NEWS RELEASE

Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts
Sandra Bent, Public Relations
(405) 325-5321

Exhibition Celebrating Ballets Russes Opens Oct. 6 at Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art

NORMAN— The University of Oklahoma School of Dance, OU Libraries and the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art are showcasing the Ballets Russes Special Collections and Archive and its connection to the University of Oklahoma with an array of exhibitions, lectures and an Oklahoma Festival Ballet production. Many events are open to the public with complimentary admission.

The public is invited to the complimentary exhibition opening at the museum at 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 6. From Diaghilev to Terekhov and Chouteau: An Exhibition of Material from the Ballets Russes Special Collections and Archive remains on display in the Ellen and Richard L. Sandor Gallery through Dec. 30. The exhibition opens alongside the museum's fall exhibition Picturing Indian Territory: 1819-1907 the same night.

The Ballets Russes, the pre-eminent ballet company of the early 20th century, was founded in 1909 by Russian impresario Sergei Diaghilev. Throughout the company's history, it was a who's who of famous artists that ensured the success of the company. Noted composers Strauss, Stravinsky, Ravel and Prokoviev wrote scores for the ballet company. Set designers included such renowned painters as Picasso, Matisse, Braque and Miró. Choreographers such as Balanchine, Fokine and Massine, and principal dancers Nijinsky, Karsavina and Danilova served as dominant figures in the ballet world. The company's cutting-edge productions forever changed audience expectations of ballet as theatre.

The Ballets Russes connection to the university comes from two of its principle dancers Yvonne Chouteau and Miguel Terekhov.
In 1943, Chouteau, one of Oklahoma’s American Indian ballerinas, joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo at the age 14. She toured with the company until it closed in 1956.

Terekhov joined de Basil’s Ballet Russe as a teenager in South America and later joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

Both came to OU as guest artists in 1961 and remained to establish one of the first fully accredited university dance programs in the United States. The department became the School of Dance in 1998 with Mary Margaret Holt as director.

In 2007 the School of Dance created the Ballets Russes Special Collections and Archive, a permanent collection of artifacts and personal histories from former members of the ballet company. The collections include correspondence, programs, clippings, diaries, scrapbooks, photographs and musical scores, as well as video resources, costume items and other ephemera. More than 40 former dancers with the Ballets Russes companies, as well as other donors, have entrusted their personal collections to the archive. The current and ongoing digitization project will make the holdings accessible to the general public.

The exhibition at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art on the OU Norman campus features a selection of works from the collection, including photographs, programs, costumes and other articles from the ballet troupe’s history.

Camille Hardy, noted dance critic, historian and scholar, joined the School of Dance faculty as professor of dance history and served on the steering committee to assist in the collection of photographs and oral histories.

To honor the Ballets Russes, University Theatre and School of Dance will present Oklahoma Festival Ballet, a program of world-renowned ballets from and inspired by the legendary ballet company. Oklahoma Festival Ballet will open at 8 p.m. Nov. 4, additional performances are scheduled at 8 p.m. Nov. 5, 10 and 11, and 3 p.m. Nov. 6 and 13. All performances will be held in the Elsie C. Brackett Theatre, 563 Elm Ave., on the OU Norman campus.

The production is a tribute to the memory of Chouteau. Highlights include Stravinsky's masterpiece, The Firebird; Pas de Quatre, originally danced for Queen Victoria by the four reigning ballerinas of the Romantic Era; a new version of the ballet that made Nijinsky famous, Spectre de la Rose; and a new piece Bouquet for Yvonne, in tribute to the memory of Chouteau. OU School of Dance faculty Pamela Bjerknes, Holt, Ilya Kozadayev and Clara Cravey Stanley choreograph and stage this program of legendary ballets.

Events are complimentary unless noted otherwise.

Schedule of events:
Oct. 4-Nov. 15 – Ballets Russes Exhibition, Bizzell Memorial Library, 401 W. Brooks St.


Oct. 14 – Lecture by Mary Jo Watson - "The Spirit of the Dance": Native American aspects of the Ballets Russes, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Library.


Advance purchase tickets for Oklahoma Festival Ballet are $25 for adult; $20 for senior adult, OU employee and military; and $10 for student, plus processing fee. Tickets at the door are $35 for adult and $15 for student, cash or check only. To purchase tickets online, go to theatre.ou.edu or call or visit the OU Fine Arts Box Office at (405) 325-4101, located at 500 W. Boyd St., in the Catlett Music Center, on the OU Norman campus.

For accommodations, please call the OU Fine Arts Box Office at (405) 325-4101.

###