

**Maya
Plisetskaya**



Maya Mikhaylovna

Plisetskaya (Russian: Ма́йя Миха́йловна Плисе́цкая; 20 November 1925 – 2 May 2015) was a Soviet-born ballet dancer, choreographer, ballet director, and actress, who held Spanish and Lithuanian citizenship. She danced during the Soviet era at the same time as Galina Ulanova, another famed Russian ballerina. In 1960 she ascended to Ulanova's former title as prima ballerina assoluta of the Bolshoi.





Plisetskaya studied ballet from age nine and first performed at the Bolshoi Theatre when she was eleven.



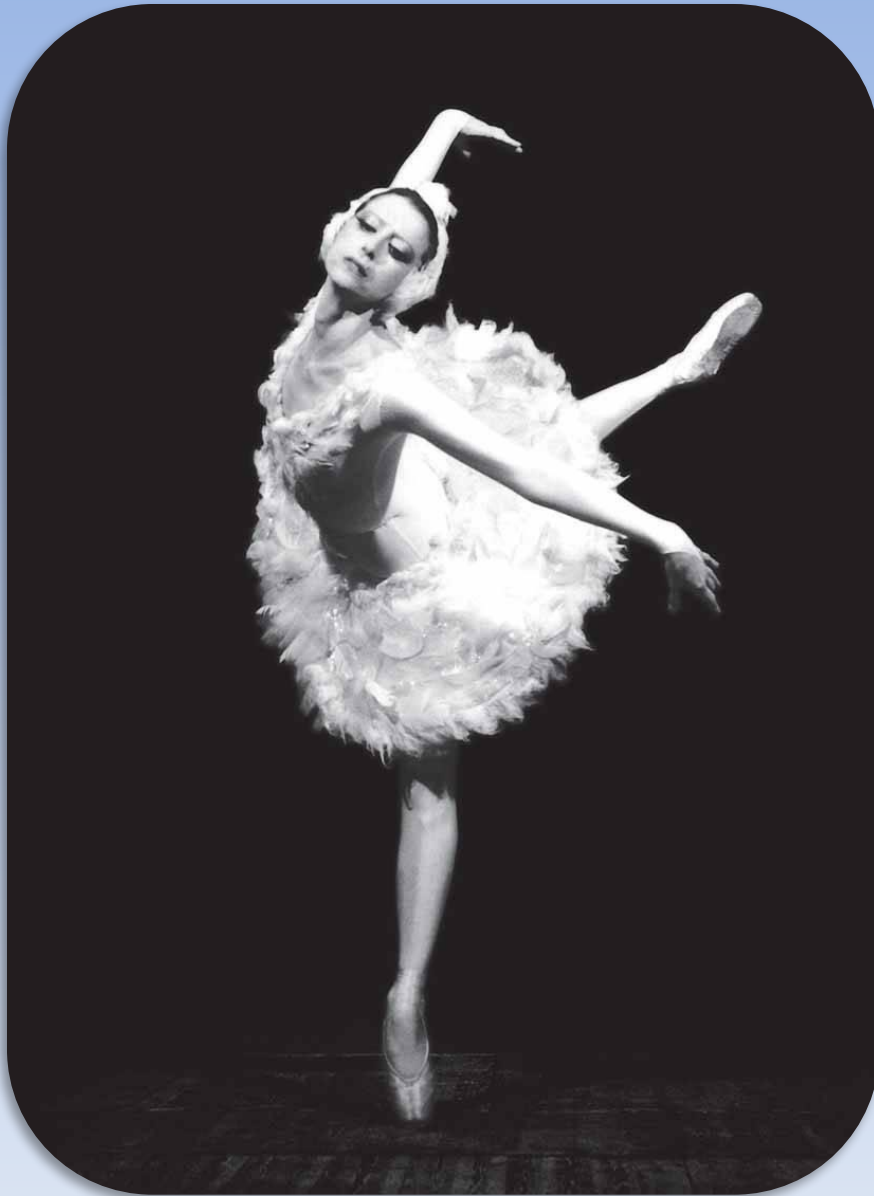
She joined the Bolshoi Ballet company when she was eighteen, quickly rising to become their leading soloist. Her early years were also marked by political repression, however, partly because her family was Jewish.



She was not allowed to tour outside the country for sixteen years after joining the Bolshoi. During those years, her fame as a national ballerina was used to project the Soviet Union's achievements during the Cold War. Premier Nikita Khrushchev, who lifted her travel ban in 1959, considered her "not only the best ballerina in the Soviet Union, but the best in the world."

As a member of the Bolshoi until 1990, her skill as a dancer changed the world of ballet, setting a higher standard for ballerinas both in terms of technical brilliance and dramatic presence. As a soloist, Plisetskaya created a number of leading roles, including Moiseyev's *Spartacus* (1958); Grigorovich's *The Stone Flower* (1959); Aurora in Grigorovich's *The Sleeping Beauty* (1963); Alberto Alonso's *Carmen Suite* (1967), written especially for her; and Maurice Bejart's *Isadora* (1976).





Among her most acclaimed roles was Odette-Odile in *Swan Lake* (1947). A fellow dancer stated that her dramatic portrayal of Carmen, reportedly her favorite role, "helped confirm her as a legend, and the ballet soon took its place as a landmark in the Bolshoi repertoire." Her husband, composer Rodion Shchedrin, wrote the scores to a number of her ballets.

Having become “an international superstar” and a continuous “box office hit throughout the world,” Plisetskaya was treated by the Soviet Union as a favored cultural emissary.



Beginning in 1994, she presided over the annual international ballet competitions, called *Maya*, and in 1996 she was named President of the Imperial Russian Ballet.



Plisetskaya died in Munich, Germany, on 2 May 2015 from a heart attack aged of 89.