

BY RONALD MEYER

# THE DANCERS

## A PHOTO EXHIBITION BY NINA ALOVERT

Nina Alover's "The Dancers," a brief survey of her dance photographs beginning in the mid-60s and early '70s in Leningrad and ending with work from the twenty-first century taken in New York, Paris, and St. Petersburg, was on view at the Harriman Institute during the fall 2013 semester. Reviewing "The Dancers" for the *Wall Street Journal*, William Meyers writes: "Her pictures are distinguished by their style and precision; like sports photographers, dance photographers must anticipate and have the instantaneous reflexes to capture it. Again and again, the dancers in her photos are caught at the apogee of their leap and seem to be floating in air."

Alover, a native of Leningrad, began her career as a photographer of the ballet in the 1960s, when she documented the early performances of future stars Nikita Dolgushin, Natalya Makarova, Alla Osipenko, and Yury Soloviev. In 1968 Alover photographed the young prodigy Mikhail Baryshnikov. When the two met soon afterward, Alover made a present of the photographs and the two became fast friends.

Alover, with her mother and two children, immigrated to the United States in 1977. She faced the usual obstacles adjusting to her new life, even though Baryshnikov, who had defected to the West three years earlier, helped to smooth the way. Soon after her

arrival, Alover's photographs appeared in the New York Russian daily *New Russian Word*, and she later became a regular contributor to influential dance publications such as *Dance Magazine*, *Pointe*, and *Ballet Review*.

Alover's first book, *Baryshnikov in Russia*, was published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston in 1984 and was soon translated into many languages. This was followed by another seven books, published in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union, devoted to dancers Vladimir Malakhov, Yulia Makhalina, and choreographer Boris Eifman, among others. In addition, her work appears in a number of volumes about dancers and the dance. Photographs by Alover are in the collections of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, the Theater Museum (St. Petersburg), the Public Library (St. Petersburg), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and several private collections.

"The Dancers" is part of the Institute's ongoing series of exhibits of art from and about the region that has been running under the direction of Associate Director Alla Rachkov for more than a decade. The exhibit was curated by Natasha Sharymova (New York Plus Plus) who earlier brought to the Harriman shows of photographs of the writers Joseph Brodsky and Sergei Dovlatov, the latter of which also showcased photographs by Alover. □





Diana Vishneva, Studio, Mariinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, 1996 (photo by Nina Alover)

Opposite page (from left to right): Natalia Makarova and Mikhail Baryshnikov, *Carmen* (Bizet/Petit), American Ballet Theatre, Washington, D.C., 1981; Vladimir Malakhov, *Dying Swan* (Saint-Saens/Mauro de Candia), Mariinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, 2011; Diana Vishneva and Marcelo Gomes, *Lady of the Camellias* (Chopin/Neumeier), Rehearsal, Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, 2011; Mikhail Baryshnikov, *Daphnis and Chloe* (Ravel/Murdmaa), An Evening with M. Baryshnikov, Kirov Theatre, Leningrad, 1974 (all photos by Nina Alover)