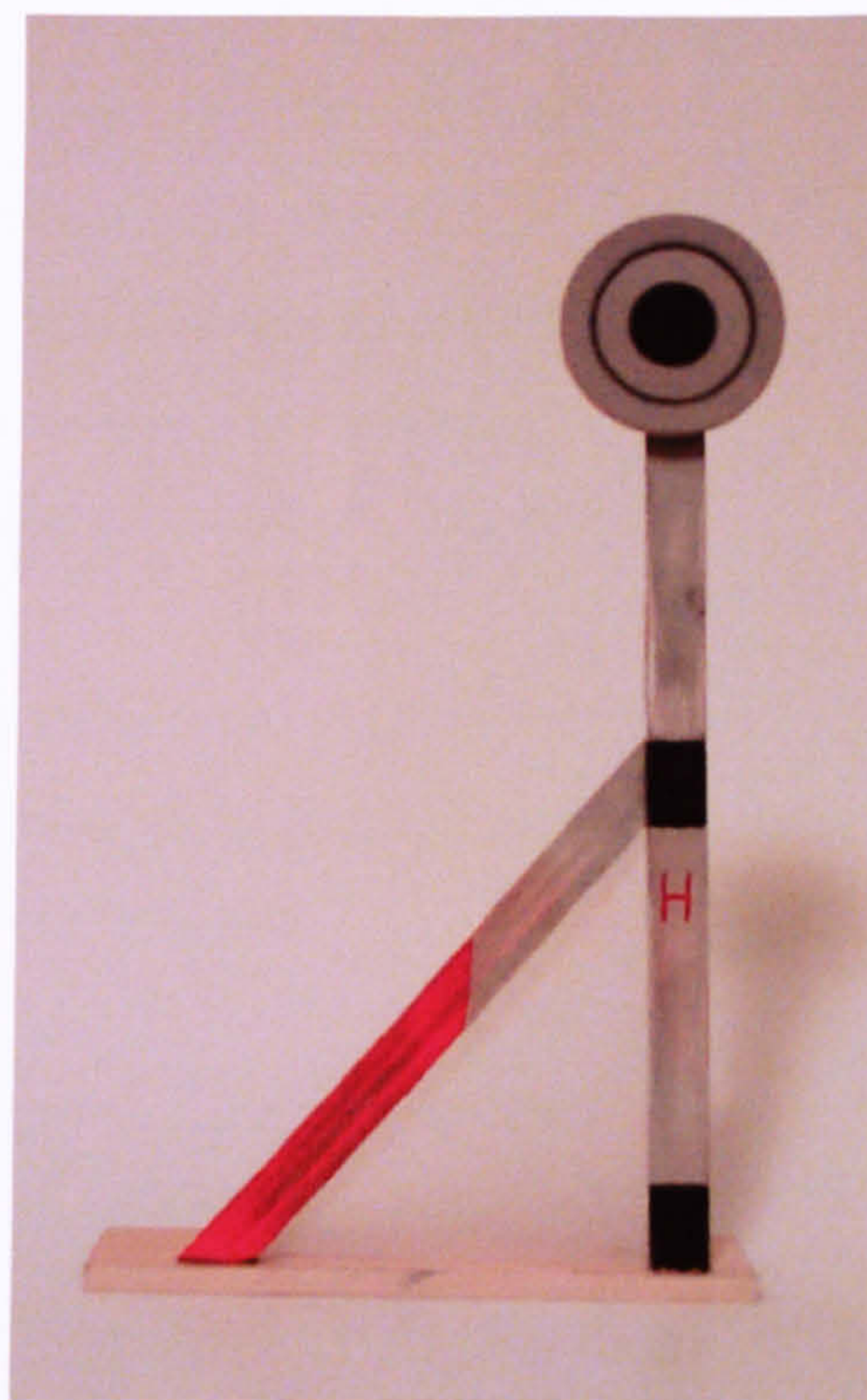
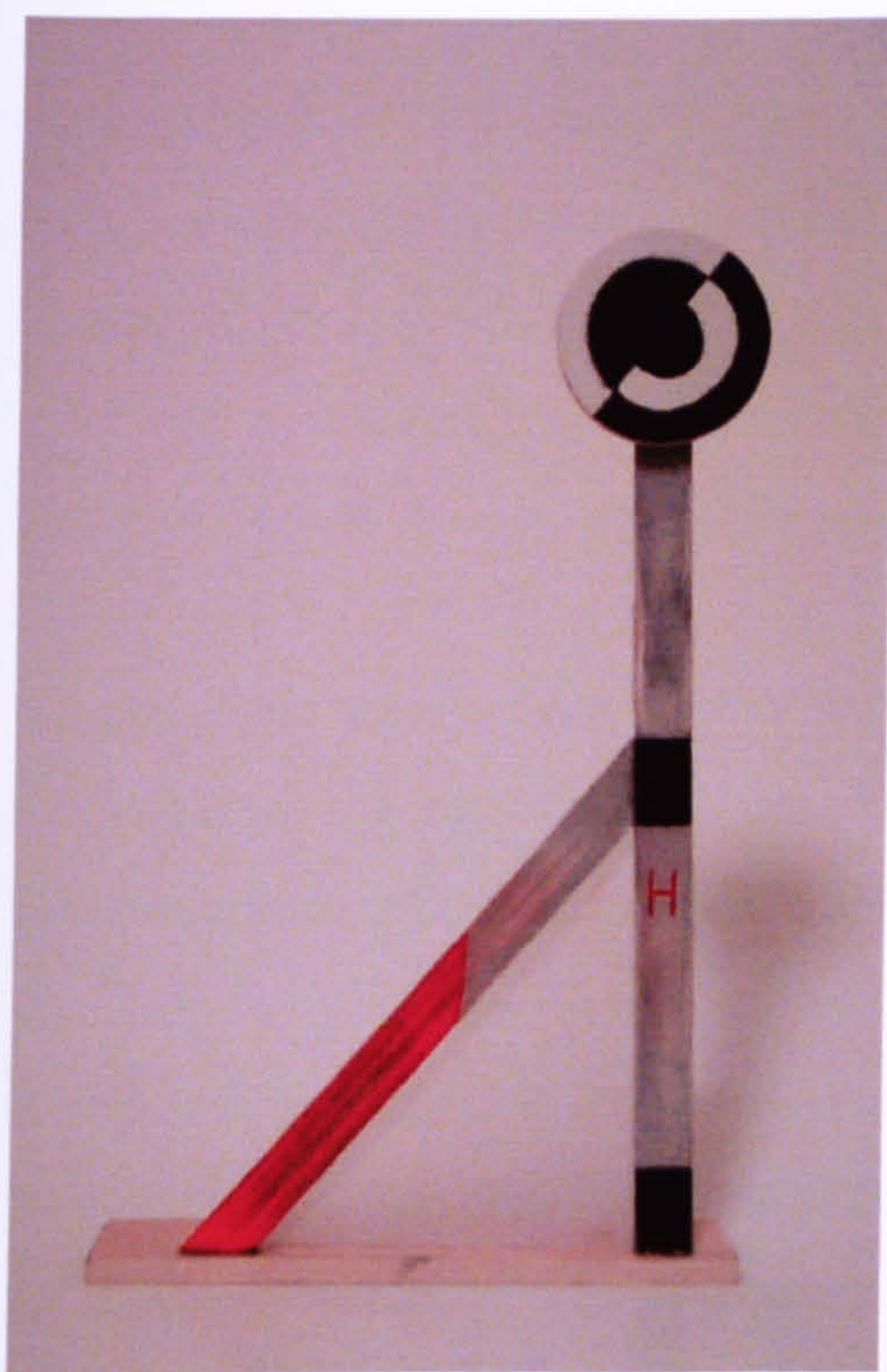
In Jakulov's model a triad of wheels hang down over the stage space. The presence of a large centre wheel with two smaller 'satellites' suggests balance and order and they are a dominant presence. They are a clear part of Drawing D and appear to have been envisaged only for the factory act, as they do not appear in Drawing A and are being assembled in the Drawing B sketch of the entr'act. On the model they appear as a slightly modified version of those in Drawing D.

As discussed in chapter 3, the use of wheels is common on Russian Constructivist stage sets, evoking the mechanical aesthetic of movement, production and industry. As representatives of Man's first great invention, Jakulov's wheels are elevated from contact with the earth to the height of the stage space. Driven by transmission belts and moving in time to the action, they set the pace of the new working day in the factory just as the Sun would have set the pace of the day in the fields. The large central disk has a section marked out by a wedge, like a quarter hour on a clock face²⁵. This breaks up the movement in a similar way to the painted circular forms on the 'Street Lamp'. It also evokes an association with the industrial weighting of wheels as on locomotives.

On the black and white photograph of Jakulov's model, there is another smaller wedge which is lost on the surviving model. The study has opted to use a red wedge, in keeping with the graphic importance of the red wedge in Russian art

²⁵ On the black and white photograph of the model there is a clock placed above the set which further invites this association.

FIGURE 4.4



The study's model of the 'Street Lamp', still and in rotation.

works of the period, (see fig. 4.5). This painted wedge, with the open sections enabling coloured light from the third layer back (see Drawing I) to come through, makes the large wheel particularly dynamic in motion.

The basic colour of the wheels on Jakulov's model is white or silver²⁶, which would reflect light better than bare wood, and there is the use of signal red and black to reiterate the railway theme. The left hand wheel is divided in half by the use of colour to create another variant of the dynamic visual organisation of circular motion that occurs on the 'Street Lamp', and other constructions.

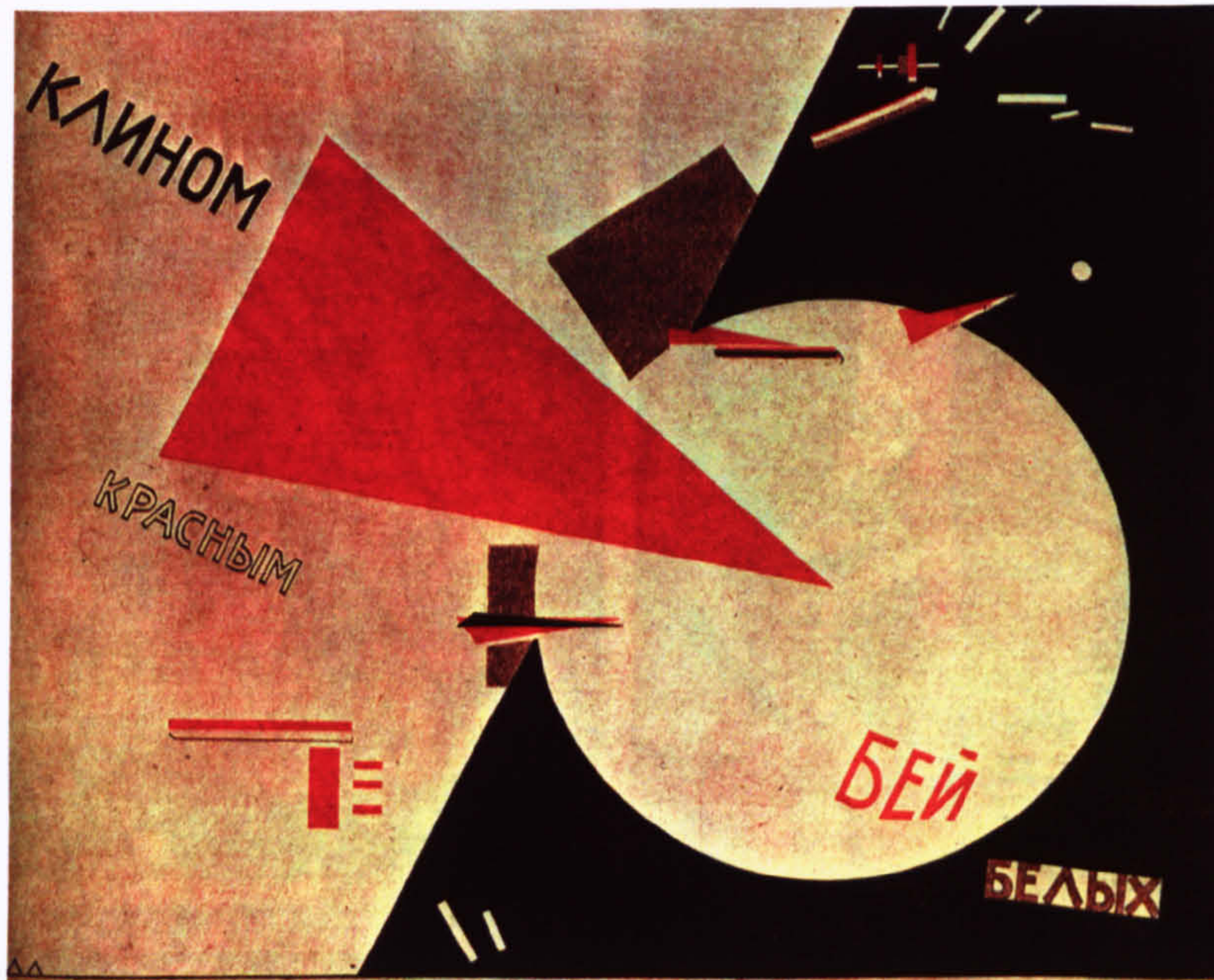
On the black and white photograph of Jakulov's model a metal object appears to hang down from the central wheel. This has been lost from the existing model, but it is presumably the hoisting tackle specified in the scenario.

Overhead wheels in the 1927 production are indicated by descriptions. The evidence suggests that they were lowered over the action for act 2 (see Appendix 14 B). There is little to inform as to what they actually looked like in the production, but equally nothing to indicate a departure from the model. It is clear that apart from the visual sense of industrialism and mechanisation dominating the action, that they bring to the scene, they also moved on their transmission belts in time to the hammering movements on stage.

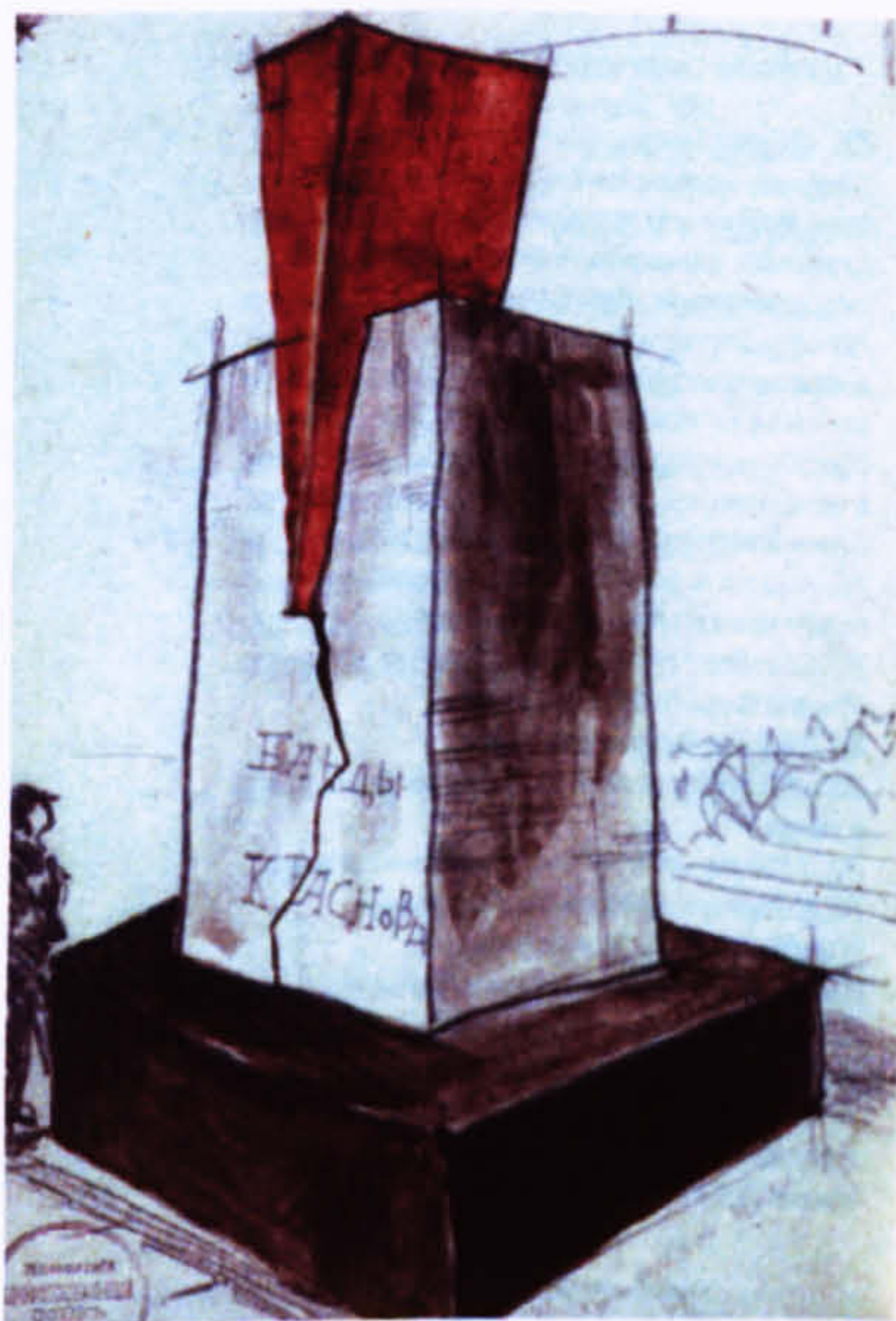
The study's model of the overhead wheels is shown in fig 4.6, as plain wooden structures and then showing the effects of painting their surfaces. The study found that the use of the red wedge enabled the abstract element to maintain its balance with the growing realism of the set, (particularly when exploring the components of the 1927 production set). At the same time it also serves to evoke

²⁶ They look white but the study has concluded that this is probably an affect of the angle of the camera, as on its own model it has found that silver paint appears white very easily when lit and photographed. The centre wheel certainly does not appear to have been white on the black and white picture of the original model. Review descriptions evoke a sense of a factory that suggests metallic looking wheels would be more appropriate.

FIGURE 4.5

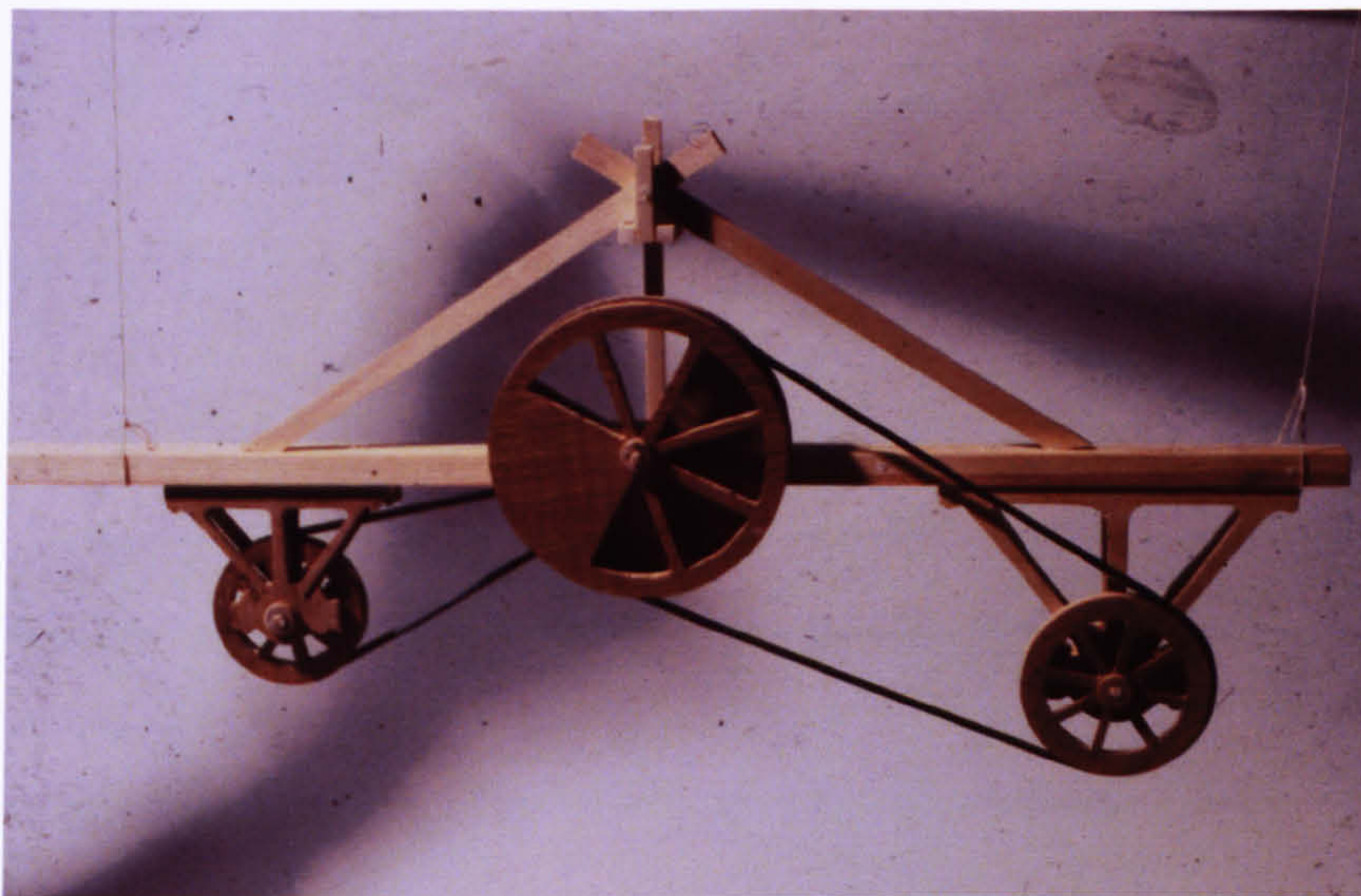


El Lissitzky, Poster: Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge, (1919).
Source: Kahn-Magomedov (1995) p.373.

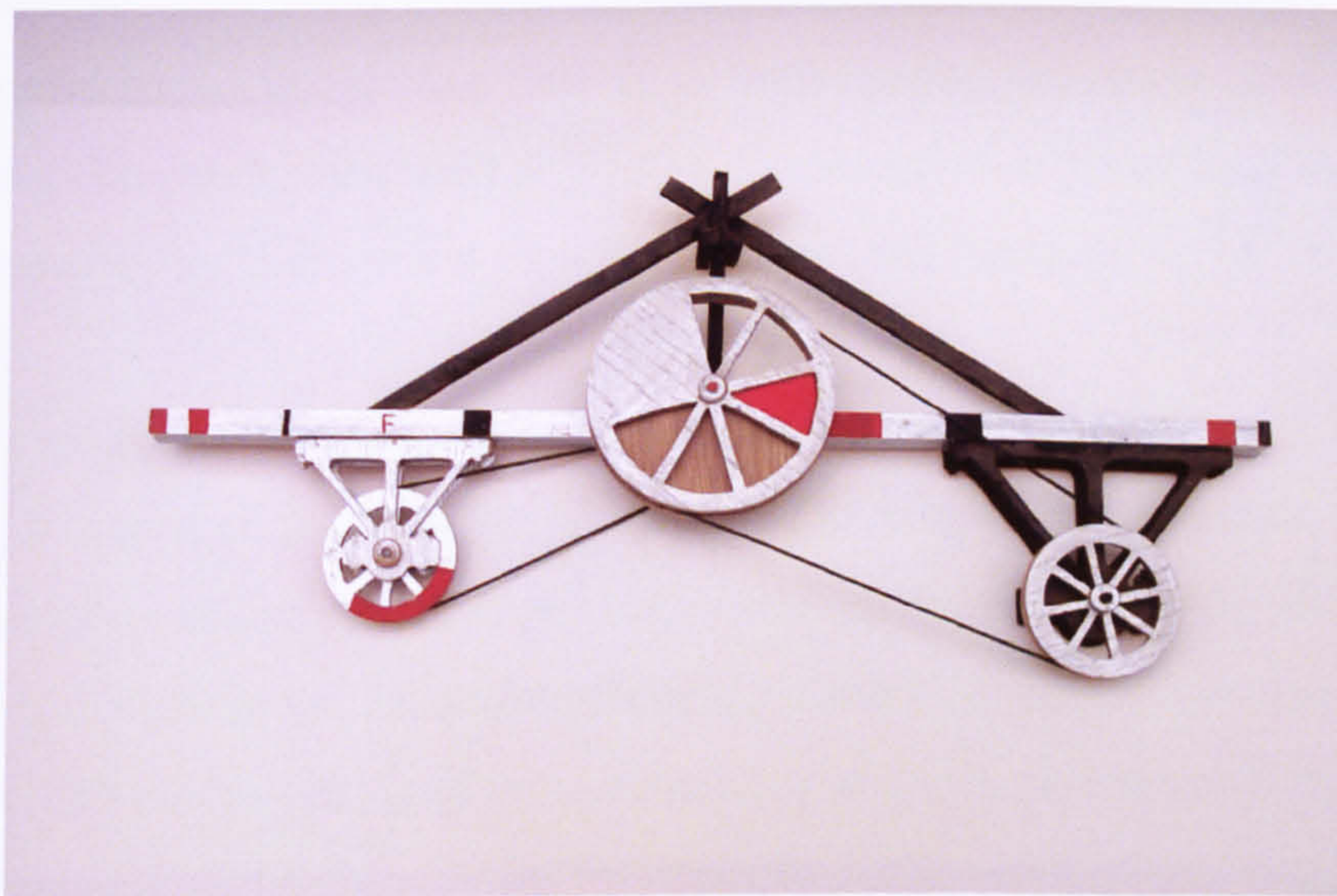


N.Kolli, Red Wedge Monument (1918).
Source: Kahn-Magomedov, (1995) p.265.

FIGURE 4.6



The study's model of the overhead wheels in plain wood, before painting.



The study's model of the overhead wheels after painting.

the sense of a factory as a modern technological environment that emerges in images from the 1920s (see fig. 3.13 in the last chapter).

3.2.4 The 'Machine Tools with Pedals'

The most visually dynamic and colourful parts of Jakulov's model set design are the 'Machine Tools with Pedals'. In the drawings (see Drawings B and D) they are sketched on wheels, which would clearly allow them to be more easily brought on stage and positioned in the 'entr'act', as the drawings and scenario specify them as act 2 objects only. The model does not show them on wheels, which may indicate that Jakulov had abandoned the entr'act, or had decided to have them on stage from the beginning, or had simply not modelled them on wheels.

As functional objects, evolving in the 1925 materials from separate 'machine tools' and 'pedal apparatus' to 'Machine Tools with Pedals', they have already been discussed. However, they need also to be considered in terms of their visual potential, thematic associations and their likely nature and function.

On Jakulov's model the central mass of the stage design is linear and geometrical; it is surrounded however, by circles of varying sizes and colour that create a sense of revolving mobility that enlivens the set even when static, and indicates the potential for an almost pyrotechnical display. From the 1910s into the 1920s circular colour wheels of interacting circular and semi-circular forms are a common visual motif; they appear for example, in the work of the Delaunays²⁷. Exter had used colour discs "*reverberating as street lamps*"²⁸ in a painting of 1914²⁹ the year in which Sonia Delaunay produced her painting Electric Prisms (see fig. 4.7 (a)) inspired by the colour and light effects of the

²⁷ Jakulov was a close friend of the Delaunays, although he was later to accuse them of stealing his ideas, see Bowl, (1991-2) p.74. Jakulov was, like the Delaunays, preoccupied with colour and light throughout his life

²⁸ Described by Bowl, (1991-2) p.74

²⁹ *ibid*; the painting, 'Composition', 1914 is held by the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

new electric street lamps that were replacing the gas lights in Paris at the time.³⁰ These disks became a visual metaphor for modernity and appear for example, in Leger's painting *The City* of 1921 (see fig.4.7 (b)). They were also important in Russia during the 1920s. For example, John Bowlt has noted how color disks were used in the pedagogical courses in Moscow and Leningrad in the early 1920s by a range of artists including Ivan Kliun, Malevich and Gustav Klutis (see fig. 4.7 (c)). The colours on Jakulov's disk are not however, quiet, tonally related and harmonic as in some of the Delaunay's paintings. They abruptly arrest each other in confrontations of equal strength; they impact rather than blend. In movement however, they merge towards transparency as the speed of rotation increases.

The study has been unable to find a single description of these objects in terms of their colours or surface appearance. Jakulov himself refers only to their construction and function as tools in his annotations. There are however, many references to signals and semaphore in the reviews that may support their presence on the production set. In addition Larionov and Goncharova describe:

*"... signalling installations and lighting devices, flaring, oscillating and flashing with colours and fire, in some kind of maelstrom of uninterrupted movement – symbolised thought and contemporary industrial civilisation."*³¹

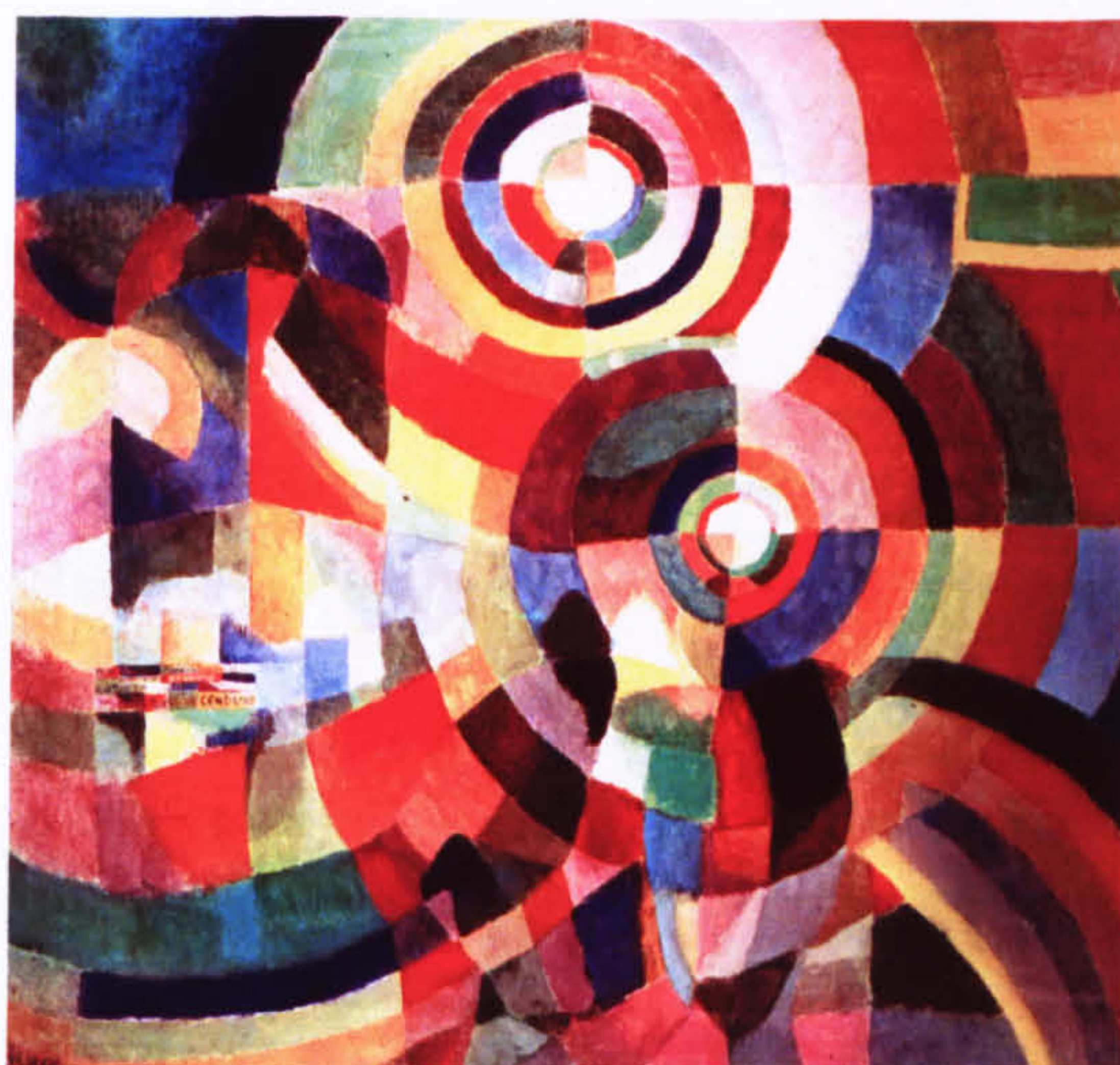
The study has concluded that these objects are very probably the '*signalling installations*' The question emerges however, as to how the set that is so often described as dull, drab and grey, transformed itself into this 'maelstrom' of colour. The study has concluded that these objects were probably not on the set for act 1 but played their part in the transformation of the set in act 2 along with the 'Rim of Signal Lights' discussed below.

As they are not clearly described in the reviews, the study considered whether they might have been adapted for the 1927 production. For example, if these objects were cut outs, then the coloured sections behind the cut out disk could be

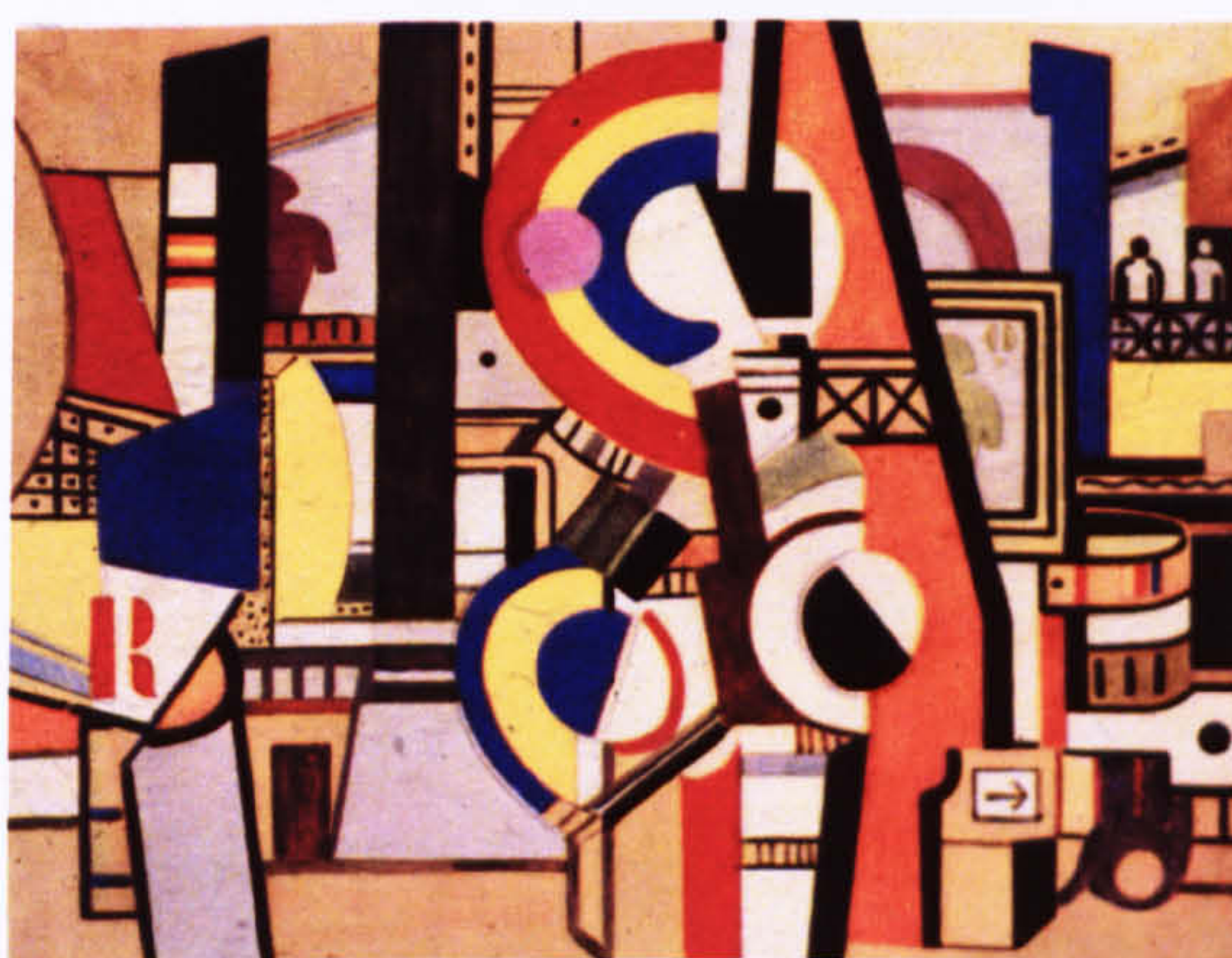
³⁰ Cohen, A. (1975) p.58-60.

³¹ Larionov, M. & Goncharova, N. (1955) p.33

FIGURE 4.7



(a) Sonia Delaunay: Electric Prisms, (1914). Source: Cohen (1988).



(b) Leger, The City, 1921. Source: Musee Fernand Leger, Biot.



(c) Klutis, 1920s.

made of coloured filters, and a light positioned behind would turn them into revolving lights on stage. It is clear from descriptions that the effect of the set in motion was achieved largely through light, although Larionov and Goncharova's description suggests through "*signalling installations and lighting devices*".

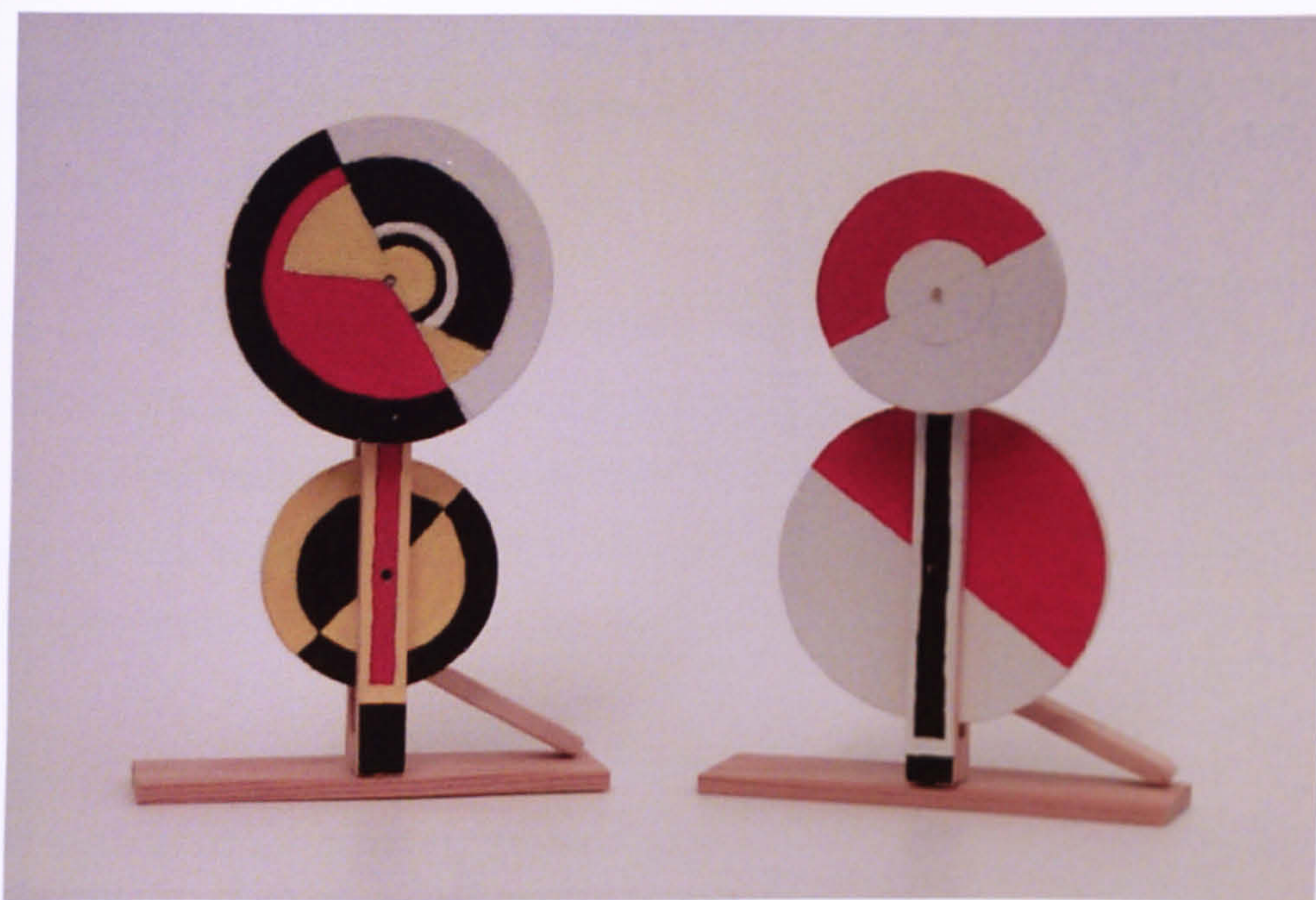
Drawing D may indicate that Jakulov had initially considered them as cut outs. On the model however, the effect of intersecting shapes is obtained purely through paint. As Jakulov takes a very detailed approach on the model, this painted surface is probably a literal representation of his intentions at that stage. The study has concluded that Jakulov's design has many different kinds of balance, and that one of these is the balance between colour from painted effects and colour from light. Both clearly have different qualities and roles in the design, and they would interact with each other in interesting ways. They may have been adapted for the production set, but the study's model reconstruction has left them as painted objects (see fig. 4.8) as on Jakulov's model.

Jakulov's approach to the construction of these objects can be clearly seen on the surviving model where the top part of one of them has broken off and been lost. A small wheel at the back allows for the rotation of the disks through pedal action via a transmission belt.

3.2.5 The Mobile Stairs

If the study's ordering of the drawings is correct, then this object first appears in Drawing C, where it forms the construction or platform identified in the scenario as relating to the women at work. It then appears in the same way in Drawing D where it is identified as the 'mobile stairs'. In Drawing B it is perhaps used as well as positioned in the entr'acte. It appears in these drawings without the top ladder part shown on the model, but in Drawing B it appears to be evolving in this direction. The annotations now refer to it as the '*mock small ladder/staircase on wheels*' and it is almost merging with an extended ladder going up to the 'Railway Signal'. Once again objects appear to be evolving into simpler

FIGURE 4.8



The study's models of Jakulov's 'Machine Tools with Pedals'.

combined solutions through the drawing process. If the top of the mobile stairs was able to fold down it could clearly still serve as the original small platform. With a dancer on the bottom part of the ladder to balance it, it would presumably also be stable as a ladder.

This is a versatile object that potentially serves a range of functions in relation to the needs of the action. On the model its newly acquired top ladder section gives it a particular stage presence in that it resembles a giant chair and adds to the playful, circus like qualities that form an aspect of Jakulov's design.

The study has not found any evidence in review descriptions of the presence of the 'Mobile Stairs' on the performance set, but, again, that does not necessarily mean it was abandoned. The study considered whether it might have evolved into the more extensive ladders indicated on Drawing E, but review descriptions of the set do not support this.

The study's model has copied the item on Jakulov's model, in wood, painted silver and black as on the surviving model.

3.3 Gymnastic Appliances: The Rope Ladder and the Ropes with Rings.

A ladder and ropes are indicated in the 1925 scenario as the means by which the swindlers escape the Commissars. To fulfil the scenario they would have to be on the right side of the stage as on the model. There is a more extensive presence of ladders however, in some of Jakulov's drawings. In Drawing C, something like the rope ladders extends down either side of the left overhead wheel, and this idea emerges again in Drawing B. It clearly would not be difficult to reposition the rope ladder depending on the needs of the action, and so Drawing B may indicate their intended use in act 2.

The ropes with rings on the end are not clearly depicted on any of the drawings. Jakulov first explored circular motion using ropes or belting in Drawing C over the 'Mobile Stairs', incorporating this into the action of the three women on the 'small platform' specified in the scenario. In Drawing D this became more

elaborate with a large circular ring hanging down from above with ropes off it for the dancers to swing around on. In the later Drawing B, this structure has disappeared though there is still a dance on top of the small platform underneath where the ropes with rings hang down on the model.

The study has found no conclusive descriptions to place the rope ladder or the ringed ropes on the performance set, but one description refers to “*gymnastic appliances*” which could refer to either or both³². The idea of the set as apparatus, and the idea of dancers being able to climb up the set is envisaged in most of the drawings and both concepts form an important part of the design.

3.4 Representational Objects

There is a notable presence in the design of representational objects, as opposed to the abstracted constructions that retain a representational element. These include a true to life representation of a train and a table and stools, as well as giant and small hammers. Individual objects may be contingent features relating purely to the needs of the action, but the study has concluded that the presence of such objects is a constituent feature, forming an overall balance and relationship of object types.

3.4.1 The Train

As discussed in the previous chapter, the train was a recurrent image in Russian art and graphics of the period, with its clear associations with mechanism, speed and the industrial revolution. ‘Propaganda trains’ were also a feature of the era in which the ballet is set. Jakulov’s train however, is notably free of revolutionary posters, and brings not activists but speculators.

Jakulov had used a railway station motif in his designs for the Café Pittoresque where there were platforms with figures of Negroes in red coats standing along the sides and half sized theatrical figures above. Jakulov apparently referred to

³² Empire News. July 10th 1927. p.3

the cafe as a “*World Station for art*” sending out “*express trains of the new achievements of the arts.*”³³ Thematically, the railway station, in Le Pas d’Acier represents perhaps, an intermediary point of transition, change, movement, expectation, arrival and departure. As discussed in Chapter 1, it appears to have had an interesting evolution in the process of the ballet’s creation, possibly originating as an idea for the setting from Ilya Ehrenburg. In the 1925 scenario, in the musical titles, in the drawings and model, the idea of a railway station is clearly identified as the setting with the arrival of a train commencing act 1 after a prologue scene of silhouettes.

In the 1925 materials, the moving train coming on from the right in act 1 was probably meant to be moved on small wheels from behind³⁴ with dancer’s, as ‘the speculators’ moving with it, and on it, in imitative action³⁵. There is a wooden bar that runs along the front of the wheels, like a connecting rod, that would have been an ideal support for dancers ‘riding’ along with the train. Dancers then come down from the central platform to meet the arriving speculators in the front stage area, for a ‘bartering’ dance and other dances and interactions colourfully described in the 1925 scenario. The exiting visual potential of this scene is clear.

As previously discussed, the model appears to have envisaged the train on the back platform instead. In the 1927 production the scene was replaced with ‘The Hawker and the Countesses’ but the setting retained its railway station associations. (see Appendix 14 B).

The study has modelled the train as a painted object, as on Jakulov’s model, and has used it to explore the earlier intentions for Act 1 indicated by Jakulov’s model. (See section 5 below).

³³ Kostina, (1979) p.14; she does not provide a source.

³⁴ This would not have been unusual in the contemporary Soviet theatre. For example, in Meyerhold’s D.E. of 1924 screens were moved in this way across the stage space. See Hedgboth, (1975) p.25

³⁵ Jakulov specifies, in Drawing A, a dance of wheels and levers as part of this scene.

3.4.2 Hammers and Other Props

The scene involving hammers forms a key part of act 2. It appears in the 1925 scenario, in Jakulov's drawings and was realised in the 1927 production. The hammers clearly evoked the idea of real work, but they also accompanied the score and were used for their sound as well as their visual power. The giant hammers were used on the front platform and the smaller hammers behind, as appears to have been originally envisaged. This would no doubt have visually enhanced the depth effects and sense of perspective. The hammers form a central part of Jakulov's overall concern with orchestrating the action on visual planes.

The scenario specifies a range of props for the market place including trays of produce for the sellers, a piglet and an armchair. The scenario also requires a board extending off into the wings for the escape of the Commissars, which is not shown on the model. However, Jakulov's model contains a couple of objects that do not appear in the drawings and are unspecified in the scenario. Shapes emerging from behind the gauze which cannot be identified, may perhaps include the escape board. To the sides of the model there are two 'screens' (see **fig. 4.1**) which may perhaps have been used to 'receive' the advertisements that the 1925 scenario describes as flashing over the set for the finale. There are also a table and two stools (perhaps replacing the original armchair). Although these objects could potentially serve a range of activities, they indicate that Jakulov had designed the model in relation to a more detailed conception of the action than was sketched in the original scenario.

3.5 The Use of Gauze, Light and Other Stage Effects

3.5.1 Use of Gauze

The use of gauze is a central part of the set design from the scenario through to the model and the performance set. It allows for the creation of spaces within spaces, for silhouette effects, and perhaps most importantly enables control over the presentation of the stage's depth in layers.

Unfortunately, most of the gauze has not survived on the existing model, but on close examination the black and white photograph reveals a potentially complex use of gauze. The gauze attached to the middle legs of the front platform may have been the intended location for the bazaar in act 1 as Jakulov's manuscripts note the bazaar as located behind gauzes³⁶. The platform is high enough off the ground to allow characters to move under it quite easily. It could clearly be lit from the side to enable the creation of a particular space within the general stage space. On a larger scale, there is a use of full gauzes between the two platforms. Close examination of the black and white photograph of Jakulov's model, (see **fig.0.1**), reveals that more than one full gauze is envisaged because the train is behind a gauze but in front of the scaffolding which must be on another gauze. (The potential effects of this have been discussed above in relation to the model and Act 1 in section 2.1 above). This is an indication of how Jakulov may have achieved the depth effects noted by Kochno³⁷ and appreciated in the reviews (see Appendix 14 B).

The 1925 scenario specifies a prologue scene of silhouettes indicating that a gauze was probably also envisaged at the front of the stage to be lifted and/or made transparent for the start of act 1 with the arrival of the train. It is clear from descriptions that a use of gauze remained central to the design of the production set, although it would appear to have been restricted to act 2.

3.5.2 General Use of Light

"I know of no other painter capable of expressing with such power, such keenness, such expressiveness, the remarkable forms and lines of the new urban era... ..in the theatre... Jakulovfound an outlet for his seething creativity, for the dynamism and colour which were the very foundations of his creative temperament and his talent."
A.Tairov³⁸.

The study has concluded that the lighting is likely to have been the most complex part of the production. The exciting use of light in Soviet theatre of the period is

³⁶ See Appendix 2A Jakulov's manuscript page 1-2.

³⁷ Kochno, (1954) p.271-274.

clear from descriptions of Meyerhold's productions. For example, in D.E. of 1924 there was a mixture of on-stage lighting and projected light from the rear of the auditorium and from the side of the stage. As might be expected of Meyerhold's productions, light was intended to be a functional part of the performance, with flickering and weaving beams of light intensifying the dynamism of the action, and defining stage areas.³⁹ Judging from accounts of Jakulov's work in general, his approach to lighting was particularly complex, and highly sophisticated.⁴⁰

Descriptions in the 1925 scenario indicate a clear role for lighting in providing the action flow, highlighting different areas of the stage space at different times while taking other areas out of focus. For example, the scenario describes: "...by means of lighting effects, the work on the first machine and on the distant platform with women fades away."⁴¹

The 1925 scenario indicates quite dramatic lighting for act 1, with a prologue of silhouettes and a side light for the arrival of the train. Descriptions of the 1927 production however, tend to focus on the dramatic use of lighting for the finale, where it appears to have brought the set to life and interacted with moving disks and wheels to evocative visual effect. The furnace of the factory forge is powerfully evoked in the reviews which also describe a use of silhouettes in the background and smoke effects. (See Appendix 15 B).

Unfortunately, very little of the surviving source materials refers directly to lighting. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, a basic sketch of a lighting plan (see Drawing I) has survived. It indicates three levels to the stage working depth wise with theatre flats, with lighting located as coming from the sides of each layer and from above on each layer. It also makes reference to colours with a

³⁸ Tairov, 'Georges Yakoulov', Notes et Documents, (1969). First published in Russian in 'Iskoustvo' Moscow 1929, no. 1-2, pp.73-77.

³⁹ Hedgebeth, (1975) p.26

⁴⁰ Kostina, (1979) p.17 notes for example, his sophisticated lighting plan for Oedipus Rex. She concludes: "Jakulov went further than many of the artists who were at that time experimenting with light and colour..." She also notes his striking and innovative lighting effects for Meyerhold's production of Wagner's Rienzi "where the architecture served as a polyscreen for complex light effects..." p.18

⁴¹ See Appendix 2A typed page 3.

strong presence of silver, but also including cobalt, crimson, yellow and green. Each side layer appears to have been divided into three levels with different colours of light on each level. On Drawing E, Jakulov has an annotated note under the heading 'light' referring to "*flood lighting, enlivening the set, shining forms that give off light.*" It is difficult to be sure because this is clearly in note form, but Jakulov may be indicating three different applications of light; floodlighting of the stage, light which enlivens set parts, and shining forms which emit light themselves.

Propert's description of the 1927 production gives a strong sense of the lighting of the stage as a whole:

*"...that final scene, with the revolving lights, green, red and white, flashing down on the triple tier of shining, half-naked bodies..."*⁴²

Other descriptions are less clearly of external light projected onto the set and descriptions imply a possible use of light coming from the stage as well. This is further discussed in the next section.

Jakulov wrote: "*colour imparts form and rhythm*"⁴³. The use of painted colour on the model can be seen very clearly in terms of form and rhythm but in a reconstruction this would need also to be found in terms of lighting.

The study of lighting in relation to Constructivist stagings in the 1920s is potentially a study in itself, and in addition, it has been beyond the limitations of working on a model, to really explore the potential of lighting the set. The presence of the gauzes on the original model however, give some indication of the possibilities.

⁴² Propert, (1931) p.56.

⁴³ Jakulov, *Dnevnik khudozhnika. Goluboe solntse*, (Moscow: Altsion Almanach, Book 1, 1914), reproduced in Jakulov, *Moia biografiia i khudozhestvennaia deiatel'nost'* (Erevan: 1979). Translated from Russian for the study by Margaret Jones.

3.5.3 The Rim of Signal Lights

Jakulov's model shows a hanging bar at the top of the set, divided into three sections. Inside each section are individually pinned disks of wood that rotate from left to right. Drawing B (lower drawing) sketches this object with an indistinct Russian word in the far right. The annotation to its left reads: "*Rotating wheels light up*". The explanation of the set on this drawing also refers to "*mock lighting devices coming down from above*."

The study initially considered whether Jakulov's pinned disks of wood were intended to model light reflectors⁴⁴. However, descriptions of the performance set indicate light effects coming out of the stage as well as shining down upon it.⁴⁵ For example, one critic writes: "...*a rim of signal lights flashes and flames*"⁴⁶. Another notes that "*wheels whir & hammers clang & signals flash*"⁴⁷. The study has concluded that this 'rim of signal lights', and other references to signals flashing, most probably refers to a realisation of this structure on the performance set; there are however, no detailed descriptions of it.

Although Jakulov could well have intended his disks of wood to model actual theatre lights, the question arises as to why he does not just call them lights in his annotations. In Drawing E, Jakulov refers to "*shining forms that give off light*" that could possibly refer to this rim at the top of the set. The study's interpretation is that it would be consistent both with Jakulov's descriptions and the overall themes and qualities of the set evoked by the critics, if this object contained 'responsive lights', ie. lights that appear to respond, in strength and speed, to the kinetic activity on stage, and/or can flash on and off individually or in groups.

⁴⁴ This object was discussed with theatrical model makers, Anthony Waterman and Colin Maxwell at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. They said there was no convention amongst model makers to enable an interpretation of Jakulov's intentions and agreed with the study's suggestion that they could be intended as reflectors or actual lights.

⁴⁵ It is interesting to consider Kostina's description of Jakulov's paintings: "*In Yakoulov's painting, the source of light (more often several sources) is generally found within the composition. A ray of light, directed from the depths of the canvas towards the observer, reflected in the mirror surface of the glass of the windows... or as if passing through a three-sided prism, is unexpectedly given a new direction or returns to the depths of the canvas*" Kostina, (1979) p.12

⁴⁶ The Boston Evening Transcript, July 23rd 1927.

On the actual set such lights, with the use of dimmers would be capable of flaming and flaring in the way suggested by the description of Larionov and Goncharova quoted above of “*lighting devices, flaring, oscillating and flashing with colours and fire.*” Such a use of ‘signal lights’ would also relate to the general theme of signaling, and semaphore observed by the critics.⁴⁸ The study has concluded that due to the probably limited number of circuits that would have been available in 1927, the division of the box into three may not only relate to the three wheels, and three sections of the stage space (ie. the centre platforms and either side, or the three levels) but also indicate three circuits. The study has presumed that each of the three sections would have been separate circuits which would not allow for individual lights to flare up or flash on and off but it would allow for different sections to respond in this way. Presumably, Jakulov would not have used the three actual sections as blocks, but have wired up individual lights in each section to a single circuit. This would allow for a more random appearance to the use of the lights.

The study’s model has improvised a structure to explore the possibility of signal lights to some extent, but this has been limited by the difficulty of modelling lights. In the absence of descriptions of the colour of these signal lights, the study has kept to the basic signal colours used on the set, red, white and yellow. An orchestration of the lighting in terms of colour must have been required, especially for the finale when these lights would be flashing in addition to coloured lights flashing down on the action and in addition to the lighting needed to maintain the sense of the layered stage.⁴⁹ They should perhaps look more like disks than actual lights, the small and large forms echoing the small and large circles of the ‘Machine Tools with Pedals’. On a full size set they could clearly rotate from side to side, as indicated by Jakulov’s model. There are clearly many

⁴⁷ The Sunday Pictorial, July 10th 1927 p.9

⁴⁸ Signal lights are an interesting feature of the factory in Metropolis (1926) which gives an insight into the contemporary idea of their form and function in industrialised settings. See fig. 3.13.

⁴⁹ It is very difficult to interpret review descriptions in terms of light sources. The study has concluded that the use of this rim of signal lights was one form of light, and that the revolving coloured lights described as flashing down on the action came from the use of theatre lights with colour wheels.

possibilities. For example, different coloured gels could form the disks with rotating lights, like mini lighthouses, revolving behind.

3.5.4 Use of Other Stage Effects

"Great hammers clang and boilers let off steam"⁵⁰ "...pistons puff".⁵¹

It is clear from review descriptions that smoke effects were used in the 1927 production in the factory act. There is no mention of this in the 1925 materials.

Descriptions of the production set indicate that wooden pistons were added, probably to the back platform. Smoke effects may have been used along with the action of the pistons, filling the back layer of the 'factory forge'. It was presumably contained by the gauze and would have interacted with the lighting of that layer at the high back of the stage. This indicates a shift in approach away from the 'merry alienation' of the painted cloud effect on Jakulov's 1925 model, towards a greater evocation of illusion. This is further discussed below.

3.6 Materials and Use of Paint.

The model indicates that Jakulov used wood for all the objects on stage, apart from the ropes and rope ladder. A use of other materials appears to be restricted to the gauze, belting and the inner sections of the 'Street Lamp' and the 'Railway Signal'.

The surviving model reveals that every surface of the set has been painted. The earlier black and white photograph of the set also indicates an extensive use of paint, with very little that could be bare wood. The existing model indicates that the platform legs and sides for example, have been painted silver, as have the edges of the steps up to the platform and the mobile stairs. Jakulov had used silvering techniques on his set for Princess Brambilla⁵². However, this set relates

⁵⁰ Daily Mail, July 5th 1927, p.9

⁵¹ La Liberte, Juin 9 1927.

⁵² Kostina describes a use of silver by Jakulov on the set of Princess Brambilla. She writes: *A particular luminescence was achieved by having the light pass through filters of various colours*

to a different aesthetic to Le Pas d'Acier, and in his Constructivist phase, Jakulov appears to have moved towards favouring the use of natural wood, particularly plain polished plywood, with colour coming purely from light. Aladzhalov writes:

*"Jakulov loved to use various textures, and he introduced them in their natural form, as a constituent part of his design. For example, he made frequent use of 'real' materials, such as wicker, white tin-plate or unpainted plywood, showing up their texture using coloured rake lighting...He showed that 'an architectural set allows itself to be inlaid with various materials which respond in different ways to the light.'"*⁵³

It is clear from descriptions that elements of the performance set were painted and Grigoriev appears to be alone in making reference to sections in *"plain, unpainted wood."*⁵⁴ Critics refer to the set generally as grey, and Grigoriev mentions a grey background. As already noted, the surviving model shows silver paint on various parts of the set, including the platforms, the steps up to the platforms and the mobile stairs.

Silvering of parts of the set allows for a grey appearance under some light and a steely silver under others. The sketch of the lighting plan that has survived indicates the use of cobalt to silver light which would no doubt heighten the metallic appearance. However, it is difficult to accept the dark red background of the surviving model as part of Jakulov's design. It may of course not be the original box, or possibly the background of the model was painted in this tone for the purposes of black and white photography, or perhaps it was to illustrate the crimson lighting that forms a part of the lighting plan (see Drawing I). We can at least be certain that as a painted background it was not a feature of the production set.

The study was initially reluctant to use paint on its model to the extent indicated by Jakulov's model; in bare wood with gauze and a sparse use of colour for

then fall on the three-dimensional parts of the set, which had been painted with a thin layer of silver and gold foil. This conferred on the whole scene a fantastical luminescence which seemed to come from within the dynamically constructed form." See Kostina, (1979) p.16

⁵³ Aladzhalov, (1971) p.66

⁵⁴ Grigoriev, (1953) p.240

signification and on the revolving disks, a very contemporary sense of 'modernity' arose. In terms of authenticity however, the contemporary appeal of the set in plain wood did not capture the sense of the factory in a 1920s context. Although Grigoriev's description of plain unpainted wood has caused the study some unease, Constructivist sets of the period tended to be painted wood. In addition a study of images of the factory and machines from the period indicates the likelihood of a steely modernity of image. For example, see **fig. 3.13** in the previous chapter for the image of machines in the films L'Inhumaine (1922) and Metropolis (1926). The use of flashing signal lights, pistons puffing smoke and the critic's intense sense of grey, indicates that on the production set there was a concern to evoke a sense of industrialism and modernity.

Another consideration is how Jakulov might have intended his painted set to be presented. Descriptions of the production set indicate that it may have had a slightly battered appearance, in keeping with the idea of a 'railway goods yard'; in other words it probably looked 'used' rather than 'new'. The black and white photograph indicates that even in 1927 the model had a rather rough appearance and this may have been an intended feature of the set. One critic refers for example to "*a battered lamp post*"⁵⁵. In aesthetic terms there is an interesting balance here between how this 'roughness' could serve both to emphasise the 'makeshift' nature of functional, anti-naturalist theatre, and yet also evoke the illusion of 'reality'.

The use of paint on the model includes letters on various set parts and the number 2 or 8 on the middle of the back platform. These letters do not appear to be an abbreviation or to spell out a word⁵⁶. The study considered whether they may have been intended to relate to plans accompanying a photograph of the model, rather than parts of the set. It concluded however, that these isolated letters were most probably intended to evoke the sense of an industrial setting. In painting its own model, the study found them an essential part of the design in the sense of evoking an industrial setting. In the film Metropolis (1926), letters

⁵⁵ Empire News, July 10th 1927, p.3

⁵⁶ Textual fragments were common in Soviet theatre and for example, letters spell out the author of the Magnaminous Cuckold in abbreviated form on Popova's set.

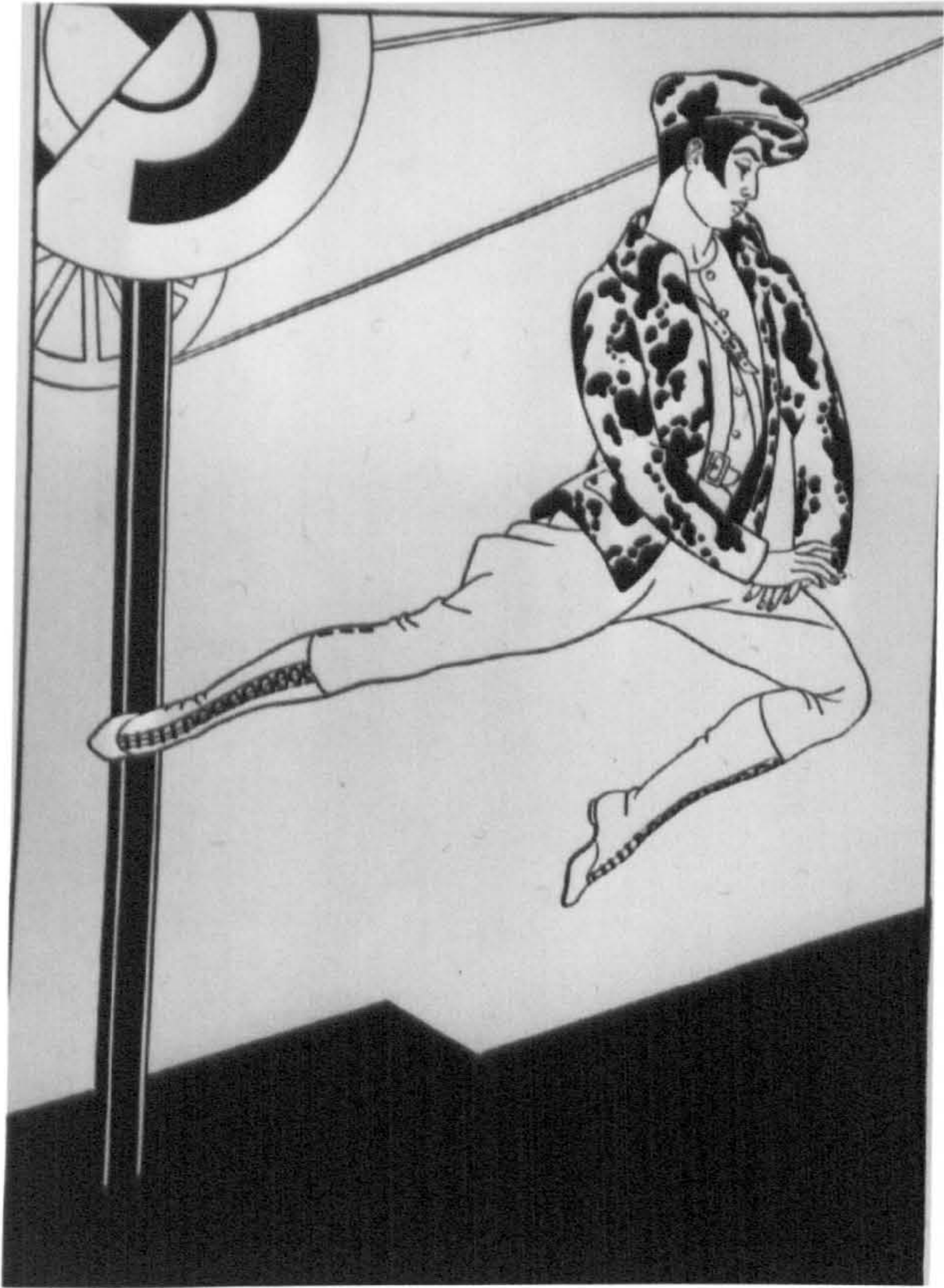
and numbers are used in a very similar way to create the impression of a 'scientific' environment (see **fig 3.13**). Again, on Jakulov's set they also have the potential to remind the audience of its nature as a construction, while at the same time evoking the illusion of an industrial setting.

4. Apparent and Potential Differences between the 1925 and 1927 Scenarios and Approaches to the Set: A Summary of the Study's Findings. (See Appendix 14)

As already discussed, research indicates that the 1927 production adapted the model, removing the train, adding pistons, levers, and possibly wheels and perhaps a factory chimney. There is however, no reason to conclude there were major departures from the model. The study has found no evidence of 'new' designs dating from 1927 apart from Drawing J of a large structure, involving plywood and possibly tinsplate, rings and cables, that is difficult to identify. Most of the drawings that cannot be clearly identified as part of the 1925 working process, are concerned with technical details of construction (ie. drawing J), the lighting, (ie. Drawing I), and the costumes. The exception is Drawing E, which could date from 1927 and indicates a greater use of ladders and a large wheel in semi-profile at ground level but the reviews do not support the idea of this drawing as a representation of the production set.

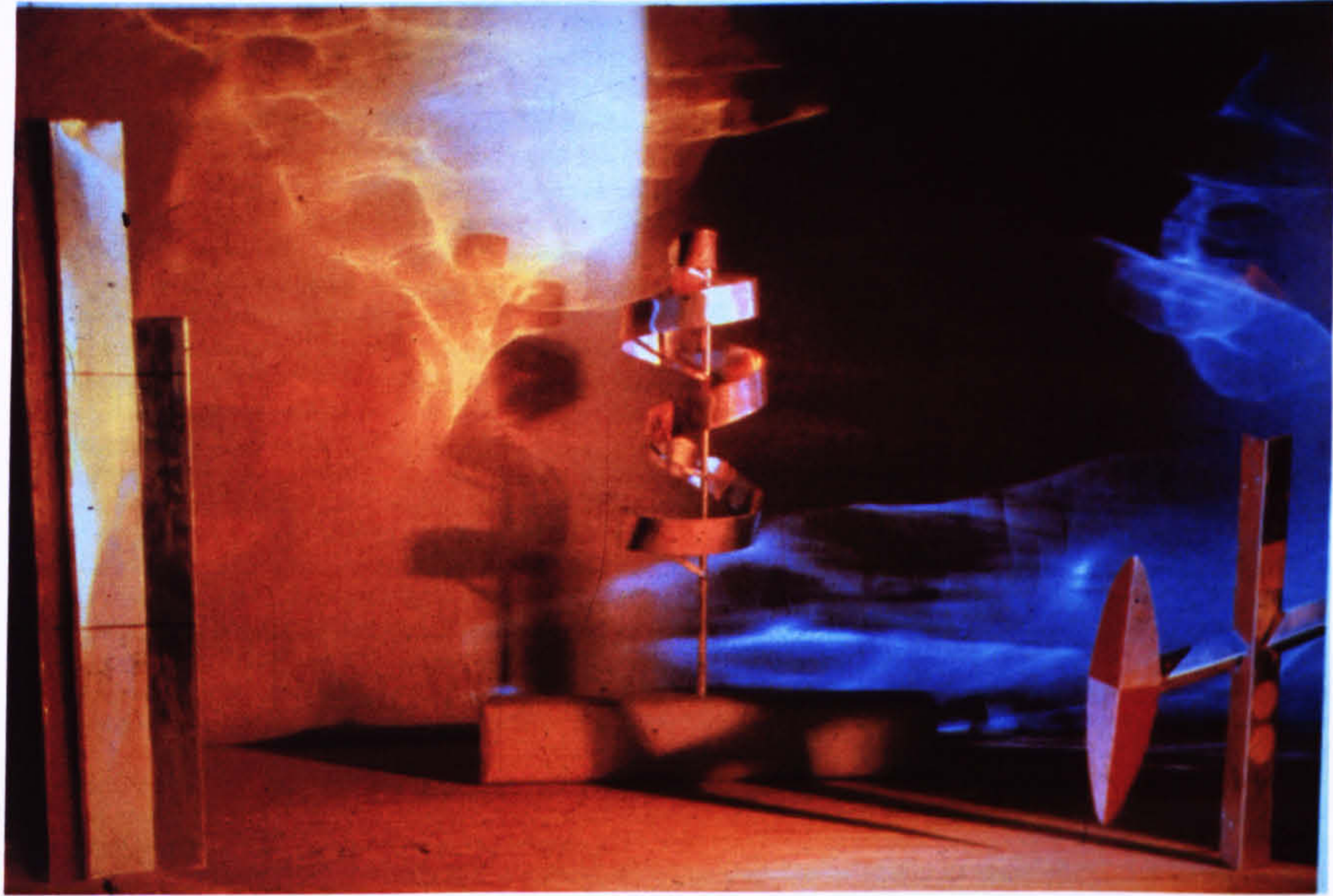
There is also some 'external' evidence that points to a close relationship between the model and the production set. For example, Eileen Mayo's drawing of Serge Lifar in Le Pas d'Acier, (see **fig. 4.9**), published in 1928, was presumably based on her impressions of the production. In it we see a clear representation of the 'Street Lamp' and idea of interconnecting wheels and belting. In addition, Leger's set designs for a new production of the ballet in 1948 make a clear reference back to Jakulov's originals, combining themes of mobility, hammering

FIGURE 4.9



Eileen Mayo's drawing of Serge Lifar in 'Le Pas d'Acier'.
Source: Mayo (1928).

FIGURE 4.10



Leger's set design for 'Le Pas d'Acier' (1948). Source: de Francia (1983).

and railway signals into his design. (See fig. 4.10). Leger's hammer like railway-signal also utilises the chequer pattern of Jakulov's original 'Railway Signal'⁵⁷.

The study has concluded that both the model and the production set represent versions of the one design, bearing a similar relationship to each other as the drawings bear to the model; in other words that they adhere, in different variations, to the constituent features of an evolving design. Having said that, we cannot be sure of the nature or the extent of the adaptations and the way the set was used may have differed quite significantly.

What is clear, is that the 1927 production departed quite radically from the original scenario. It is difficult to know whether the changes in the scenario arose from a need to adapt the set, perhaps for practical reasons, or whether the adaptations of the set arose because of changes to the scenario. However, the visual appearance of Act 1, and the function of the set in Act 1 was certainly different than indicated on the model.

Jakulov notes in his interview in Rabis of 1928 that the aim of the production had been to:

*“demonstrate in a symbolic form, yet as close to reality as possible, the regeneration of everyday life (the period of military communism) and the ideological basis of the new structure. In accordance with this, the ballet has two acts: the period of the breaking up of the old way of life, its deformation, and the enthusiasm of the revolutionaries against the background of the disintegration of the old and the pathos of organised labour.”*⁵⁸

The potential for the 'pathos of organised labour' is there in all the 1925 materials, but it is countered by the finale's resolution with its celebratory nature and suggestion of empowerment through work. Massine's finale in shifting away from Man's operational control of the factory to his transformation into

⁵⁷ It is of course possible that Léger did not see the production, but if so then it would indicate that Jakulov's model has in a sense played a more active role in the history of the ballet than the production set. There is also a sense in which this could be argued anyway because the model has been the only reproduced image of the set to record the ballet over time.

⁵⁸ Jakulov, (1928) p.5. See Appendix 8 section B for a translation of the entire article.

mechanism appears to have resulted not only in a greater 'pathos', but also a greater ambiguity of message.

In the 1925 scenario the first act is little more than a colourful parade of hustle and bustle in the market place around the train's arrival, with speculators that bring the citizens out to barter. The emphasis is on visual 'colour'; cigarette sellers and sweet sellers who 'twirl' with their trays of produce, women in lampshades for hats, Sailors throwing their money about, and an indignant Orator whose book bounces back at him on a string are amongst those who people the scene. The emphasis appears to be on the industriousness, resourcefulness and comic villainy of 'characters' in a time of adversity and change. In the 1927 production, however, the playful humour has been replaced with satire and even brutality. The ladies in lampshades are physically threatened, items of their clothing are torn from their bodies in an unpleasant exchange and they are now Countesses, emphasising the politics of the scene. The once delicate scene between the Sailor and the Worker Girl, so charmingly evoked by Prokofiev's score, has also changed beyond recognition. In the original scenario the two do not even come into contact with each other and part with polite bows. In the 1927 production, the scene has become, according to André Levinson, full of "*coarse erotic insinuations*"⁵⁹ and the heroine is carried off stage astride the Sailor's shoulders.⁶⁰ Levinson even finds an enactment of gang rape within the scenes. In addition to brutalising the characters and the drama, Massine's choreographic realisation appears to have replaced twirling traders and chases across the set between pompous Commissars and agile swindlers, with angular, 'dissonant' movement, and a strong military presence. Jakulov people's his first act with 'former people'⁶¹; ie. people from classes that are not recognised as bone fide citizens after the Revolution; such as private traders, speculators, and the impoverished former upper classes. However, in the 1925 materials these

⁵⁹ *Comoedia*, Juin 9 1927.

⁶⁰ *Le Temps*, Juin 15 1927.

⁶¹ See Brovkin, (1998) p.30-35. He notes the groups that were disenfranchised and impoverished, and how being included in this category was "a serious social disability even in the relatively tolerant atmosphere of the 1920s." p.31. It was a very real threat also to intellectuals and artists as well as members of the pre-revolutionary elite.

characters tend to be attractive rather than to invite our condemnation⁶²; to some extent the 1927 production may have addressed that problem. The critics could not understand why the 'apache dancers' were the best dressed characters on stage; it is difficult to ascertain from surviving source materials what these characters were supposed to represent, but it is likely that all the characters had a particular significance in terms of Soviet society during the 1920s.

As previously discussed the theme of transformation is a clear component of the 1925 materials. For example, there is the desire to show how the set for act 1 can be reformed into the environment of act 2. The costumes appear transitional and the Sailor transforms himself into a worker by simply changing his costume on stage. Jakulov's original use of visual 'colour' in act 1 has been removed from the 'characters' in act 2, but is now generated and controlled by them. There is a clear connection to be made between their work in the factory and the colourful effects of the 'Machine Tools with Pedals' as the factory is set in motion. In losing the reconstruction of the décor scene and that of the sailor's transformation into a worker, and removing the 'colour' from Act 1 to some extent, the ballet appears to have moved away from the 1925 approach to this theme.

However, in terms of the set, there is a sense in which the 1927 production appears to have achieved a more startling and 'alchemical' transformation of basic ingredients. Jakulov's model presents a set that was lively and visually interesting for both Act 1 and Act 2. The visual excitement of the train in Act 1, with the use of gauzes to create the station and the bazaar, prepares the viewer for the sets potential in Act 2. Viewed from another perspective, the characters and setting for Act 1 threaten, in the 1925 materials, to be at least, if not more, visually appealing and interesting than the factory scenes. This could undermine the thematic celebration of industrialisation. In 1927 the set for Act 1 simply evokes a drab sense of closure (See Appendix 14 B) that nevertheless manages to transport the critics in the second act, coming to life through the interaction of

⁶² Elizabeth Souritz (1990) p.213-214, notes that 'former people' appeared in many Soviet works of the period but that these supposedly negative characters were frequently the most interesting

light and moving wheels, and revealing and suggesting hidden levels and depths through the interaction of light and gauze. Judging from descriptions, this 'alchemy' in terms of the set, appears to have fully realised the celebratory nature of the 1925 materials, even if Massine's choreography evoked the idea of Man's subjugation to the machine for many critics⁶³.

However, in Jakulov's 1925 materials, there is a sense of interaction between the notions of work and play that may have been lost in the 1927 production. Although Jakulov notes that the dancers on the machines should give the impression "*not of abstract ballet movements but of useful work*"⁶⁴, the drawings themselves reveal a very playful component. Amidst the background toil, Jakulov's drawings evoke a playful interaction of Man and Machine. This can be seen in the women dancing with rings on the small platform in the factory act, and in the qualities evoked by the drawings of dancers operating the centre wheel of the front platform and the 'Machine Tools with Pedals'. While Massine's finale stressed dancers emulating the machine, Jakulov's machines tend to emulate dance. They are operated by a 'balletic leap' onto the pedals and their colourful intersecting shapes have an abstract 'dance' all of their own when set in motion. Jakulov's machines give rise to 'dance with pedals', 'dance with the wheel that puts the set into operation,' 'dance on the mobile stairs with a wheel' and 'dance with a turning gear wheel'. The emphasis here is clearly on interaction. Descriptions of the 1927 production however, reveal dancers labouring with set parts⁶⁵, the interaction of work and dance becomes the emulation of the machine in the Machine Dance. There also appears to have been a shift away from the more playful circular motion of Jakulov's designs in action, shown on the drawings, in favour of a more mechanical and virile aesthetic with the back and forth thrust of pistons, described by the critics. The evidence may not be conclusive in this respect, but in general there appears to

and this was a problem. She notes they survived as characters until about 1931, appearing in Shostakovich's ballet *Bolt*. (1931)

⁶³ For example, *The Daily News* July 5th 1927, p.7: "*The impression it all gives of human beings crushed into nothingness by a relentless machine is remarkable*".

⁶⁴ See Drawing C in Appendix 3.

⁶⁵ *The Star*. July 5th 1927, p.6 notes that some workers are carried out exhausted, and the sense of workers toiling is very clear from review descriptions.

have been a greater interactivity of dancer and set in the earlier conception that was sacrificed to a different emphasis in production. One critic even noted that:

*"The set has no purpose other than to provide the impersonal framework for this mechanism, and then, towards the end, to increase the intoxication of it while accompanying the movement of dancers with that of some disks or wheels."*⁶⁶

The underlying attitude towards work in the factory was perhaps unresolved in both the 1925 materials and the 1927 production; the celebration and the pathos are there in both but perhaps to different extents, forming a different balance. The ballet's set clearly realised the celebratory qualities of the ballet's original concept to a large extent, but the 'message' appears to have become clouded in ambiguity by the choreographic realisation, at least in a Western viewing context. The question arising for the study is whether the shift in emphasis affected the way the set was presented and what implications the answer to this question has in terms of reconstruction.

5. Reconstructing the Set Design: Authenticity and the Search for a Visual Representation

The term reconstruction implies the theoretical presence of an original work and evidence of the prior existence of that work. This becomes more complex however, if the nature of the work, or evidence of the work, resists the idea of a singular original, as is the case with Le Pas d'Acier. The issue of authenticity⁶⁷ becomes particularly complex in terms of reconstructing Jakulov's designs for there is the question not only of historical authenticity in terms of a reconstruction's relationship to an original, and the need therefore, to define that original, but also the question of artistic authenticity. By the latter, the study means the need to judge the relationship of the model and the performance set to the perhaps purely theoretical notion of the most authentic version of Jakulov's design. As already discussed, however, the absence of visual records of the

⁶⁶ Le Nouvelle Litteraires, Juin 25 1927.

⁶⁷ The study acknowledges the theoretical complexities of this term in contemporary discourse. See for example, Rubidge, (1993) 'Does Authenticity Matter? The Case for and Against Authenticity in the Performing Arts', and Copeland, (1993) 'The Fate of Authenticity'.

realised set means that if it is to be the object of a 'reconstruction', it can only be deduced and envisaged through reference to the earlier model.

The 1925 materials provide a fascinating insight into Jakulov and Prokofiev's original conception for the ballet. To some extent, it is tempting to conclude that the 1925 materials constitute the 'authentic' conception and designs. However, this approach to reconstruction would conceal the interesting shift in emphasis that appears to have occurred between the 1925 materials and the 1927 production. If the aim is to find Jakulov's intentions, his Rabis interview indicates that he supported this shift in emphasis, although surviving correspondence does indicate serious disagreements between Massine on the one hand and Prokofiev and Jakulov on the other, over the Diaghilev production.⁶⁸

It could be argued that the performance set is always the 'authentic' set both historically and artistically because it is the fruits of the collaborative enterprise that makes up the nature of theatre. The study's interest however, has been in exploring Jakulov's designs, and the question arises as to whether the performance set was a development of the design by the designer, or an adaptation resulting perhaps from Massine's entry into the creative process, or from the need to respond to staging problems, or any number of other possibilities.

The question arising for a reconstruction of the production set is whether it is identifying its idea of the 'original' set as an adaptation of the model or something more. As already discussed, the study's view is that the model and the performance set were both 'versions' of the design's defining features⁶⁹. The model however, is not a general purpose design, and while it may be adaptable within certain constraints, it is a balanced formal realisation of the ballet's themes and approach as they were in 1925. If Jakulov was involved in any

⁶⁸ See for example, Prokofiev's letter to Massine of November 1st 1927 stating that Jakulov "*being very unhappy with the changes made to the subject which he devised...*" (but this may refer to Massine's later adaptations) and Prokofiev's letter to Derzhanovsky of May 12th 1928 stating "*...since in Diaghilev's production there was a lot which did not comply with my wishes.*"

⁶⁹ Rubidge, (1996) p.220, discusses models of performance in relation to ideas of authenticity. She points to the ideas of Eco and Goehr, in defining a "standard position" on a performance 'work' as an "open concept".

meaningful extent in the ballet's actual production, would he not have found a new solution to the balance of form and theme demanded by the new scenario? If he did not, or this was not necessary, then how adaptable is the set design? Was the artistic authenticity of the model compromised and if so, what are the implications of attempting to reconstruct the production version? ⁷⁰

In terms of historiographical 'reconstruction'⁷¹, the need to 'answer' the above issues and questions does not necessarily arise, as analysis, interpretation and exploration can function free of the need to fix a visual representation. In a sense therefore, the study's practical reconstruction has forced the interpretative aspects of the study to the fore. At the same time, the historiography resists any straightforward answers or any idea of a singular 'authentic original'.

In terms of reconstruction there are several possible focus points. For example, the 1925 version of the set could be reconstructed, which would entail interpreting and re-presenting Jakulov's model. Alternatively, the model and descriptions of the production could be used as the basis for a version of the production set as an adaptation of the model. More radically, the materials and descriptions could be used as a basis for a reinvention of the production set. In addition to the interpretation required in respect of determining the nature of the 'original' however, a reconstruction would also, of course, have to address the gaps in knowledge, which have been explored in this chapter and in Appendix 14. The study has concluded that there is sufficient source materials for the term reconstruction to be a meaningful possibility in relation to Jakulov's design, but that the source materials do not allow for a replication of anything other than Jakulov's model which was not a realised set and needs to be interpreted in terms of theatrical presentation. In terms of the production set, the study has concluded that source materials invite and allow for several, perhaps many, 'reconstructive

⁷⁰ In discussions with Anthony Waterman, (16th May 1996) a theatrical model maker at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Mr Waterman pointed out that it is quite usual for a designer's model to be adapted. He said that this would often occur firstly, in the building of the full set and secondly, to suit the needs of the production. His view is that there is no really authentic moment for a set design but that a designer's intentions are often at their most fulfilled at the model stage.

⁷¹ As dance historian Susan Manning has pointed out, historiographical reconstruction and staged reconstruction work with the same evidence and have to go through similar processes of interpretation and analysis. The synthesis of that material however, is clearly different. See Manning, S, in Copeland ed., (1992) p.13.

versions' that could draw on source materials from all stages of the design process to produce an interpretation.

The study has attempted to deduce as much as possible about the nature of the objects on the production set, and to identify the thematic, stylistic and spatial-organisational elements that are constitutive of the design concept. It suggests that this produces a basis from which a reconstructive version of the set design could potentially take place.

5.1 The Study's Model and its Findings.

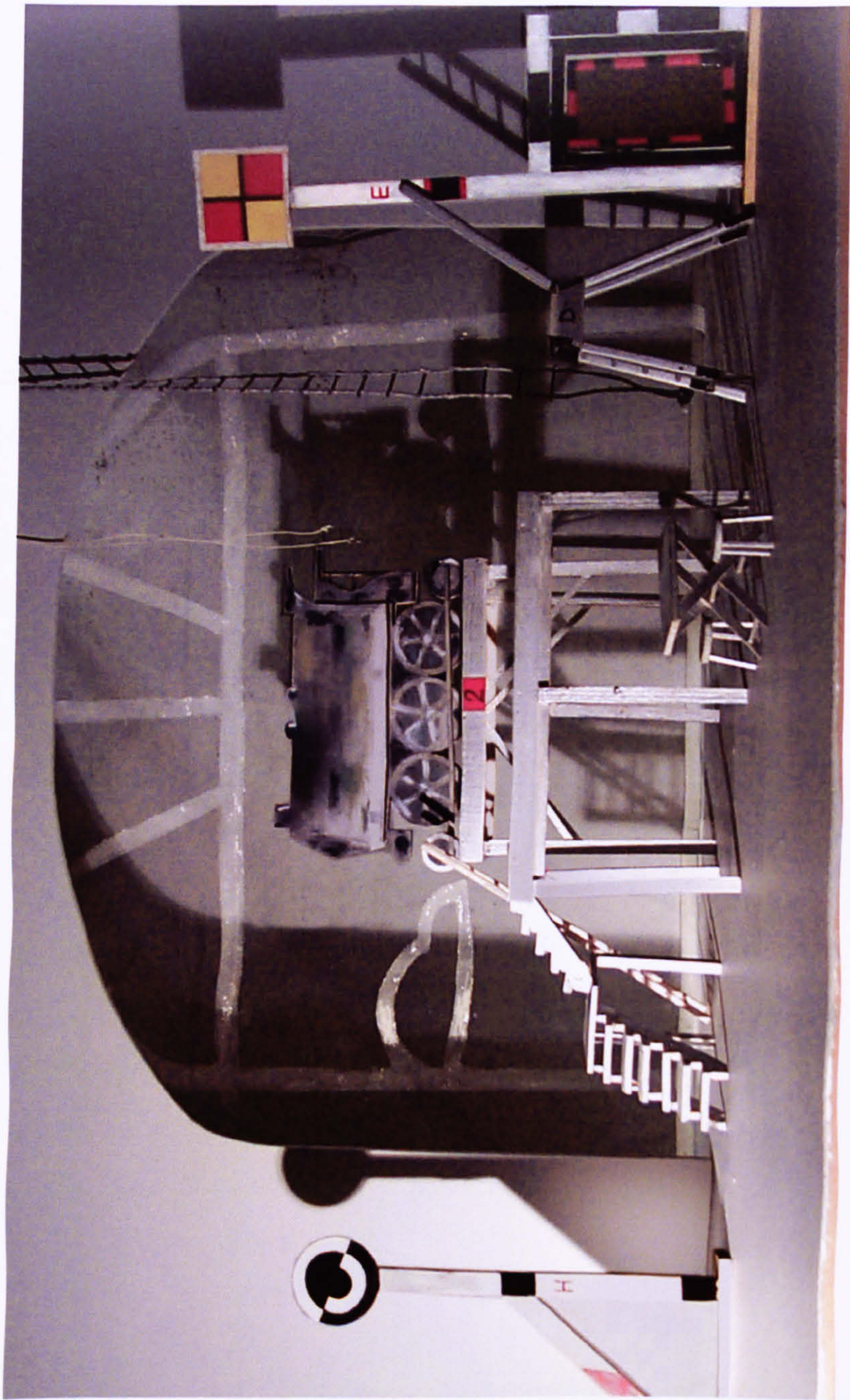
The reader is referred back to the introduction, section 3.2 for a discussion of methodology relating to the production of the study's model.

The study's own model has enabled an examination of Jakulov's designs in three dimensions. It has been used primarily as a vehicle for exploration in the research process; it has accompanied the development of the research as a tool, rather than being a finished product emerging after the research. Above all, it has been a practical forum for exploring and interpreting Jakulov's intended set in 1925 and some interpretations of the production set as an adaptation.

The work on the study's model began by rebuilding and exploring the set parts on Jakulov's model in terms of their construction, their movement/action potential and visual qualities. Descriptions of the study's interpretations of individual elements have been given above. This section is therefore, concerned with the study's overall explorations and interpretation of the settings for the two acts.

Fig 4.11 shows the study's explorations of Act 1 as indicated by Jakulov's model. It is difficult on a model however, to present the 'cinematic' nature of the study's interpretation of how this part of the action was envisaged. We have to imagine how in a theatre the central gauze in front of the train could be partially opaque, and how the train, possibly with speculators on board, could be more

FIGURE 4.11



The study's model showing the basic setting for Act 1 as indicated by the 1925 materials.

dramatically emphasised via lighting, and made to emerge and be revealed and concealed.

The use of different weaves of theatrical gauzes would give a far greater control than could be explored on the study's model⁷². It would be possible for example, to make the painted cloud effect on the gauze appear and disappear by selective lighting⁷³. However, even limited explorations of lighting the gauze on the study's model revealed the 'cinematic' potential of the set and the design's capacity to 'play' with illusion while maintaining its basic anti-naturalistic theatrical integrity.

In terms of the evidence for the 'cinematic' aspect to staging, the study has found support both from Kochno's descriptions and from the reviews in relation to act 2. Kochno writes that the ballet was "*doubly Soviet*" in that "*it drew its inspiration from the revolutionary picturesque*" while bringing into play the processes fashionable in the USSR, the constructivist method..."⁷⁴. The study has concluded that what it has called the set's 'cinematic' aspect could relate to this idea of the '*revolutionary picturesque*'. What is clear is that the critics in 1927 were visually transported by the use of lighting, gauze and depth effects. While they do not actually describe this in terms of stage effects, the results of those stage effects are apparent. One critic wrote for example: "*The stage is filled with rising tiers and receding vistas of workmen, heaving and hewing, ascending and descending...*"⁷⁵. The study's explorations of Jakulov's model indicates that this potential was originally intended to be exploited throughout Act 1, starting with the silhouettes for the prologue (described in the scenario) and running through the act with the 'Arrival of the Train' scene.

⁷² It was difficult to find a suitable way of modeling gauze. The study finally opted for bridal netting painted with matt undercoat to remove the shine and add 'weight'. The painted effects were then layered on top using emulsion. Jakulov used something much coarser. The black and white photograph indicates that Jakulov may have sown fabric onto the gauze rather than painted it; but this is not clear.

⁷³ The study is grateful for the advice of theatre producer Michael Friend in relation to the potential of theatrical gauze.

⁷⁴ Kochno, (1954) p.274.

⁷⁵ The Sunday Pictorial, July 10th 1927 p.9

Figs. 4.12 - 4.15 show the study's suggested interpretations of the production set for Act 1 and Act 2, based on set parts from the model and descriptions. Trying to fulfill all review descriptions simply revealed the difficulties of interpretation, and descriptions are not in themselves clear enough to be a sound basis for any idea of reproducing the production set as it was in 1927. The study's versions are therefore, based on an interpretation of the source materials as a whole, and then on a thematic interpretation of the nature of the work. Within the limitations of working on a model, they explore and suggest possibilities. For the 'red and white gates' indicated by the reviews as part of Act 1 (see Appendix 14), the study has used the general shape and construction of two unspecified objects on Jakulov's model, see 'screens' on **fig. 4.1**, using red as a 'railway signal' colour and shape as on other parts of Jakulov's model. It has opted to use tin plate for the insides and has roughened the appearance in keeping with the idea of a railway goods yard⁷⁶. It has also improvised a basic factory chimney that two reviews indicate was part of the set for Act 1⁷⁷. The study found that reducing the objects on stage enhanced the sense of closure and the rather drab grey set experienced by the critics, and that the design was adaptable within its basic principles.

The study has improvised wheels, pistons and levers⁷⁸ for Act 2 and suggests that the likely place for these objects is the back platform. The pistons on the back platform reintroduces an element of the earlier locomotive and the study's structure of pistons and wheels was based on the combined idea of the train and the Milling Machine, both of which were originally located on the back platform for Act 1 and Act 2 respectively in the 1925 materials. With levers (based on the idea of levers from a railway signal box) also on the back platform, it becomes a 'centre of operations' as appears to have been envisaged in a literal way in the drawings.⁷⁹

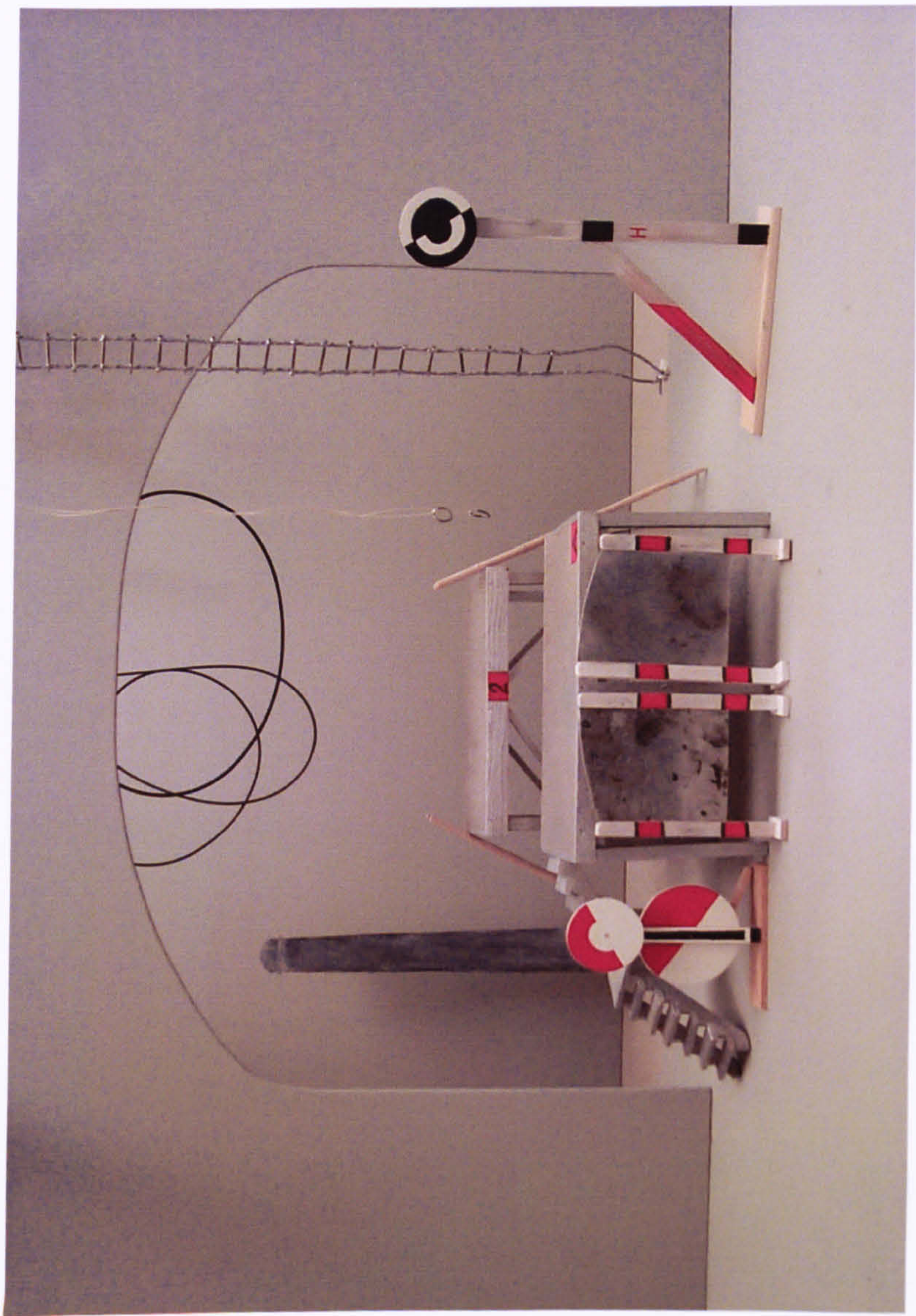
⁷⁶ Several critics read the scene in terms of a vague association with railways (see Appendix 14 B p. 172) and The Daily Telegraph, July 5th 1927, p.12, specifically described the setting as a railway goods yard.

⁷⁷ See Appendix 14 B p.172

⁷⁸ Described by Massine, Grigoriev, and some critics. See Appendix 14 B p.176.

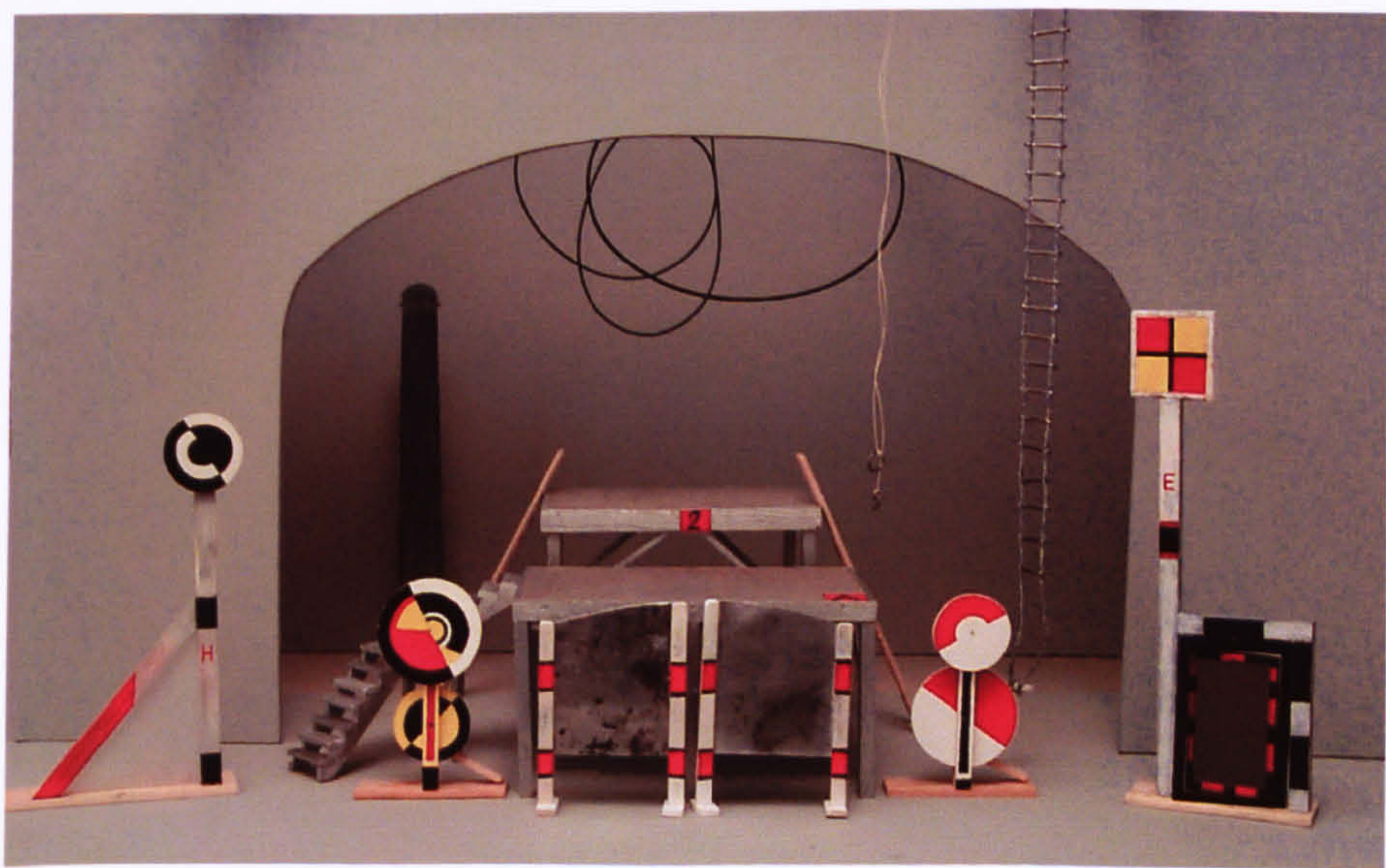
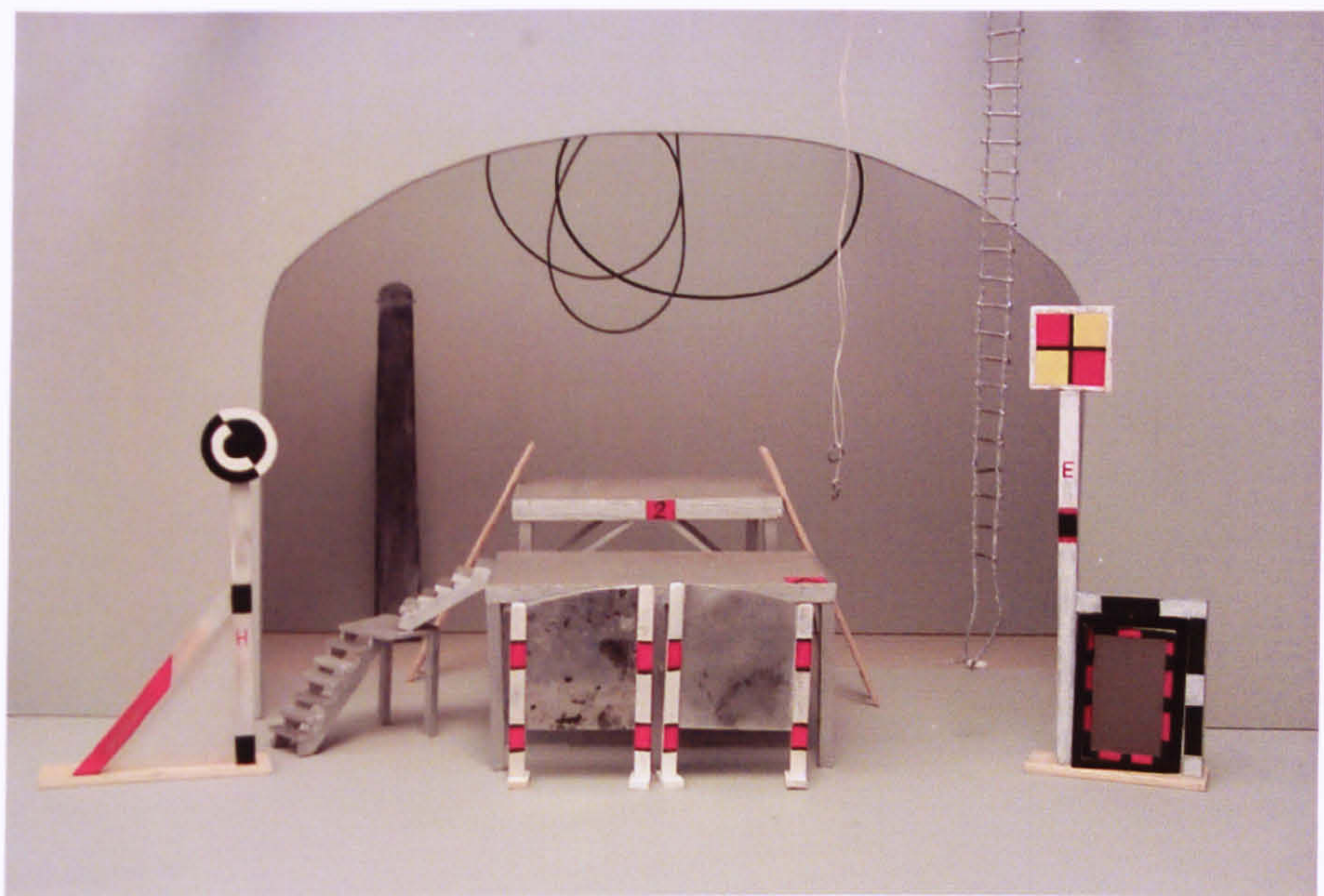
⁷⁹ In the annotations for Drawing D for example, Jakulov envisages a turning gear wheel on the back platform that puts the set in motion. The study has assumed that the desire to actually manually operate the set from onstage was abandoned due to the practical difficulties involved. It has also assumed that this had been abandoned by the model stage of development.

FIGURE 4.12



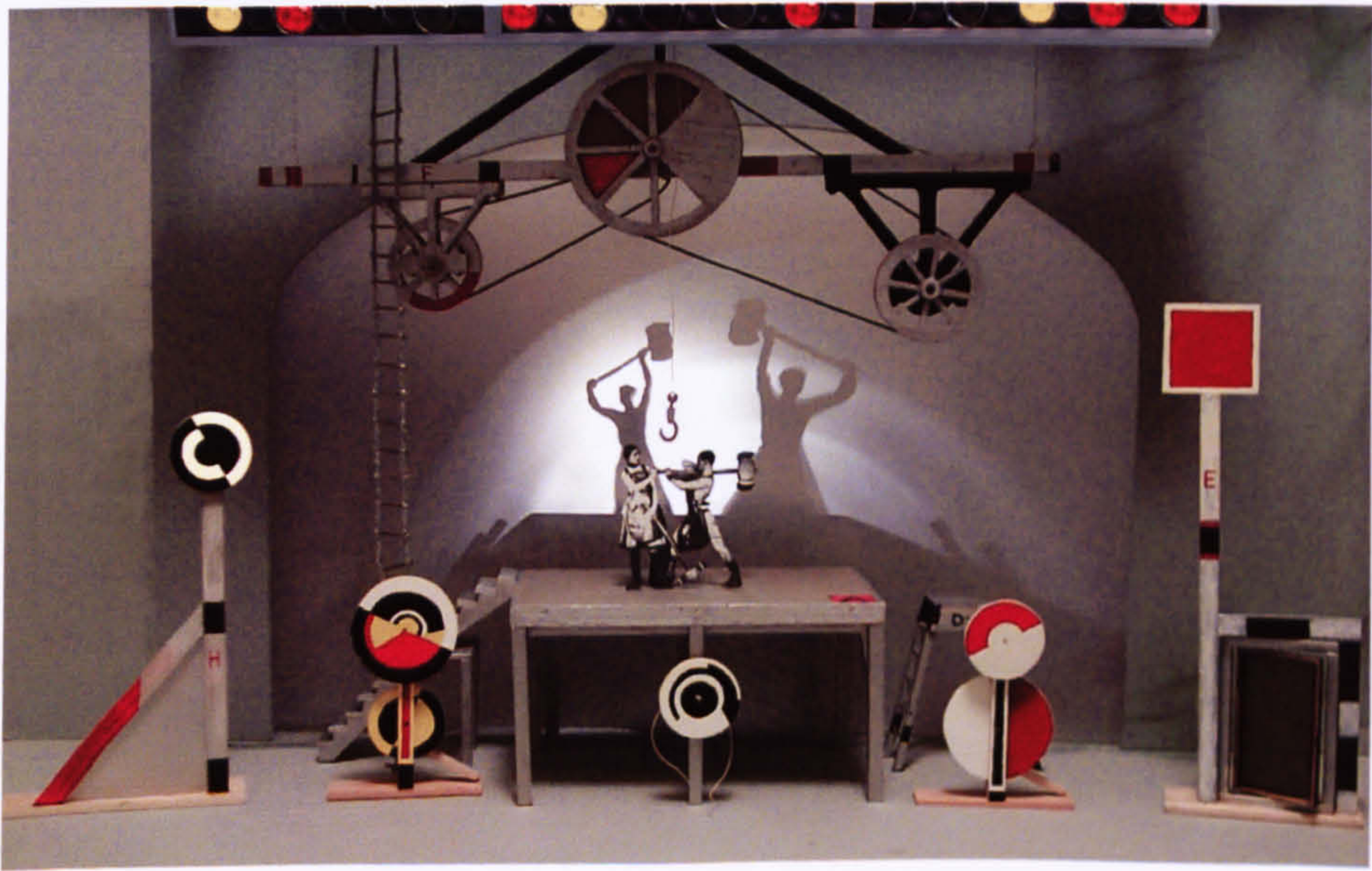
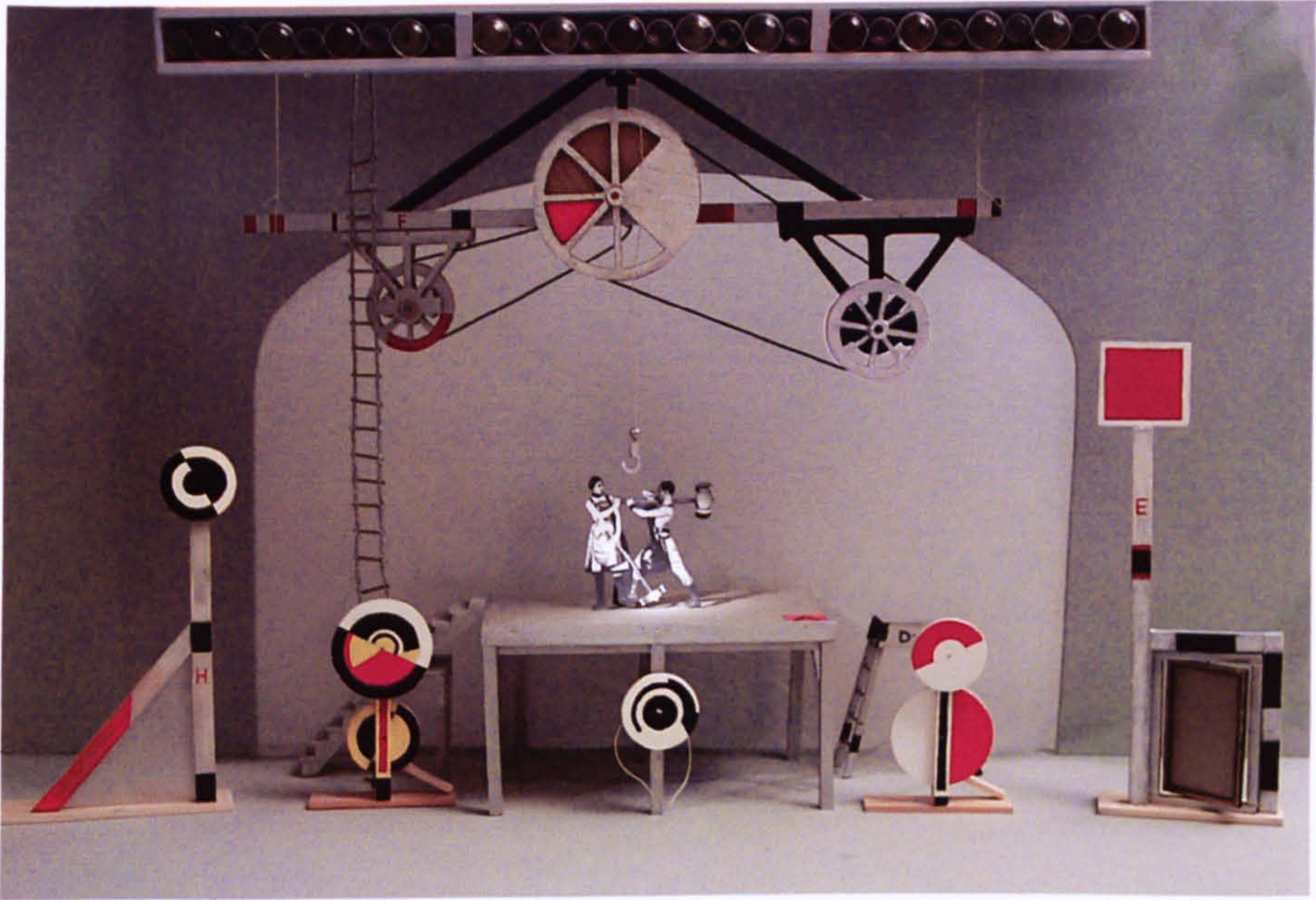
The study's model showing a possibility for Act 1 based on all source materials.

FIGURE 4.13



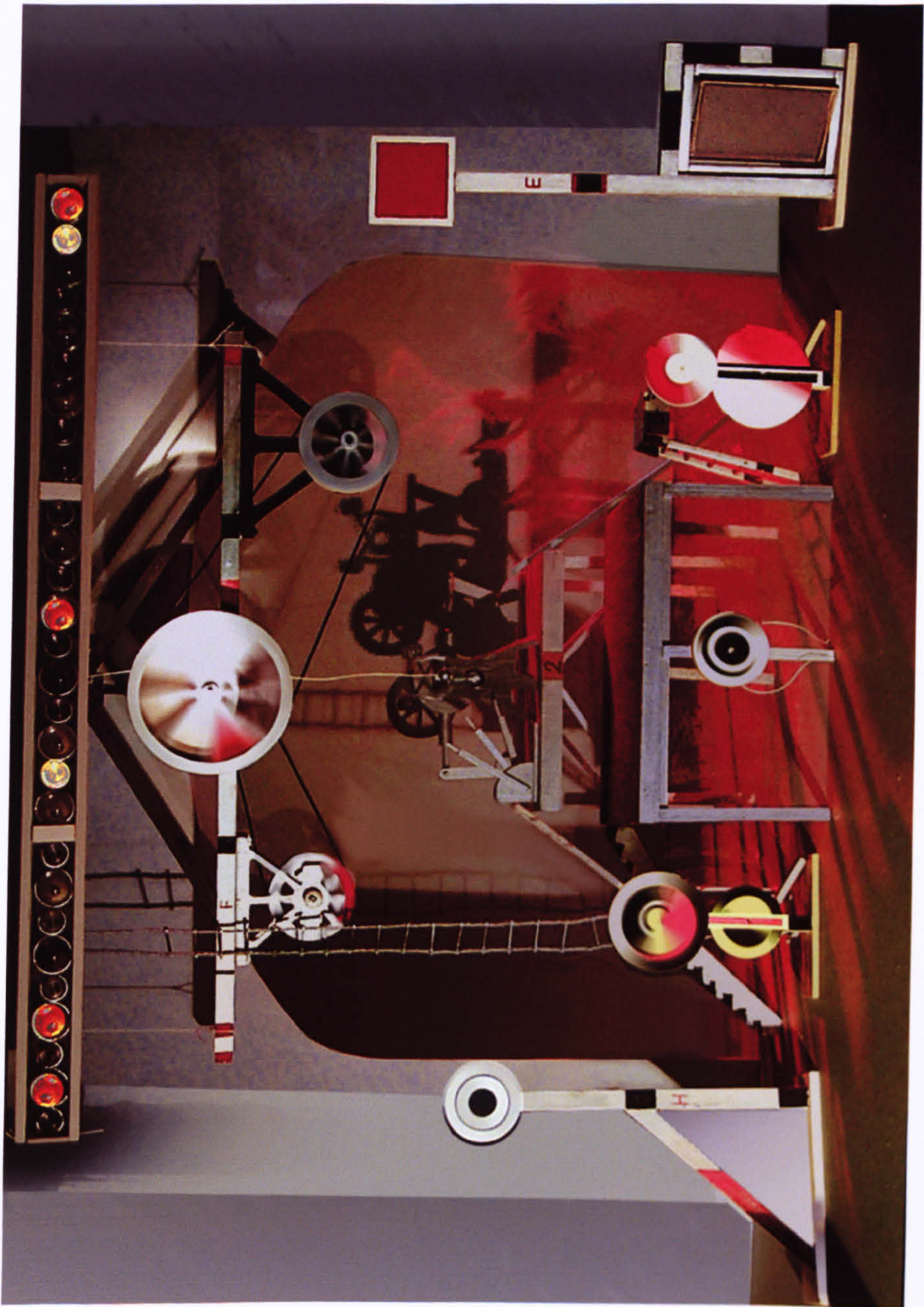
The study's model exploring different possibilities for Act 1.

FIGURE 4.14



The study's model exploring different possibilities for Act 2.

FIGURE 4.15



The study's model exploring possibilities for Act 2.
The image has been manipulated using Adobe Photoshop 5.0 to suggest the motion of wheels, and to illuminate individual signal lights.

The study began by discovering that the model's train was probably not on the performance set, but at the end, the 'presence' of the train, back on the back platform as pistons, wheels and levers, and in terms of the 'tracks' through space structured by the stage objects⁸⁰, appeared to be everywhere on the set. The train itself, as part of the narrative of the 1925 materials, may be a contingent feature, but its essence is thematic.

The study's model has introduced the 'Overhead Wheels', the gauze, the 'Machine Tools with Pedals, and the 'Rim of Signal Lights' for Act 2. It has also placed two ladders on either side of the back platform to enable ascent and descent. When lit, this also adds to the depth effects by casting silhouettes on to the back drop giving the impression of further layers to the action.

One of the main problems arising for the study's model has been in terms of the amount of space used and the surface appearance of the objects. Again this relates to the question of authenticity. As discussed in the Introduction, the study adhered to the proportions calculated from a reverse perspective drawing of the Sotheby's photograph of the surviving model. It also had the dimensions of the theatres it was performed in enabling an approximate calculation of the depth available. The question arises however, as to how far the cramped conditions imposed by perhaps a limitation in the function of the model, and then by the stages available, is a part of the design. In the end the study's model has not imposed a strict adherence to the space around the setting or between objects. The study has concluded that in an actual reconstruction, adhering to the principle of authenticity to the extent of replicating the original staging conditions would be misplaced⁸¹. Even adhering to the proportions of the original model assumes that Jakulov would not have changed this if and when involved in the actual production of the set.⁸² In terms of the objects on stage,

⁸⁰ It is clear that the dancers had to move along horizontal planes on different layers of the stage space, or vertically up and down ladders; the objects and gauzes do not permit movement from front to back.

⁸¹ Constructivist stagings were, after all, envisaged as free standing in a way that would enable them to change location, even moving out onto the street.

⁸² Replicating Jakulov's model on a larger scale may give rise to problems that have not surfaced for the study's model.

the study has concluded that Jakulov's design is quite adaptable within certain parameters, providing the thematic, stylistic and spatial organisational elements are maintained.

6. Conclusions

Based on a combination of the 1925 materials and descriptions of the production set, the study has reached conclusions as to the nature of Jakulov's designs. The production of the study's model has enabled the exploration of source materials and has therefore, contributed to these conclusions. The study's interpretation of the evidence is that the evolution of the design was away from the playful, circus like aspect that forms an element of the model and towards a more stark visual contrast between the acts, and that this reflected an overall shift in dramatic theme and quality in the action. There are however, basic elements and principles of the set that can be found across the source materials; the study has attempted to define and elucidate these as the constitutive elements of the set design.

Jakulov's designs clearly need to be realised theatrically in order to be fully appreciated. It became increasingly clear to the study for example, that, though the interaction of structure, light and gauze, space in Jakulov's design is organised and orchestrated, and is as much of a 'construction' as the objects. There are spaces within spaces, and the lighting plan, and indeed all the source materials, point to a layered stage space. Three layers back and three layers up are the planes, or tracks, through which the dance, like the engine that animates the design, can move. When seen in this way, the sense of the stage becomes not cluttered but organised and structured, and the potential interactions of dance and the design become legible.

In exploring Jakulov's model the study found that to some extent the set appears to play with the very idea of theatrical representation. There is a curious balance between on the one hand a theatrical factory and on the other an industrial theatre set. The revolving doors, mobile stairs that look like a giant chair, and rotating set parts emphasise a circus like theatricality and yet the daunting size of the

platforms, the use of depth effects, the looming presence of the overhead wheels and transmission belts, and the use of objects from 'real life' such as the train, reaches for a different aesthetic.

Although the ballet abandoned the train scene, where Jakulov appears to have been moving towards the 'picturesque' or 'cinematic', there can be little doubt that the production's visually powerful evocation of the factory moved further towards this approach than was indicated in the 1925 scenario. Massine's use of 45 dancers on stage for the finale clearly contributed to a powerful evocation.

One critic wrote:

*"Men and women in all stages of hurry and perturbation toiled and moiled, shifted heavy weights about, rained steam-hammer blows on huge bars of imaginary steel, tried to look like pistons, connecting rods, cams, and differentials, grew hot, and never, never smiled... it came off hugely, grimly."*⁸³

The power of the illusion is clear, and yet the imaginary factor is stressed not concealed⁸⁴; the steel is imaginary and Massine's dancers imitate machine parts rather than use them as was the stress of the original scenario. In some ways therefore, this balance is present throughout the source materials but emerges and reemerges in different realisations from the drawings through to the production. The idea of transformation is clear too, from the sense of the drab and dull to the flashing lights, moving set parts and flaming colours of the finale.

The study has concluded that one of the key aspects of Jakulov's designs is the balance between the 'picturesque' and the anti-naturalistic, and between the use of abstraction and representation⁸⁵. In its fascinating interaction of the thematic,

⁸³ *The Daily Mail*, July 5th 1927, p.9

⁸⁴ This approach can be found elsewhere in Soviet productions of the period. For example, Souritz, (1980) p. 121 notes the description of Foregger's scene entitled 'The Train' reproduced in 1923 from *The New York Times*: "at first the dancers depicted passengers on the platform; in the darkness they stood on sheets of iron and, to a roaring and crashing from behind the scenes, began to sway and, with their feet, to drum out a noise like the clatter of wheels. Meanwhile two of the performers gesticulated with lighted cigarettes so that sparks went flying in all direction as if from the smokestack of a locomotive....The reporter asserted that 'the audience has the full impression of a train thundering along an uneven Russian track.'"

⁸⁵ *The Saturday Review*, 16th July 1927, p.91-92, noted that the constructions are "symbols" that are either "unintelligible" or "sufficiently recognisable, like the factory-chimney and the lamp-post in *Le Pas d'Acier*, in which case they make the rest of the constructions look rather ridiculous."

the stylistic and the spatial-organisational approach, Le Pas d'Acier relates to Soviet approaches to staging in the 1920s and the profound influence of Constructivism on the development of scenic design.

CONCLUSIONS

"...after a few shy whistles from our ill-fated émigrés, from the first moments of the show applause burst out. This applause went on throughout the whole production. It was without doubt Jakulov, the most Soviet of all practitioners, who had imbued the production with a most original, authentic Russian flavour, and the audience called him back 8 times."

A.V.Lunacharsky.¹

This study has located, presented and explored a body of source materials relating to the Diaghilev Ballets Russes production of Le Pas d'Acier (1927). Through practical reconstruction of Jakulov's set design, in model form, alongside close analysis of source materials, this study has explored the nature of Jakulov's conception and designs and the extent to which the ballet as a whole was formed by Jakulov's ideas and approach to staging.

The development of the ballet's creative process between 1925-1927, that emerged through this research, has enabled interpretation of source materials that have previously been unexplained, in terms of their original nature, probable function, and place in the development of the ballet. The study's recovery of the 1925 scenario and other unpublished source materials enabled a study of the ballet's initial development by Prokofiev and Jakulov. Through the study's collection of contemporary reviews and other accounts relating to the ballet's performance in 1927, the ballet's initial conception has been discussed in relation to an exploration of the realised ballet under the directorship of Massine.

Within the limitations imposed by the available source materials, which are by no means a complete record of any aspect of the work, the study has interpreted and discussed the evolution of the design in the production process. It has identified and explored qualitative differences between the more playful, life affirming 'Ursignol' of 1925, and the representation of harsher realities in Le Pas d'Acier, or 'The Step of Steel', in 1927. The study has argued that the points of difference and departure between the 1925 materials and records of the 1927 production are of

¹ This quotation was supplied by E. Souritz in an unpublished paper in Russian sent to the author in 1996. Souritz gives the reference as: Lunacharsky, A.V.: 'Politika' i 'publika', Krasnaia panorama, 1928, No.33, August 12th p.9-10.

considerable interest in themselves, in terms of the development of the ballet and in terms of understanding the motivations and approaches of Prokofiev and Jakulov and those of Diaghilev and Massine. The study has also discussed the possible relationship of the ballet's adaptations between 1925-1927 to wider contextual developments in the theatre of the Soviet Union.

Several practical and theoretical issues concerning the possibilities and problems of the ballet's reconstruction have arisen alongside the study's reconstruction of Jakulov's designs. Through the interaction of archival research, contextual study, and a three dimensional practical exploration of the set in model form, the study has considered the visual and theatrical potential of Jakulov's designs and their approach to space. It has found not one authentic original realisation of the design, but evidence of an evolving design around consistent basic principles, at different stages of the collaborative process. The study has discussed the practical and theoretical problems this presents in terms of reconstructing Jakulov's set, and has attempted to identify the set's constituent features, its organisational principles and its adaptability. It has concluded that reconstruction, in drawing on source materials that relate to different versions of the design, and in the absence of visual records of the production set, could potentially result in different possible versions. In terms of 'authenticity' the study has concluded that potential variants in terms of reconstruction relate to the adaptability of the design, but that while there may be several 'right' solutions, source materials also enable potential judgements as to what may be 'wrong', or inauthentic.

Although Russian dance historian Elizabeth Souritz has taken this ballet very seriously in her writings², in Western accounts there is little to encourage the idea that Le Pas d'Acier was of much interest in itself or that its designs were anything more than Diaghilev's pursuit of novelty. Research is confronted not only by a lack of records and knowledge of the work, but also by a wall of dismissals from company memoirs, and a tendency to ignore or attach a lack of value to the work in dance historiography. Yet Diaghilev claimed in his interview on the ballet in

² See Souritz, (1980). In discussing the influence of Constructivism on Soviet ballet, Souritz notes that Le Pas d'Acier appears to have been the most Constructivist of ballets staged in the 1920s, with the ensuing irony that it was staged not in Moscow but in Paris.

1927, that he regarded Le Pas d'Acier as the most important ballet he had ever given next to Stravinsky's Les Noces. Whether or not Diaghilev was mistaken in this evaluation in terms of the long term history of ballet, this study hopes to have demonstrated that Le Pas d'Acier has much to tell us about the aesthetic complexities of Soviet theatre in the 1920s, the nature of Jakulov's approach to the ballet's themes and scenic design, and about the role of design in Diaghilev's Ballets Russes during the 1920s.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Research

The study does not claim to have located all surviving source materials on Le Pas d'Acier. The study has been restricted to Western sources and while there is no evidence of significant holdings on the ballet in the former Soviet Union, letters sent from Jakulov in Paris during 1925 and 1927 to his friends and family are certainly an unexplored potential source. It is also possible that more material is available on the ballet in the West, perhaps held in private collections. Several reviews from the Paris press have been identified by the study but not located, and it is possible that other undiscovered coverage of the ballet exists that has not come to light during the course of this research.

This study has been restricted to the study of the ballet as a Western phenomenon and this imposes an obvious limitation in terms of contextual research. The study has had limited access to materials relating to Soviet theatrical Constructivism and very limited access to sources for Jakulov's work as a Soviet theatre designer. The latter in particular is a clear area of interest for further research. An understanding of Jakulov's approach and context would undoubtedly be enabled by study in Russian archives and particularly by study at the National Gallery of Armenia in Erevan. This study suggests that Jakulov is a neglected artist and that research in Erevan, and into his connection with other artists of the era who interacted with dance, such as the Delaunays and Leger, would be of interest to several subject areas.

Material published in Notes et Documents gives many indications of how and why Jakulov's work merits further exploration. His set designs, for example, are likely

to have been a great deal more influential in Russia and in the West than has been acknowledged. Victor Beyer states that the influence of Le Pas d'Acier can be seen for example, in Alexander Calder's design for Henri Pichette's Nuclea in 1952³, and it has been argued that theatrical Constructivism began with Jakulov's designs for Café Pittoresque⁴. Yet, by the 1970s Notes and Documents complained of how Western historiography of the era was accrediting the designs of Café Pittoresque to Tatlin. The term the 'Jakulovisation of the Theatres' that appears in Russian literature on the subject points, in itself, to the influence and popularity of his work. It is also interesting to note that he features more prominently in Western literature from closer to the time. Sheldon Cheyney for example, writing in 1927, notes that "*Jakulov and Popova are usually named as the most important early practitioners*" of Constructivism in the theatre⁵. Michael Hoog, the curator of the Musée d'Art Moderne, writing in 1967 when the museum acquired an early abstract painting by Jakulov, concluded: "*Jakulov..who rightfully figures amongst the pioneers of abstract painting, which was still quite young in 1913, deserved to be rescued from oblivion.*"⁶ However, the decision to return Jakulov's works to Armenia in the 1970s has meant that his work has remained largely inaccessible to Western scholars.

This study has found Jakulov's designs for Le Pas d'Acier to be a fascinating balance of formal approaches that can be related to different strands of Soviet theatre during the 1920s. It became increasingly clear however, that lighting was a particularly important element of the design, and further research into the nature of lighting in Soviet stagings may enable a better understanding of this aspect of theatrical Constructivism.

Another area of interest for further research concerns the influence on the designs on the choreography. Although Massine's choreography is almost undoubtedly entirely lost, there is much that can be inferred from the interactive nature of the design and action, and from the descriptions that have survived. It is possible that

³ Notes et Documents, Paris, March 1969, p.5-6.

⁴ Kahn-Magomedov (1995) p. 216, quoting I.Sokolov from Teatr i Muzyka, 1922, no.12 p.287.

⁵ Cheyney, 'Constructivism', Theatre Arts Monthly, Nov.1927, p.860

⁶ Hoog, M. 'La 'composition' de G.Yakoulov appartenant au Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris', Notes et Documents, May 1967, pp.3-5.

the nature of Jakulov's design for Le Pas d'Acier influenced the development of Massine's architectural approach and use of the corps en masse in his later 'Symphonic' ballets. This study suggests that it would be interesting to explore the possibilities of a re-invention of Massine's choreography for parts of the ballet based on a study of its influences, Massine's style and approach in the late 1920s, and surviving source materials.

Several theoretical issues emerged relating to the nature of interpretation and reconstruction that could not be explored within the confines of this particular study, but are possible ways forward for this research. An issue arising that has been of particular interest has been the effect of the practical component on the whole approach of the study. The need to produce a reconstruction of the set design undoubtedly influenced the approach to source materials, moving further away from contextual narrative towards detailed analysis. The study has not been able to explore this as an issue, but it sees a potentially interesting area of research in terms of how dance historiography has evolved, and how it is being affected by the growing centrality of reconstruction in all areas of approaching the past.

A further issue that has to some extent been present from the beginning of the study, is the problem of identity. The study considers itself as 'dance research', not simply because the object of study is a ballet, but because it has emerged from a background in dance study, and is addressed in particular to the area of dance historiography. However, it has been situated in a department of Art and Design, and has worked through scenographic rather than choreographic reconstruction; it also has clear affinities with theatre studies. The study's sense of not clearly belonging in any one disciplinary approach, has led to the conviction that there may be a need for arts historiography to evolve a more interdisciplinary strand in terms of establishing the inter relationships of the different arts. A work such as Le Pas d'Acier is an example of how historically interesting material can be neglected perhaps largely because of conventional disciplinary boundaries and approaches. An area of potentially interesting research would be to explore the limitations and possibilities of different kinds of interdisciplinarity on the historiography of the performing arts.

There are also many possible areas for further research relating to the ballet itself, its themes and context. In particular the ballet could be explored in the broader context of the contemporary cultural representations of industrial modernity. The images on which Le Pas d'Acier drew remained resonant for some time in the Soviet Union even though Constructivism itself was condemned. In 1931 for example, Russian society was likened to a locomotive with the Communist Party as its 'Drive Shaft',⁷ and in 1934 Soviet Society was described as a 'Great Conveyor Belt.'⁸ The themes of the ballet relate to explorations of labour and industrialisation across the arts and comparative study of realisations in different aesthetic approaches, including the film Metropolis (1926) and Chaplin's Modern Times (1936) could be of interest.

All three stagings of Prokofiev's Le Pas d'Acier relate to the theme of industrialisation and its effects on society and the soul of Man, that has been a major preoccupation of the twentieth century. The study would have liked to have explored all three productions and suggests that this would be an interesting area for further research. The original staging however, is the only one that relates directly to Soviet society in the 1920s and to have come directly from a Soviet approach to staging of the 1920s. It is also of course, the production which gave rise to Prokofiev's music. It is possible that an analysis of Prokofiev's score in conjunction with the 1925 scenario would be of interest in terms of interpreting Prokofiev's thematic intentions and musical references. In terms of Prokofiev in particular, the ballet's political history, in terms of how it has been seen, praised and condemned, may also have something to add to an exploration of the mutability of artistic representation in changing political contexts.

Overall, this study hopes to have enabled further discussion and interpretation of Jakulov's work and the ballet as a whole, and to have shown that Le Pas d'Acier is of considerable and neglected historical interest.

⁷ Quoted in Clark, T. (1993) p.36 from Vedushchaya os, 1931,

⁸ *ibid*, quoted from Bolshoi konveier, 1931.

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