Helene Kirsova came to Australia in 1936 with the Monte Carlo Russian Ballet. Born Ellen Wittrup in Denmark, she had trained with Europe's leading ballet teachers and had reached prima ballerina status dancing with major European companies and working with choreographers such as Leonide Massine and Michel Fokine.

Kirsova received star billing for the 1936 Australian tour which was entrepreneured by Colonel W. de Basil. De Basil brought more companies to Australia in 1938 and 1940 which further opened up a world of exotic and dazzling ballet to Australian audiences.

The advent of these 'Ballets Russes' companies also had a lasting legacy in the form of members of the companies who elected to stay in Australia. Two of the most prominent of these were Edouard Borovansky and Helene Kirsova both of whom formed companies of their own which had lasting influences on the development of ballet in Australia.

Kirsova initially returned to England with the Monte Carlo Russian ballet in 1937 but returned early in 1938 when she married the Danish Vice Consul in Sydney, Erik Fischer. She soon established a ballet school developing local Australian dancers as well as engaging other dancers from the de Basil companies who remained in Australia.

She formed her own company in 1941. Based in Sydney, the company also successfully toured Australia in spite of the difficulties of movement around the country in wartime, as well as the constant threat of male dancers being enlisted into wartime duty. After a short life span of three years the company was disbanded in 1944 following its Brisbane season.

Kirsova went to Europe in 1947 with her second husband the Australian journalist Peter Bellew and lived in Paris. She died on the 22nd February 1962 while visiting London.

Additional information from:

• Potter, Michelle. “A strong personality and a gift for leadership: Helene Kirsova in Australia” in Dance research (Oxford University Press), Vol .Xlll No.2. 1995 pp 62-76. (Copy included in Kirsova file in the PROMPT collection)

• Bellew, Peter. Pioneering ballet in Australia
(Sydney, Craftsman Bookshop, 1945)

CONTENT
The list is primarily based on material in the National Library of Australia’s PROMPT collection. Where there are gaps in the PROMPT holdings, the list has been supplemented by an indication of material in the National Gallery of Australia’s Research Library. The Research Library holds Helene Kirsova’s extensive personal archive including stage and costume designs, photographs and letters as well as published materials. In a couple of rare cases where no programs are held in either institution, newspaper clippings in the NGA Kirsova Archive have been quoted as evidence of performances.

The PROMPT collection also contains programs for part of Kirsova’s career in Europe prior to her Australian visit, and programs for all the Australian tours of the de Basil companies in 1936, 1938 and 1940.

ACCESS
The Kirsova Ballet PROMPT files may be accessed through the Library’s Special Collections Reading Room by eCallslip request: http://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn2657385

Access to the National Gallery of Australia Research Library and the Kirsova Archive is by appointment. For more information please telephone the Gallery on +61 (0)2 6240 6532

ARRANGEMENT
The Kirsova Ballet programs are listed in chronological order, which reflects the arrangement of the Library’s PROMPT collection.

Entries identify the city and the venue. All the information is taken from programs, flyers and ephemera.

Entries for each program are arranged as follows:

Date (day and month); City
Name of production or performer
Details of publication

Holdings are noted for NLA (National Library of Australia, PROMPT collection) and NGARL (National Gallery of Australia Research Library).

An list of performers and repertoire is provided at the end of the document. This document is also keyword searchable.
OTHER RESOURCES
The National Library’s collection also includes:

- Books about the Kirsova Ballet
- Oral History recordings and interviews
- Pictures
- Newspaper articles available through Trove
KIRSOVA BALLET SEASONS

1941  8 July. Conservatorium (Sydney, New South Wales)  
      (5 performances)  
      Ballet productions  
      Book:  32 p. Wrappers  
      Title page: “Red Cross Ballet Season presented by Helene Kirsova… Gala  
      opening performance July 8 1941”.  
      Includes photographic portraits of Helen Kirsova, principal dancers and  
      designer Loudon Sainthill; photos of rehearsals; four pages of colour designs  
      by Sainthill; program of ballets.  
      Held NLA

1941  Date? Location?  
      Ballet season for Red Cross…presented by Helene Kirsova.”  
      Repertoire: Dream…and a fairy tale, Les Matelots, Vieux Paris

1941  4th, 5th, 6th October, The Everglades, Blue Mountains (Sydney, New South  
      Wales.)  
      Souvenir of Everglades Garden Fete…. Proceeds in aid of War Veteran’s  
      Home at Narrabeen and King George’s Fund for Sailors.”  
      Title page: “Ballet productions presented by Helene Kirsova.”  
      Repertoire: Les Sylphides, Vieux Paris  
      Program: 12 p. Wrappers held NGARL  
      Includes advertisement for “The Helene Kirsova School of Russian Ballet—  
      Diaghilev Tradition”, with two pages of photos of company principals.

1941  22 November  6 weeks season Minerva Theatre (Sydney, New South Wales)  
      The Kirsova Ballet Souvenir  
      Book:  32 p. Wrappers Held NLA  
      Cover title: “”  
      Title page: “Madame Helene Kirsova and Whitehall Productions present The  
      Kirsova Ballet, Minerva Theatre, Sydney, Season 1941-1942.”  
      Content is substantially the same as the book above with photos, portraits  
      designs etc. Program of ballets differs.

1941  22 November  6 weeks season Minerva Theatre (Sydney, New South Wales)  
      Les Sylphides, Faust  
      Program  
      Held NLA (2 copies)

1941  22 November  6 weeks season Minerva Theatre (Sydney, New South Wales)  
      Les Matelots, Faust  
      Held NLA
1941
22 November  6 weeks season Minerva Theatre (Sydney, New South Wales)
*Les Sylphides, Les Matelots, Vieux Paris*
Program
16 p. (undated)
Held NGARL

The contents for all the programs for this season of the Kirsova Ballet are identical. Photo portraits of the company are the same and page nine in each program is an uncredited essay titled “A permanent Australian ballet”. However, changes in the Repertoire and in the cover illustrations have been noted.

1942
31 January. His Majesty’s Theatre (Melbourne, Victoria)
*JC Williamson Magazine Program*
Repertoire: *A dream… and a fairy tale, Faust*
Program
34 p. Wrappers
Held NLA (2 copies)
Cover illustration of seated woman in yellow evening gown

1942
31 January. His Majesty’s Theatre (Melbourne, Victoria)
*Les Sylphides, Faust*
Program
34 p. Wrappers
Cover illustration of seated woman in yellow evening gown
Held NLA

1942
31 January. His Majesty’s Theatre (Melbourne, Victoria)
Program as above with same repertoire but cover illustration is a drawing of a ballet dancer signed “Constable”.
Held NLA

1942
31 January. His Majesty’s Theatre (Melbourne, Victoria)
*Les Sylphides, Les Matelots, L’Oiseau bleue, Ritual fire dance, Vieux Paris*
Program
34 p. Wrappers
Cover illustration of seated woman in yellow evening gown
Held NLA

1942
31 January. His Majesty’s Theatre (Melbourne, Victoria)
Program as above with same repertoire but cover illustration is a drawing of a ballet dancer signed by “Constable”.
34 p.
Held NLA
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1942 | Wednesday, matinee 11 February His Majesty’s Theatre (Melbourne, Victoria) *Dream …and a fairy tale, Faust*  
Change of cast slip  
Held NLA |
| 1942 | Friday, 20 February His Majesty’s Theatre (Melbourne, Victoria) *Les Matelots, Blue Bird, Vieux Paris*  
Changes to cast slip  
Held NLA |
| 1943 | 9 February, Season commenced (6 performances) Conservatorium Sydney, New South Wales.  
*Les Sylphides, Revolution of the Umbrellas*  
Kirsova Ballet Season in aid of the Legacy War Orphans Appeal  
Program: 4 p.  
Held NLA |
| 1943 | 15 March Season commenced (7 performances) Conservatorium Sydney, New South Wales.  
*Revolution of the Umbrellas, Hansel and Gretel*  
Program: 4 p  
Held NGARL  
Season details verified in Pask. |
| 1943 | 18 September (Season commenced) Conservatorium Sydney, New South Wales.  
*Lac des cygnes, Jeunesse, Hansel and Gretel, Capriccio*  
Program: 4 p.  
Cover title: “Kirsova Ballet Season presented by Helene Kirsova to provide at Erskineville the first of a series of fully equipped children's playgrounds to be established by the Kirsova Ballet throughout the congested areas of Sydney”  
Held NLA |
| 1943 | 17 December (Season commenced) Conservatorium Sydney, New South Wales  
*Lac des cygnes, Capriccio, Harlequin, Vieux Paris*  
Program: 4 p.  
Cover: “Proceeds from this season will be used to continue the work of establishing a series of fully equipped playgrounds throughout the congested areas of Sydney. The full proceeds from the September season amounting to pounds 1,678, were sufficient to provide two grounds at Erskineville, and these are now under construction. Proceeds from this season, it is hoped, will be sufficient to complete the requirements in Erskineville and also extend the scheme to another municipality lacking proper playing facilities.”  
Held NLA (2 copies) |
1943 17 December (Season commenced) Conservatorium Sydney, New South Wales
Les Sylphides, Harlequin, Hansel and Gretel, Capriccio
Program 4 p.
Cover: "Proceeds from this season will be used to continue the work of establishing a series of fully equipped playgrounds throughout the congested areas of Sydney. The full proceeds from the September season amounting to pounds 1,678, were sufficient to provide two grounds at Erskinville, and these are now under construction. Proceeds from this season, it is hoped, will be sufficient to complete the requirements in Erskinville and also to extend the scheme to another municipality lacking proper playing facilities."
Held NGARL

1944 15 January (Season commenced). His Majesty's Theatre Melbourne, Victoria
Lac des cygnes, Jeunesse, Harlequin, Vieux Paris
Program. 3 p. fold out
Held NLA

1944 22 January (Season commenced) His Majesty's Theatre Melbourne, Victoria
Les Sylphides, Revolution of the Umbrellas
Program. 3 p. fold out
Held NLA

1944 29 January (Season commenced) His Majesty's Theatre Melbourne, Victoria
Lac des cygnes, Harlequin, Hansel and Gretel, Capriccio
Program. 3 p. fold out
Held NGARL
“Program for final week commencing Saturday January 29”

1944 7 February (Season commenced) (3 weeks) Theatre Royal. Adelaide, South Australia.
Les Sylphides, Hansel and Gretel, Harlequin, Vieux Paris
Program. 3 p. fold out
Held NLA.
(2 copies)

1944 7-12 February Theatre Royal. Adelaide, South Australia
Les Sylphides, Revolution of the Umbrellas
Program. 3 p. fold out
Held NGARL

1944 14-19 February 1944. Theatre Royal. Adelaide, South Australia
Lac des cygnes, Capriccio, Jeunesse, Vieux Paris
Program. 3 p. fold out
Held: NGARL
1944 26 February Theatre Royal, Adelaide, South Australia  
\textit{Lac des cygnes, Capriccio, Jeunesse, Vieux Paris}  
Program. 3 p. fold out  
Held: NGARL

1944 8 April (Season commenced) His Majesty’s Theatre, Brisbane, Queensland  
Programs for the first two weeks of season are not held in either NLA or NGARL.  
News clippings held by NGARL list the repertoire on 8 April 1944 as \textit{Swan Lake, Harlequin, Hansel and Gretel, Vieux Paris}; 15 April 1944 lists the repertoire as \textit{Revolution of the Umbrellas, Les Sylphides}.

1944 22-28 April His Majesty’s Theatre, Brisbane, Queensland  
\textit{Lac des cygnes, Jeunesse, Capriccio, Hansel and Gretel}  
Program 4 p. fold out  
“Program for the Third week commencing…April 22…”  
Held NLA

1944 22-28 April His Majesty’s Theatre, Brisbane, Queensland  
\textit{Les Sylphides, Revolution of the Umbrellas}  
Program. 4 p. fold out  
“Program for...week commencing April 29”  
Held NGARL

1944 29 April His Majesty’s Theatre, Brisbane, Queensland  
\textit{Les Sylphides, Revolution of the Umbrellas}  
Program. 4 p. fold out  
Held NGARL

1944 1-2 May, His Majesty’s Theatre, Brisbane, Queensland  
\textit{Les Sylphides, Revolution of the Umbrellas}  
Program. 4 page fold out  
Held NGARL

1944 3-6 May, His Majesty’s Theatre, Brisbane, Queensland  
\textit{Lac des cygnes, Hansel and Gretel, Harlequin, Vieux Paris}  
Program 4 page fold out  
Held NGARL

1944 11 December. [Maccabean Hall, (Sydney, New South Wales],  
\textit{Kirsova Ballet School pupil’s recital}  
Repertoire: Ten items danced by pupils and six items danced by members of the Kirsova Company.
Program. 4 p. fold out
Held NGARL

Undated
No venue or place
Cover title: “Ballet productions presented by Helene Kirsova”
Repertoire: A dream…and a fairy tale, Les Matelots, Vieux Paris
Back page has advertisement for “The Helene Kirsova School of Russian Ballet-Diaghilev Tradition”
Program. 4 p. fold out
Held NGARL

THE KIRSOVA COMPANY: DANCERS WHO PERFORMED
Dancers who appeared with the Kirsova Ballet as listed in programs:

- Betty Alexander
- David Beard
- Mischa Burlakov
- Helen Black
- Serge Bousslof
- Bettina Browne
- Judith Burgess
- Margaret Cameron
- Michael Cameron
- Wolf Cardamatis
- Peggy Chauncey
- Frederick Maxwell Colas
- Patricia Deardon
- Roxanne Dick
- Yvonne Ellis
- Margaret Findley
- Victoria Forth
- Helene Ffrance
- John Foxall
- Joan Gadsdon
- Ruth Green
- Betty Hall
- Joan Halliday
- Monica Halliday
- Paul Hammond (aka Paul Clementin)
- Strelsa Heckelman
- Earl Henderson
- Anne Hiller
- Peter Houston
- Terence Hughes
- Nicolas Ivangine
- Patricia Jordan
- Betty Kellett
- Athol Kirkland
- Raissa Kousnetzova
- Henry Legerton
- Frances Lett
- Charles Morris Lisner
- Shirley Longley
- Barbara Macdonnell
- Elsie Macgregor
- Grant McIntyre
- Marie Malloy
- Alice Marcetts
- Gloria Mitchell
- Norma Mitchell
- Joyce Morgans
- Judith Murphy
- David Murray
- June Newstead
- ? O'Sullivan
- ? Parsons
- Joy Palmer
- Moira Peoples
- Gwen Pike
- Roland Robinson
- Peggy Sager
- John Seymour
- Valery Shaevsky
- Jean Shearer
- Thadee Slavinsky
- Edouard Sobishevsky
- Arnold Spirka
- Edna Stanton
- Jill Stanton
- Tamara Tchinarova
- ? Walker
- Bruce Walter
- Trafford Whitelock
- Billie Windas
- Maria Windas
- Vera Windas
- Valentin Zeglovsky
REPERTOIRE

Ballets performed by the Kirsova Ballet in Australia 1941-1943 as documented in programs – all “Produced by Helene Kirsova”:

- **A dream...and a fairy tale**
  Book and choreography: Helene Kirsova
  Music: Frederic Chopin
  Décor and costumes: Loudon Sainthill
  Premiere: 8 July 1941

- **Les Matelots**
  Choreography: Helene Kirsova after Leonide Massine
  Music: Georges Auric
  Décor and costumes: Loudon Sainthill after Pedro Pruna
  Premiere: 8 July 1941

- **Vieux Paris**
  Book and choreography: Helene Kirsova
  Music: Jacques Offenbach, J. Strauss Jnr
  Décor and costumes: Loudon Sainthill
  Premiere: 8 July 1941

- **Les Sylphides**
  Choreography after Fokine
  Music: Frederic Chopin
  Premiere: November 1941

- **Faust**
  Book: Heinrich Heine arranged by Helene Kirsova
  Music: Henry Krips
  Décor and costumes: Loudon Sainthill
  Premiere: October 1941

- **L’Oiseau bleue = Bluebird**
  Pas de deux from ‘The sleeping princess’
  Music: Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

- **Ritual fire dance**
  Music: Manuel De Falla

- **Revolution of the Umbrellas**
  Book and choreography: Helene Kirsova
  Music: Henry Krips
Décor and costumes: Wolfgang Cardamatis
Premiere: February 1943

- **Lac des cygnes** (Swan Lake, Act 2)
  Choreography: Marius Petipas
  Music: Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky
  Premiere: September 1943

- **Jeunesse**
  Choreography: Helene Kirsova
  Music: Francois Poulenc
  Costumes: Birger Bartholin
  Premiere: September 1943

- **Hansel and Gretel**
  Book and choreography: Helene Kirsova
  Music: Engelbert Humperdinck
  Décor and costumes: Amie Kingston
  Premiere: March 1943

- **Capriccio**
  Choreography: Helene Kirsova
  Music: Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov
  Costumes: Alice Danciger
  Premiere: September 1943

- **Harlequin**
  Choreography: Helene Kirsova
  Music: Maurice Ravel
  Décor and costumes: Amie Kingston
  Premiere: December 1943