

Leon Bakst - 'Scheherazade' - 1910

Social Influences - (meaning 'public' - Politics, Fashion Identity, Consumerism, People Opinion/Choice)



The colourful and oriental costumes in Scheherazade defied the stiff conventions and stereotypical ballet costumes of the time and the public and theatre goers were buying into this revolutionary change.

Influential costume designs such as The Odalisque's and Shah Zeman spilled over into fashion and interior design, sweeping away drab colours and introducing looser clothes.

The ornate and bejeweled costumes led to a heightened demand for rubies, emeralds, jade and corals over more traditional diamonds as the public acquired a new taste for these vibrantly hued gems.

Orient inspired dress was commonly seen on fashionable women lounging on large exotic floor cushions in rooms draped with colourful, embroidered curtains.

Bakst's revolutionary costume designs in Scheherazade allowed emotive expression within design and invited the audience to understand the emotive qualities of the characters through the use of colour, pattern and form.

Cultural Influences - (meaning 'artistic' - Religion & Tradition & Art/Design Movement)

Bakst dared to venture beyond the simple and traditional ballet costume designs of the time (see right) to create the colourful and visually striking costumes pieces for Scheherazade.

Scheherazade was inspired by 'The Arabian Nights' and Bakst took many artistic influences from Eastern and folk culture, including traditional Arabic patterns that featured on The Chief Eunuch's costume.

The Chief Eunuch and Shah Zeman costumes are an imagined orientalist mix of Ottoman and Persian styles, which the Parisian theatre going public had never seen before. They were enthralled by the colour, exoticism and barbarism that the costumes depicted.

Bakst's Scheherazade costumes coupled with entirely new music and dance used Eastern folk influences to actively encourage participation and reaction from the Western audience.

Bakst's costumes still influence today's designers. Karl Lagerfeld's 2011 pre-fall collection for Chanel took inspiration from Bakst's heavily gilded and embellished costumes.



('Little Dancer Aged Fourteen' 1880-81 by Edgar Degas')