

WINNING WOMEN

Maya Plisetskaya

- From the beginning, Plisetskaya was a different kind of ballerina. She spent a very short time in the corps de ballet after graduation and was quickly named a soloist. Plisetskaya was known for the height of her jumps, her extremely flexible back, the technical strength of her dancing, and her charisma. She excelled both in adagio and allegro, which is very unusual in dancers.

Despite her acclaim, Plisetskaya was not treated well by the Bolshoi management. Her family had been purged during the Stalinist era, and she had a defiant personality. As a result, Plisetskaya was not allowed to tour outside the country for sixteen years after she had become a member of the Bolshoi.

In 1958, Plisetskaya received the title of the People's Artist of the USSR. That same year, she married the young composer Rodion Shchedrin, whose subsequent fame she shared. Wanting to dance internationally, she rebelled and defied Soviet expectations. On one occasion, to gain the attention and respect from some of the country's leaders, she gave one of the most powerful performances of her career, in Swan Lake, for her 1956 concert in Moscow. Homans describes that "extraordinary performance:"

