

## Film Review: History & Culture Co-Exist in Exemplary ‘The White Crow’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 5, 2019 - 8:34pm

- [Adele Exarchopoulos](#) [2]
- [Ballet](#) [3]
- [Chulpan Khamatova](#) [4]
- [David Hare](#) [5]
- [Defection](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Movie Review](#) [8]
- [Oleg Ivenko](#) [9]
- [Paris](#) [10]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [11]
- [Ralph Fiennes](#) [12]
- [Rudolf Nureyev](#) [13]
- [Sergei Polunin](#) [14]
- [Sony Pictures Classics](#) [15]
- [Soviet Union](#) [16]
- [The White Crow](#) [17]

CHICAGO – In any ear for pop culture, the name Rudolf Nureyev is well known. A Soviet Russian-born ballet virtuoso nicknamed “Lord of the Dance,” RN lived large until he died, of complications due to AIDS at age 54 in 1993. But before that, he was born into poverty, danced into fame, and historically defected to the West in 1961. “The White Crow,” a new film directed by Ralph Fiennes, tells his story.



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

An unknown actor named Oleg Ivenko portrays Nureyev, and the title refers to the Russian term for outsider. The dancer was an ultimate lone wolf as portrayed in the film, seemingly separated from everything else by his blazing talent. Deftly directed by actor Ralph Fiennes – who also portrays Nureyev’s legendary teacher Alexander Ivanovich Pushkin – the timeline jumps from childhood through the early years as a Soviet sensation, to the Paris of 1961 at the moment of his defection. The film establishes the lone nature of the dancer, who focused his energy and his purpose toward the beauty of interpretative ballet. There is so much to his life after the defection, but the way Fiennes’ introduces the Nureyev of his film, there is a feeling of knowing him.

Rudolf Nureyev (Oleg Ivanko) was born on a Trans-Siberian train in the Soviet Union in 1938 to a lower class Tatar Muslim family. Discovering dance as a kid, he seeks the best instructors – including the prized teacher Pushkin (Ralph Fiennes) – to accelerate his education, delayed by World War II. After rising quickly through the Soviet ballet ranks, he travels to Paris on a cultural exchange that will change his life.

While there, he absorbs the city as if he’s physically ingesting it, constantly missing his KGB-enforced curfews. He meets some French dancers, who introduce him to Clara Saint (Adèle Exarchopoulos), a high-flying socialite defined by a recent tragedy. As he wows the City of Lights, he spends his nights with Clara and his new friends, which leads him to the defection of destiny.

*“The White Crow” currently continues its limited release in Chicago. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Rudolf Nureyev, Oleg Ivenko, Ralph Fiennes, Adèle Exarchopoulos, Chulpan Khamatova and Sergei Polunin. Screenplay by David Hare. Directed by Ralph Fiennes. Rated “R”*



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Oleg Ivanko as Rudolf Nureyev in ‘The White Crow’  
*Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics*

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- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ballet>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/chulpan-khamatova>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/david-hare>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/defection>
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- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ralph-fiennes>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/rudolf-nureyev>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sergei-polunin>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sony-pictures-classics>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/soviet-union>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-white-crow>
- [18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/29383/history-culture-co-exist-in-exemplary-the-white-crow>