

Almost as famous were the amorous liaisons Diaghilev found time to pursue with Nijinsky, Leonid Massine and Anton Dolin, among others, all the while bowling over dance audiences from Europe to the United

States.

To Tanner's surprise, he saw Dolin make his way to a seat in the theater the first time he did "Charlatan" for an audience in New York. It proved both a disconcerting and exhilarating experience.

"He sat in the front row, and I got through the first act somehow. During the second act, I got halfway through and he dropped his head, listening intently," he said.

In that second act, Tanner started to relate the story of when they took Nijinsky, who was

mad, backstage during a performance to try and jog him back into reality.

"I was describing this poignant and vivid scene, evoked by all the writers that I've read, and suddenly Dolin was shaking his head very slowly from side to side."

Unnerved completely, Tanner stopped the show.

"I said, 'I'm sorry Mr. Dolin, it's the best I can do on the basis of everything I've read,'" he said.

Then Dolin lifted his head and looked at Tanner.

"With faraway eyes, he said, 'No no, you've got it exactly right.'"

Tanner said that was all he needed.

"A premiere endorsement; Dolin had been there," he said. "I mean, he'd slept with Diaghilev for God's sake. He danced for him and loved him, and that was it for me."

# Daring Tanner is

## Larger-than-life performance

# top of the Fringe

## leads festival without borders

By Mike Steele  
Star Tribune Staff Writer

The Minnesota Fringe Festival is all about the unexpected, and about the last thing you'd expect in the rough-and-tumble fringe world is to see a superb veteran actor put on a polished and provocative one-man show that ranks up there with the best of the genre.

Tony Tanner, the British-born actor, dancer, choreographer and director, has been on Broadway, received Tony award nominations and performed in everything from splashy musicals to Shakespearean tragedy. Now he has shown up at this year's fringe with his one-man show, "Charlatan," a brilliant evocation of the life and times of the Russian ballet impresario Serge Diaghilev.

I admit to a taste for bravura acting. This is acting at its most bravura, acting that resonates from the mouth through the hands and down into agile legs and flitting feet that punctuate the imperious and grandiloquent sentences that roll out of his mouth for the better part of 90 minutes.

THIS IS obsession, and Tanner is a wonderfully skillful obsessive, deeply involved in his subject. His descriptions of Nijinsky in "Le Spectre de la Rose" and "The Afternoon of a Faun" are extraordinary, illustrated by Tanner's own body stretched out into famous Nijinsky poses as he describes each work.

This is a more open Diaghilev than the real one — speaking freely about his homosexuality, for instance, describing his conquering of Paris through sex and violence, acknowledging his manipulative skills and admitting above all that "I do need not to

be forgotten." It's a brilliant, larger-than-life era, and Diaghilev, all *effete esthete*, was the vortex around which it spun. Tanner makes him huge.

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