

Symposium Proceedings Publication 2013

# The Dance of the Future

Cultivating Duncan Dance for the 21st Century

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SADORA DUNCAN  
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

for Duncan Practitioners in Dance & Related Disciplines

# The Dance of the Future

## Cultivating Duncan Dance for the 21st Century

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Symposium Proceedings Publication 2013

Isadora Duncan International Symposium

**The George Washington University**

**June 16-18, 2013**

Valerie Durham, Editor



Washington, DC

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## DEDICATION

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This publication is dedicated with fondness and respect to our teachers, who have kept alive the spirit and dance of Isadora Duncan through the years and into the future....

“Oh , she is coming, the dancer of the future: the free spirit, who will inhabit the body of new woman; more glorious than any woman that has yet been; more beautiful than the Egyptian, than the Greek, the early Italian, than all women of past centuries – the highest intelligence in the freest body!”

Isadora Duncan, “The Dancer of the Future,” *The Art of the Dance*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Organizing Committee of the Isadora Duncan International Symposium would like to acknowledge the work, efforts and contributions of the many people who came together to bring in the inaugural symposium into existence.

Thank you to the original members of the Organizing Committee: Margaret Brooker, Valerie Durham, Jennifer Sprowl, Cynthia Word and Ingrid Zimmer. Your passion, vision, hard work, collaboration and cooperation laid the groundwork for this dream to become a reality.

Thank you to Daniel Tai Soon Burgess and Maida Withers, the Department of Theater and Dance, and The George Washington University for their generous support of the inaugural symposium with donation of the dance studios and space.

Thank you to the Bernstein Foundation for their support of our celebratory final gathering at the Lombardy Hotel at the conclusion of the symposium.

Thank you to Peter di Muro for his excellent support of our first “Issues of the Field” – bringing humor, dynamism and positivity into much needed conversations. Thank you to Yi Hsin Lin for sharing her photography to document the symposium event. Thank you to James Durham for his audio/visual, video and data maintenance support before, during and after the symposium.

Thank you to our presenters, who shared their knowledge, expertise, artistry and experience in beautiful, inspiring, well-crafted workshops, master classes, choreography showing, panel discussion and presentations. All in attendance benefited from their rich and diverse sessions.

Thank you to our attendees, the students and followers of Isadora Duncan, who came to learn and to share their own visions of dance.

Thank you to our teachers, and to lovely, infinite Isadora, whose vision gave rise to all.

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# PREFACE

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## **JUNE 2013**

From Sunday, June 16 at noon through Tuesday, June 18, 2013, the inaugural Isadora Duncan International Symposium brought together 52 Isadora Duncan dance practitioners from various lineages and disciplines. In these three dynamic days, the symposium hosted over 27 different sessions in two studios, including workshops, master classes, panel discussions, presentations, and a museum tour. The symposium offered an unprecedented opportunity for Isadora Duncan dancers, representing a wide range of generations and artistic lineages, to share their varied experiences and perspectives on Duncan dance. At any given moment, a master teacher sat on a panel with a younger choreographer, while a diverse group of workshop participants physically explored different perspectives on Duncan dance in the twenty-first century. Between sessions, participants enjoyed archival video screenings, engaged in conversations among artists who hadn't met in years and forged new connections. Attendees and presenters came from all across the United States, as well as from Brazil, England, Russia, and Germany, bringing a diversity of knowledge and learning opportunities rarely available in the Isadora Duncan dance world.

## **BACKGROUND AND MISSION**

The Isadora Duncan International Symposium (IDIS) was born of a desire to deepen the understanding of Isadora Duncan's unparalleled art form, both within the Isadora Duncan dance community and in the broader dance world as well. In recent years, the Duncan dance community has lost several important Isadora Duncan dancers who represented the closest links to Isadora: Mignon Garland, Sima Leake, Julia Levien, Hortense Kooluris, and Sylvia Gold, to name a few. The original members of the Isadora Duncan International Symposium, including Margaret Brooker, MFA (Austin, TX); Valerie Durham, MFA (Potomac, MD); Jennifer Sprowl (Chicago, IL); Cynthia Word, MFA (Annapolis, MD) and Ingrid Zimmer (Washington, DC) sought to share the lessons of these teachers, so that their knowledge will not be lost.

By creating a professional, learning-focused environment, the IDIS Organizing Committee intended to strengthen the bonds in the Isadora Duncan community, creating an opportunity to share across a range of Duncan dance lineages with respect for different perspectives. Charged with protecting and passing on the knowledge and life's work of the previous generations of Isadora Duncan dancers, we wished to create a means to communicate with one another and to address issues that face the entire field of Isadora Duncan dance. Dancers in attendance represented a variety of Duncan dance lineages, including the Maria Teresa Duncan, Anna Duncan, Irma Duncan, Anita Zahn and Elizabeth Duncan legacies. As a committee, our varied experience, background and knowledge within

the field of Isadora Duncan dance represented a wide perspective and rich network, exemplifying the open, collaborative framework we wished to see reflected in the structure of the symposium.

We chose the name *symposium* because the word itself seemed to embrace these ideals. Dictionary definitions of symposium include, “a meeting or conference for the discussion of some subject, especially a meeting at which several speakers talk on or discuss a topic before an audience.” The ancient Greek and Roman traditions define a symposium as a convivial meeting, usually following a dinner, for drinking\* and intellectual conversation. Plato’s *Symposium* is a philosophical dialogue on the subject of ideal love and the vision of absolute beauty. What better title for a conference on the work of an artist who was deeply inspired by Greek art and aspired, in art and in life, to such beauty herself?

The mission of the Isadora Duncan International Symposium is to support the international community of practitioners in the philosophy, technique, choreography and legacy of Isadora Duncan. IDIS therefore provides opportunities for practitioners to share best practices, show their work, and develop new colleagues, thereby strengthening and enlarging the existing world-wide Duncan community in order to better expand the reach and impact of Isadora’s revolutionary ideas.

*\*While the IDIS did not serve wine at its sessions, the convivial atmosphere was well-represented, especially in our end-of-symposium celebration at the nearby historic Lombardy Hotel.*

### **INAUGURAL EVENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS: JUNE 2013**

The first Isadora Duncan International Symposium was graciously supported by The George Washington University in their “J Building” studios through the Department of Theater and Dance Chair Dana Tai Soon Burgess and Professor of Dance Maida Withers. Their generous support allowed the symposium to have its fledging launch, and provided a superb location for all presenters and attendees to gather.

We structured communication about the symposium in a way that would be open, egalitarian, inclusive, respectful, collaborative, professional and educational. Calls for papers and presentations were open to all who considered themselves Duncan practitioners, not only in dance, but also in scholarship, visual arts, music, photography, philosophy and more. We were delighted and honored that so many Duncan dancers and teachers, including those from related fields, caught the vision and submitted ideas for presentations, workshops and master classes.

The symposium featured panel discussions on important issues such as pedagogy, dance therapy, choreography, and historical research, including an unpublished memoir by Russian Fabin Garin, artwork from La Belle Epoch, comparative analysis of the Florence Fleming Noyes school, and archival research at Raymond Duncan’s Akademia. We also

celebrated the life of Sylvia Gold with a choreography showing, archival video footage and remarks from her students who attended the symposium. Master classes demonstrated technique to strengthen understanding in musicality, expressiveness, intention, the waltz, and blending supportive movement approaches, such as ballet or yoga, all with an eye to the future of Isadora Duncan dance. Experiential workshops delved deeply into specific themes, such as the sacred dance, the solar plexus, democracy and the Greek chorus, and the Dalcroze method. Early morning sessions offered somatic practice opportunities with Active Isolated Stretching & Strengthening, as well as essential oils and the Alexander Technique. Presentations ranged from discussions about modern approaches to staging Isadora Duncan dance, to essential characteristics of Duncan, to Anita Zahn's pedagogy for children, to the history of the Sun Dancers and West Coast Duncan Dance.

One of the most interesting sessions was our "Issues of the Field" group discussion, led by former Liz Lerman Dance Exchange Artistic Director Peter di Muro. A bold conversation about the issues facing the field of Duncan Dance, the session encouraged participants to be fearless in bringing up controversial issues such as methods for sharing archival material and repertory, perceptions of exclusivity by race and gender, and challenges of contemporizing the Duncan work without alienating its foundational principles, all supported by Peter's encouraging conversational framework. The discussions, though sensitive, were handled with openness, respect and honesty, and the participants seemed to find they have many concerns in common, inspiring passion and hope for the future.

This conversation, and the entire experience of the three-day symposium, had three promising outcomes. The first was the decision to organize the next symposium. The second was to publish a document of the proceedings, inviting presenters to submit reflections on their presentations. Lastly, several attendees suggested the possibility of organizing committees to address common issues facing the field of Isadora Duncan dance.

### **INTO THE FUTURE**

Several actions were taken as a result of these recommendations. The next Symposium will be held in Chicago, IL, in June 2015. The publication of proceedings of the inaugural Symposium, (this document), is presented in e-book and print versions. And, IDIS has facilitated the formation of five project committees, including the Isadora Duncan Archive, the Isadora Duncan Academic Conferences & Publications Network, the Isadora Duncan Outreach Committee, the Isadora Duncan Standards & Guidelines Committee and the Isadora Duncan International Newsletter. Each of these committees is organized and chaired by volunteers from members of the Isadora Duncan dance community in the United States and around the world.

### **ABOUT THE PUBLICATION**

This publication contains submissions by the presenters, including outlines of what they presented in their sessions and, in some cases, reflections about those sessions and

supplementary information. While all presenters were asked to submit an essay about their session, not all chose to do so. A full symposium schedule, workshop descriptions, and presenter biographies are included in the appendices at the end of the publication. We hope this publication will serve as a resource to Duncan dancers and other scholars and researchers, for it is filled with excellent and insightful information about the breadth and depth of Isadora Duncan's approach to dance and to life.

Isadora Duncan International Symposium  
Organizing Committee  
c. 2013

# DUNCAN'S CORE THREADED INTO CONTEMPORARY WORK

**Beth Jucovy**

Artistic Director, Dance Visions NY, Inc./Director, Children Dancing

**Abstract:** This workshop explores how Duncan dance technique, intent and movement enrich and deepen other dance techniques. Through barre work, traveling movements, short dance sequences and improvisation, I demonstrate ways in which I incorporate Duncan dance into my children and adult classical and contemporary dance classes. Together, we next explore what constitutes the core of Duncan dance. Lastly participants explore ways in which they might integrate key Duncan concepts, technique and aesthetics into their own dance creations.

**Keywords:** Duncan dance, pre-ballet, ballet for young children, ballet and Duncan dance, creativity in dance, modern dance, modern dance roots, Duncan dance and modern dance, Duncan dance and contemporary Dance, Julia Levien, Duncan Dance for children, Improvisation, Dance in relation to music, Duncan Dance attributes, Duncan's core, Duncan dance today, Duncan dance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Duncan Dance NY, Duncan Dance Long Island, Dance Visions NY, Dance Visions NY, Inc., Children Dancing, Dance Visions

**Presentation Date:** Sunday, June 16, 2013, 12:45- 2:15pm

**Format:** Workshop

**Supplements:** Duncan's core *barre* work used in workshop

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## Duncan's Core Threaded into Contemporary Work

### INTRODUCTION

*How this workshop reflects my individual perspective*

Duncan dance is my roots. I view it as my personal "traditional" dance. I have been immersed in the Duncan tradition from young childhood. Julia Levien was considered part of my family. Anna Duncan, too, played a major role in my early childhood. It was the dance form and, I would go so far as to say, the philosophy that totally resonated with my mother, Ruth Rosenbluth, and my upbringing.

Though I went on to train in ballet and later other modern dance forms and even jazz, Duncan dance was always there in my environment through my sisters, particularly Adrienne (Ramm), and through my mother, who continued to be a friend and soul mate with Julia. I returned to pursue Duncan dance intensively by the time I was in my early twenties, starting with the Commemorative Company in the late 70s, but I already had, at that time, the experience of being in the professional dance world with other dance forms. At that relatively early point in my career, I realized that performing and presenting the Duncan repertory and also incorporating the technique into my entire dance work was my calling. I went on to dance with many New York-based Duncan dance groups through the decades. I also began to direct my own groups and gave solo concerts and Duncan workshops in New York, Europe and Israel.

In 1990 I founded Dance Visions, based in Great Neck Long Island, in which Duncan dance has always been a major component. Perhaps stemming from my experiences training and performing with ballet, modern and jazz companies, I fully believe in the importance of clean line and, in general, dance technique when Duncan dances are presented as performance. I believe these elements are important to include in order for it to survive as a performance dance form in our contemporary times. I believe that a dance-trained body that is able to fully absorb the Duncan aesthetic in its many aspects can help propel Duncan dance into the future.

In giving this workshop, my intent is to impart my understandings of the technique and the aesthetic as passed on to me by Julia, Anna Duncan, my mother, my sisters Adrienne Ramm and Theda Detlor, Hortense Kooluris and Gemze de Lappe, but then filtered through my particular lens, which includes my other dance experiences as well as my own personal world views. This is an important point.

I have worked with many other Duncan professionals as co-dancers and directors. It is clear to me that each one of us has her own lens on the work – differences in how we perceive, absorb, cultivate and disseminate what we were taught. I believe these differences have much to do with our personal world views and even our personalities. I believe this Symposium has the potential to strengthen the respect we have for each other's views. If we allow ourselves to have an open mind, we can all learn other perspectives grow richer in our own understandings of the techniques that are very true for each one of us. I am honored to share my particular perspective with you all.

We start with a few samples of ideas, exercises, and teaching methods I have used in classes over thirty years including ballet, pre-ballet, creative dance, pure Duncan, classical/contemporary dance and improvisation/choreography.

#### *Short center warm-up*

Duncan initial stretches with modern dance infusion: In a circle, standing rolls to each direction (down, sides, and lift back), head rolls into body rolls – about four. They get bigger to right, then smaller to left. Sitting rolls and stretches in three positions (feet together, legs stretched out in front, legs out to sides). Lying down – ham string stretches, lying and arching up.

#### *Duncan barre (as passed on by Julia Levien and Hortense Kooluris, with ballet infusion)*

In these *barre* exercises, we stress the movement emanates from the solar plexus and radiates to the extremities: limbs, head, and beyond. For more thorough explanations of the *barre*, please see the Duncan-infused *barre* supplement following. Included are Duncan *pliés*, *tendus*, brushes, *rond de jambe*, attitudes to the front, side, and back, leg swings front and back, leg throws front and side, and body stretches forward then arching back.

## *Walks*

I use the basic Duncan walk as taught to me as a child in class with Julia Levien. Memories of this always stayed with me. I incorporate this in Duncan classes as well as in my other children's classes including pre-ballet, ballet and classical/contemporary.

We focus on the careful articulation of the foot from the ball of the foot to the heel. Though we point our foot somewhat before placing it on the ground, it is not in full ballet *tendu*. It is more a way of feeling the ground beneath you before placing your weight on it. The weight is carefully and smoothly transferred from one foot to the next. The entire body is involved with the focus and motivation of the particular feeling expressed in the walk.

In classes with young children, I explain that they must walk carefully on a diagonal of stars and bring a gift to me, the Sun, in order for me to shine. We use props, such as beanbags, that they hold in two hands and they must present me with this gift. They decide what the gift to the sun is. They must be very serious in intent as they bring me their precious gifts. For this workshop with adults, we took the pathway of the Duncan serpentine: four loops advancing downstage. With each line of the loop we had a different intent. We start the first two loops with the calling walks, each person calling the one behind with the back (upstage) arm lifting, with careful attention to the front arm in balance with it. The front arm also acts as an antenna for the space in front as you advance. The image for the next loops is of acolytes bearing a gift to a god, similar to the idea I use with children. Hands are placed in front, as if holding an offering. The last loop is the tragic walk, body slightly inward, head down, one arm and then the next slowly coming up in front, wrists dropped, suggesting tears. We must absolutely hear the music and shift weight on the beat, never anticipating, always sensitive to the particular phrasing of the pianist. (Suggested music: F. Schubert, *Impromptus Opus 90 no. 3 in G flat major or no. 1 in C minor*.)

## *Light runs and skips*

Next we take the light runs and skips in a circle. This movement flows easily from the walks as it still is light movement and early in the class sequence. In the light runs, the heels barely touch the floor. The skips in this movement are also light. Knees come up, foot stays in line with the knee, not further in or out. I use the light runs and skips in all genres of classes for children as well. Imagery for children includes sky spirits/faeries placing dew or faerie dust on the grass during the night. They must do it quickly so they are finished before dawn and no one will see them. Imagery for adult Duncan class can include the wind, spirits of the wind, fleeing, or the god Hermes.

In a circle, sometimes with scarves, alternate runs and skips. We use the musical phrases to determine when we switch from runs to skips. While running, inside arm swoops from behind down and then forward. When arm comes up, you then switch arms and repeat. For skips, arms are held lightly out to the sides, but allowing the motion to be extended into them; they are not held rigidly. (Suggested music: J.S. Bach, *Gavotte in G Minor*.)

### *Angel lifts, darts and leap, run, run*

Though these movements are all part of the Duncan vocabulary, they easily translate into ballet and modern dance classes.

**Angel lifts:** Advancing across the floor: step-together-step-and-lift into attitude back with leg and body lifting and arching. Body slightly pulls in during the step-together-step and opens out during the back attitude like the movements of an accordion, reflecting the act of breathing. The body opens out as much as is natural for each body. Steps still articulate the careful toe-to-heel articulation. One can rise onto *relevée* during the attitude if ready. (Legs alternate and arms come rounded and forward during the steps, opening up in opposition to the leg – if left leg is back then right arm is forward and lifted, left arm balances it to the low side, slightly behind body. (Suggested music: Erik Satie, *Gnossienne No. 1*; Adrienne Ramm, *Songs of the Dancing Muse: For Theda or Reminiscence Isadora*; Paul Joseph, *King of the Mask: Crystal Lake*.)

**Darts:** Same as the angel lifts, but with a spring and hop. The step-together has an uneven rhythm as in a *chassé*. The lift has a hop added. The quality becomes joyous. We do it with a partner – toward and away. Awareness of each other and communication becomes integral to the movement. (Suggested music: J. S. Bach, *Brandenburg Concerto No 3 in G major*.)

**Leap, run, run:** Start with a leap, then two light runs. The rhythm is in threes, and the quality is strong, light, light. Legs alternate. For this I use the image of flying. Chest is very open, particularly on the leap. It feels invigorating and ideally as though you actually are flying.

### *Simple movement study: The Chase*

We then do a simple dance study using skips and leap, run, run to the music of J.S. Bach, *Musette in G major*.

This is perfect for children's Duncan classes and for young children's ballet classes. The music is organized as AABAB. Divide into two groups. AA: First group starts with leap, run, run across the floor. On the next musical phrase of eight, the second group chases after them with big skips, arms pushing, from low to forward and slightly up, as in a strong wind. This repeats four times (Part A consists of one repeat of both eight-count phrases: leap, run, run, skips, leap, run, run, skips). The groups can vary which phrase they do. After the four repetitions (AA), on the next musical phrase of eight, we do a polka (a Duncan *chassé*: step together, step hop) coming into the formation of horizontal line across the center. Then four big skips forward, four skips backwards, lift and run to exit. Next, repeat the A part once (meaning two repetitions of the music and movement: leap, run, run and skips, leap, run, run and skips). Vary groupings and finish with the repeat of the B part, polka and skips. The quality is flying and chasing. Middle section is playful as well.

### *Center study with improvisation: Mermaid's Dream (children) or Sea Study (teens/adults)*

We are now ready for improvisation. We do this study to the music of Smetana's *The Moldau* edited to begin at 1 min 5 seconds. We start in the center in a neutral first position (Duncan first). The beginning melody is basic center Duncan *barre* and center movements, following a leader. Include *pliés*, *relevées*, *tendus*, leg swings forward, head and body rolls, arm movements, and jumps. As always, all the movements are initiated from the center, or solar plexus. The imagery for children is that we are mermaids, each on our own shell, stretching our tail and body, moving in wind. The image can also be Naiads. When done with adults as in this workshop, we use the idea that we are the water itself rather than a being of the water.

The musical phrase changes as we kneel and recline, going to sleep for the night. Each gets up in turn in various size groupings: waking up and riding the tide, or creating the waves or just the gentle flow of the water. Utilize skips, darts, runs, sparks (step-hops in attitude), walks, lifts, spins, and suspensions. The music quality in the beginning of this section varies from playful to quiet. Next the dynamics begin to build stronger and stronger. Dancers join and then, when desired, recede back to their shell. Eventually, near the end of the music, when it is extremely strong and loud, all are up and dancing. They are riding on the waves of the music, or perhaps just dancing as tumultuous ocean water in a storm. At one point, near the end, all follow a leader with leap, run, runs. Then there are swoops and floor patterns of figure eights. Finally each goes back to her or his shell. We perform stationary Duncan movements following the leader, which help quiet the dance down, always following the music. We once again kneel and use our bodies and arms as the last of the waves. Finally there is a climax of two notes; we quickly lift in our recline and then drop as if pirates are coming, or just a strong, punctuated ending to this ocean study. This is a dance that uses the music as an important theme of the improvisation.

### **DISCUSSION**

After that energetic and long improvisational study, we sit and talk. I like to have an open discussion, rather than a lecture. What is Duncan dance to each of us? Why are we drawn to it? What, can we say, defines the technique, the dances, the aesthetic? Participants brainstorm and write their thoughts on journal paper. I show a chart of my own thoughts.

Many of the same ideas were articulated. Points include:

- movement coming from the center and radiating outwards
- sensitivity to the nuances of the music: both the rhythms and the lyricism
- idea that every movement portrays full meaning
- harmony of the entire body while moving
- focus and intent being at the core of all movement

- archetypes through simple movement and quality variations, (what is it that varies to evoke various archetypes?)
- movement ALWAYS as expression of the music
- when seeing it: audience sees the body as a whole not as parts
- movement flow: see, react internally (sometimes that may be reversed), then externally initiate from the center
- each movement is a reaction to the one that came before; each movement has its predecessor (preparation)
- promise of more: lines are not finite
- clarity of all the above through simplicity
- each person owns the right to harmonious, fully expressive body and movement

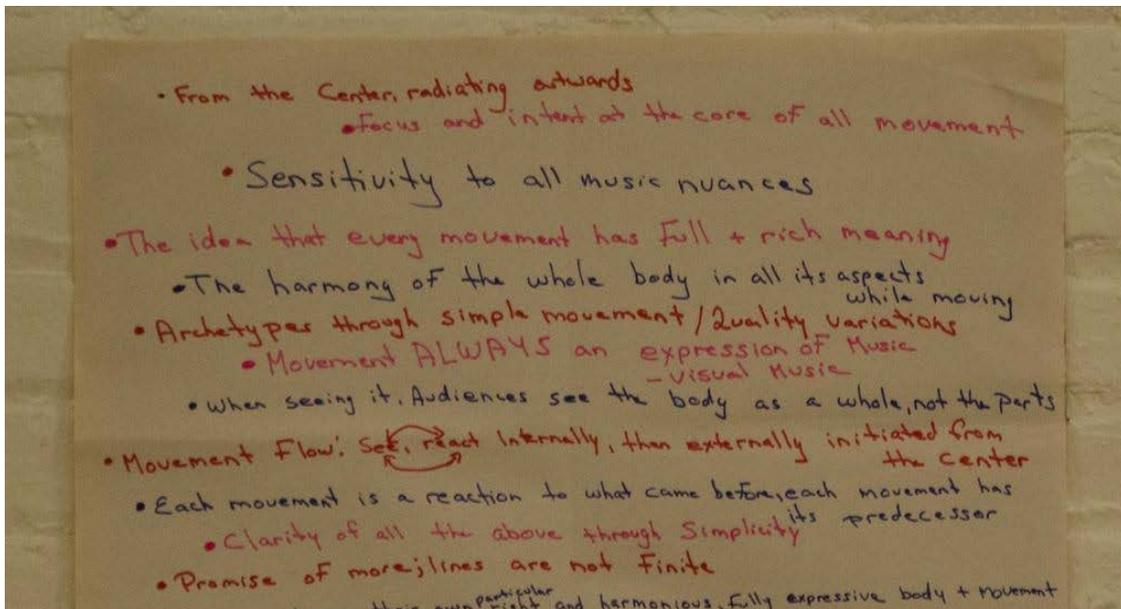


Figure 1. Photo of Chart by Yi-Hsin Lin; from Isadora Duncan International Symposium.  
Courtesy Beth Jucovy (presenter)

*Create movement to new music focusing on these principles*

Each person now creates a movement sequence. We work with the music called *Are You Coming with us?* by Gary Stadler and Wendy Rule from the album *Deep within a Faerie Forest*. It is repetitive so creating movement to it and then performing it at any point should not be problematic. It is not typical of music used for Duncan dance. First, we just listen to the music. After listening, participants are asked to focus on one to three points that were expressed earlier regarding what is central to Duncan dance, points that particularly speak to each individual. We listen to the music again, and then participants begin to work individually, with a partner or in small groups, as preferred. Most in the symposium workshop chose to work individually. Considering this was the very first workshop of the

symposium, this was not surprising. I think people preferred to create individually before they wanted to collaborate.

It seemed that most improvised, rather than set, their dances. We divided into two groups, watched and wrote down notes about what we saw. I saw very interesting ideas emerging. Each had her own responses, though most were lyrical and beautiful, with a strong Duncan classicism. In performance, it was interesting to see how the dancers related to each other during their own choreography. Those who were less lyrical stood out strongly, as they were less traditional/ more unusual.

All in all, I believe this workshop was the right beginning for the symposium. It dealt with basics of how the Duncan core ideas can be integrated into other dance techniques and helped people feel or discover their own individuality and priorities within the wide Duncan aesthetic. It helped people clarify what was important to each personally.

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*Short Duncan barre given with consideration of ballet and modern dance techniques.  
Modified from The Duncan Barre of Julia Levien.*

1) Duncan *pliés*: From a comfortable first position. Neutral lift, *plié* and round to the earth, move up, energy going through the body and upward, finally outward to the universe. The series cycles, each movement emanating from the one before.

2) *Tendus*: leg slides on floor and stretches in each directions, whole body responds; movement initiated from solar plexus opening out and closing in

3) *Brushes*: same, with leg extending slightly off the floor, though toes reaching for the floor (the earth)

4) *Rond de jambe*: same, without closing until after leg circles from front to side to back. Body starts from in and opens wider and wider as leg goes around, repeats as in breath rhythm

5) Attitudes front, side, back: Bent knee (attitude in parallel) lifts front while body curves inward, sideward while body tilts toward lifted leg and back with natural turn-out, while body lifts up and arches out. EACH MOVEMENT initiated from solar plexus

6) Leg swings front and back: Facing barre, *relevés* in parallel, then knee lifts forward while body pulls in (knee to nose), then leg brushes the floor and swings to extend back while body lifts up and arches back.

7) Leg swings front and side: at barre with inside leg in *tendu* front: step leg swings forward then steps back while inside leg takes *tendu* forward again. Movement initiates from the center so body opens and closes and arm and focus follow the pathway of the leg. Same for side, although leg alternates where it steps forward and back.

8) Body stretch forward and arch: from fourth position with inside leg forward body takes long stretch and bends forward then down, then reaches out to come back through neutral, then arches back with outside arm following through forward and back. Repeat 4 times with each repetition getting bigger and deeper.

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# THE ESSENTIAL ISADORA

## *Finding the Inherent Characteristics of Isadora's Technique*

Valerie Durham, MFA

**Abstract:** This presentation explores the essential characteristics of the Isadora Duncan technique and approach to choreography, including breath and solar plexus initiation of movement, personal expression, flow of movement and musicality, as it relates to Durham's thesis concert, *In/And/Off/Through*, which presented new choreography in the Duncan style, based on classical and ancient artwork from the Smithsonian's Freer/Sackler Galleries collections of Asian art, as well as abstracted versions of Isadora Duncan's historical repertory.

**Keywords:** Isadora Duncan, Duncan technique, Duncan repertory, new choreography, Asian, Greek and Egyptian visual art, dance, essentialism, breath, solar plexus, musicality, flow of movement, contemporary dance-making, historical dance, live art creation, relationship of visual artist to the dancer

**Presentation Date:** Sunday, June 16, 2013, 2:30-4:45pm

**Format:** Presentation and Discussion

**Supplements:** Modified Powerpoint included

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## **The Essential Isadora: *Finding the Inherent Characteristics of Isadora's Technique***

The Duncan dance practitioners of today, including dancers, teachers and choreographers, rely on the substantial and rich foundation created by the mother of modern dance, Isadora Duncan. Much work has been accomplished since the time of her career to preserve, protect, pass down and foster her technique and her repertory for future generations. It is a question for contemporary Duncan dancers who wish, as Isadora encouraged, to find their own voice and their own artistic expression, within the constructs of Isadora's philosophy and approach, in a manner which fulfills her grand vision, but also speaks to the needs and aesthetics of the modern era.

In that vein, questions arise such as: What is essential in the Isadora Duncan technique? What must be present for a work to be "Duncan"? Must there be a Greek tunic? Must the music be classical? Can the movement initiate from somewhere other than the breath and solar plexus? What ultimately makes a dance a *Duncan* dance?

In creating my thesis project at the University of Maryland in 2012, I undertook these questions, using the artwork of various ancient cultures, including Japan, India, Egypt, China and Greece, to investigate the possibilities choreographically. With a careful selection of four main characteristics of Duncan dance – breath and solar plexus initiation, endless flow of movement, personal expression and musicality – I worked with 12 diverse dancers who differed in age, gender, background, level of training, ethnicity, and experience to create dances that related these four characteristics to new applications in terms of visual artistic inspiration, contemporary and diverse genres of music, and the staging of traditional and new choreographic work.

The attempt to work as Isadora worked, through the careful selection of visual art that elicited a gestural impulse and of music that inspired a flow of movement and call of emotional expression on a universal scale, proved challenging but rewarding. Had Isadora never known the art of ancient Greece, I feel she could have found ample sustenance in the classical artwork of Japan, China, and India in particular.

For example, each of these cultures presented visuals of the human body in its most beautiful form. Surprisingly, in studying the stances and posturing of figures from paintings and sculptures, I discovered that each culture imbued its classical aesthetic of the human body with asymmetry and angles, such as the bent knees in Japanese courtesan paintings and the tribunga of ancient Hindu sculpture.

In a manner sometimes similar to Isadora's conversion of the Tanagra figurines into the movement study known as "The Tanagra Figures," I found I was able to connect various gestures and shapes from the artwork to each other, using breath, flow, musicality and personal expression, as evidenced in my new work "Oiran." Other times I worked more in her method of bringing mythology to life, such as her "Furies" as compared to my "Guardians," which I created from Japanese Shitenno temple guardian and demon statues and mythology.

While I was able to apply these important and essential Isadora Duncan dance characteristics to all my dances in the thesis project, not all dances looked classically Duncan. In particular, "Isis & Hathor" (based on Egyptian artwork) and "Eternal Cycle" (based on Hindu artwork) were not as overtly "Duncan" in their aesthetic appearance; however, the internal motivations and connection to the music were extremely rooted in Duncan principles and practice.

In terms of working with Duncan's repertory directly, my most controversial experiment, at least from the perspective of the Duncan community itself, was my "abstracting" of her choreography "Ode to Apollo" from Schubert's *Ninth Symphony, 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, Andante*. Using post-modern dance-making techniques, I took Isadora's distinctive and repetitive phrases, and broke them up across dancers. For example, the opening phrase "Torch right, torch left, torch right, torch left, torch right and swirl right, swirl left, press and run away," generally performed by one or a group of dancers in succession from upstage left to downstage right, was divided among the dancers on the stage, moving in different directions and at different times. In this case, the first phrase described above might be performed by three different dancers: Dancer 1 "Torch 1 (become pedestrian), Torch 4 and 5, (become pedestrian), press and run away"; Dancer 2 "(pedestrian) Torch 2 and 3, (pedestrian), Swirl 2, press and run away"; Dancer 3 "Torch 1 (pedestrian), Torch 3 and 4, Swirl 1 and 2, (pedestrian)". In this way the entire phrase was performed and seen by the audience, but with an added element of surprise and randomness that kept the choreography fresh and revealing, as if the dancers (presenting themselves as patrons in a museum at this time) were being inspired to movement by the art they were witnessing in the blank gallery space.

An unwritten, unspoken element that I included as an inherent characteristic is a connection to nature in the movement. Always the idea of waves, wind, the movement of trees, the blossoming of flowers, underlies any choreography created in the Duncan style. However, since I did not expressly work with this characteristic as an essential element, I cannot say that it is an essential *principle* in creating new Duncan-style choreography. All the other elements did prove critical to her work. The need for the “Greek” aesthetic was less clear. Some choreographies seemed to work well without an inherent Greek-ness and still seemed to present themselves as identifiable Duncan-style dances. Other pieces, such as the aforementioned “Isis & Hathor” and “Eternal Cycle” were perhaps less obviously so.

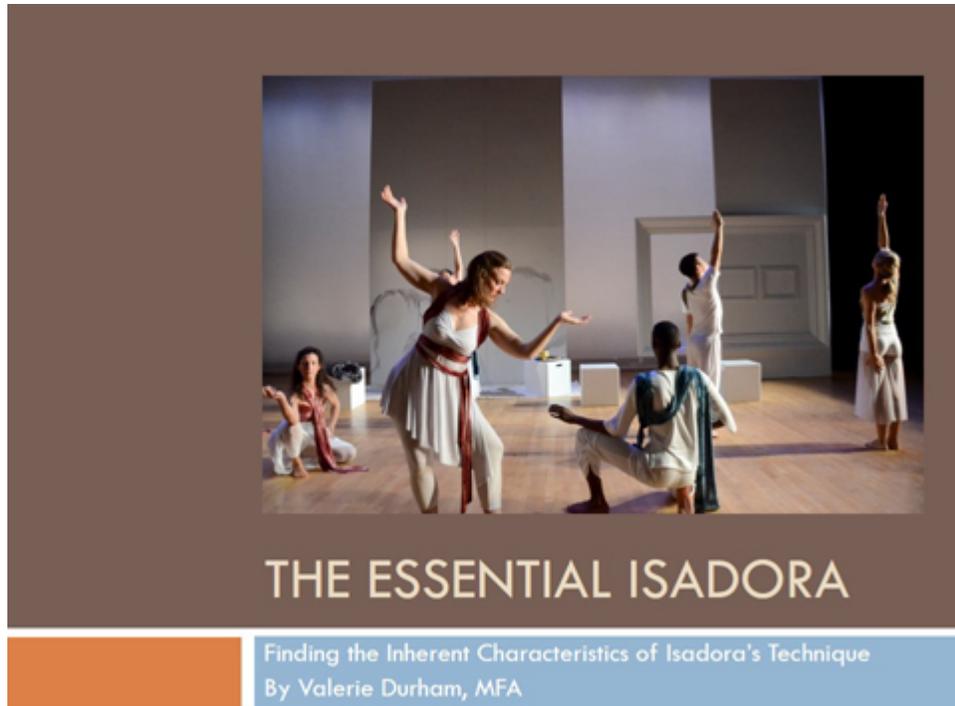
The final piece of the concert, “Ourselves In|And|Of|Through Art,” was joyful and full movement, relying almost exclusively on Duncan vocabulary, with the cast of dancers connecting and turning to each other, embodying the diversity of cultural perspectives and accumulation of human knowledge through the ages. As they danced, a live artist onstage painted in broad contemporary calligraphy-style strokes, taking his inspiration from the movement of the dancers, creating a complete cycle of inspiration – from life, to visual art, to dance, and back to visual art.

## **DISCUSSION**

The presentation attendees discussed the essential principles of the Isadora Duncan technique I selected as my variables in this choreographic experiment. Their own training and experience with the Duncan technique affirmed the importance of moving from the breath, initiating that movement from the solar plexus, creating an endless flow of movement, and the importance of musicality and personal expression. One participant, Dicki Johnson Macy, suggested the importance of a connection to nature as an essential element of the Duncan technique, with which I quite agreed. The question of whether the Greek aesthetic was an essential requirement was still vague and unanswered. In some ways, the wearing of the tunic is a distinctive “badge of honor” that reflects our timelessness and our embracing of the beauty in life as Duncan dancers. In other ways, the tunic seems old-fashioned and affected to some, as if Duncan dancers are people who are not fully present in modern times. There’s also the issue of the themes that contemporary dances can address: Perhaps not everything has to be rooted in Western cultural perspectives and mythology?

To conclude the session, we watched a video of the thesis concert performance, allowing participants to see firsthand how the thesis incorporated Duncan principles, abstracted Duncan repertory and investigated Duncan philosophy and approach to come to a fuller understanding of our relationship as people to art and art-making.

**The Essential Isadora:**  
**Finding the Inherent Characteristics of Isadora's Technique**  
Powerpoint Presentation by Valerie Durham, MFA



## In | And | Of | Through: Choreographic Questions

1. How can principles of Isadora Duncan technique and dance philosophy be applied to contemporary dance-making?
2. How can those same principles be applied to alternative aesthetics based on artwork from diverse global cultures?
3. How does this process indicate a larger relationship to the creation, inspiration and interpretation of art by the individual in society?

## Foundational Concepts

- Principles of Isadora Duncan technique:
  - ▣ Breath and Solar Plexus Initiation
  - ▣ Flow of Movement
  - ▣ Musicality and phrasing
  - ▣ Personal and emotional expression
- Selected artwork from the Freer Gallery of Art
- Community of diverse dancers to embody the process of the individual's transformation by art
- Live art creation to signify the cycle of art inspiration from life and interpretation into life

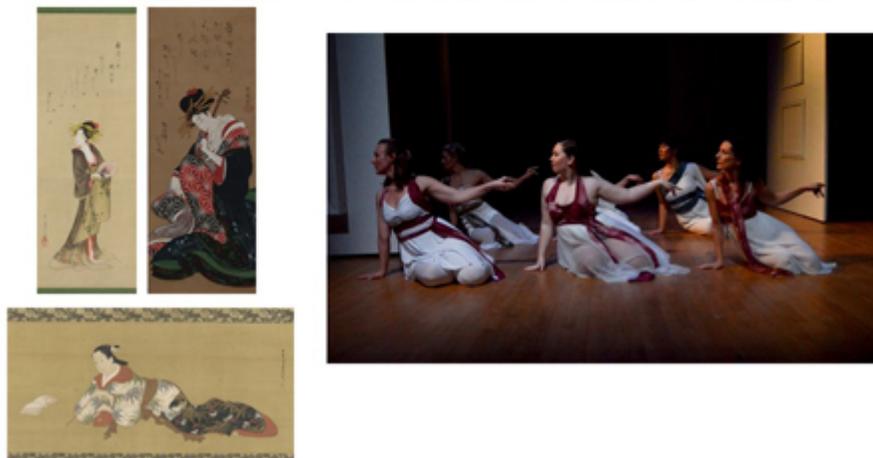
## Tanagra Figures and Oiran Images

- Isadora Duncan created the “Tanagra Figures” from studies of ancient Greek statuettes in the British Museum to
  - ▣ 1) instill the Greek aesthetic in the body
  - ▣ 2) understand the flow of movement from one position into another



## Applying a Different Aesthetic

- Images of the *oiran* from silk screens in Edo Period in Japan had similar qualities of body stance, naturalness and elegance.



## Movement Principles

- I was able to marry the Isadora Duncan technique with an alternative aesthetic through the use of:
  - ▣ Breath and solar plexus initiation
  - ▣ Flow of one movement into the next
  - ▣ Musicality and phrasing
  - ▣ Personal or emotional expression
- I applied these elements to all the dance choreographies in *In | And | Of | Through*

## Abstracting Andante

- One of my larger artistic missions is to find ways to bring enhanced relevancy to historical Duncan works through abstraction and reconceptualization
- “Abstracting Andante” takes the conventional Duncan choreography and
  - ▣ 1) breaks up the movement phrases across bodies and across the space
  - ▣ 2) inserts the notion of the individual’s inspiration for movement
  - ▣ 3) introduces the aspect of the “pedestrian” into a classical, lyrical choreography

## Abstracting Andante



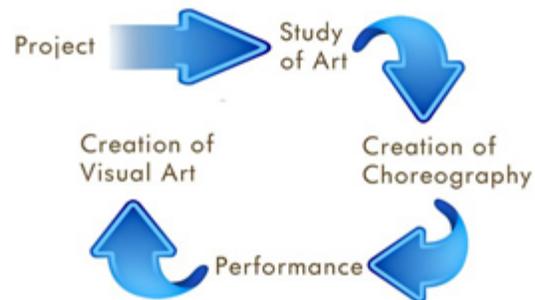
## Renaissance to Isadora to Rodin to Durham to...

- Greek and Renaissance art was based upon a study of the natural human body in motion
- Isadora Duncan studied Greek and Renaissance art to learn the “most natural earth positions” for movement
- Artists such as August Rodin and many others created artwork based on Isadora’s dance
- Dancers like myself have studied those artists’ images to learn more about Isadora’s dance



## Cycle of Art in *In | And | Of | Through*

- Study of art in the Freer Gallery of Art collections
- Embodiment of the art through choreography and performance
- Capture of that embodiment through live art creation based upon the dance choreography



## *Isis & Hathor and the Amulet of Thoth*

- Walking motif in *Isis & Hathor* dance came from study of the *Amulet of Thoth*



## Goals for Community and Teaching

- Teach fundamental principles of movement from the Duncan techniques:
  - initiating movement from the breath and solar plexus
  - connecting movements with flow
  - listening and responding to musical phrasing
  - finding a personal expressiveness in the dance
- Build a sense of community through social interactions, positive encouragement
- Foster an environment for personal growth and transformation

## *Eternal Cycle into Community*

- The individual experience of *Eternal Cycle* leads into a moment of connection and expression of relationship in *Community*



## Culminating in Live Visual Art Creation

- The final dance and poses were taken from all the preceding dances and inspirational artwork
- Adrian Galvin's use of contemporary Chinese calligraphy painting with its focus on process was able to take the energy of the final dances and record it in ink through Adrian's movements
- I further interpreted those paint strokes in my final solo before ending to observe Adrian's painting



## Lessons Learned

- Process of bringing separate elements together in a contextual container
  - Choreography – Set – Costume – Lighting – Music
- Isadora Duncan technique and philosophy is relevant for contemporary dance-making and flexible in its application around alternative aesthetics and postmodern concepts
  - Artwork – Gallery – Patron – Movement – Artwork
- Universality of art for humanity
- Importance of process and respect for the individual in the process of making art

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# I ALWAYS DANCE THE CHORUS

*Isadora Duncan and the Dance of Democracy*

Alice Bloch, MA, Ph.D.

**Abstract:** Isadora's statement, "When I have danced I have tried always to be the Chorus..." infuses her technique and pedagogy with a democratic sensibility that stands in radical opposition to the dance of her day. This presentation explains how her technique embodies this communal sensibility. It includes movement demonstrations and audience participation.

**Keywords:** Greek chorus, class, democracy, gravity, nature, pedagogy, race, solar plexus, technique

**Presentation Date:** June 16, 2013, 2:30-4:00pm

**Format:** Lecture/workshop/master class

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## **I Always Dance the Chorus: *Isadora Duncan and the Dance of Democracy***

Isadora Duncan, who lived from 1877 to 1927, was as famous in her day as Lady Gaga is now. Newspapers reported on what she ate, her romances, her schools, her lack of corsets, and her bare feet. But many people now forgotten have led publicly scandalous lives. Why is Isadora remembered? Because of the power and beauty of her dance. When Isadora began dancing, her art was considered frivolous, fit only for low-life music halls. The ballet she saw was stiff and artificial. Isadora reawakened the idea that dance expresses universal human experience, something we take for granted today. She danced water, flowers, love, rage, and revolution. The Greek tunics in which she danced intensified the fluidity of her movement and made it acceptable for post-Victorian audiences to gaze at her bare limbs. While her dance was fierce and sensual, it was spiritual in essence, a prayer that connects us from the earth through our bodies and souls to the universe. As Isadora wrote: "I...sought the source of the spiritual expression to flow into the channels of the body filling it with vibrating light..." (Duncan, 1927:25)

Considered radical for her time, her art is also very much of the earth. Her movement is inspired by natural wave forms and weighted by the pull of gravity.

**DEMONSTRATION:** Sway back and forth moving the upper torso in a Mobius strip pattern, with the arms trailing, first at waist level, then at shoulder level, and then overhead. Move the upper arms with the sense of pressing against the air to show the experience of gravity.

It is body centered—the solar plexus is deep in the chest, nestled between our hearts and our lungs. When Isadora opened her arms out to the world and up to the universe, she seemed to embrace her audience and draw them with her. She connected with her audience as no previous Euro/American dancers had, not just kinesthetically, but spiritually, philosophically, and, as will be seen, politically as well.

Isadora's statement, "When I have danced I have tried always to be the Chorus...I have never once danced a solo" (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:96), infuses her choreography,

technique and pedagogy with a democratic sensibility that stood in radical opposition to the regimented and empty-headed dance of her day. Her focus on the ensemble rather than on herself helped her avoid self-expression and contributed to the universality of her dances. The Chorus she referenced was the dancing Chorus of classical Greek drama. She imagined that Chorus as “the center of a harmonious ensemble, like the solar plexus at the center of the man. Toward them everything converged; from them everything went out like rays from a light” (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:96). Envisioning this center as she moved, Isadora experienced herself as dancing with others even while performing primarily alone. Much of the profound impact she had on audiences can be traced to her projection of that sensed union. In effect, Isadora danced with all humanity in the service of a larger ideal.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** Have audience members stand and place their hands over the solar plexus. Invite them to experience the solar plexus as multi-directional, radiant energy. Have them allow this energy to move their arms in expanding, outward gestures. Use the images of the multi-armed Nata Raja and Ganesh of the Hindu pantheon to help them invoke this experience.

**MUSIC SUGGESTION:** Bach, *Air on a G-String*.

Analyses of her enduring appeal are loaded with misconceptions, such as the belief that she had no technique, or that her influence on contemporary dance is mostly philosophical. Also fallacious is the notion that her ability to connect with audiences was merely charismatic. In fact, the interweaving of her precepts with her movement forms the groundwork of her choreography and pedagogy. The content and structure of Duncan technique classes, as they have evolved from her example and philosophy, dispense with the traditional hierarchy of ballet classes where the *etoiles* stand front and center and everyone has a designated place.

She rejected ballet’s exacting lexicon with its everlasting struggle to replicate an external, idealized body. Observing a children’s ballet class at the Berlin Opera House she was horrified that

[t]heir feet are being tortured into deformed shapes. Their tender little bodies already are being forced into tight bodices and baby corsets, while their natural graceful movements are being tormented into unnatural straight kickings of the legs, toe walking, and all sorts of awkward contortions which are directly contrary to what a child’s natural movement would be developed in the line of reason and beauty (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:73).

The artificiality of chorus line dancers repelled her:

I do not appeal to the lower instincts of mankind as your half-clad chorus girls do....They would be much less suggestive if they were nude. Yet they are

allowed to perform because they satisfy the Puritan instinct for concealed lust (Duncan in Rosemount, 1981:49).

Isadora's mingling of spiritual impulse and naturally based movement empowers her dance to counteract the obsessive focus on self that characterizes so much of today's dance classes and performance. Eliminating hierarchical authority and egotistical fixation from her movement classes renders Isadora's dance democratic at its core.

Democracy requires community consciousness in order to succeed. The communal consciousness inherent in Isadora's definition of the Greek chorus, which she projected in performance and infused into the classroom, was and is fundamentally democratic. But democracy's unique virtue is also to support individual freedoms. The result is that democracy exists in a continual tension between the rights of the individual and one's duty/relationship to the larger community.

This seeming contradiction pervades Duncan's movement and her philosophies of art and education. For example, a key and unique element of Isadora's movement is motion through space, begun and renewed by a subtle, forward impulse from the solar plexus. One is always, slightly, falling. You only avoid toppling over by continually regenerating the movement through the solar plexus—the technique used in *chi* running. Thus the interconnection between your deepest self and the surrounding world, or community, is constantly renewed. Her pervasive use of actively oppositional movement, as in the swing skips, requires the same dual consciousness.

**DEMONSTRATION:** As in *chi* running, begin with vertical alignment and tilt slightly forward from the solar plexus until you must step forward to avoid falling. Continue this into walking.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** Have audience members experience the above walk, emphasizing initiation of the movement from the solar plexus. Take the movement into leg swings and swing/skips. Contrast second position swings as they have developed in Duncan technique where the solar plexus impels you out into space with the over-the-legs balance of second position swings in Limón technique.

**MUSIC SUGGESTIONS:** Bach, *Jesu-Joy of Man's Desire*; Schubert, *Entr'acte #2 from Rosamunde, Impromptu in E-Flat Major*.

For Isadora then, the solar plexus is simultaneously spiritual and physical--the temporal home of the soul and the radiating center of the body in motion. For her it was a logical step to comprehend the fundamental, democratic role of the Greek chorus through the symbol of the solar plexus. The merger of the individual and the community in one harmonious symbol made the Chorus the lived expression of the democratic process. By dancing with an active sense of the choral presence, one is effectively dancing democracy.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** Ask audience members to stand and re-invoke the energetic awareness of the solar plexus. Then ask them to envision a Chorus of individuals, each with a radiating, energetic center. Have audience members maintain their sense of the Chorus while moving through space in various patterns such as lines and circles.

**MUSIC SUGGESTIONS:** Granados, *Andaluzá*; Beethoven, *Violin Romance #2*.

Of course, this is an idealized vision. Anyone who has studied Duncan's writing and her sybaritic life knows that there were huge contradictions between her principles and her practice. Her racism is a glaring example. As she famously (and mistakenly) wrote, "It is monstrous for anyone to believe that the Jazz rhythm expresses America. Jazz rhythm expresses the South African savage" (Duncan in Cheney, 1928: 48-49). I cringe when I discuss the racist aspect of Duncan with my students, but then face it head on. According to Ann Daly, in her indispensable book, *Done into Dance*, Duncan purposely used "strategies of difference and exclusion" (Daly, 1995: 111) in her references to race and class. Daly states:

When Duncan was denouncing African "primitivism" or invoking Nietzsche, or constructing herself as a Greek goddess, she was producing and reproducing social divisions along the lines of class and race. Duncan was interested specifically in going back to and appropriating the roots of *Western* (white) culture in the Greeks; the Egyptians, she said, were origin of an-*Other* (black) race (Rosemount, 1977:92).... As for ragtime and jazz, which rivaled her for the public's attention, she scornfully dismissed them on many an occasion as "this deplorable modern dancing, which has its roots in the ceremonies of African primitives" (Rosemount 126, in Daly, 1995:12,114).

While this is a necessary and valid critique, it is problematic. Daly seems to view Duncan's philosophy as divisive and exclusive. However, this is an oversimplification. Words like "appropriate" and "strategy," used by many contemporary scholars, can have negative associations. We may see as conscious motives what are actually unexamined premises. And we can fall into the trap of condescending to our subject from our presumably enlightened perspective.

But all of us are products of our times. For instance, the word, "product" demonstrates the degree to which the capitalist philosophy has commodified our collective consciousness. For me, one of our necessary tasks as we grow as human beings is to become conscious of our "embedded" (there's another one from the Iraq war) prejudices. Do I condone Duncan's racism? Of course not. Rather, I contextualize it. As Daly said, Duncan chose her words "strategically," as a means of validating her aesthetic. But I would note that the choice arose from her culturally typical blindness to the ubiquitous racism of her day.

Class issues for Duncan are more complex. She strove throughout her life to provide free concerts and free schools to people of all classes. However, once Paris Singer became her lover in 1909, she reverted to her upper-middle class origins and lived in luxury. Although

her students were drawn from the lower class, her audiences and patrons were white, and primarily middle and upper class. Whether she would have welcomed non-white students, in the unlikely case that she would have encountered any, is questionable.

She spoke of the “masses” with seemingly upper class condescension, as when she said, “Education of the young is the only way to bring taste and understanding to the working class” (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:118). This statement seems inconsistent with her embrace of communism, but in the same essay she wrote compassionately of her working class audiences. She answered complaints that they were unable to comprehend Beethoven’s music with the observation that the contrast with their lives of hard labor was too much for them to overcome quickly. While one must acknowledge that “taste” is both individual and culturally mediated, isn’t enhancing understanding what education is about?

Isadora’s empathy for the working poor was real and life-long, perhaps because her father’s desertion of the family meant that she grew up in poverty. Her joy in her students’ accomplishments and vigor, fed in a healthy diet as part of her educational system, knew no class boundaries. Isadora described the transformation in her Russian students who: “...came to the first meeting pale and weak, who could at first hardly skip or raise their arms to the sky....” When she danced free for the Russian peasants she wrote: “For the first time in my artistic career, it seemed to me that the horizon was widened” (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:113,118).

Some of Duncan’s inspirations, such as classical Greek culture, classical music, Delsartism, and the health and women’s dress reform movements, certainly emerged in the upper and middle class milieu of 19<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe and the United States. Her credo: “To express what is most moral, healthful, and beautiful in art—this is the mission of the dancer and to this I dedicate my life” (Duncan in Cheney, 1928: 56), perfectly echoed the middle class values of her day. Daly notes the grace, hygiene, and artistic poise demanded by the American Delsarte practitioner Henrietta Russell Hovey (Daly, 1995: 128). Denouncing these values as middle class, however, seems to imply that lower classes have no desire for or standards of the moral, healthful, and beautiful, and that is patently false.

In Daly’s critique, Duncan “gained a reverence for dance by deconstructing and reconstructing it as a practice of Western ‘Culture’ for the privileged classes.” Duncan’s exclusionary strategies exploited “the conventional distinctions between high and low” (Daly, 1995:111). Again, a pernicious motive is implied. Yet picture a typical Duncan performance: a single, tunic-clad figure dances to classical music against a backdrop of grey-blue curtains. Her art is lost when she performs in the raucous context of the music hall. Duncan was certainly, as Daly implies, conscious of her image. But as an artist, she wanted her work to be seen in its ideal context, an imperative that must be respected in any critique of her practice.

Further, there were no class distinctions in audience seating for the free concerts Isadora envisioned. Her image of a Greek theatre is that in which “the greatest number of people

can see, hear, and feel at the same moment with the same intensity and equal proportions....The Greek was essentially a democratic theatre” (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:86-87).

When one considers Isadora as educator, her philosophy is consistent. The 19<sup>th</sup> century educators who inspired her, such as Jean Jacques Rousseau in his *Emile*, Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel, all stressed the primacy of the creative, “natural” individual, a premise that parallels the democratic ethos. In fact, the Greek root of the word “democracy” is “people deciding” (Personal communication, Frank K Flinn, June 20, 2008). For Pestalozzi, education “should be organic, meaning that education of ‘head, heart, and body,’ should be integrated, and that education should draw upon the faculties or “self-power” inherent in the human being” (*Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved June 13, 2008, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online: <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-47600>). Froebel, who pioneered the kindergarten concept, believed that “man is essentially active and creative rather than merely receptive” (*Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved June 13, 2008, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online).

A philosophy of education that involved the whole person, that looked to the individual as the source of power and saw creativity as essential, supported Isadora’s image of a school.

She envisioned:

[y]oung girls in such an atmosphere surrounded by Beautiful form & that by holding before them the ideal form they would gradually grow to a personification of it in their own Bodies—and thus by the continuous practice of beautiful movement in coincident of that form would become perfect Beings in form and movement... (Collection of Isadora Duncan Materials, Theatre Collection, Museum of the City of New York, 1911).

Initially, this sounds like an educational system that would shape dancers into a common, idealized form, as does ballet pedagogy. As is clear from her exclusion of African based dance styles and her directives to her pupils, Isadora subscribed to a specific limited aesthetic. In her essays, “What Dancing Should Be” and “A Letter to the Pupils” (Duncan in Cheney, 1928: 71-73, 107-108), she exhorted her adopted daughters to limit themselves to her principles of beauty. Yet her foundational beliefs, the ones that endured to inspire us today, emphasized, as do democratic principles, the creative achievements of the individual. Isadora’s statements confirm this:

The only power that can satisfactorily guide the child’s body is the inspiration of the soul. In this school I shall not teach the children to imitate my movements, but to make their own...I shall help them to develop those movements which are natural to them. (Duncan in Rosemount, 1977:53,61)

In fact, it is Isadora’s emphasis on the soul rather than the ego that allows her dance to

transcend self-expression, and differentiates it from the self-obsessed mania for extreme technique of much dance today.

Her choreography transcends the individual. As dance critic Deborah Jowitt points out, Isadora named her dances in the plural even though they were originally solos: “The Furies,” rather than “Fury,” and “Blessed Spirits,” rather than “Blessed Spirit,” because a group experience was what she intended to express. In her World War I *Marseillaise*, she made herself “the heroic symbol of a multitude” (Jowitt, 1988: 89, 92). Theologian Kimerer LaMothe experienced Isadora’s 1921 “Mother” as a Dionysian universal, in effect, a Dionysian chorus” (LaMothe, 2006:152-154).

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** Invite participants to discuss their experience of dancing *Furies* and *Blessed Spirits* as a solo and with a group. Have them dance *Blessed Spirits* in solo mode while envisioning and experiencing themselves as dancing it with a multitude.

**MUSIC SUGGESTION:** Gluck, *Dance of the Blessed Spirits* from *Orfeo*.

Movement shaped by the curvilinear continuity and ebb and flow of waves was at the core of Duncan’s aesthetic. “The great and only principle on which I feel justified in leaning is a constant and absolute unity between form and movement; a rhythmic unity which runs through all the manifestations of nature” (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:102). This unity may be understood as a unity of individual and community. The spatial patterns of the travelling exercises in Duncan technique as it has evolved today, as seen in the work of many practitioners and described by Julia Levien, (such as the serpentine and skipping and polka patterns) feature continuous lines of dancers where each person has time to move individually (Levien, 1994:71).

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** Have participants do a skipping pattern where partners invite each other to dance with a calling gesture, and all skip together in a circle.

**MUSIC SUGGESTION:** Schubert, *Momente Musicale #3 in F Major, March Op 121 #1*.

Isadora’s culturally limited aesthetic prevented her from perceiving the harmonious and natural flow of African based movement. It fed her denigration of angular and percussive dance styles, which she saw as limiting. “We dance with the jerky gestures of puppets. We do not...know how to develop our visions into the harmonies that attend our dreams” (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:100). Even with its limitations, however, her vision of harmony bonded to nature has in it the seeds of individual creativity.

For Isadora, a connection to nature is essential for the individual soul’s expression. She wrote, “To seek in Nature the most beautiful forms and to discover the movement which expresses the soul of those forms, that is the task of the dancer” (Duncan in Cheney, 1928: 102). Contrary to balletic dictums, she understood that acknowledging the force of gravity empowers rather than restricts us: “The dance should simply be, then, the natural

gravitation of this will of the individual, which in the end is no more nor less than a human translation of the gravitation of the universe” (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:55).

In “The Dance of Future,” creative expression springs from each dancer’s body:

...the primary movements for the human body from which shall evolve the movements of the future dance in ever-varying, natural, unending sequences... will always have to depend on and correspond to the form that is moving...Even so the movements of the human body must correspond to its form. The dances of no two persons should be alike (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:57-58).

Her philosophy resulted in the multiplicity of dance forms and expressions we see today—obviously in modern and postmodern dance, but even in ballet and the African-based forms such as jazz, tap, and hip hop that Isadora might have rejected.

One result of her beliefs is that Isadora only took children younger than nine into her schools:

You will find that the movements of all natural things work within harmonious expression. And that is true in the first years of a child’s life; but very soon the movement that is imposed from without by wrong theories of education, and the child soon loses its natural spontaneous life....The child of nine has already entered into the prison of conventional and mechanical movement, in which it will remain and suffer its entire life... (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:77).

The focus on individual essence imbued Isadora’s personal regimen and her prescriptions for dance pedagogy. In Irma Duncan’s autobiography, she describes Isadora’s training methods, saying that she engaged in a vigorous course of gymnastics and incorporated *barre* work into her own, and her students’ training, “...though of course,” stated Irma, “in a much more relaxed style, without distortions and from natural positions of the feet.” In fact, the abdominal work of Joseph Pilates, who was trained in German gymnastics, is an ideal way to support the upper torso movement of Duncan technique. These warm up exercises were the only time she used a mirror, claiming that it interfered with her inner concentration and expression. For Isadora, the truly creative dancer moves from her soul (Rogers, 1965:71,126).

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** Ask participants to stand and curve the spine forward as described in Julia Levien’s book on Duncan technique as they experience the counter-lift through the abdominals characteristic of the Pilates method (Levien, 1994:2).

**MUSIC SUGGESTION:** Chopin, *Preludes, Nocturnes*.

The children proceed from gymnastic warm ups to simple walking in groundwork to prepare for an essential component of Isadora's dance pedagogy: "The pupils...during their sports, in the playing fields, during their walks or in the woods, run and jump naturally until they have learned to express themselves by movement as easily as others can express themselves by word or song" (Duncan in Cheney, 1928: 82). Again, for Isadora, the art of dance must proceed from "the natural will of the individual." It is noteworthy that Irma's small syllabus begins, not with movements of the arms and spine as we do today, but with walking (Rogers, 1970:1-2).

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** Invite the participants to participate in Julia Levien's "Walk with Gestures" pattern, emphasizing the energy emanating from the solar plexus as the motivating force (Levien, 1994:26-29).

**MUSIC SUGGESTION:** Beethoven, *Fur Elise*; Schubert, *March Opus 40, #1*.

Isadora's movement with its foundation of wave forms and basic locomotor movements is, unlike ballet, appropriate to a growing child's body. She described her niece dancing on the beach "as though the heartbeat of her life were sounding in unison with the mighty rhythm of the water." The girl was, Isadora observed, "only dancing what she has been taught, but the movements are so completely in harmony with her child-like nature that they seem to spring direct from her inmost being" (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:74,75).

Yet underlying her wish to perpetuate her movement values is an equally strong desire, a democratic impulse, to see individuals realize their potential in movement.

It seems to me criminal to entrust children, who cannot defend themselves, to this injurious training [that is, dancing based on arranged gymnastics]; for it is a crime to teach the child to guide his growing body by the stern power of the brain, while deadening impulse and inspiration. The only power that can satisfactorily guide the child's body is the inspiration of the soul (Duncan in Cheney, 1928: 53).

And of course for Isadora, the soul expresses itself through the solar plexus, not the brain.

The movement roots of the communal, choral aspect of democracy pervade Isadora's connection to nature. In her pedagogic program she states, "Let us first teach children to breathe, to vibrate, to feel, and to become one with the general harmony and movement of nature" (Duncan in Cheney, 1928: 77). Her study of classical Greek art also informed this aspect of her teaching philosophy. She filled her schools with copies of these images, including girls dancing hand-in-hand at the Panathenas so that "[t]he real children of the schools, moving and dancing amidst them, must resemble them" (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:80-81).

One of Isadora's crucial innovations was to see choreography as the natural outgrowth of this individual experience. However, she understood intuitively that great choreography is

not self-expression. Rather, it expresses the individual essence within community: the Chorus of democracy.

But even when they are dancing together, each one, while forming part of a whole, under group inspiration, will preserve a creative individuality. And all the parts together will compose a unified harmony that will bring a new birth to the world: will make live again the flaming beauty of the dramatic Chorus... (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:82)

Duncan classes as they are now taught have evolved from her educational philosophy and the teaching of her adopted daughters, particularly Irma Duncan. In practice, as we know from Irma, Isadora was an inspirer rather than a teacher, “apparently unable to dissect a dance in order to teach it to others” (Rogers, 1965: 127). Isadora’s adopted daughters developed coherent pedagogical structures from their study, performance, and teaching of her work. Irma, who stayed with Isadora the longest, set out what she termed “an authentic representation of the technique underlying Isadora’s art” (Rogers, 1970: 35) in her book, *The Technique of Isadora Duncan*. The more complex movement sequences of Julia Levien’s pedagogy as described in her book, *Duncan Dance*, seems to have developed from Irma’s 12 basic movement themes.

My Duncan training has come primarily from the lineage of Irma Duncan as taught by second-generation Duncan dancers Julia Levien and Gemze DeLappe, who studied and performed with Irma and Anna, and from Lori Belilove, Ellen Foreman, and Linda Tarnay. As is true for most Duncan dancers today, my teaching combines what I have learned from these wonderful teachers with my own studies of Isadora’s writings, drawings of her, and insights I have gained in the process of performing and teaching her work. Inevitably, the teaching has evolved over time. Lori Belilove has developed a set of rigorous exercises to enhance awareness and mobility of the upper torso. I use a spinal release series I learned from choreographer Tamar Rogoff, and sensing exercises from Eiko and Koma’s “Delicious Movement” technique to increase fluidity and the energetic flow of movement through the torso. Whereas Julia Levien has instructions for improvisation in her guide to teaching Duncan dance (Levien, 1994: 96), Gemze DeLappe states flatly that “Irma never improvised” (Personal communication, April 17, 2008). But this rich variety affirms Duncan’s principles, and is the natural outflow of her core beliefs.

I maintain that the teaching has evolved in a way that is consistent with Isadora’s theories, and further, that the evolution of this teaching contains the democratic essence of Duncan dance as it expresses the importance of the individual and the necessity for community.

Isadora’s focus on individual essence begins with her use of the solar plexus as the center. Moving from the solar plexus, one moves from the heart and from the breath – from the essence of oneself, or, as Isadora describes it, the unity that begets diversity that is “...the central spring of all movement, the crater of motor power, the unity from which all diversities of movement are born” (Duncan, 1927:75).

Her description suggests to me the image of multiple solar systems within a galaxy; multiple galaxies within a universe; individual suns generating communities of planets. As Walt Whitman, Isadora's favorite poet put it: "(I am large. I contain multitudes.)" (Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, stanza 51).

The interweaving of inner and outer, self and other imbues the whole Duncan class with communal, choral, consciousness. This multidirectional and continuing flow of energy opposes the uni-directionality of ballet, where one searches constantly for the ideal form, which exists in some Platonic universe outside of the dancer.

As Julia Levien described it:

...every movement emerges both physically and emotively from the body center...and then radiates outward to become part of the surrounding space, both immediate and limitless. To spring up from the floor acknowledges the pull of gravity. The upward thrust opposes this; the descent holds back as it yields (Levien, 1994:xiii).

Isadora's intense awareness of natural forces, especially gravity and wave forms, generates a sense of energy within the body and a tactile relationship with space. The active sensing of gravity creates an ongoing connection to the world around one. "The movement should follow the rhythm of the waves: the rhythm that rises, penetrates, holding in itself the impulse and the after movement; call and response, bound endlessly in one cadence" (Duncan in Cheney, 1928:99).

One may begin a Duncan class simply by breathing with the palms folded over the solar plexus, or as I learned from Amy Garlin, Mignon's granddaughter, by walking with palms over solar plexus. From there, the movements expand into gestures that reach into, touch, and enfold the space. The arms are activated from the back and shoulders through the fingertips, not in mimetic gestures but in felt, postural, communion. The Tanagra series begins with sequences focused on the individual, but progresses to the sensed awareness of other beings and the world around the individual.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** Invite the participants to perform the four basic Tanagra figures, experiencing the first two as with an inner focus, and the second two with an outward focus that includes others in the space around them (Rogers, 1070:17-21; Levien, 1994:10-12).

**MUSIC SUGGESTION:** Schubert, *Standchen*.

Isadora's locomotor movements create an instantaneous empathy among dancers and audience. They are movements common to us all: walking, running, leaping, and skipping. As one moves through the space, arms and torso are continually active in communal

gestures of gathering, reaching, and calling. These gestures are integrated into more complex movements of waltzes and polkas so the sense of relationship is never lost. In addition, as the classes have evolved, there are always times when students dance together in choral patterns that weave through and encircle the space. Imagery also supports the sensed connection between self, others, and nature.

As noted, improvisation seems to be a later addition to the class structure, possibly originating with Julia Levien. However, since Irma cites it as a source for choreography, and describes Isadora's improvising movement when she taught (Rogers, 1965: 67; 1970: xii), improvisation has a valid place in a technique that emphasizes individual creativity. Typical improvisations include dancers walking, skipping, and running between and among each other, using gestures of calling, reaching, and gathering. Dancers may link arms and circle around, reaching towards each other as they approach, and away as they separate. The delight dancers experience in these improvisations reinforces the sense of the individual in community that creates the democratic essence of Isadora's technique.

The movement called "Universe" exemplifies the union of philosophy and movement expression. As Irma Duncan describes it:

Imagine you are standing in the center of the world on a high peak. You look up and see stars above you, your hands are crossed over your breast. YOU YEARN TO RAISE YOUR ARMS TO THE INFINITE. YOU DO SO and say to yourself, UNIVERSE! You fold your hands over your breast again. Then you look below and see at your feet meadows, rivers, and seas. YOU WANT TO STRETCH YOUR ARMS OVER THEM POSSESSIVELY. YOU DO SO, and say, EARTH! Fold your hands over your breast again in a gesture symbolizing the conscious self. Then you look straight ahead and see your image, man. YOU DESIRE TO HOLD YOUR ARMS OUT TO HIM. YOU DO SO, and say, FRIEND! (Rogers, 1970:12-13).

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** Invite the audience to refocus on the solar plexus, and then do the Universe gesture three times, facing a new direction each time. Encourage them to be aware of the radiant energy within and around them.

**MUSIC SUGGESTION:** Bach, *Overture #3, Air. Overture #2, Badinerie.*

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# THE ROLE OF THE SOLAR PLEXUS IN ISADORA DUNCAN DANCE

Laura Pravitz, I.D.M.A., C.L.M.A.

**Abstract:** The solar plexus operates as central and key to Isadora Duncan dance. It unites our movement and serves as stationmaster, transmitting, regulating and managing the cycle of our expression and self-renewal. It is also our hearth and home, where we return to take stock, stoke our fire and replenish. Our moods, imaginings, and intentions radiate from and return there, giving to our dance its unique quality of continuity and fecundity. The solar plexus also grows the ineffable quality of unification that we see and feel in Duncan dancing through a play between shadow and light. This paper seeks to unpack and unravel the mystery and relevance of Isadora's wonderful discovery through an exploration of anatomy and sacred teachings, and the lens of Laban Movement Analysis, the Dionysian, and natural form.

**Keywords:** solar plexus, Isadora Duncan Dance, sacred geometry, Laban Movement Analysis, anatomy, archetype, mythology, religious symbology, art history

**Presentation Date:** Sunday, June 16, 2013, 2:30-4:00pm

**Format:** Workshop/Master class

**Supplements:** Supplements I, II and III included

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## The Role of the Solar Plexus in Isadora Duncan Dance

A fiery coal tucked within our waters that can also be cool; a sleeping dragon in her cave. Stationmaster; motor; mediator between Apollonic order and Dionysian chaos, giving form to freedom and freedom to form. As have many of you, I've been working with the solar plexus through Isadora Duncan dance for a very long time. We speak of it; we feel it; we have our own unique relationships to it. I have been seeking to understand and unpack its role and power. Just what is this "place"? What do the ancient traditions have to say and of what relevance is it to Duncan dance? What are its anatomical connections? And how might I understand the solar plexus through my background lens of Laban Movement Analysis? My teaching, along with these weeks of exploration, have revealed to me some useful insights and embodiments, some of which I would like to share with you today.

The celiac, or solar plexus, rules all the digestive organs as well as the kidneys and ovaries through a network of radiating nerve fibers. It is the largest ganglion in the body.



Figure 2. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.

In the Hindu religion, it is the Manipura, or "Fullness of Jewels" or "Jeweled City," and is considered the hot area of the body, a center of power energy where emotions are expressed. It also relates to mental functioning, reasoning, knowing and creativity. It is from there that we take risks and come out of our inner world. The solar plexus is considered doorway to the eyes and is associated with the action of movement and the feet. It is the center of dynamism, willpower and achievement, and the radiating of the life force of PRANA from the sun throughout the body. One online reference offering ways to balance

the solar plexus (instant solar plexus relief!) refers to aspects of leadership (knowing one's true self-worth and adaptability and resilience), honoring "gut knowings," solitude as blissful recuperation and trying new things among other "cures."



Figure 3. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.

The Manipura is also associated with the power of fire and digestion and "the center of etheric-psychic intuition... a sensual way of knowing; a vague sense of size, shape, and intent of being." A smaller chakra, "the celestial wishing tree," or courtyard or gateway to the heart, sits between the solar plexus and the heart, relating one to the other. This "courtyard" is also described as the magic of the internal, where God is on the inside, and where there is happiness without cause; it is bliss.

The Blessed Trinity; Triple Goddess of Maiden, Mother, and Crone; or the tri-partite division of the world into land, sea and sky. We might place the center of the circle connecting its three parts at the solar plexus. And the cross in Christianity has its bisection at the solar plexus.

The triquetra, or Vesicae Piscis, is a religious symbol denoting the three-fold:

In the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, the Tipharet, or "the beauty," is the sixth sephirot and lies at its heart, the point where macrocosm meets the microcosm. The tipharet is thought to be the highest point where the material self of thought and flesh can come to know the

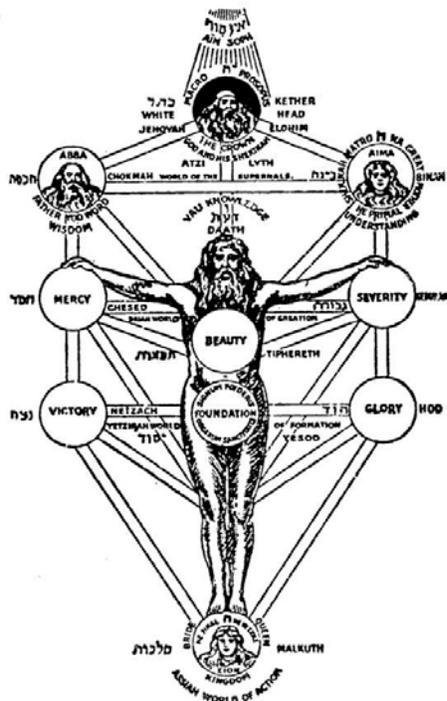


Figure 4. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.

divinity within, positioned between light emanating from the kether, or the crown, and the earth. At this midpoint of the tree is also an entity called "dweller upon the threshold," who guards the veil of illusion, synonymous to Carl Jung's Shadow Self. Some Kabbalistic occultists relate the Manipura with two contending and balancing forces elsewhere on the Tree of Life, the Hod and the Netzach, which are also associated with the left and right legs and feet of the body. We explore these principles of shadow and of oppositional exchange more fully in the workshop through our movement.

Some years ago, I drew these "Eco Maps" from my felt sense when I dance, and which I see now as a kind of Duncan "Tree of Life," incorporating the imaginal and numinous and dream realms. I've left these with their annotations on the table for those who wanted to take a closer look at the end of our time together. (See the Supplements section for additional information.)

There seems to be an endless stream of mystical connections related to the solar plexus, and what I offer here is a mere brushstroke in that direction.

I find these aspects as applicable and germane to our dance. We are guided by the stirrings of our solar plexus, moving from and returning there, in solitude, to refuel ourselves. With its anatomical connection to our stomach, now known in science as our "second brain," the solar plexus can be a center for our "gut knowings"; our deeply residing inner truth. We can radiate confidence from there; deal with our fears; and find, know and commit ourselves through our feet and our vision. Sometimes, our solar plexus may take us with greater or lesser degrees of consciousness, as if it had a will of its own - a little Jiminy Cricket guiding us to stay true. And we find resonance with its proximity to our

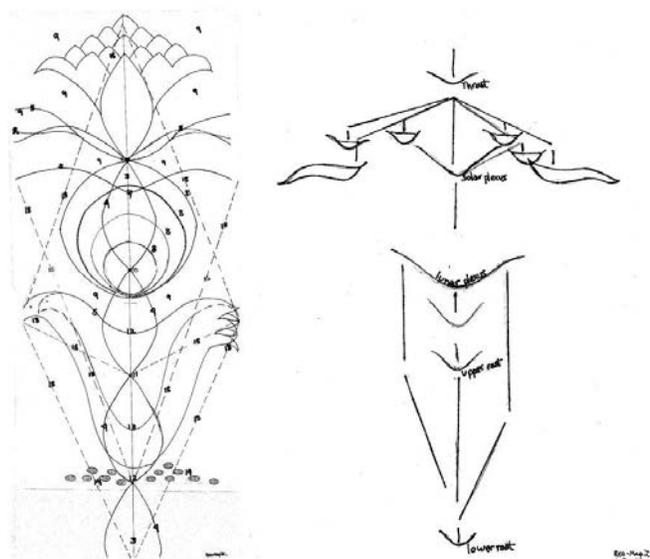


Figure 5. "Eco-maps" created by Laura Pravitz.

heart. When I return there I feel I've come home to myself, better focused and in touch with the pleasures and anxieties of being.

## **LABAN MOVEMENT ANALYSIS**

Rudolph Laban's work derives from a primary premise that we live with an inner drive that has as its goal an outward expression. His entire system of observing and describing movement is seated on this premise of the inner impulse to be felt on the outside. We may view this as related to that "etheric-psychic intuition" of the Manipura, or the "gut knowings" of our own inner state and strivings. Laban's work takes us from the inner rumblings to outer expression and coping through spatial pathways that are colored by our qualitative life - HOW we move through space - our ATTITUDE towards weight; time; space and flow. And so we have the joining of the inner to the outer; to movement and embodied meaning; and an entry to our exploration of Duncan dance, with its central reference at the solar plexus.

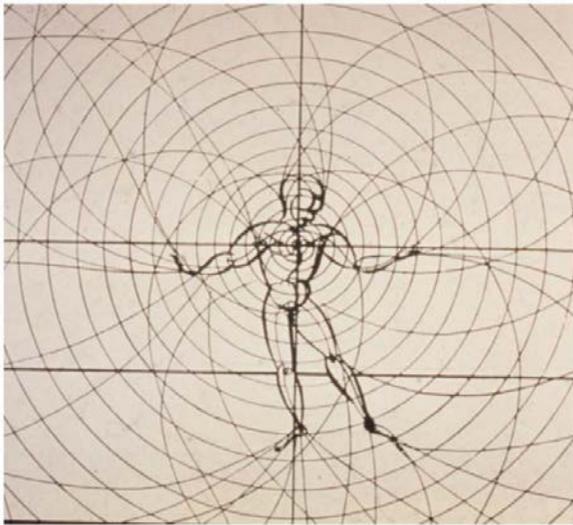


Figure 6. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.

*"The true dancer, like every true artist, stands before beauty in a state of complete suspense; he opens the way to his soul and his "genius," and he lets himself be swayed by them as the trees abandon themselves to the winds. He starts with one slow movement and mounts from that gradually, following the rising curve of his inspiration, up to those gestures that exteriorize his fullness of feeling, spreading ever wider the impulse that has swayed him, fixing it in another expression." – Isadora Duncan, The Art of the Dance*

The solar plexus is a point full of dynamic potential. We can palpate a pulse as it sits on our diaphragm, tender like the soft spot on a newborn's crown. Our in-breath ignites the sleeping coal to awareness and then to wakefulness. Its radiating nature broadens, orienting us towards space and movement. The in-breath also engages its anchoring shadow counterpoint at the spine. This anchoring at the spine also can serve us to cope if emotions overwhelm at the solar plexus, and support us as we navigate. We can breathe back into this boney support that connects us, bone by bone, to our feet to re-ground. Our radiating in-breath also brings us from single point to radiating lines, establishing our

movement options and equipping us to choose a direction: opening or closing; advancing forward and retreating back (our sagittal); Widening or narrowing sideways (our horizontal); rising and sinking vertically.



These polarities also avail us of our expressive options: Our verticality can bring us from denizens of the deep to the Divine; from earth to sky. From the horizontal we travel the wide world and see beyond the horizon. We reach, grasp, and venture forth in our sagittal. And the Gods that dwell within us begin to come alive.

Figure 7. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.

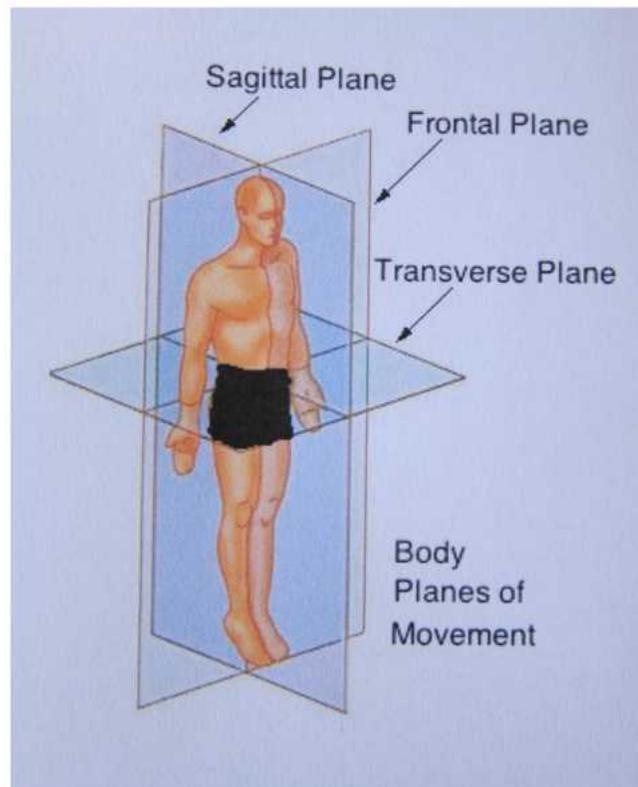


Figure 8. Laban planes of movement. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.

*"The Dance - it is the rhythm of all that dies in order to be born again; it is the eternal rising of the sun." - Isadora Duncan, The Art of the Dance*



In our Duncan dance, we digest the image, the myth, the story, the archetype, and send forth and away that inner impulse that brews within and longs, as Laban says, to be seen on the outside. We fill and empty the contents of our emotional and archetypal intelligence. The solar plexus is the point where, in our Dionysian or our universal gesture, the wave that brews within crests and explodes open and away; where the grape is poised towards the sun for an ultimate ripening; the point of fullness and release -back to the ocean of the collective unconscious from whence it came.

We house all that within us. The vine, with its stabilizing taproots, flourishes in spirylic umbilical away-ness. This natural form gives us our great mobility.

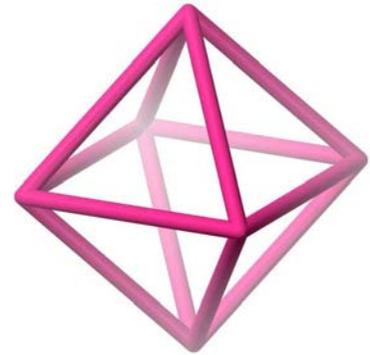
*Figure 9. Isadora Duncan, photo by Edward Steichen. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.*



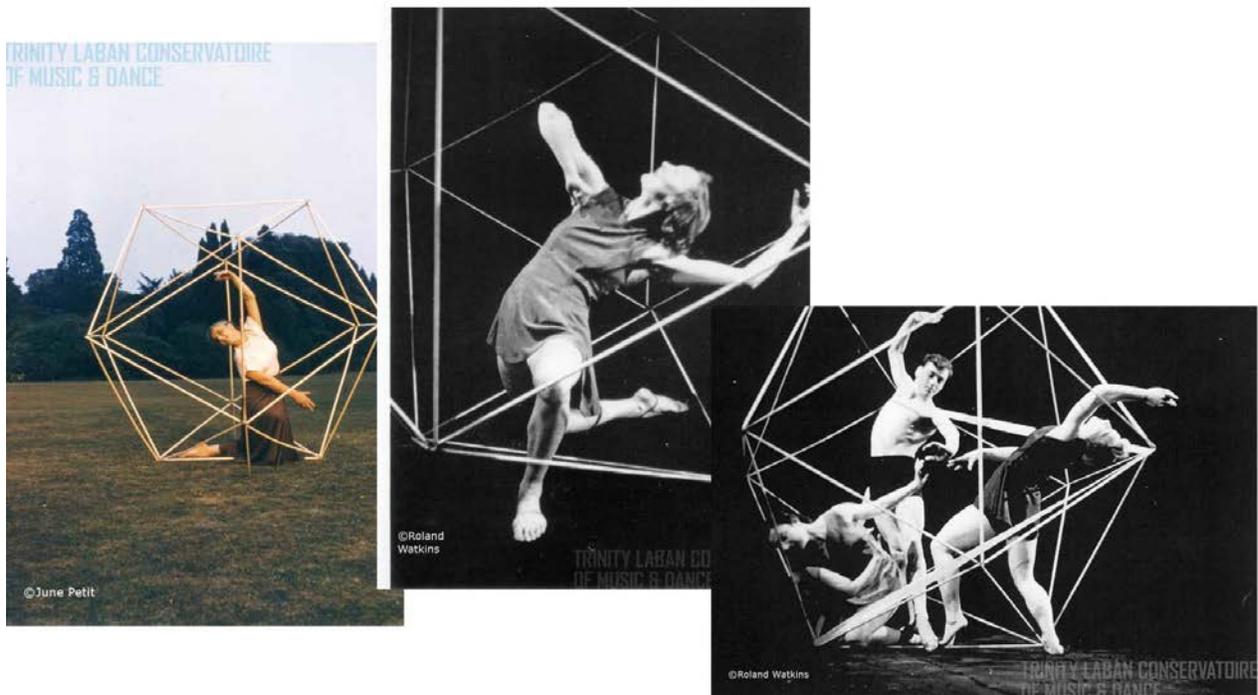
*Figure 10. A grape vine; photo of Isadora Duncan at the Temple of Dionysus, by Arnold Genthe, 1904; ripe grapes. Images courtesy of Laura Pravitz.*

But of course, unlike ballet, we as Duncan dancers are not restricted to an octahedral dimensional scaffolding.

Laban Movement Analysis tells us how our movement is contained and expressed within crystalline forms whose vertices and inclinations pull and deflect us toward and away, and that the more complex our expressive message, the more complex the crystalline form we move within.



*Figure 11. The octahedral geometric shape of Laban Movement Analysis.*



*Figure 12. Dancers within the geometric scaffolding based on principles of Laban Movement Analysis. Photos from the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance. Images courtesy of Laura Pravitz.*

The solar plexus, sitting like a gyroscope on our breath muscle of the diaphragm, gives us the expressive access and mobility unique to Duncan. We can change there on a dime.



*Figure 13. Photo by Edward Steichen. Anna Duncan by the sea. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.*



*Figure 14. Photo of a silk worm, spinning its cocoon. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.*

The silkworm caterpillar scribes a “figure 8” with its head as it spins its cocoon, and sends a strand of liquid from its mouth that solidifies when it contact the air – just as our words give form to our thoughts when they escape from our mouths, or our gestures give form to our feelings and ideas. When we dance, we, too, find the “figure 8.” And when we dance with silk flowing around us, we embody the nature of the silkworm. The “figure 8” – continuous, accessible to every dimension, recuperative by nature – spins our dance and our realization of nature’s sacred geometry.

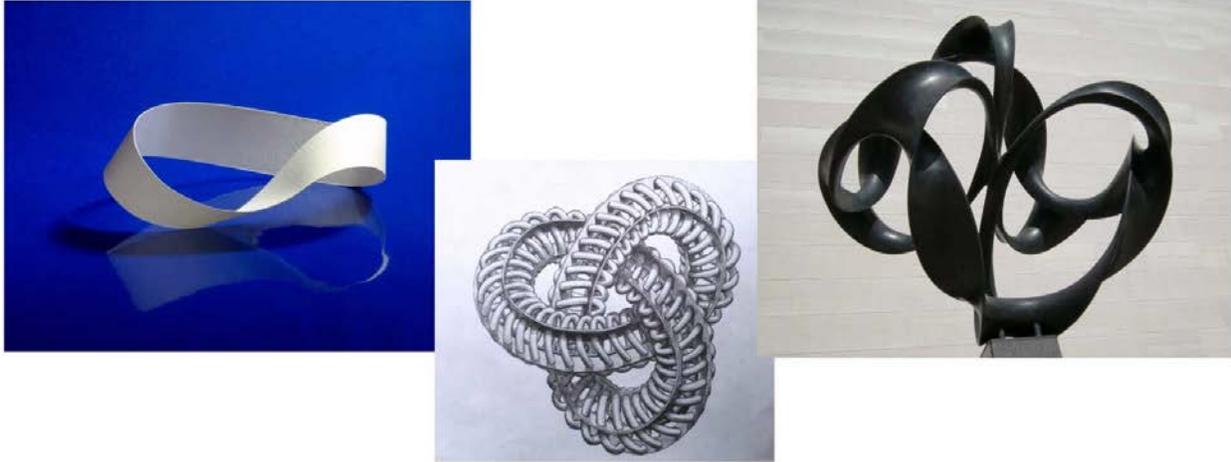


Figure 15. Images that represent the figure 8, the Möbius strip and the double helix. Images provided by Laura Pravitz.



Figure 16. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.

Our stability comes from something more complex than a simple rooting; rather, it seems to be an ever-present exchange between opposing and balancing forces. There is always a play of supportive or complimentary pulls and presses, of shadow and light in fluid exchange within circuits of sustained continuity. We find ourselves moving within (transverse) spatial forms like the figure 8, Möbius strip, or the double helix, life's essential form.

The caduceus, with its healing attributes of order, harmony, equilibrium, and the flow of life, is associated with Hermes, messenger god of travel and quick changes. Swift healing. Godspeed. The solar plexus unites, grows, transmits, regulates, and manages the cycle of comings and goings, serving as unifier and stationmaster of the expressive impulse through the meting out of

this shadow and light, where the inside becomes the outside and the outside the inside. Viewer and dancer alike remain engaged because of this sustained dynamic tension.

This is classical form, where contra-postal, cross-lateral presence yields a dynamic balance and exchange and a tipping of the scales. Whether it is expressed in a close kinesphere or the farthest reaches, this tension of opposites is an inclination towards wholeness. Both/And. Give and take. Active and passive. Leading and following. Balance, harmony, order and equilibrium. Freedom and form.



Figure 17. The caduceus, symbol of medicine and healing. Image courtesy of Laura Pravitz.



Figure 18. Top left: *Hermes* by Giovanni da Bologna (1580); Top right: *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa of Avila* by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1647–1652); Bottom: *Cupid and Pysche* by François-Edouard Picot (1817).  
Images courtesy of Laura Pravitz.



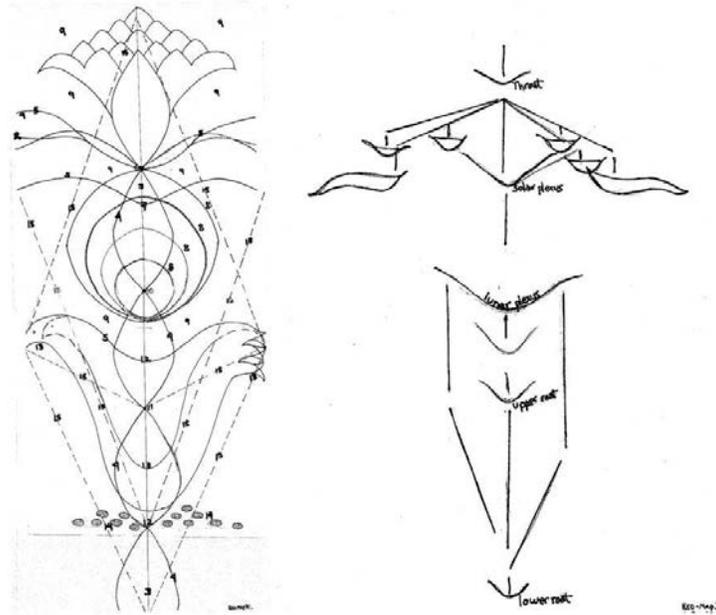
Like the wind and the waves, such forms are directional and free at once, and their very structure is fluid and ongoing. Can this embodiment of freedom within form and form within freedom speak to a higher intelligence in a freer body? And does Duncan's embodiment of sacred geometry bring us closer to the numinous?

*Figure 19. Image courtesy of  
Laura Pravitz.*

### Supplement I

DUNCAN ECO-MAP II by Laura Pravitz

- 1 - 5-Petaled cornice, ornate only in its dream of itself, ever-expanding toward oneness. 4+1; 3+2. Nimbleness.
- 2 - The lip, offering; containing; suspending; extending.
- 3 - Axis of pure self. The column. Place of rest and collection.
- 4 - The life form of DNA, spiraling around the central axis. Golden Mean rectangles contained within spirals are there to aspire toward as ""sweet spots". Flying and falling away from and toward the Golden Mean.
- 5 - Seeking true but human arcs. Joy and trembling humility before true embodied form.
- 6 - Throat. Song. Cry.
- 7 - Solar Plexus. Resides alone. Hot jewel. Fiery coal.
- 8 - Circles of breath stoke the fire; ripple outward toward oceanic wholeness. Circumference aspires toward fullest arc.
- 9 - The Dream. Cushions and lubricates the joints, floating in fluid. Receptive and elastic as they breathe and scribe the image. Elements. Collective and personal unconscious.
- 10 - Navel. Backwards through all time.
- 11 - Womb. Nascence.
- 12 - The drop at the base of the parabola. Arcs lift away from their base points on the pure axis. Points drop "flat" and lift "sharp." These extensions of self-help to access myth.
- 13 - The dream of The Bird. Tail lifts and lilt. Poised. The Bird's eye - Presence the Bird's Womb - Potential
- 14 - Treading on golden eggs.
- 15 - Riding the cushion of nimbleness between gravity and tensile forces.



## Supplement II

Eco-Map I by Laura Pravitz

- 1 - Space left between approaching lines. Joints spacious and filled with the dream.
- 2 - Parabolae scales weigh; balance; hold contents. Scales may tip, but do not lose the tension of reciprocity.
- 3 - Classic Symmetry and Classic Asymmetry. Alive with both. Movement along the continuum from one to the other.
- 4 - Parabolae - Undercurves are deep and below themselves; dig down to root and anchor. Yield to the place below as point of departure. Arms of parabolae lip outward to hold a wider infinity.
- 5 - Head is elsewhere. Body is pure, led by a higher order - something self and not self.
- 6 - Twin birds, joined yet separate, relate toward and away, taken by the call of the spheres, to which they belong. Drawn within and without.

## Supplement III

Movement Lesson Plan for "The Role of the Solar Plexus in Isadora Duncan Dance"  
Workshop by Laura Pravitz

### FLOOR WORK

1- SEATED ON HAUNCHES -

Begin to feel ourselves. The solar plexus, waiting. Hands over it. Feel its life, its pulse - rising and returning - naturally, like the tide. The in-breath radiating in all directions. Breathing in again, we find an anchor at the spine. Then yielding. S/P yields to gravity to kiss the earth, exerts its will to pull away, moves from exerting its light - to retreating back to the supportive shadow companion at the spine.

(Images of Seaweed OR kite - Lunar stability and solar mobility. Our will in concert with nature's will. An exchange of yielding and exerting). 8s; 4s; 2s; 1s.

2- S/P sinks back to bring us to floor. Pulls to rise (feet anchor in front) to sink - repeat.

3- Draw everything in - radiate out. Repeat.

- 4- Sitting with legs in moderate 2nd, feet anchored, S/P circles; excursions wide over legs (center and periphery)
- 5- Wider stance - Circle the world. Feet and fingertips define the edges of the world. Find our scaffolding at our distal extremities. Hands and feet anchoring while the mobile S/P orbits. Widen feet and orbit the universe. The world of our body moves within our frame.
- 6- Legs in wide 2nd - diagonals over legs (advance-retreat). Ground with hamstrings and sitz-bones.
- 7- Retreat all the way down to floor - rise to high opposite diagonal. Feel the tensile support
- 8- Gathering twists - elbow in to S/P and out
- 9- From side-sit: Hip lifts - fingertips lead in to S/P and reach up, drawing hips with it, to heavens. Gaze active.
- 10- From "X" on back, R/L body halves - opening at the hinge of our central axis to the far reaches of the universe. Holding the globe as we open and close around our central axis. Build in momentum to take you to knees. And yield to repeat side/side. Into X and then knee drops and establishing of L/R cross-lateral.
- 11- Anchor at the S/P and feel the spiraling around to the L, R fingertips leading, and the stable anchor there. Let the knee drop turn you fully side; arm and leg reach; continue the spiral to end range into "Christina's World." Add the portal of the gaze. Feel the stability of hand and foot in concert with the mobile, gyroscopic solar plexus and the gaze - the mobility within the stabilizing scaffold of heel-sitz and spatial support. (In Duncan, we often ease away from a boundaried crystal, yielding to a natural sphere - a play between our own will and nature's).
- 12 - Sitz-bones walk - S/P of ctr. of hands; L/P of ctr. of feet. Backs of hands and feet also have the play of shadow and light and oppositional exchange. Hands as portals of the solar plexus.
- 13 - Crab - Hip-thrusts forward and back. Tuck toes under; push back on feet; anchor tail between heels to uncurl bone by bone. Figure 8s.

#### STANDING

- 1- UPPER BODY FIGURE 8s - Passing of hands dancing in figure 8s. S/P OF HANDS as portals to the sun. Affinity to lightness and air and the celestial of the expressive upper body/shoulder girdle
- 2- LOWER BODY FIGURE 8s - (Pulling of vines). Affinity to strength and earth and gravity of the stabilizing lower body.
- 3- Solar and lunar plexus - lunar as stabilizer; at times, mobilizer -Dubinishka). MOVE THE DUBINISHKA A LITTLE. Our waters absorb, translate and negotiate these opposing wills of nature - gravity and levity - between succumbing and overcoming.
- 4- FIGURE 8s, PATHWAYS FILLING THE ROOM. Finding the centrifugal and centripetal exchange, INWARD AND OUTWARD AT ONCE, with the S/P as stationmaster. We come from within to express without. Inward, we garner our image/emotion/inspiration and it finds its path outward. A music heard inwardly.

#### ACROSS THE FLOOR

- 5 - STEP, STEP, SUSPEND TO TWIST AT THE S/P, BACK. While rotating around the gyroscopic solar plexus; appreciate the scaffolding of fingertips and gaze to feet. The REACH-SWAY, with S/P as central place of transmission side to side: multi-directional; freedom and form.
- 6- THE CADEUSES  
Backward figure 8 shoulder girdle circles - locate the S/P at spine -line of front to back.  
-Keep the core cadeuses with its wrappings and crossings at ankles, knees, hips, waist, solar plexus, throat, ears, outer spheres. -The Cadeuses, rising; fountaining. S/P of hands; feet. Remind of all these cues.  
-Our deep inner spiryllic core of the cadeuses stabilizes us; pulls us to our center and channels our life force - not a fixed core, but one whose genetic structure is one of mobility; of the continuous tensile exchange of shadow and light.  
-LET THE CLEAR LIGHT PLUCKS OF THE HARP ENTER YOUR EARS -SO THAT THE EARS AND THE HEARING AND THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES ARE AWAKENED, BROADENING YOUR AWARENESS AND THAT "VAGUE SENSE OF KNOWING". MUSIC HEARD INWARDLY. -Turns around the gyroscopic point - freedom above - Spiryllic emanations of arms, taking the inner impulse away to join the spheres.

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# SHE LIVES AMONG US

## *A Mytho-Poetic Movement Ceremony Invoking the Dancer of the Future*

**Paola Blanton**

**Abstract:** Using Isadora Duncan repertory movement, gesture and imagery, we listen for the natural language of the individual and group souls in order to make them the movement of the body. With the aid of vision, intent, word and action we commune with soul-sources, Isadora's teachings, and the Greek ideals of harmony and proportion in an invocation of Universal Beauty through ritualized movement.

**Keywords:** Dancer of the future, universal gesture, Tanagra figures, gift, lines, solar plexus, philosopher's stone of dancing, liquid light, gesture, ritual, ceremony

**Presentation Date:** June 16, 2013, 7:30 PM

**Format:** Workshop/Master Class

**Supplements:** Outline of "The Ceremony" Vangelis, *Mothodea*, 9<sup>th</sup> movement

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## **Celebrating and Manifesting the Dancer of the Future**

Who is the Dancer of the Future? Is she an individual, a collective or an archetypal ideal, or can she be all three simultaneously? What are her qualities and attributes, and how can Isadora Duncan's vision and technique inspire us toward the embodiment of this ideal? In *The Art of the Dance*, Isadora wrote that "the Dancer of the Future will be one whose body and soul have grown so harmoniously together that the natural language of that soul will have become the movement of the body." This inspiring prophecy is a great call to action, but it is no small undertaking. Each of us is a Universe in her own right. Our bodies carry the imprint of lives lived, battles fought, children born and nurtured, life-work, partners, health and well-being issues. Frequently we are at odds with our bodies, to the point where soul/body communion seems like a distant possibility. To merge body and soul is also the goal of yogis, sufis, tai chi masters, tantrics and mystics, and while all of those traditions offer maps to that goal, it remains elusive and shrouded in mystery.

Isadora spoke of dance returning to its sacred place in culture and of that the true dance is a prayer – using the body as the channel of divine soul and the instrument of its expression. But this is easier said than done. Even she stood in the Parthenon for what seemed an eternity, waiting with her hands clasped over her solar plexus for the flash of soul-consciousness that would illuminate her dancing path.

We are lucky that she left us a map comprising her poetic vision and a body of movement technique and vocabulary. But in the end, the map is not the territory, and what we are also left with is an open experiment. This experiment is highly personal to each Duncan dancer, who brings her own history, thoughts and aspirations to the moment. The experiment is also collective, shared within a group of dancers who bring their own special gifts to a communion in sacred space. Finally, the experiment is archetypal, in the sense that we are connecting to a thought-form that animates an entire body of work and inspires its adherents. This thought-form, which we can name the Dancer of the Future, encompasses

the ancient sources of inspiration, Isadora herself, generations of Duncan dancers, and finally, us in the here and now.

Isadora speaks to us from a time in which the conditions for the New Woman and the Dancer of the Future were not yet ripe. There was still a lot of work to be done, territory to be reclaimed, and paradigms to be shattered before the radiant intelligence she prophesied could shine through the sacredness of Woman's body and all of its parts.

Across history's panoramic stage she calls to us. Scenes turning through women's suffrage, Civil Rights, feminist revolutions and freedoms hard won have filled generations of New Women with hopes and aspirations that their increasingly free bodies would express. Each one of us is a potential Dancer of that Future – dancing our dreams, aspirations, and struggles, and finding our true dance in prayer. Now more than ever, we see a groundswell of rekindled interest in Duncan dance. Women are drawn to it like the Maenads to Dionysus' call, for there is deep mystery and magic to be lived through the practice of Isadora's sacred dance. We access deep reservoirs of inspiration through its practice, as if we are reaching into an ancient future, some dimension of eternal now that she understood so well. Her reverence for the Greek expression of universal harmony and beauty manifests throughout her work like a thread of epiphanies, each one part of a heroic journey to a nobler state of being.

In Julia Levien's arrangement of the "Tanagra Figures," we embody the harmonic proportions and beauty of the ancient Tanagra votive figurines that so inspired Isadora. When I learned the "Tanagras" from Lori Belilove, I felt the same awe and grandeur that I've always felt in museums; a humbling sense of the presence of the Eternal. However, in performing the "Tanagras," I feel like I am *channeling* that presence. A brief pause in a Tanagra form flows into a gesture of "drawing down" that punctuates each transition. What does that gesture mean in that context? I've listened to my soul the innumerable times I've repeated the "Tanagras," and I've arrived at the following conclusion.

As a Duncan Dancer, I am a channel to past, present, future and eternal sources of inspiration, an open vessel through which they flow and transmute. I have the capacity to directly experience the source consciousness of which Isadora spoke, the one that must be danced because it defies verbal expression. I use the movements of the Duncan repertory to establish a connection to this source consciousness, and the forms and lines of my body to contain, transmit and mold this energy.

By traveling through me, these source inspirations become imbued with my personal qualities as I become imbued with theirs. As my consciousness shifts, so shifts the quality of my movements from mere physical actions to gestures filled with poetic transcendence – a prayer. I contact, connect to, and express an ideal – an invocation. The Dancer of the Future, as Isadora shows us in word and movement, becomes a Muse for the New Era and the New Woman. She becomes, in the words of Jeanne Bresciani, "the highest expression of our relationship to ourselves, and our conscious presence in the universe." When I make the

“drawing down” gesture, I feel myself drawing down the essence of this Muse, this Dancer of the Future who is at once a nobler, ever-present aspect of myself and an as-of-yet-unattained ideal.

I envisioned the extension of that conscious expression as a unifying vision, intent, and gesture elevating the group’s consciousness to the task at hand. When the group’s consciousness is raised, it is focused on a working model of an archetypal Dancer of the Future. Defined through reflection, contemplation and dialogue, this working model, or group thought-form, fleshes out with our collective movements and gestures, becoming more real, tangible, and interactive.

I arranged this as a group experience, beginning with the discussion of the Dancer of Future’s archetypal potential, articulating the qualities and values she represents to individual dancers. The discussion cycles through the specified gifts each individual brings to the collective, archetypal Dancer of the Future, and finally, to what the *duties* of the Dancer of the Future are, collectively and individually. What is the pressing work we need to do in this moment of history to keep evolving the New Woman, the New Era, and the Dancer of the Future? A flow of inspiration begins – between a dancer and herself, her peers, and the egregore, into which Isadora Duncan first breathed life.

The ceremony is quite reverent and meditative, not unlike a religious or spiritual ceremony in which certain observances are taken, like reverent entry into sacred space, ritual purification, rituals of unity, invocation and communion. For, if the true dance is really a prayer, then we must treat its practices as sacred rituals that culminate in a celebratory communion of dancing souls.

Thus we enter the space reverently, and connect to ourselves through breath and gesture. We connect to others with attention, breath, word, gesture, and movement. We unite our intentions and focus our energies on the egregore, using gestures and movements to circulate the energy of our intention through the planes of the collective and archetypal and back to the individual.

Duncan dance rituals are physical mantras that unite attention, breath, movement, gesture, and intent. When I execute the Universal Gesture, for instance, I breathe in to prepare and visually perceive a spot in front and below. I exhale, solar plexus and arms falling, and inhale up the central axis before expanding my arms, solar plexus, and consciousness to the Universe. Performing this series of actions time and again begins to generate an image, a story. I begin to pull the energies of the Earth up through me and offer them to the expansive Universe, imagining a circulation of energy using my body as the conduit. I become a fountain for this energy, light and flowing, which inspires and purifies me, elevating my perception and vibratory frequency.

I’ve always felt an impression after performing the Universal Gesture that there was a movement waiting to come out of me that was a response, or continuation of it. After I

finish the Universal, I then inhale my arms up and out, and exhale pushing my hands out on the level of my head. I inhale up, seeking and grasping, and with both hands pull a current of energy *down* the body's central axis to ground it in front of me. I've come to call this gesture the Gesture of the Vessel. By exhaling out on the level of my head, I clear my mind of excess thought energy that blocks my channel. By reaching up, I aspire to a nobler version of myself, my Muse, my essential Dancer of the Future and draw her down through my vessel into manifestation. The image completes the intention of the Universal Gesture and strengthens my sense of myself as an open circuit.

A very potent image that comes from a chapter in *The Art of the Dance*, "The Philosopher's Stone of Dancing," is that of "Liquid Light." Isadora talks about the three types of dancers, the third being the Dancer of the Future; one who "understands that the body, by force of the soul, can indeed be converted to a luminous fluid....When [the human soul], in its divine power, completely possesses the body, it converts that [body] into a luminous moving cloud and thus can manifest itself in the whole of its divinity."

This image is very propitious because it is easy to visualize liquid light, and the powers of visualization are key to the experience of higher states of being. We see and feel liquid light in a summer rain, or in a blue lagoon. We thrill to it in the Milky Way. We feel it running through our veins and jumping from neuron to neuron. In communion with others we feel it running like an electric current, pure and uplifting.

"Liquid Light" is a way that alchemists refer to the Elixir, that mysterious substance/state of pure grace. Like Nirvana, it's hard to describe in words, so we experience it through our practice: a moment, a substance, a state of being and energy that animates the Dancer of the Future. Through reaching for our most reverent, refined, and authentic expression, we bridge past, present, and future into a glowing moment of Eternal Now, uniting with Isadora's legacy and projecting it through ourselves into the Future. Dance's objectives become spiritual, and its movements become prayer. The Liquid Light is the medium and message of the archetypal Dancer of the Future. It is the energetic substance that transmits the soul's intent to the body's expression.

Isadora said, "And I knew I had found my dance, and it was a prayer." We will use forms, movements, and images from Duncan repertory and add a storyline – that of the thread linking the Dancer of the Future as a thought-form to the Greek ideals, to Isadora, and finally to us. We will contemplate the qualities of the Dancer of the Future and what qualities we bring to her individually. We will join forces and use the collective energy of our movements and intentions to commune with her in sacred ceremony. Through this ceremony, she will become more real to us, and we will become more real too. We will breathe her life into the Dancer of the Future and she in turn will breathe life into us, filling our individual vessels with the messages of our eternal souls.

**THE CEREMONY, set to the 9<sup>th</sup> movement of “Mythodea” by Vangelis**

*Entrance* – Walk, penetrate space, eye contact, recognition, spatial awareness, building the scene and defining the first circle

*Circle* – We’ve found each other! Acknowledging the others through sight, gesture. Assembling into a circle, the temple not made with hands. In this formation, the Source/Muse/Egregore/DF is in the middle, hovering slightly above our heads.

*Universal Gesture* – Greet one another, Earth, Self, Universe. Self-dedication.

*Gesture of the Vessel* – Raise awareness/breath/arms, amplify vision, open channel to DF, body assumes form and lines of Vessel. Draw the energy down the body’s central axis, ground. We’ve “plugged in.”

*Tanagras* – Following are the Tanagras I used for the ceremony, together with the intention set to each movement, which the leader of the ceremony speaks.

(Jar) “Through honoring an ancient form and the movement of Isadora that transmits its essence, we expand our vision and recognize in each other the gift of reflection.” (We emphasize the turning of the head to look at each participant in the circle. We finish with the drawing-down gesture, each person feeling the connection with the archetypal DF strengthening.)

(Fugue 1) “We recognize the holiness of the body and all its parts, and ask that its lines and movements be worthy transmitters of the DF’s Liquid Light current.”

(Fugue 2 in and repeat out) “Together, we create an earthly vessel to transmit the DF’s Liquid Light and invite it to circulate through our group.”

*Universal & Vessel* to outside

(CALL from outside to inside, inside to outside, outside to inside, on music)

“We invite humanity to the Sacred Dance.”

(*The Gift*) –Explode in the middle, rest heads on each other’s shoulders for a moment.

“What do you bring to the DF?”

(*Ring Dance*) – Circulating the Liquid Light through the group

“What do we bring to the DF?”

(BUILDING THE ENERGY, DRAWING IT DOWN, CIRCULATING, RETURNING ENERGY; receiving a gift from the DF)

“What do you most need right now to achieve a nobler version of yourself?”

(BUILDING THE ENERGY, DRAWING IT DOWN, CIRCULATING, RETURNING ENERGY), receive a mission from the DF, which each one will alchemize through the heart and offer up in victory.

“What does the DF need from *you* right now? What is your mission? What do you take with you?”

Like this, we’ve united Duncan Dance vocabulary and Isadora’s philosophy with our hearts’ intentions, our bodies’ movements and our souls’ aspirations to the attainment of her vision of the Dancer of the Future. She manifests as a source of inspiration and energy for each of us to imbibe, circulate through our group, and offer back to her. We’ve contemplated her, invoked her, communed with her, made an offering to her and received a charge from her. The cycle is complete; our dance has become a prayer.



*Figure 20. Our group “Alma Musa,” performing Priestesses of Peace - A Ceremony invoking the Dancer of the Future” at the 2012 International Peace Festival at Ibirapuera Park, São Paulo, Brazil.*

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# CONTEMPORARY DUNCAN

**Julia Pond**

Independent choreographer, dancer and teacher

**Abstract:** How does Duncan's classical modern dance technique translate into a landscape of contemporary modern dance? In our Contemporary Duncan workshop, we will explore the following questions: Where does the impulse to expression originate and what are its essential elements in Duncan technique? What if you take away the Greek shapes and move with just solar plexus initiation? Can Duncan's movement vocabulary be adapted and modernized? We believe that modernization is essential for the integrity of the art but also to honor the spirit of Isadora.

**Keywords:** Modern dance, contemporary dance, Greek dance, solar plexus, improvisation, choreography in the style of Isadora, Duncan technique, Duncan repertory, Isadora Duncan artistry

**Presentation Date:** Sunday, June 16, 7:00-8:30pm

**Format:** Workshop/Choreographic Showing

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## Contemporary Duncan

Contemporary Duncan. What does that even mean? The following is not an academic paper but rather an attempt to explain the work I've been engaged in over the last three years, developing a contemporary voice rooted in the Duncan work. In my teaching and choreographic practice, which I shared at the first International Symposium, this has come to mean a stripping back of the Duncan technique to a few core ideas: Move from the solar plexus. Use the natural weight and momentum of the body. Work with the music. Let go of Greek shapes. Recognize that a set use of rhythm, quality, and dynamics, present in classical Duncan technique, can take on a new form, one that's perhaps less delicate.

But why modernize a classic, and beautiful, art form? Do we even have the right to play with these inherited ideas? I think so. Isadora's technique shifted and changed dramatically throughout her life, from early solos to the later, more plastic dramatic pieces like "Revolutionary" and other Russian dances. Pushing her inquiry forward honors her spirit of innovation and experimentation, as she herself was an inveterate innovator and explorer. Further, art is necessarily of its time, and dedicating ourselves as artists solely to a historic practice ignores essential questions about the way in which **who** we are (and the art most true to us) is inextricably tied to **when** we are.

The passage in *The Art of the Dance* where Duncan speaks about the wave movement at the heart of all creation is particularly inspiring and relevant to my approach. She's talking about the essential energetics of nature and dance. I believe that working strictly from point of initiation, or intention, is another way to reveal this essential energy; initiation can be interpreted as physical, while intention comes from the mind or soul. So, what happens if we just move from the solar plexus without being tied to the traditional shapes of classical Duncan technique? Another way to explore the essentials of Duncan technique is

to use traditional shapes of the Duncan technique, but to elongate and extend the lines, in search of a more direct (and perhaps more contemporary looking) transmission of energy.

My presentation on the core of intention, was delivered in collaboration with Meg Brooker, and took the form of a taster technique class. I chose to structure this like a traditional dance class, to counter the idea that Duncan dance is somehow apart from the dance world; I believe the technique is as valid as any other modern dance technique, and I wanted to present it in the context of a traditional dance class structure. The nuts and bolts of the class moved from a warming floor sequence to center standing exercises incorporating *plies*, footwork, and spatial/weight-based work. Next we move across the floor in various exercises designed to flow from the solar plexus and start really using space, to finish with a short combination and improvisation. At the Symposium, Meg taught a segment on improvisation, also working with the idea of the core of intention. We investigated the impulse to expression physically and mentally through technique and improvisation.

We also chose to do a short choreographic sharing, to connect the dots between our studio/class work and how this manifests in our choreography. This (and the class!) yielded some interesting feedback, from excitement to doubt that any of it qualified as "Duncan." Reflecting on the opportunity to present our work, I feel it is important to continue to push boundaries, while honoring the historicity of the repertory. In July 2013, I presented my solo from the Symposium in London, paired with a few dances from the Duncan repertory. For me, there is a real value in showing where the lineage comes from, but also being unafraid to take it in new directions, pushing its physicality, challenging technical boundaries, and inviting interdisciplinary performance. This is a combination that many of my teachers' generation have also used to serve the dual purpose of presenting their own work and that of Duncan. I think we can go far in creating our new work, making wild choices, and taking big risks artistically. For my practice, this is the truest way to honor the inherited dance of Duncan.

# BODY CONDITIONING FOR THE BAREFOOT DANCER

**Jennifer Sprowl**

Artistic Director, Duncan Dance Chicago

**Abstract:** This 75-minute workshop focused on specific stretching and strengthening methods designed for injury prevention, strength and peak performance for barefoot dancers. This workshop began with a brief introduction to Active Isolated Stretching & Strengthening (AISS) and physical therapy exercises. We moved into demonstration of these exercises using a model on a massage table before the group participated in executing the various exercises for themselves. I facilitated everyone to foster a deeper kinesthetic experience.

**Keywords:** Active Isolated Stretching & Strengthening (AISS), physical therapy, kinesthetic, injury prevention, barefoot dancing, Duncan dance

**Presentation Date:** Monday June 17, 2003, 7:30am-8:45am

**Format:** Lecture/Workshop

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## Body Conditioning for the Barefoot Dancer

Active Isolated Stretching (AIS) and Strengthening is a balanced program designed for injury prevention, strength and peak performance. I attribute my personal recovery from injury to the practice and application of AIS, as developed by Aaron Mattes ([stretchingusa.com](http://stretchingusa.com)) and taught Jim and Phil Wharton ([whartonhealth.com](http://whartonhealth.com)) and others.

Having attended Aaron's workshops and trained as a Flexibility Technician with Jim and Phil, I incorporate aspects of AIS in every class I teach. It is my firm belief that AIS is the most effective way to achieve musculoskeletal balance and structural integrity. It has served me well as I hope it does you.

I have also consulted and worked closely with Matthew Butler, PT, DPT, OCS, FAAOMPT. I consider Matt my mentor and teacher in Chicago. He has helped refine and adapt the exercises he uses in his practice to the repertoire found herein.

Lastly, I want to thank my husband, Randy Saks, MS, Exercise Science, AIS practitioner and Physical Education teacher. Together we discuss procedures, protocols and philosophy that is specific and individual for every body.

### AIS PRINCIPLES

- Identify and Isolate the specific muscles
- Agonist – Antagonist
  - eg. Quadriceps (Agonist) contract, allowing Hamstrings (Antagonist) to relax/stretch
- Reciprocal Inhibition (tissue is signaled to relax), as a result of Agonist contraction

- Increases blood, oxygen and nutrition to the specified muscle before and after stretch
- Regular breathing – avoid holding breath
- Facilitate stretch 1-2 seconds and return to starting position.
  - Releasing pressure and returning to starting position reduces the opportunity for the myotatic (stretch) reflex to engage, thus preventing “reversal” contractions.
  - Sustained stretching of tissue that disregards the stretch reflex can result in muscle soreness due to overstretching or scar tissue because of tearing.

### **AIS LOWER BODY, HIPS, AND CORE**

1. Single Leg Pelvic Tilt
2. Double Leg Pelvic Tilt
3. Bent Leg Hamstrings
4. Straight Leg Hamstrings
5. Adductors
6. Abductors
7. Gluteals
8. Calves: Soleus/Gastrocnemius
9. Hip Bridge (Basic and Variations)
  - a. Unstable surface, single leg, etc.
10. Deep Hip Stabilization
  - a. Clams (Isolated in non-weight bearing)
  - b. Single leg stance (with and without eyes closed; 3-way reaches (unilateral in weight bearing – combines foot/ankle, knee and hip stabilization)
11. Core
  - a. Front Plank
  - b. Side Planks

Balance is dependent upon 3 components:

1. Vestibular System (Inner Ear)
2. Visual System (sight)
3. Somatosensory/Proprioception System (sensory input from the lower extremities)
  - a. Proprioception activity teaches the body to rely on sensory feedback from the legs. Muscles responsible for stabilization, when challenged, strengthen to promote greater support within the joint(s) and hence, create a more stable and articulate body.

*c. 2013 Jennifer Sprowl, Artistic Director, Duncan Dance Chicago, duncanichicago@gmail.com*

# DUNCAN DANCING

## *The Art and Soul of Isadora in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

**Dr. Andrea Mantell Seidel**

Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies  
Professor of Dance, Florida International University

**Abstract:** This presentation focused on three attributes—presence, beingness, and mindfulness—that are central to creating the core qualities of luminosity and radiance in Duncan dance. The workshop began with a brief lecture that addressed and clarified the widely misunderstood notion of “authenticity” in re/construction and discussed other essential qualities of Duncan dance that give an “aura of virtual truth.” The workshop then introduced a series of psycho-spiritual techniques including visualizations, meditation, and breathing exercises to facilitate a mind/body connection and concluded with exercises to merge the experience of moving from the deeper core of the Self with a sense of community.

**Keywords:** Duncan dance, Andrea Mantell Seidel, dance, Isadora, Isadora Duncan, Mantell, Seidel

**Presentation Date:** Monday, June 17, 2013, 9:00-10:30 am

**Format:** Lecture/workshop, panel presentation

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## **Dancing Duncan: *The Art and Soul of Isadora in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

Presence, Beingness, and Mindfulness. As a Duncan teacher and performer for over 30 years, I have come to realize that these attributes are central to creating the core qualities of luminosity and radiance in Duncan dance that bring an “aura of truth” to a performance. I recognize that excellent technique and form and an understanding of Duncan vocabulary and aesthetics are necessary containers, but all too often the vessel of the performer/practitioner can be empty and devoid of that indefinable Presence that illuminates the inner body and then radiates outward from the solar plexus to touch, move, stir and uplift the viewer. A primary interest and quest in my investigations of dance, religion, and spirituality over the last few decades has been how to access and unlock these qualities of radiance and luminosity and how to develop strategies to communicate them to others.

Quite spontaneously, on the second day of the conference, I ventured to go “off script” and not give the lecture and somewhat more “traditional” Duncan workshop that I had planned. I also wanted to challenge myself to move out of my comfort zone where I usually meticulously prepare class lessons and respond more spontaneously to the energy and presence of the workshop participants and be “more present in the unfolding moments of the conference.” In my sixtieth decade, I am enjoying and learning to truly “be more free, more natural.” In this freedom from “trying to become something,” “trying to achieve some goal,” or “seeking some external validation,” I am discovering the true heart and soul of Duncan’s legacy: the luminous, radiant **Self**.

I began the workshop with a brief overview of the essential elements of Duncan and with a discussion of key issues related to the much misunderstood and misused term “authenticity.” There was much debate at the conference among the Duncan scholars,

artists, and practitioners present as to what constitutes an “authentic” Duncan dance performance, whose version is most credible, and what are the essential attributes that define an “authentic re/construction.” Dance re/construction or re/creation, as Julia Levien preferred to call her re/membrances of the dances, is influenced by one’s personality, training, aesthetics, environment, and socio-historical conditions. In this regard, no one can precisely portray a version of exactly what Duncan produced and danced onstage in her lifetime because no one can fully inhabit another’s body. Dance critic Mark Franco refers to Duncan reconstructions as “decentralized multiple versions of Duncan rather than a totalized vision of Duncan as a consolidated self” (Franco 1995).

Duncan re/constructions, like all re/constructions, ultimately are influenced by the “mode of transmission” (Shay 2002), by the identity and subjectivity of the reconstructor, and by contemporary socio-political, aesthetic, and cultural biases within a context of continuity and change. In other words, the dance, whether “reconstructed,” “re/membered,” or “re/created,” is born anew by succeeding generations in a particular time and space. However, clearly common features signify and define what we refer to as “the Duncan legacy” of repertory and technique.

These features include use of the breath; initiation from the solar plexus; whole body movement; a sensuousness in the lyrical dances that flows from the prevalent use of arcs, curves and “wave” motions; visualization of the music; a clear sense of intention and focus developed from an emotional, mythic, or imagined narrative; organic, natural movements; an emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual; a sense of creating community and connectedness with others; and a credo where “emotion precedes motion.” However, even if all of these attributes are present, a performance may still lack an aura of authenticity or truth if the central quality of luminosity or radiance is absent.

After the brief verbal introduction, the workshop introduced some “psycho-spiritual” strategies to help develop the sense of presence, beingness, and mindfulness that facilitates the creation of a radiant body and a transcendent performance. The strategies sought to bridge various techniques from yoga and other spiritual disciplines with the essential spiritual elements inherent in Duncan technique. In *The Art of the Dance* and in her autobiography, Duncan wrote frequently about accessing an inner, vibratory light:

I...sought the sources of the spiritual expression to flow into the channels of the body filling it with vibrating light—the centrifugal force reflecting the spirit’s vision. After many months, when I had learned to concentrate all my force to this one Centre, I found that thereafter when I listened to music, the rays and vibrations of the music streamed to this one fount of light within me—there they reflected themselves in Spiritual Vision not the brain’s mirror, but the soul’s, and from this vision I could express them in Dance (Duncan 1928:75).

We do not know Isadora’s precise “methodology” for awakening the vision of the spirit; it is

doubtful that she had a “method’ at all. Most likely, similar to other mystics, artists and poets such as Walt Whitman and William Blake, she arrived at these states both spontaneously and through focused intention and invocation. Central to the mystical experience is the “bypassing” of the thinking brain, which Isadora called the “brain’s mirror,” and the accessing of the intuitive mind, which can more easily perceive and manifest the ineffable sense of spirit. The workshop opened with a simple meditative, walking exercise to “invoke the sacred,” where participants were instructed to visualize themselves in a holy temple of the gods or awe-inspiring outdoor environment. This exercise was followed by an eye-gazing exercise to facilitate a group connection, enhance clarity of focus and, ideally, penetrate to a deeper sense of Self. The exercises were intended to develop ease in “standing or walking in one’s full beingness” without artifice or guardedness and to allow the self to be open and vulnerable to others. Openness facilitates access to emotional memories that then can be activated as “visible” narratives that give truth and transparency to the dance.

The workshop also included a series of warm-up exercises integrated with visualizations, breathing and meditative techniques to activate the solar plexus and help clear away the “mind chatter” that impedes a deep ability to listen to the music and rhythms of the body. Movement exercises included Duncan’s “Universe” gestures, the sway, and excerpts from the “Blessed Spirits” flute solo. In the class, I stressed the importance of embodying the “multiple selves” and stories inherent in each dance; nearly all Duncan dances operate on three or four levels: the level of Isadora’s personal story, the mythic story, the historical or social context, and the dancer’s personal story. The challenge for the dancer is to simultaneously portray all three or four “bodies” or “multiple selves” at once, so that the dance bridges the personal, mythic/historical, and the universal. The key for the dancer is to cultivate the presence and state of mind where she is deeply committed both to telling “her story” and to connecting that story to the story of all humanity. Working with this concept of “multiple selves,” participants performed the opening movements of “Blessed...” both as specific choreography and as improvisational material. Also central to the narrative in “Blessed Spirits” is the ideal of compassion for the suffering of humankind. This quality is best conveyed through an attitude of generosity and the sincere desire to uplift others from their suffering. The workshop concluded with exercises to invoke a spirit of generosity and the sincere desire to uplift others from their suffering as well as to facilitate group connectedness and a sense of community.

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# WHY ARE YOU DANCING?

*Exploring Intention as a Foundational Concept in Duncan Dance*

**Janaea Rose Lyn**

**Abstract:** This paper is an overview of a dance-based workshop that focused on the foundational importance of *intention* in the philosophy, technique and choreography of Isadora Duncan. Pianist Chang Shen was an integral part of this class, which included an in-depth exploration of performance intentions for Duncan's choreography to Brahms, *Waltz Op. 39, #15 (Petals)* with a range of musical interpretations. The workshop culminated with a performance of this piece by Lyn and Shen.

**Keywords:** Isadora Duncan, Janaea Rose Lyn, Intention, Chang Shen

**Presentation Date:** June 17, 2013, 9:00-10:30am

**Format:** Master Class/Workshop

**Supplements:** Rose petals used in class. Class photos by Yi-Hsin Lin and description of choreography handout, included.



*Frontispiece. Janaea Rose Lyn. Photo by Yi-Hsin Lin.  
From the Isadora Duncan International Symposium.*

## Why Are You Dancing?

### CLASS INTRODUCTION

Please welcome our pianist, Chang Shen. Because I often work with musicians and they are such an integral part of Isadora's work, it is important that we include them in our class as a collaborator, and not as an accompanist.

In this workshop we will focus in depth on the foundational, but broad, Duncan dance concepts of *intention*, *waves* and *musicality* so we can understand and express them in a more nuanced way. Then we will use them to explore different performance approaches to a range of musical interpretations of Duncan's choreography to Brahms' *Waltz, Op.39, #15*. Since we also call it "Petals," I have brought rose petals for everyone to dance with.

What makes Duncan's work contemporary is what also makes it timeless, and I believe this is found in the largest idea of Intention. We can better understand Duncan's philosophical underpinnings as three distinct but related smaller Intentions, which I define as:

**Educational Intention (Class technique):** To train the body and soul to move in a harmonious and integrated manner...

**Creative Intention (Improvisation, choreography, rehearsal):** To develop an instrument that transcends technique so that the dancer can create and express from an authentic voice...

**Artistic Intention (Performance):** To perform onstage in a true present and give physical voice to the (preferably live) music.

The combined, overarching intention is to produce a harmoniously moving human being with a sensitive, expressive and creative instrument, who is able to respond as a performer to an intuitive moment when onstage.

Dance educators of all styles and levels should consider approaching classes, rehearsals and performances with these distinct intentions, and incorporating Duncan dance techniques. This will enhance the clarity, creativity and presence of your students in the studio and onstage, and once they experience this for themselves, the relevance of Isadora Duncan can be more easily articulated to twenty-first century dancers.

As practitioners of Duncan technique, we know that before there is a single movement the dancer consciously begins with an internal desire. This is our foundational approach, and one that initiates an organic and kinesthetic progression. As Irma Duncan said, "Remember always to start your movements from within. The desire to make a certain gesture must be there first; you must be strongly conscious of the impulse before you start to move, no matter how small or gentle the gesture."<sup>1</sup>

"Physically, this idea translates as: the breath animates and initiates movement, expanding the torso upward and outward. As the torso moves in the direction of the intention, the eyes then focus on a person or place in space and a gesture completes the movement sequence, which lingers in suspension at the top of the inhalation.

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1

Duncan, Irma. *The Technique of Isadora Duncan*, pg 12.

Specifically, this movement progression in Duncan dance can be stated as: intention (*purpose*) > breath (*inhalation*) > body (*rises*) > focus (*established*) > gesture (*unfolds*) > resolution (*pause*). Then the same progression takes places in reverse, as the exhalation releases from the pause between breaths, returning back into the body, and then pausing once again to clarify and re-initiate with a new intention.

In one of her essays, Isadora describes this as “the movement should follow the rhythm of the waves: the rhythm that rises, penetrates, holding in itself the impulse and the after-movement; call and response bound endlessly in one cadence.”<sup>2</sup>

As we move through this class we will experience this wave concept through different movement sequences, and in three distinct spatial directions: diagonally in place; horizontally while walking and vertically while waltzing. When we understand how to use them individually, these waves can intersect with clarity and with different dynamic qualities. Our dancing energy takes on a power that can radiate fully in all directions.

## **CLASS TECHNIQUE**

### *Educational Intention*

#### Opening Sequence: Wave 1 - The Breath Rhythm, Diagonal from Solar Plexus

Let’s make a circle. In this first opening sequence we will move through a series of movements from the Duncan vocabulary, practicing the intention/ breath/gesture progression. We will approach this as a meditative and physical warm up to connect with our breath, our diagonal wave motion, and each other.

Before we begin, let’s review a few other foundational concepts that are an important part of the Educational Intention. Please stand with your heels together and feet pointing diagonally outward in a natural First, or “V” position. This is a good stance for finding and working with your natural turn out, and for understanding that naturally the body is designed to work three-dimensionally, at roughly forty-five degree angles. The torso in relationship to the earth is naturally inclined forward and not vertical. The limbs are also inclined in front of the torso, and as we lift them we create sculptural lines. There are no straight lines in nature, so while we can choose to create linear shapes in other dance forms, or work in parallel or using full turn, for the Duncan work we want to build from the curves and spirals of form and energy that exist organically.

For these reasons, I feel strongly that it is essential to stand at all times when engaged in Duncan work with the weight on one leg, known as our *contrapposto* stance (see Figure

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2

Duncan, Isadora. “Depth.”

21). This frees the mobility in the torso and allows you to find the range of motion necessary for the “C” and “S” curves that are intrinsic to the classic lines found in the Duncan work (Figure 22). It also allows for an immediate shift of weight as you are already placed firmly on one leg.

Lift your right leg and let your foot land on the floor in front of you in a relaxed toe, ball, heel progression. As the heel strikes and you shift forward, commit your weight immediately onto a straight leg, never staying on two legs. Now find the slight forward diagonal in the hip of your right standing leg as you keep your shoulders over your hips. Feel how this action releases the back ankle and it slides in from behind to meet the ankle in the front. Notice you can remain in this position without any weight on the left leg, and your torso and legs can respond fully.

We will stay on the right side for a while as we move through our warm up. To transition our weight to the other side we will take three steps: Back on the left, side on the right, and front onto the left leg. We will alternate sides using this three-step pattern so we are always moving sculpturally and three-dimensionally into a *contrapposto* stance.

Now, as you are gesturing, whether to the heavens, in a direction, or to a person, establish your focus clearly and really *see* something. As you move through the intention-breath-body-focus-gesture-resolution sequence, clearly articulate your arm work as well.



Figure 21. Janaea Rose Lyn and class. Photo by Yi-Hsin Lin. From the Isadora Duncan International Symposium.

If you keep more energy in reserve than you use, your movements will have more power because you have not expended it fully in the torso, or through your limbs. Aesthetically, Duncan arm work and leg work are rarely fully extended. We call it a “give” in the joint, not bent weakly or overly straightened. This way of moving indicates there is somewhere further the body can go, a continuing state of becoming (see Frontispiece).

Finally, listen closely to Chang’s playing of Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata* as you follow me, as I did not set this sequence, but will evolve it in response to his playing.

*Activity: Opening sequence in a circle as group follows.*

### The Walk: Wave 2 - Horizontal with Undertow

The walk builds from the *contrapposto* stance as we now move continually through space a horizontal plane. The key to this particular wave motion is understanding the undertow that counter balances the forward motion as each weight change happens. A continual progression of advance, to recede, to advance, a more forward action than back, but never a complete stop.

As you take a step forward from your *contrapposto* stance, focus initially on the rhythm of the forward surge as your weight transfers through the foot to the heel onto a straight leg as you commit. Notice how your weight recedes back in an undertow motion as the back leg immediately begins moving forward. The back foot stays connected to the floor as it passes by the other ankle through the center line, at which moment the torso is vertical. The back leg continues forward and lifts slightly off the floor for the next step, foot relaxed and not pointed. Once again the wave energy surges forward as the ball of the foot strikes the floor first and the weight shift completes as the heel lands in time with the downbeat of the music.

This rhythmic stepping on the downbeat is essential for developing musicality, both individually and collectively, so listen for it in the music when Chang is playing. After we are walking together well, I will add some arm work as a melody line to counterpoint the rhythm of the walk. Feel free not to add the arm work and just focus the horizontal wave motion of the walk as that is more important.

*Activity: Walking in a circle as a group with arm work.*

### The Waltz: Wave 3 - Vertical with Over- and Under-curves

The waltz step will build on the same type of weight shift and sliding action of the back leg as we did in the walk, but in three-quarter time and using another wave motion. This one is vertical with over- and under-curves.

Rise to the ball of the feet with arms to the side, slightly in front of you. The heels never touch the floor; it is the spring and use of a rebound in the ankle that produces the lightness and lilting quality. To begin: *Step* forward on right leg on count 1. *Slide* left leg back behind it and shift weight onto it on count 2. *Shift* back to the right leg (front) partially releasing the ankle on count 3. Then rebound back up on that same leg on the eighth note (“*and*” count) to begin the sequence starting on the other side, the left. Feel the waves from under and over the ground as we waltz in continual rhythm, moving *down, up, down, up*, and then beginning on the other side.

Once you have that, on count 2 as you slide the back ankle in let both knees have some

“give” so you can lean your body towards your back leg in a “C” curve as you look over that shoulder. Think of someone holding your wrists in place so the action releases the shoulder socket down and back in body, but the arms stay level (Figure 22).



Figure 22. Janaea Rose Lyn teaching at Xavier College Prep.

*Activity: Waltzing across the floor with simple arm work.*

## **PROCESS**

### *Creative Intention*

Now we have a deeper understanding of, and access to, these three distinct diagonal, horizontal and vertical wave motions. We can use them individually with different dynamics to have more nuanced expressiveness in our dancing, and we can also intersect them to *radiate* fully in all directions, whether standing still or moving through space.

Isadora was interested in “the truly creative dancer, natural but not imitative, speaking in movement out of himself and out of something greater than all selves.”<sup>3</sup> So to cultivate this ability as we move into Creative Intention, we will improvise to Brahms *Waltz Op.39 #15*. Regardless of whether you know a version of choreography to “Petals,” forget it and really listen to Chang’s playing and respond freely to the music as if you never heard it before.”

*Activity: Group improvisation to Brahms Waltz Op. 39 #15.*

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3

Duncan, Isadora. “Philosopher’s Stone of Dancing.”

Now, everyone who knows a version of Duncan's choreography will dance it at the same time. Dance it your way while being aware of, and responding to, what is going on around you artistically, spatially and musically as Chang plays another interpretation of the piece. The other dancers who don't know it will observe and then give feedback.

*Activity: Different versions danced at same time and then feedback given from observers.*

All of the comments from the observers spoke of seeing strong focus in each dancer combined with a heightened sensitivity to both the other dancers onstage and the music, which is exactly the direction we are going!

So that we have a shared structure to work with, first I will teach everyone the version I dance (Figure 23). Then we will spend time experimenting with several different intentions and musical interpretations. After that we will learn how to use and integrate the rose petals to enhance the performance of the piece as we move to our Artistic Intention.



*Figure 23. Janaea Rose Lyn and class. Photo by Yi-Hsin Lin. From the Isadora Duncan International Symposium.*

*Activity: Taught choreography outlined in handout.*

Now that the form and movements have been learned, you will make dynamic and phrasing choices to interpret specific intentions that I will give you. Chang will interpret them musically, and we did not pre-arrange tempi or phrasing so this would be a fresh experience for everyone. Listen closely and respond to his interpretations as well as expressing your own.

I chose this dance specifically because it builds from foundational Duncan dance language of standing, walking and waltzing and the wave motions which accompany them, and because within its seeming simplicity can be found a range of valid performance interpretations.

Our first approach will be Celebratory, so explore the playful exuberance and lightness in the dance (Figure 24). Our next intention will be Prayerful, taking a more solemn, profound and heavy approach. Thirdly, in different sections of the music, Chang will play a combination of these two ideas.



Figure 24. Janaea Rose Lyn and class. Photo by Yi-Hsin Lin. From the Isadora Duncan International Symposium.

*Activity: Several interpretations are danced by the group.*

Now we will learn techniques for using rose petals and integrating them with the choreography for enhanced effect. I will show you when and how to use them, but the most important thing is to keep some in both hands for the final release at the end of the dance.

*Activity: Technique for using rose petals in the dance.*

## **PERFORMANCE**

### *Artistic Intention*

Now we have completed our creative process and are ready for our Artistic Intention, to approach the piece as performers. This is the moment to integrate all the work we have done today as a receptive and expressive artist, interpreting a clear concept in relationship with your craft, your musician and your audience. You will dance in two groups so you can experience being onstage, and being audience members.

The final intention for all of you is to interpret this music and the dance as a metaphor for human existence and mortality: the days of your life, scattered like so many petals that fully release in the final moment of death.

*Activity: Two groups- each perform with rose petals and observe.*

Each group was so moving and did a beautiful job. To end class, Chang and I will perform this piece for you (see Figure 25).



*Figure 25. Janaea Rose Lyn performing Petals. Photo by Yi-Hsin Lin.*

*Activity: Janaea and Chang performed “Petals” for the class, followed by a brief discussion.*

### **Brahms Waltz Op. 39 # 15 (Petals) by Isadora Duncan as taught by Janaea Rose Lyn**

*This dance can be performed as a solo or with any equal number of dancers entering from both sides of the stage, each side beginning on the DS leg. Reverse all directions for Left Side. If a large group is performing, adjust the spacing as they enter to make a phalanx (reverse V formation). Connect the focus when gesturing to each other. Music bars are in three quarter time.*

Right Side: Begin Up Stage Right (USR) facing Profile to audience.

First Eight bars: Gather Rose Petals with cupped hands, and rise on balls of feet on last two bars

Next Eight bars: Waltz onto stage along back curtain with focus on hands, RLR, LRL, RLR, LRL, then turn and continue waltzing RLR, LRL, Down Stage (DS), towards audience, looking out and reaching hands forward then walk R, L, R, as you open arms to the sides and pause on the last bar.

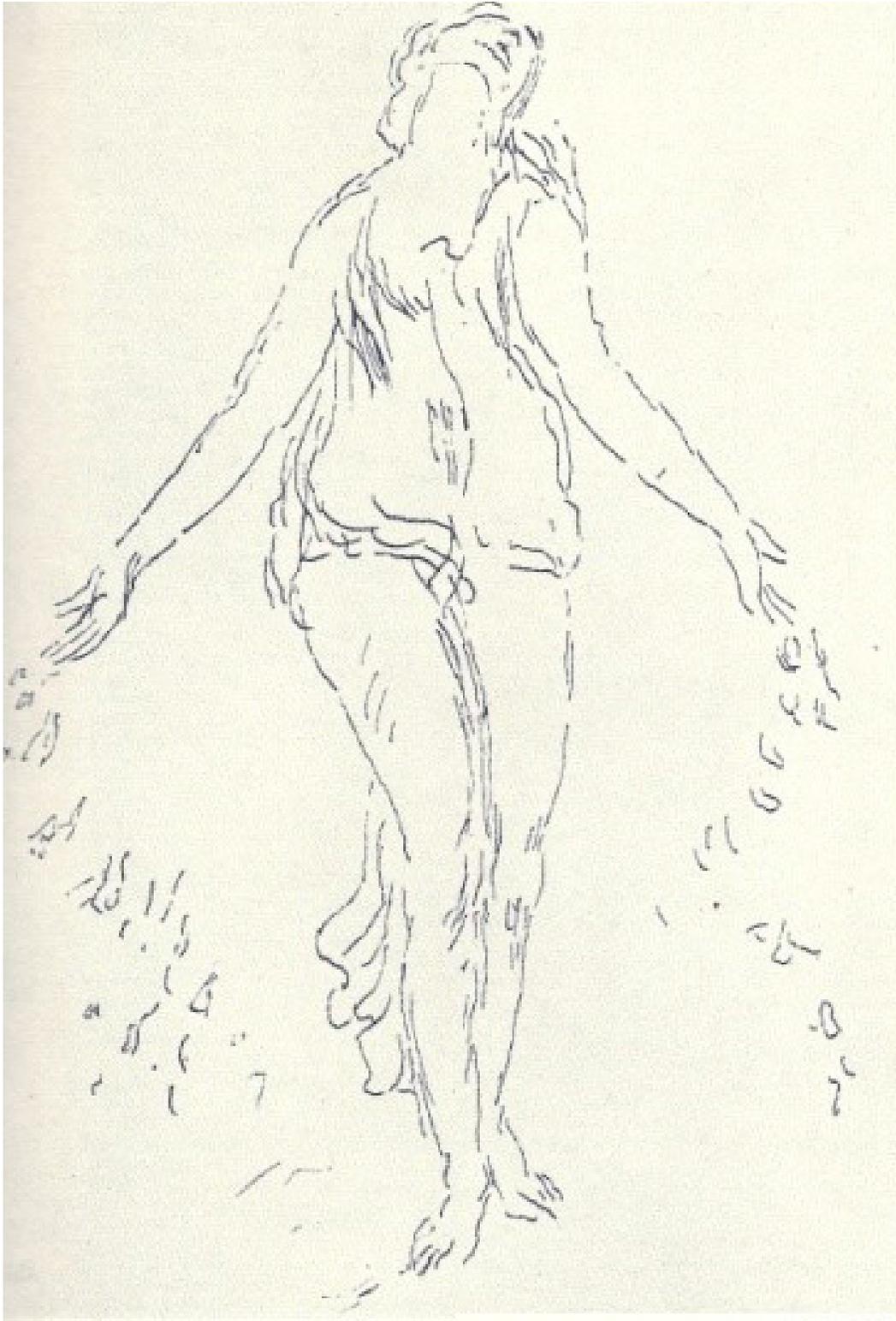
Next Six bars: Waltz LRL as you reach right hand to left, RLR as you open and scatter petals, repeat reach LRL, open scatter RLR, step L one bar and bend down and rise back up on the last bar with a gathering gesture (you can also pick up petals) ending with arms out stretched to the sides.

Next Eight bars: Waltzes, forward RLR, with focus L, and back LRL with focus Center, forward RLR, with focus R, and back LRL with focus Center, forward RLR, with focus L and back LRL with focus Center, then walk forward R, L, R, as you gesture with each step -Heart, Lips, Eyes and pause on the last bar as you reach and focus up.

Next Six bars: Waltz LRL as you reach right hand to left, RLR as you open and scatter petals, repeat reach LRL, open scatter RLR, step L one bar and bend down and rise back up on the last bar with a gathering gesture (you can also pick up petals) ending with arms out stretched to the sides.

Last Eight bars: Waltz turns US -Accent Jump/land on R, quick turn LRL, Accent Jump/land on R, quick turn LRL accent up Jump/land on R, quick turn L only, Balance hold on R, arm up, [Note: Can also be done a simple walk US - step R, cross L 4x] Spiral DS onto L leg with curved "basket" shape in L arm and throw imaginary petals to left with R arm, step R and throw R,

Final three steps L,R,L as you gesture with each step -Eyes, Lips, Heart, arms melt down to sides with body in S curve on last bar and release final petals you have saved on the last note...



DRAWING BY ANTOINE BOURDELLE

Figure 26. Isadora Duncan performing "Petals" by Antoine Bourdelle. From the collection of Janaea Rose Lyn.

# SUN DANCER

## *Duncan Dance as Sacred Dance*

**Pattee Russell-Curry, D.M.T.**

**Abstract:** A discussion of Russell-Curry's entry into Isadora Duncan dance through a liturgical dance troupe. The troupe was informed by Duncan dance through the lineage of West Coast Duncan dancer Annah McCluskey (a past member of the San Francisco Dionysian Duncan Dancers, student and performer at The Temple of Wings, also with Mignon Garland, and workshops with Lori Belilove and others). Duncan dance lends itself beautifully to the ecstatic lift of the ribcage up into the heavens, eliciting a spiritual experience of ecstasy. The Sun Dancers was a liturgical Sacred Dance Troupe based in Tiburon, Marin County, CA during the 1980s. They danced at the Community Congregational Church (CCC) in an alternative open space with art all around, or outside on their lawn overlooking the Sausalito harbor. The troupe performed environmental pieces in community venues and participated in the Harmonic Convergence observed on Mt. Tamalpais. Dancers were pictured in *Newsweek's* Year in Pictures. McCluskey's beautiful Duncan essence informed, guided, and inspired unique, original choreographies crafted for worship meditation, and honoring the earth. Her Goddess Series was a women's healing retreat using Duncan dance in self-discovery.

**Keywords:** West Coast Duncan Dance, liturgical dance, Temple of Wings, Mignon Garland, Annah McCluskey, Lori Belilove, The Sun Dancers, spirituality, healing, dance therapy

**Presentation Date:** Monday, June 17, 1-2:30pm

**Format:** Workshop/Lecture

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## **SUN DANCER: *Duncan Dance as Sacred Dance***

Duncan dance is uniquely suited as a vehicle for conveying spiritual connection in worship through the use of movements and zones in space that reach into the heavens (Delsarte), and through the use of movements originating from the solar plexus (Duncan). The uplift of movements takes the mover and the witness into an ecstatic state, and the movement flow of energy (Laban) can mesmerize, invigorate and inspire the worshipper in ways that are spiritually moving.

This presentation looked at my personal entry into the Duncan dance world through my participation in a liturgical sacred dance troupe in Marin County, CA from 1986-1990. The Director of the Sun Dancers Sacred Dancers, Annah McCluskey, was a former member of the Dionysian Duncan Dancers (DDD) of San Francisco, a renegade group of Duncan dancers who had trained with Mignon Garland for years, and then went out on their own. The DDD performed internationally. Annah's lovely movements, so informed by the Duncan qualities of lightness, flow, and rounded, gentle, uplifting movements, went into a new direction, by using the *qualities* of Duncan, in choreographing new liturgical works inspired by music used in worship. The Duncan qualities were set on my body, but I did not inherit the dances. When I relocated, I was given permission to use some of the dances, and inherited many costumes for liturgical services.

I established an ecumenical liturgical sacred dance troupe that performed for 13 years throughout the San Joaquin Valley. This work took us into a variety of denominations, and

also led to my recruitment to set Duncan dance on elementary age school children through a grant-funded program on energy conservation, looking at the elements of nature and power sources.

During the workshop, I shared my Duncan influences, as well as some of my teachers' lineages, both to share my background origins, and to provide a small history of some of the West Coast Duncan dancers who might not be as familiar to East Coast Duncan dancers. The presentation also used quotes from Annah McCluskey's Goddess Series of Women's Empowerment Workshops, with my own selection of Goddess images, to share ideas for how myth, art, Duncan dance and spirituality can be used in spiritual journeys and healing.

An extended experiential movement culminated this workshop, during which I used music from "The Goddesses." Participants moved through each of the Goddesses presented, with brief reminders of the qualities they represented. Movers explored their own personal experience of these aspects for a few minutes before I introduced the next Goddess to explore through movement. Over time, the group was gently invited to move from individual exploration to group experience, as movers began to engage, connect, and evolve into the "magic circle" of community, bonding and sisterhood. My experiences in Duncan dance and in sacred dance were very woven together in the experience of sisterhood, and the experiential movement for participants also evolved into this experience of the healing quality of uplifted movements, as we explored our inner world and its connection to a higher spiritual energy, and then also discovered this interconnectedness through community cooperation and support.

My background as a dance-movement therapist undoubtedly informed the building of a safe container for this type of experiential movement in a short amount of time, and the participating movers' own willingness to search out these places and to enjoy moving together led to a meaningful experience for all present, as evidenced through the final processing of this experience and the closing comments.

# THE ALCHEMY OF DANCE

*Self-Care for Dancers*

MaryBeth Hraniotis, IDMA, CTAT, M.AmSAT

**Abstract:** Dancers perform with injuries. These injuries, compounded by the impulse to keep dancing through pain, are common because the psyche of the dancer does not allow for “perceived” weakness. Secondary injury may leave the dancer vulnerable to a cascade effect. The Alexander Technique is a means to move differently while simultaneously inhibiting habitual interferences in thought and action. In this new movement paradigm dancers can continue their art without further injury. Incorporating plant based medicinal essential oils into the holistic care plan will aid in reducing inflammation, improve regeneration and repair to soft tissue, and is more cost effective.

**Keywords:** Dance injuries, dance psyche, Alexander Technique, essential oils, integral health, holistic techniques, cognitive behavior, constructive conscious control

**Presentation Date:** Tuesday, June 18, 7:45-8:30am

**Format:** Workshop/Lecture

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## The Alchemy of Dance: *Self-Care for Dancers*

### INTRODUCTION

Dancers have the ability to move in many ways, with flexibility and strength, tempering with mood and intention, gaze and direction. This finely attuned skill can also interfere with “leaving ourselves alone” in the way an Alexander teacher approaches movement. Alexander teachers are highly trained to observe sensing, moving and thinking patterns in themselves and others. As a Duncan dancer and Alexander teacher, I have noticed our art form has a few areas that can contribute to injuries. One area is the weight of the whole body resting continually in the front of the foot in a demi-relevee position. The second area is the impulse to move first from the solar plexus (mid-upper thoracic) region, which results in undue tension patterns in the upper back, neck and head, which is the region Alexander termed “primary control” (Alexander 1932).

The dancer’s psyche, as a universal construct, is unique to the art. Dancers have a high degree of self-reflection, determination, persistence, dedication and discernment. These qualities work for and against the dancer. Dancers avoid resting an injury and will rehearse and perform regardless of the potential outcome. They may not share the true depth of an injury with others, even when they seek medical attention for it, and often downplay symptoms or omit details they feel may jeopardize their ability to continue to dance and perform. So what can we do as dancers and athletes who wish to engage in our art, while supporting our health and well-being concomitantly?

### DISCUSSION

Traditional teaching-learning methods in dance training instill misuse patterns, such as “pull-lift up, turn-rotate out” and many other “doing” directions while moving. Over time,

built up tension patterns are formed which cause undue strain on the bones, ligaments, and muscles. This undue repetitive strain instills psychophysical habits that interfere with the plumb line of the dancer, thereby limiting one's potential and artistic freedom to move. For those dancers who enter maturity and continue teaching and dancing well into their 70s and 80s, it is vital to move with integrity to the Self, as well as engaging in holistic techniques that support recuperation.

Re-learning to move with ease and balance by allowing the postural reflexes to support the weight differently will allow the injury to heal optimally. This is essential to arrest the cascade of injury. Beginning to notice the balance of the head weight on the top of the neck and what happens in the upper back and neck when moving from a sitting to a standing position will shed light on how much pulling and pushing is actually happening. The functional anatomical relationship of the head to the neck requires a dynamic balance that is forward and up, from the top of the neck-spine which is located near the roof of one's mouth. Cognitive conscious awareness of the true three dimensionality of one's structure will open the whole torso-back, and the return to uprightness will automatically occur as a spontaneous dynamic balance of tensions so that the injured part will have the space and support required for repairing itself.

Students who come to Alexander lessons with a history of pain have shown remarkable improvement by incorporating therapeutic grade medicinal essential oils into their integral health plan. Essential oils are a wonderful, safe alternative to expensive over-the-counter pain medication and a natural adjunct to prescription medications. Essential oils are transported via the bloodstream when used topically, and if inhaled, they go directly to the deep brain center called the Amygdala, and are then transported via the cranial nerves to the rest of the system. The oils can also be ingested when mixed with carrier oil, water or milk. Their therapeutic effects last up to two hours. When one is in an acute phase of illness or injury the oils should be reapplied often, as they are 100 % organic and preservative free, non-toxic to the digestive system, and have a high bioavailability and efficacy in treating most ailments (Young, 2011).

A new term I recently came across while doing research around the idea of spinal suspension is biotensegrity (Levin, 2002). I had incorporated the idea of tensegrity (Fuller, 1961) while teaching for many years and discovered its efficacy and use when describing the Alexander technique to students. The concepts of non-doing in our upright system are inherent, yet often interfered with to a greater or lesser degree due to habits of thinking, moving, being. Our uprightness is an architectural design based on support via suspension. The weight of the bones is distributed equally by the whole via an intricate "truss" system of the soft tissue ligaments and layered with overlying musculature. Awareness of this concept helps us as dancers so that we may re-educate our primary control (head-neck-back relationship) to function optimally and return to a greater freedom. With improved ease of the overall use, the part that has been out of alignment will naturally re-organize itself (Alexander, 1984).

In vertebrates, the head leads the spine in movement, and the arms and legs move in relation to the trunk. Raymond Dart, an anthropologist and long time student and friend of Alexander's, wrote on human development and the double spiral arrangement of the human musculature. Alexander Murray's illustrations of the Dart procedures are a valuable reference and guide to understanding and sensing the unwinding of the spiral arrangement of the soft tissue support for the human skeleton (Dart, 1996).

The procedures demonstrate this concept in motion via integration of the parts to the whole use through a series of movements that mimic our early human developmental stages of coming into uprightness *i.e.*: rolling to crawling, crawling to standing and standing to walking. Dancers and their habitual patterns can undo a lot of their tension patterns from long years of rigorous training through incorporating some of these movements in their daily training. The primary movement of the head leading and the spine following is evident through the experience of lying down in supine and moving through the "X" pattern illustrated (Dart, 1996). I have incorporated the use of the eyes to initiate the movement for the head-neck-back to follow this primary movement. If we continue not to fix our gaze, but rather keep a dynamic, soft use of the eyes, we immediately experience a more dynamic spontaneity, which I term "constructive presencing."

## **CONCLUSION**

This new moving paradigm aids in the opening of the perceptual field of awareness, including the self-in-motion and how we relate to our environment with the multiplicity of stimuli within our capabilities. As this practice becomes the dominant, consciously integrated presence, we begin to experience an operational tempo that is both elegant and powerful. Habits that were once confining are now under one's conscious guidance and control. We at once have a broad field of awareness; attention span increases and a space emerges, offering more time to make choices in a moment of experience for a spontaneous, dynamic freedom. In the field of constructive presencing, the awakening of hidden potential emerges.

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# MOVING BEYOND DUNCAN WITH DUNCAN

*Dance in Relation to Theater Now*

**Cynthia Word and Ingrid Zimmer**

Word Dance Theater

**Abstract:** Word Dance Theater is creating a new model for Duncan philosophy and choreography in relationship to dance, theater, music, and visual art. In this lecture/demonstration we explored the Word Dance Theater model from the perspective of how it emerged, why it is powerful, and specifically how it has affected use of choreography, story, music, visual design, costume design, and sound design in our productions. Concomitant with the lecture was a display of DVD clips from our productions that served to illustrate the points made in the lecture.

**Keywords:** Isadora Duncan, cross-media productions, theater, dance

**Presentation Date:** Tuesday, June 18, 2013 9:00-10:30am

**Format:** Lecture demonstration with video footage

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## **Moving Beyond Duncan with Duncan: *Dance in Relation to Theater Now***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cynthia Word began with a brief description of her history of using text with movement, beginning in 1980. When, in 2006, she read Duncan's article "Dance in Relation to Tragedy," she was particularly inspired by this comment:

At the sublime moment of tragedy, when sorrow and suffering were most acute, the chorus would appear. Then the soul of the audience, harrowed to the point of agony, was restored to harmony by the elemental rhythms of song and movement. The chorus gave to the audience the fortitude to support those moments that otherwise would have been too terrible for human endurance. – *The Art of the Dance* by Isadora Duncan, 1928.

With this article in mind, Word became even more committed to a model of presentation that incorporates a compelling story conveyed by an actor, traditional Duncan choreography, new choreography in the style of Duncan, and music (vocal and instrumental) performed by musicians onstage. It is Word's thesis that this type of performance creates an ideal environment for viewer catharsis...a process of purging emotions through art that leads to renewal and restoration for the viewer. In addition, we feel that the weaving of story, music and dance makes the presentation accessible on many levels and thus appealing to more viewers.

### **THE PROCESS** - *Ingrid Zimmer with Cynthia Word*

Zimmer guided the group through how a project begins for Word Dance Theater. The process takes around 1.5 to 2 years from idea to presentation. Broadly the components are:

- A compelling idea presents itself. Ingrid and Cynthia spend time talking about it, discussing the existing choreography that might fit the idea as well as new choreography to be created, trying to see the pros/cons of the idea. If they think it is a really strong idea, they ask a group of friends/artists from diverse art forms to brainstorm with them about it. At this stage they often use mapping to encourage a wide range of creative thinking around the idea. A lot of images, thoughts, etc. evolve from the brainstorming process. Ingrid and Cynthia decide whether the idea is strong enough and what its components are. If the answer is YES then they move to the next stage.
- Finding a playwright. We feel that first there must be a strong story around which everything else is created. Once the right playwright is found, he/she writes a treatment, which is a synopsis of the story he is imagining. Word, Zimmer and the playwright work on this until it is what they all want. Then the playwright proceeds to writing an actual script. This part of the process could take six to eight months.
- Once a good draft of the script is available, a director must be hired. The director will be extremely important because it is through his/her skills that the production Cynthia and Ingrid envision will take shape. The director, playwright, and producer (Word Dance Theater) meet regularly.
- As the scope of the project begins to become clear we identify dance repertory, themes for new dances, and audition/hire dancers and actors. Dance rehearsals for repertory and new choreography begin. In addition, any additional designers that are needed are brought on board, such as costume, set, light, sound, and projection. If there is a complex musical format, a music director must be hired as well.
- About three months before the premiere, a two-week workshop brings all producers, performers, designers, directors, and playwrights together. The purpose is to create a rough presentation of the final product in order to see where the problems are and make the necessary changes.
- One month before the premiere, daily five-hour rehearsals begin. Production meetings move from monthly to weekly.
- Three days before the premiere, the production moves into the theater. This is where all the various components come together. Dress rehearsal, then opening!

*Evolution of the Word Dance Theater model as shown through video footage: Cynthia Word with Ingrid Zimmer [Video showing during presentation]*

The primary function of this section was to compare and contrast how the Word Dance Theater model has changed over the past seven years. Cynthia used three productions as examples: *Revolutionary! Isadora Duncan*; *Preludes: Duncan, Sand, and Chopin* and *Once Wild: Isadora in Russia*. Major areas addressed were:

- The on-going exploration of the integration of script, music/sound, and movement.
- Choreography: Use of traditional Duncan repertory; use of Duncan choreography as a starting point for new choreography and how that is done; use of WDT-created variations of traditional Duncan choreography in order to advance the story.
- Use of music and its integration into the script.
- Changes in costuming to better support the story and expand the look of a Duncan-influenced production.
- Use of sound design and projection design to create a visceral sense of time and place.

It was important to us that we leave time for discussion and reflection on our model. A lively discussion ensued.

## SINGING THE STEPS

### *Remembering Anita Zahn's Duncan Pedagogy for Children*

**Dicki Johnson Macy**, BC-DMT, LMHC, IDMA, M.Ed.  
Boston Children's Foundation

**Abstract:** Dicki Johnson Macy, a student (1960-1975) of Anita Zahn, the legacy holder of Elizabeth Duncan's pedagogy for children, presents her adaptation of Zahn's teaching style: "Singing the Steps," an experiential workshop which is supported by slide, lecture and film demonstration illustrated the merits of Anita's pedagogical pension for integrating song with dance. The process of integrating the two enhances dance literacy, has neurological implication for attachment and trauma recovery, and assists young children in developing self-esteem. Dicki has developed a lyrical curriculum of inclusion (elemental in Duncan tradition) for able and disabled children of all ages.

**Keywords:** Anita Zahn, integration, song, attachment, trauma, Rainbowdance, Isadora Duncan dance, lineage, dance education and pedagogy

**Presentation Date:** Tuesday, July 18, 2013, 10:45am-12:15pm

**Format:** Workshop/Lecture, film and slide presentation

**Supplements:** Macy's handouts of Duncan-related writings and workshops

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### *Singing the Steps: Remembering Anita Zahn's Duncan Pedagogy for Children*



*Figure 27. Dancers in the Anita Zahn School. Photo courtesy of Dicki Johnson Macy.*

"When I was small I remember Anita's question, 'How do birds keep from crashing into each other when in flight?' As we fluttered around, limbs transformed to wings by her suggestion and by the music's flying song, we somehow figured it out. Did she ever actually say that 'harmony comes from internal stillness and external awareness,' or did that lesson evolve after numerous trials at group flight? What is important is that we experienced the joy of relationship and harmony that comes from stillness and awareness; we were not simply told about it. It felt better to move together

than to crash into each other. Maybe that was the first of Anita's great lessons for me. Somehow even then, I know knew that the lesson was connected with another suggestion: 'Listen to the music; it will tell you what to do.' We grew to love and respect the music as our dancing partner and as our inspiration.

"We knew that the music was as important as the dance. Mary Shambaugh, our pianist, was to be revered as much as Anita. Anita showed this to us by continually acknowledging her partner. We learned to respect relationship and to strive, always, for harmony. In swelling

and withdrawing like the sea, in feeling the support of the wind's force as we flew across the room, we acknowledged our connection with a greater life force. And yet, we also knew with Anita there was something beautiful and special about our individual differences. I remember how she loved to have us dance the dances of different birds; I remember how fond she was of the sparrow, how soft her eyes became when she spoke of it.

“As little girls we watched the big girls with awe. The big girls wore two elastics with their tunics, one around their waists, like ours, and one added, around the time of puberty, under their breasts. We looked forward to growing fuller with enthusiasm, not fear. In Anita's mystical haven we learned that females had marvelous secrets which we would grow to know, by participating in life, not by rushing through it; that one had to live each step; that we could not live life as a race whose tempo could be altered by jumping ahead or lingering too long at a time gone by. From time to time Anita would sit us down in a circle around her, like a grandmother with her mystical pictures and ancestral stories. Sharing photographs of Isadora transported us all, and always made us feel a part of some larger, greater, beautifully mysterious world. We delighted in being Duncan dancers, and in being female, which were interchangeable beings. We never knew how old Anita was, but looked forward to being like her, full of the secrets and miracles acquired in moving through a rich life. Helping us to own this attitude toward aging was another of Anita's gifts to her girls. It gave us a joyful reverence for our elders in a society that honors only the young. She helped us to see the beauty inherent in women at all life stages, and to honor our connection with them.



*Figure 28. Students in the Anita Zahn school.  
Photo courtesy of Dicki Johson-Macy.*

“I can still hear Anita singing the steps for the dances, like lyrics to a song [singing to Bach]: ‘Step and stop and run, run, run, and turn around...left and right and turn on your left foot...’ Did she know then about the connection between learning and rhythm? I remembered those dances twenty years later, by remembering Anita's lyrics.

“There we were imagining ourselves as individual pipes in a magnificent organ, big girls

finally, in long white tunics with two elastics, dancing with our sisters the ‘Little Fugue’ of Bach: the music that Anita told us was to be played at her funeral. This proclamation made us feel proud and honored, not morbid. We experienced our beauty as we moved in relationship to each other, not by referring to the mirror or by wondering how we looked. We were humbled and honored to know of our part in a greater whole. Anita taught us that

real beauty and truth come from the experience of life, not from the superficial display of it...and from mother to daughter, the lesson continues to be passed on."<sup>4</sup>

This prelude to my workshop was an acceptance speech; I was honored by the IDII as a recipient of the "Anita Zahn Education of the Child" award in 1995. My childhood memories speak clearly of that which, coming from the heart, has been sustained, and that which becomes deeper and richer with time has been amplified. My intention in presenting this workshop has been two-fold:

1) to bring to Duncan attention one of the heritage's unsung and devoted heroes: Anita Zahn, who established the American branch of the Elizabeth Duncan School in New York in 1924 and who, for fifty years devoted her life to children and the Duncan legacy, and

2) to illustrate my application of her teaching style as I have adapted it for children wounded by neglect, natural disaster, and violence.



Figure 29. Barre work during class at the Anita Zahn School. Photo courtesy of Dicki Johnson-Macy.

In adapting and making applicable to the needs of our time, I have adhered to a basic Duncan (and classical) teaching: maintaining the core archetype, reflecting upon beauty and truth as values, and in making it contemporary, allowing for accessibility to "every man," not exclusively to the elite. As I recall the wonder and innocence of my childhood spent in the Duncan school, I am reminded of what Charles Nodier speaks of in *In the Ever After*: "The kindest privilege that nature grants the aging man is that of reclaiming the

impressions of childhood with extraordinary ease." He further states that the symbolic goal of elders is to restore the innocence and wonder to a world that has forgotten them.<sup>5</sup> I think about what our children will remember from their childhoods: what they will recall as elders and, later, pass on to their children. Children who are violated and betrayed by hands that should nurture and environments that should shelter rather than trap, are the children I know today. Premature exposure to sex and violence is the norm, as our media

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Johnson (1995)

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Chinen, Allan B. (1994)

dictates and sells products. Conflict and competition are the relationship styles that our children mimic and attune to. We have forsaken original community healing and expression of collective joy. Plato speaks, in *The Laws*, of combined song and dance being the highest form of human play: "Dance along with song originates in the leaping and wailing of infants."

I sense, from my experience, that we have truncated our children's development by interfering with the natural developmental progression of this wailing and leaping: integrated song and dance. We are raising children who are like little pressure cookers; needing the missing outlets for expression and healthy interaction, they explode periodically in fits of aggression or violence.

Isadora spoke of the integration of song and dance in her reflections on the children of Russia in *The Art of the Dance*, "...and when song was added to the dancing, it seemed that their entire being was lifted up in exaltation of the complete and joyous rhythms of youth."<sup>6</sup> I was pleased to find this passage, feeling validation for the framework for healing I have developed, which, again, evolved from Anita's lyric woven pedagogy. I have always, as a teacher of Duncan art and technique, "sung the steps." I recently asked my mentor and colleague, Jeanne Bresciani, also a student of Anita Zahn, "Was the style of integrating lyrics with dance motifs an Isadora thing or an Anita thing?" Jeanne felt, as did I, that it was an



Figure 30. Children experiencing music. Photo courtesy of Dicki Johnson-Macy.

"Anita thing." I discovered, over time, that the singing of the dance seemed to make the learning of the movements more accessible to the very young and, also, to the emotionally and physically handicapped. I deduced that the act of singing minimized the potential threat of failing (to learn dance sequences): song engaged the child in immersion, bringing her into the present moment experience of being in "the story," rather than anticipating with anxiety, the unknown, the future. This deduction actually has validity, and lends itself nicely to the creating of safety for children. We must understand that children who

do not feel safe can't indulge in the wonder and innocence that is their birthright. So in a world that does not provide safety, we Duncans can offer it. D.W. Winnicott speaks of how important song is to the infant as she evolves as an attached and competent being: "the infant uses singing as a Transitional Object. In mother's absence, the baby emulates her vocal patterns to hold onto her calm presence."<sup>7</sup> Children are listening and searching for the songs of soothing, safety, and joy.

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Duncan (1927)

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Winnicott (1991)



Figure 31. Children experiencing dance and music in the Rainbowdance (c) program. Photo courtesy of Dicki Johnson-Macy.

My program Rainbowdance©, which integrates rhythmic song and dance structured with ritual circles for children and their caregivers, enhances the experience of attachment, trust and safety.

Children experience collective joy, mirroring beautiful gestures that speak of affiliation and movements initiated from the physical and emotional heart. These ritual circles provide the repetition and safety necessary for children to begin to explore, take risks, and develop healthy relationships. I believe these children today will recall with wonder and innocence this time spent together. Rainbowdance, a granddaughter of Isadora's dances, provides a nest wherein the wonder and innocence can thrive.



Figure 32. Young students in a dance performance. Photo courtesy of Dicki Johnson-Macy.

When I started working with emotionally disabled children, I soon understood that they would become my teachers. Working with groups of varied needs and abilities, I developed a ritual sequence that proved to be grounding and energizing: "Place your hands upon your heart feeling this life inside you and around you; Open to the Sky filling with light; bring light back to your heart; open your arms and gather your friends to your heart; offer your hands forward in friendship; and turn your palms downward like rain watering the earth." <sup>8</sup> Last year I found this parallel in *The Art of the Dance*, as Isadora described her initial experience, moving and

singing with Russian children: "Children, place your hands here, as I do, on your breast, feel the life within you; this movement means MAN- and the children answered in chorus 'Chelovek;' and now raise the arms slowly upwards and outwards towards the heavens, this movement means UNIVERSE; - the children chorused, 'Vselennay.' Let your hands fall slowly downwards to the EARTH; - and the chorus responded 'Zemlia.' Now stretch your hands toward me in love, this means COMRADE; -chorus 'Tovarisch.'" <sup>9</sup>

... and from mother to daughter to daughter the lesson continues to be passed on.

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8 Johnson (2007)

9 Duncan (1927)



*Figure 33. Left: Dancers from the Anita Zahn school. Right: Students from the Rainbowdance (c) program. Photos courtesy of Dicki Johnson-Macy.*

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# LA BELLE EPOCH

**Pamela De Fina**, CID-UNESCO, 10932

Choreographer, art historian, dancer, and

author of “Maria Theresa Divine Being Guided by a Higher Order”

**Abstract:** This article presents Pamela de Fina’s lecture “La Belle Epoch,” which discusses Isadora Duncan and reveals the parallels between the paintings and sculptures of artists such as Michelangelo, Botticelli, Rodin, Bourdelle and others, and Isadorian dance. Following her graduate work at graduate school studying fine arts in Europe and California, specializing in the great art of Florence, and researching at the Villa i Tatti in Italy, de Fina moved to New York City, where she worked with Maria Theresa Duncan, the adopted daughter of Isadora Duncan, for 10 years. As a result of this relationship, de Fina learned and created her own choreography, HELD WHAT? at New York Public Library, and published a book, *Maria Theresa: Divine Being Guided by a Higher Order*, held in the archives of the Bibliotecque du Chateau of Versailles.

**Keywords:** La Belle Epoch, Isadora Duncan, Florence, Renaissance art, pre-Raphaelite art, painting, sculpture, photography, Isadorables, Maria Theresa Duncan, Pamela de Fina

**Presentation Date:** Tuesday, June 18, 2013, 1:00-3:00pm

**Format:** Lecture/ Presentation as part of “Understanding Isadora through the Past: Historical Research Joint Session”

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## La Belle Epoch

### INTRODUCTION

It is truly an honor to be able to present this program revealing the parallels between great works of art and the dance of Isadora Duncan as transmitted to me through Maria Theresa Duncan, the first dancer to be invited to perform in the White House by Eleanor Roosevelt, on May 2, 1933. As she was a great artist in her own right, I was indeed very blessed to work with Maria Theresa personally from 1979-1987 in New York City. It was above all a deeply creative and spiritual expression of life into art via the dance. Most of all, I learned to create dances in the same light.

What most inspired me to discover this style of dance was studying the great works of art and masterpieces in Florence, Italy at the Graduate School of Fine Arts, Villa Schifanoia/Rosary College, while pursuing an M.A. in Art History.

I also thank Dr. Alkis Raftis, President of CID-UNESCO and world authority on Isadora Duncan.

### THE ARTWORK AND THE IMAGES

*Frederic Lord Leighton, “Clytie,” 1895-96.*

This painting belonged to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood founded in London along with Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne Jones. They returned to the Renaissance for their

inspiration. This movement pre-figured the Art Nouveau movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is possible for beauty and holiness to interpenetrate, so that we can speak of harmony. We shall find beautiful examples in music and paintings. As the inner movement of the mystics ascent of the soul to God becomes visible. The surrender of oneself to a higher power, the unifications of one's own movements with the movements of the whole, is what makes dance religious and lets it become a service to God.

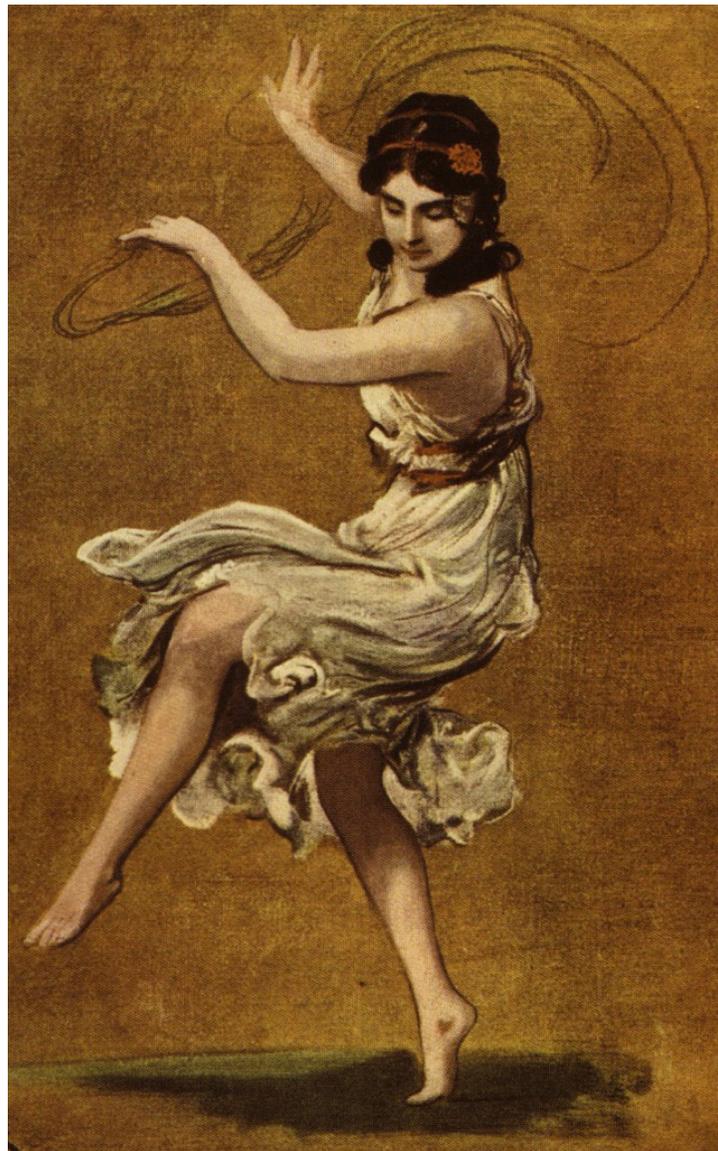
Our torn-up age is characterized by a strong yearning for unity of life, for harmony and peace. Isadora Duncan was the first to reveal to us the majesty of the dance as an art, with the possibility for universal expression, revealed by beautiful gestures, "The Holy in Art."



Figure 34. Frederic Lord Leighton, "Clytie"1895-96, painting. Image courtesy of Pamela De Fina.

*Frederic Von Kaulback's drawings appeared on the cover of the German Art Nouveau journal called Jugend in 1900, 1902, and 1904.*

Isadora Duncan appeared at the dawn of a New Age called "La Belle Epoch," 1900-1914. Along with the evolution of the press, cinema, automobiles, telephone and electricity, there existed corresponding styles in the arts. The pre-dominant style was Art Nouveau, with the characteristic line of the Spiral, creating a curvilinear design in space which is directly related to sculpture, jewelry, the applied arts, music, literature, and above all, in the dance. It was this spirit in the air that inspired the great artists, and inventors of this period.



*Figure 35. Drawing of Isadora Duncan by Frederic Von Kaulback, on the cover of the German Art Nouveau journal, Jugend. 1900, 1902 and 1904. Photo credit Pamela De Fina.*

*Walter Schott sculpted three statuettes of Isadora Duncan in 1903 in Berlin.*



*Figure 36. Walter Schott, three statuettes of Isadora Duncan, 1903.  
Photo credit Pamela De Fina. "Isadora Duncan," by Alkis Raftis, p. 176.*

*Constantin Stark, "Isadora Duncan."*

This linear symbolism permeating the atmosphere had a deeper meaning, expressing the idea of motion. Human form was relegated to the fourth dimension, to the flow of time. That is of a distinctly musical nature, not only in art but also in life, and above all in the dance, where living man set in motion becomes a figure of art.



*Figure 37. "Isadora Duncan" by Constantin Starck, sculpture. "Isadora Duncan" by Alkis Raftis, p. 142.  
Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.*

*Auguste Rodin, "Adam," "Eve," and "Age of Bronze."*

The Exposition Universelle 1900 is where Isadora Duncan met Loie Fuller and Auguste Rodin. She visited daily the Rodin Pavillon in great admiration for his sculptures. Their first meeting ripened into a very real mutual friendship and admiration of each other's art. Rodin said, "I have always tried to express inner feelings, by the mobility of muscles in my sculptures." Rodin publicly expressed his admiration for Isadora, "It can be said that she has attained sculpture and emotion effortlessly; she has borrowed from nature that force which cannot be called talent, but is genius. Miss Duncan has unified life and the dance." Rodin often sketched Maria Theresa and the other Isadorables, saying that he had no such magnificent models whose movements were in close harmony with nature.

In 1906 Rodin wrote to Antoine Bourdelle saying, "My liberation from academicism came through Michelangelo. His mighty hand was held out to me. He was the bridge by which I crossed from one circle to another." In his sculpture named "Adam" (1880) was directly inspired by Michelangelo's painting of Adam on the Sistine Chapel.



*Figure 38. Three sculptures by Auguste Rodin "Adam" (1880), "Eve" (1881) and "Age of Bronze" (1875).  
Photo credits by Pamela De Fina.*

*Michelangelo Buonarroti, "Creation of Man" in the Sistine Chapel, St. Peter's Cathedral, Vatican City, Rome.*

In Michelangelo's fresco, the finger held out is the manner in which Adam, receives the gift of life from the Creator. The celebrated "Creation of Man" as the representation of the very moment of the creation of life, by a simple contact with God, who, flying through the heavens, transmits the spark of life to man.



*Figure 39. "Creation of Man" (1511-1512), fresco by Michelangelo Buonarroti, Sistine Chapel, St Peter's Cathedral, Vatican City, Rome.*

*Photo credit by Pamela De Fina from "Michelangelo Buonarroti" by Loretta Santini, p. 52-53.*

*Isadora Duncan, photo by Arnold Genthe, 1915.*



*Figure 40. Isadora Duncan (1915), by Arnold Genthe, from "Rodin: Sculptures and Drawings" by Catherine Lampert, p.92. Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.*

*Loie Fuller, poster by Jules Chéret for the Folies- Bergères, and "Dance," gilt bronze lamp by Raoul Larche.*

Loie Fuller's dances were one of the major revolutions at the turn of the century. She was considered to be the apex of La Belle Epoch. Her dances revealed the transient evidence of reality, the mobility that unites object and spirit in the same awareness. To the painter she offered the fickled springing forth of pure color; to the sculptor, she revealed the spatial continuity of form. Fuller used electricity in her choreography, which gave her dance a spiritualist basis, and added rhythm to the lighting.



Figure 41. Poster artwork by Jules Chéret, featuring Loie Fuller, for a performance at the Folies Bergères (1893). Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.



Figure 42. Loie Fuller by Raoul Larche, "Dance," gilt bronze lamp. Photo credit Pamela De Fina.

*Isadora Duncan and Vaslav Nijinsky on the façade of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées by Antoine Bourdelle (1913).*

Antoine Bourdelle devoted his bas relief “The Dance” for the facade of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and stated that Isadora was ever present in all his works at the theater.



*Figure 43. Bas Relief for the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, by Antoine Bourdelle. Isadora and Nijinsky dancing together. From “Bourdelle et le Théâtre des Champs-Élysées” by. D. Basdevant, p.53. Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.*

*"Dance" by Antoine Bourdelle.*

Bourdelle's painting entitled "Dance" portrays the Isadorables dancing outdoors in nature, while in the background, a woman sits lamenting on a bench, with two children around her. Perhaps this represents Isadora mourning over the sudden and tragic death of her children.



Figure 44. Painting by Antoine Bourdelle, "Dance." Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.

*"Youth," painting by Arthur Mathews (1917).*

In October, 2008, I was asked to teach a dance workshop in conjunction with an exhibition of American Art Nouveau artists, Arthur and Lucia Mathews, held at the Norton Museum of Art, as well as to discuss the connections between the painter and the dancer. They both originated from San Francisco, and were deeply influenced by the Greek culture. They both were deeply inspired by nature, and believed in the interrelation between the sister arts, painting, sculpting, music, poetry and drama, as it was practiced in ancient Greece. His dancing figures, however, were depicted wearing colorful Greek style tunics, and the painter's setting was the California landscape which revealed wide open spaces, and a new young American free spirit!



Figure 45. Arthur Mathews, "Youth" (1917). From "The Art of Arthur and Lucia Mathews" by Henry L. Jones, p. 120. Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.

*"Music and Dance" by Arthur Mathews (1917).*

Depicting two groups of artists, musicians and dancers. The dancers are moving to the sounds and rhythm of the two drummers, and the third musician plays a tune from the aulos. Music in ancient Greece was an inherent part of other art forms, and believed to make the world a more civilized place. Mathews shared this ideology, transferring it to his beloved California. To dance outdoors, amidst nature, is to better understand and contemplate our relationship with the universe. The painter understands this process before he paints.



Figure 46. Arthur Mathews, "Music and the Dance" (1917). Photo credit by Pamela De Fina from "The Art of Arthur and Lucia Mathews" by Henry L. Jones, p. 122.

*Photographs of "The Isadorables" by Arnold Genthe.*

These Arnold Genthe photographs of the "Isadorables" were given to me by Maria Theresa Duncan's son Rano Bourgeois from his collection, with a letter of permission to publish.



*Figure 47. Photo by Arnold Genthe, "Isadorables," Germany, around 1915, Theresa Duncan, far left. Given to Pamela De Fina from Rano Bourgeois, son of Maria Theresa Duncan, to publish without reservation.*



*Figure 48. Photo by Arnold Genthe, "The Isadorables." Collection of Rano Beorgeois, son of Maria Theresa Duncan, given to Pamela De Fina to publish without reservation.*

*Photographs of Isadora Duncan and the Isadorables in Greece by Edward Steichen.*



*Figure 49. "Isadora and Pupils" at the Parthenon, Caryatid Porch, Acropolis (1920). Isadora, center, Maria Theresa right, Anna, left. Photo by Edward Steichen, reprinted with permission of Joanna T. Steichen, courtesy of George Eastman House. Copy of original.*



*Figure 50. Isadora Duncan at the Portals of Acropolis. Photo by Edward Steichen. Reprinted with permission of Joanna T. Steichen, courtesy of George Eastman House. Copy of original.*

*Paintings by Sandro Botticelli: “La Primavera” (1477-82) and “The Birth of Venus” (1484-86).*

In 1905 while Isadora visited Florence, Italy, it was “La Primavera,” painted in 1477-82 by Sandro Botticelli, that most influenced her dance creations. One of Botticelli’s most famous works, along with the “Birth of Venus” (1484-86), both were commissioned by the Medici family for the two brothers Giovanni and Lorenzo de Medici.

In “La Primavera,” it is a cosmological-spiritual creation in which Zephyr and Flora give birth to Spring, the central symbol of the creative process. In the center, with the blindfolded cupid above her, is Venus, identified with Humanitas, the sum total of man’s spiritual activities. To her side are the Three Graces, depicting these activities put into practice, portrayed in a dance, while Mercury disperses the clouds with his staff, giving strength and life. In “Birth of Venus,” Venus symbolizes the carnal nature of pagan love and the humanists’ ideal of spiritual love, those semi-conscious, or conscious upward movements of the soul, through which all is eventually purified.

Isadora stated that she meditated upon this painting, until she saw the feet moving, the trees swaying, and the bodies moving, and was inspired to create dances.



Figure 51. “La Primavera” by Sandro Botticelli, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy, 1477-82.  
Photo credit by Pamela De Fina from “The Library of Great Masters,” Scala/Riverside, NYC, pgs. 27-30.

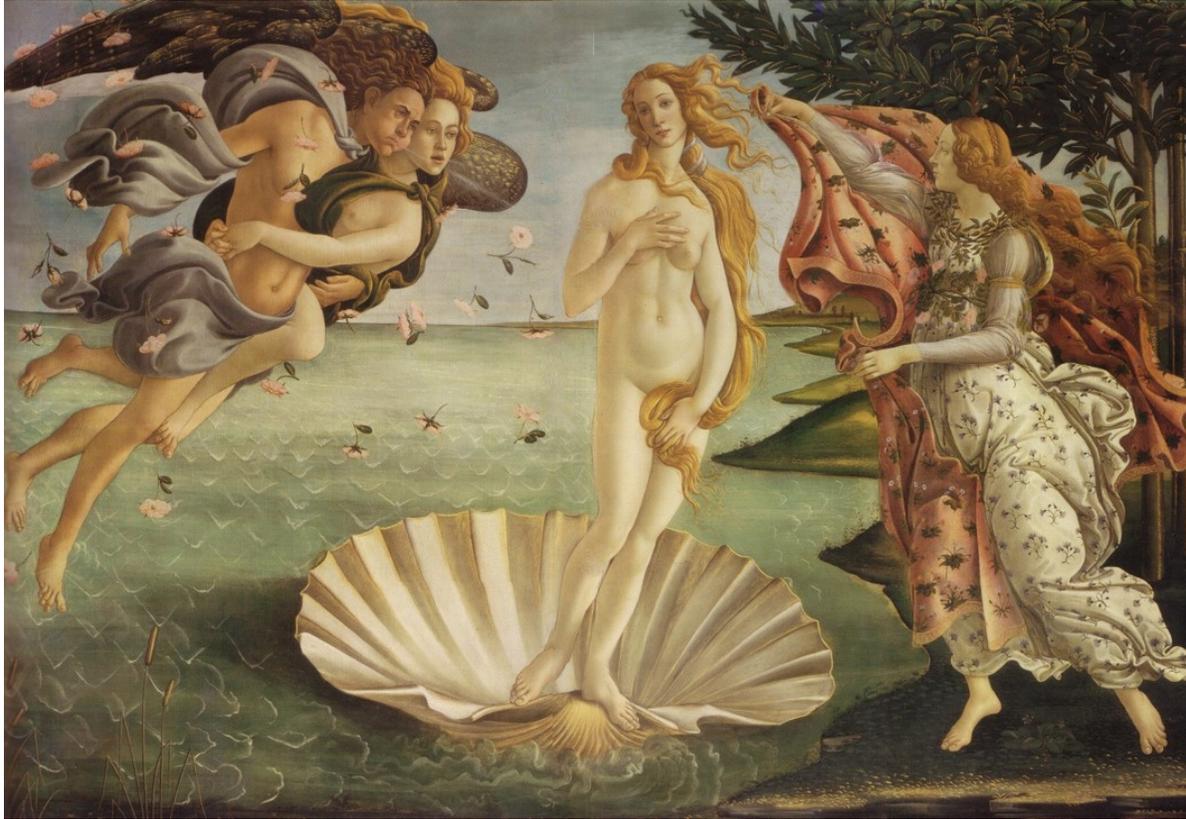
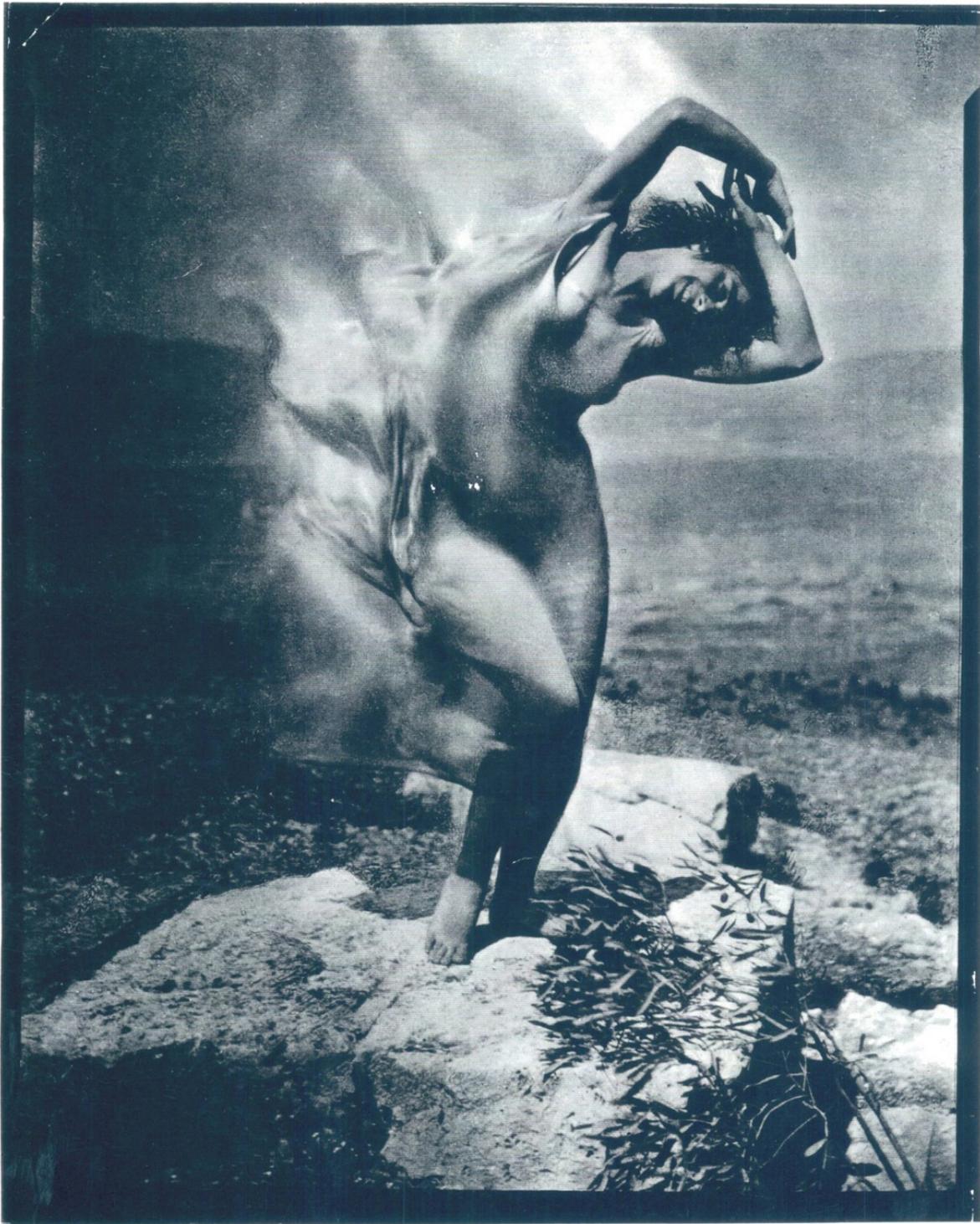


Figure 52. *Birth of Venus*, by Sandro Botticelli, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy, 1484-86. Photo credit by Pamela De Fina from "The Library of Great Masters," Scala/ Riverside, p.53.

*Photographs of Maria Theresa Duncan by Edward Steichen.*

The photographer Edward Steichen did many photos of Isadora and her pupils in Greece on the Acropolis, of which the most famous is "Windfire" with Maria Theresa. He stated, "Maria Theresa was the most talented of Isadora's protégées; she was a living reincarnation of a Greek Nymph." Maria Theresa represented the positive, joy-filled side of Isadora. No one after Isadora was able to express the art of the dance with the depth of understanding and creative genius as Maria Theresa. She was the flame in the wind, the living manifestation of beauty, serenity, grace and wisdom exalted to a divine order, speaking her own language, yet always moving to the rhythm to the sound of a higher order, expressing love, humanity, joy and generosity. Maria Theresa chose to create her own, unique works, as Isadora wanted, based on Isadora's foundational universal principles. Working with her was a very deep, and transforming experience. She used Isadora's method of arousing the soul through meditation before dancing by using a few chosen words to describe what inspired the musician to compose the music, whether Chopin, Liszt, Beethoven, to better understand the psyche of the musician. The gestures unfolded naturally from within, in rhythm with the musical phrase. It was a divinely creative, and spiritual encounter to have known and worked with her.



*Figure 53. "Windfire" Maria Theresa Duncan, Athens, Greece, 1920. Photo by Edward Steichen. Permission to reprint by Joanna T. Steichen, courtesy of George Eastman House. Copy of original.*

In a photo by Steichen in 1920, "Therese Duncan," Maria Theresa recalled her dancing in Greece: "I stand transfixed in contemplation, I raise my arms to the sky...The sun melts in a splendor of burnt gold...I dance the glory of the heavens and of the human spirit, and my dance becomes a prayer, an invocation, and a benediction of yet a greater spirit that makes me dance."



*Figure 54. Maria Theresa Duncan, photo by Edward Steichen (1920). Photo by Edward Steichen. Permission to reprint by Joanna T. Steichen. Copy of original.*

*Photos of the Château de Versailles, France.*

As a resident of Versailles, as well as a teacher in the ateliers de danse, in Paris at the Centre de Danse du Marais, bringing students to dance in the Gardens of the Château was a peak experience for me. I thought it was an ideal place for the dance, as I discovered the same philosophy and elements by which the dance had originated were also there, present in the gardens. Mythological statues, reminiscent of the dance, nature, music, were designed by Le Notre in harmony with the solar reflections. I found many parallels between the dance and the Gardens: Art, Music, and Nature form a happy union there, as well as in the dance.



*Figure 55. Les Jardins du Château de Versailles, designed by Le Notre, under Le Roi Soleil.  
Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.*

*Fountain of Apollo, the Sun god.*

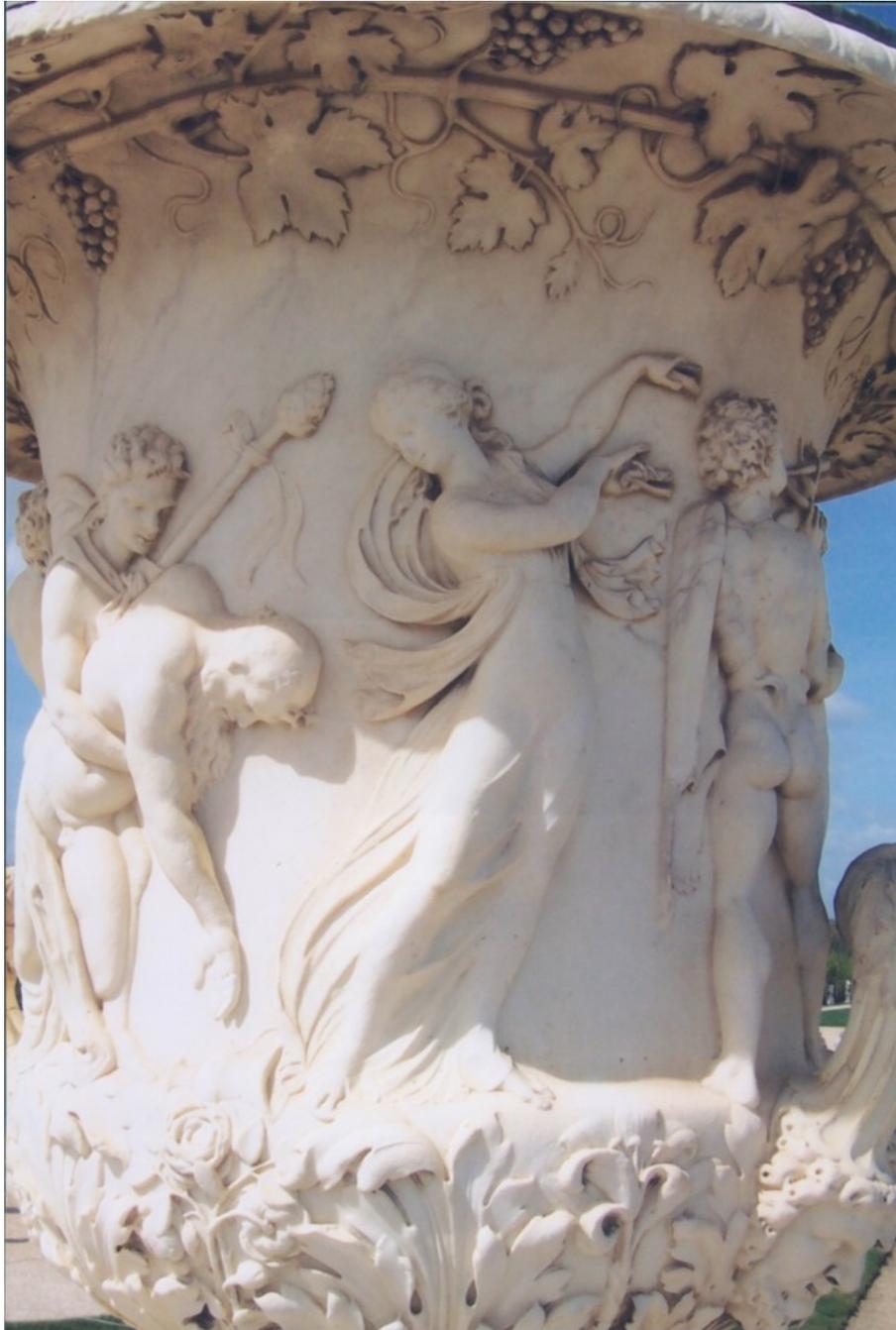
Le Brun, who designed the sculptures, entrusted the execution of the sculpture to Jean Baptiste Tubi, a Roman in the King's service between 1668 and 1670. In the center, Apollo shoots out of the water, escorted by four horses, four dolphins and four tritons.



*Figure 56. "Fountain of Apollo," designed by Le Brun, sculpted by Jean Baptiste Tubi.  
Photo credit by Pamela De Fina*

*White Stone Urn, Versailles.*

Reminiscent of a dance position, from a Greek Mythological statue. Isadora created her dances directly from Greek vases, Tanagra figures, and Greek and Roman statuary.



*Figure 57. "White Stone Urn," Jardins du Château de Versailles. Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.*

*Dionysus, god of wine and ecstasy of life.*



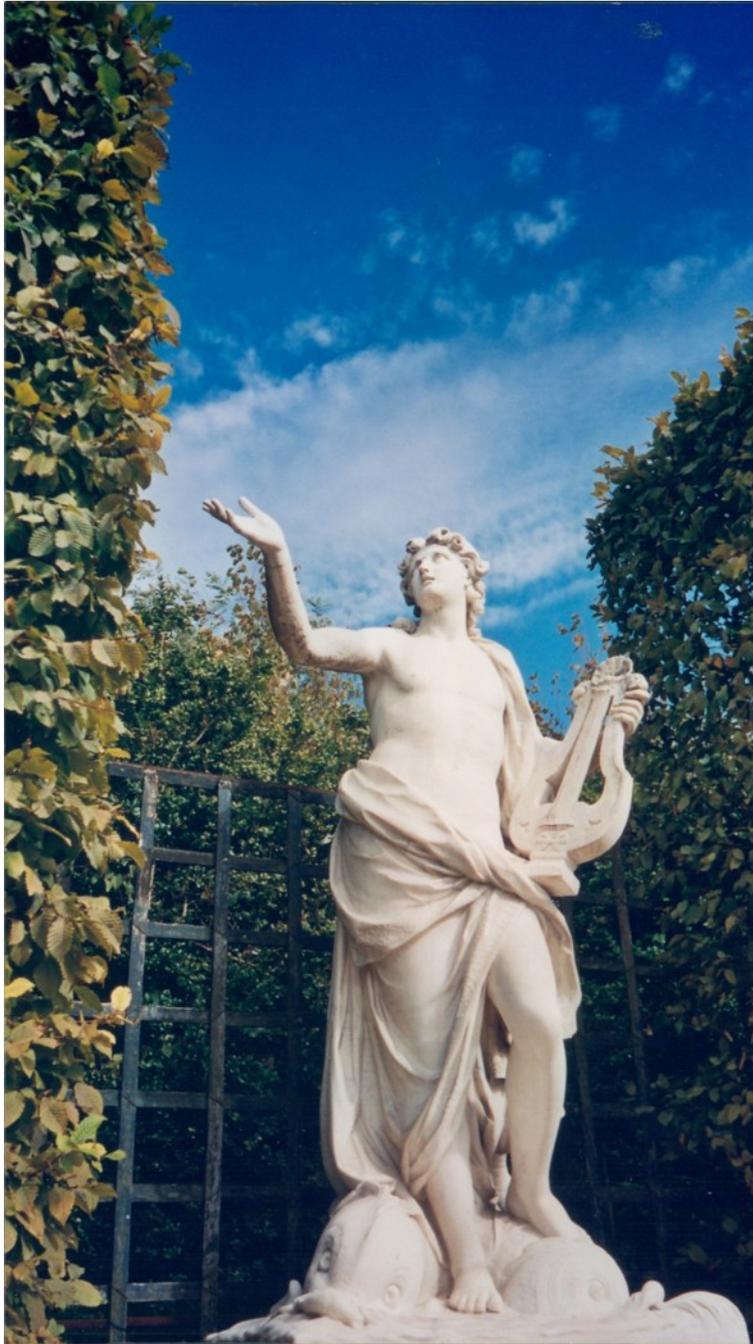
*Figure 58. "Dionysius," Jardins du Château de Versailles. Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.*

*Diana of the Hunt.*



Figure 59. "Diana of the Hunt," Jardins du Château de Versailles. Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.

*Apollo with Lyre on Two Dolphins.*



*Figure 60. "Apollo with Lyre on two Dolphins," Jardins du Château de Versailles.  
Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.*

*Rivers of France.*



*Figure 61. Bronze statue by Andre Le Notre depicting the Rivers of France. At the foot of the Château de Versailles. Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.*

*Mythological Statue.*



*Figure 62. Statue from the Jardins du Château de Versailles. Photo credit Pamela De Fina.*

*Mythological Statue.*

Mythological statue that reminded me very much of Maria Theresa, and the manner in which she draped the cape on her body. During our practices. There was a very precise way of placing the cape that became a part of the dance. She was a very serious dramatic artist-dancer that integrated music, drama and art in her creative masterpieces. She was like being in the presence of a living work of art. In the Gardens of Versailles, I, then understood the art of Maria Theresa on a very deep plane.



*Figure 63. Statue in the Jardins du Château de Versailles. Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.*

*Fountains of Neptune, Jardins du Chateau de Versailles.*

The Fountains of Neptune depict dolphins, tritons, sirens and crayfish, adorning this pyramid basin.



*Figure 64. Fountains of Neptune, Jardins du Château de Versailles. Photo by Pamela De Fina.*



Figure 65. Photo of the "Fountains of Neptune," Jardins du Château de Versailles. Photo credit by Pamela De Fina.

*Photo of Maria Theresa Duncan.*

Photo of Maria Theresa Duncan, which was a gift to her son, Rano Bourgeois. He generously gave me his collection before his death, with a letter of permission to publish. Rano and his wife Violet were ever present during the years that I saw Maria Theresa. We would walk to the YWCA and practice for three hours daily. It was truly a magnificent deep creative encounter with her, as she taught me how to create in a manner that I had never before experienced. She was the same person, all the time, whether performing, teaching, or being a friend. She was always being her natural, true self...unique, gentle, wise, graceful, beautiful, humble and generous! Her genius was that she understood the music, and the psychology of the particular musician, and what inspired him to write the music, as well as a deep natural recall of natural positions, and art. Thus, she was able to dramatize the piece in such a powerful manner to the audience, that I thought she was Isadora herself. There was no one quite like her. That's why I try the best I can to carry on her legacy, as she chose me to do!



Figure 66. Maria Theresa Duncan from the collection of Rano Bourgeois her son, given to Pamela de Fina to publish without reservation.

*Pamela De Fina with Marie Theresa Duncan, New York City.*

Maria Theresa and I lived in the same area in New York C, so we met often, and talked for hours about her life with Isadora. We visited frequently the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she was particularly fond of the Greek Art department. She said that at one time Isadora was going to establish a school in Greece and she would remain in Athens and oversee the school, which is what she wanted to do. However much to Maria Theresa's dismay, Isadora changed the plans at the last minute, and they left Athens suddenly. Maria Theresa did establish her own company in New York City, named the Heliconiades, and chose girls from Greek heritage.



*Figure 67. Photo of Maria Theresa Duncan and Pamela De Fina in New York City, around 1985.  
Photo courtesy of Pamela De Fina.*

# MOVING IN CONTEXT:

*Duncan Contemporary Florence Fleming Noyes*

**Meg Brooker**

Assistant Professor of Dance

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**Abstract:** Florence Fleming Noyes (1871-1928), an artistic contemporary of Isadora Duncan, created a movement technique called Noyes Rhythm that has been preserved for the last century by a small community of practitioners. Noyes Rhythm is influenced by the Delsarte work, draws on a Greek aesthetic similar to Duncan dance, and is practiced in tunics.

**Keywords:** Isadora Duncan, Florence Fleming Noyes, Duncan dance, Noyes Rhythm, Progressive Era, Delsarte, Noyes School of Rhythm, Shepherd's Nine, early modern dance, rhythmic dance, natural dance, aesthetic dance, woman suffrage, suffragettes, settlement house, dance teacher

**Presentation Date:** June 18, 2013, 1:00-3:00pm

**Format:** Presentation as part of "Understanding Isadora through the Past: Historical Research Joint Session"

**Supplements:** Screened films "The Mist" and "Flower of Aidoneus" by The Noyes Group

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## **Moving in Context: *Duncan Contemporary Florence Fleming Noyes***

Florence Fleming Noyes was a Progressive-era dancer and dance educator living and working primarily out of New York, Boston, and Cobalt, Connecticut, in the 1910s and 1920s. She codified a movement technique called Noyes Rhythm that had roots in the Delsarte tradition, as well as in her elocution studies with Charles Wesley Emerson, and in the rhythmic dance practices that were popular at the turn of the twentieth century. As a dance artist, Noyes enacted multiple roles; she was not only a performer and a teacher, but she was also a choreographer and director, a woman suffrage advocate, an author, and a businesswoman. In 1919, she established a summer branch of her school, and the Noyes School of Rhythm has held continuous summer sessions at Shepherd's Nine in Cobalt, Connecticut, for nearly a century. Noyes' foresight to purchase the property as a permanent location for her school is probably the single most significant reason her dance practice has been preserved. Yet, despite its preservation, the work has not been historicized, and contemporary Noyes practitioners situate Noyes historically by comparing her with her better-known contemporary, Isadora Duncan (1877-1927).

Noyes was first introduced to me as a contemporary of Isadora Duncan, yet Duncan has been far more extensively historicized than Noyes. Numerous biographers, scholars, and critics have published works documenting and analyzing Duncan's celebrated life and career; accounts narrating the events of her life range from her own reminiscences in her autobiography *My Life* to works published largely by those who knew her or saw her dance, including life-long pupil Irma Duncan; to more objective, critical analyses of her cultural influence and artistic career, such as Ann Daly's *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America*; to thoroughly researched biographies that present a complex picture of Duncan as both a woman and a public figure, such as Peter Kurth's *Isadora: a Sensational Life*. In spite

of the proliferation of documentation about Duncan's life and career, very little has been written about her actual dance technique and choreographies, although her work has been passed down through several generations of Duncan dancers who claim to have preserved nearly one hundred original dances. Nevertheless, Duncan remains a highly visible historical figure, so much so that she is often lauded as the mother of modern dance.



Figure 68. Florence Fleming Noyes.  
Photo courtesy of Meg Brooker.

Records from publications ranging from *The New Yorker* to *Vogue* to major New York, Washington, and Boston newspapers indicate that, during her lifetime, Noyes' reputation as a performer, educator, and namesake of a popular rhythmic dance practice was well established, yet, historically, Noyes' presence has been subsumed by Duncan's shadow, and her individual innovations within and contributions to rhythmic dance practice have been erased by the "Duncan-esque" label. Both Duncan and Noyes were visible as performing artists and as educators, yet there are significant differences in the circumstances surrounding their careers. Duncan was nearly seven years younger than Noyes and debuted as a dancer nearly ten years before Noyes' first concert. Duncan had a more visible career partially because her career was longer. As a graduate of Emerson College of Oratory, Noyes had more formal education than Duncan, and she also had more relative economic stability.

While Duncan sanctified her dance practice by refusing to dance in music halls and vaudeville houses, Noyes did not need to make that distinction. She was not "dancing for her supper," so to speak. In fact, the majority of Noyes' public dance appearances were in the context of private society functions, pageants promoting the woman suffrage cause, and charitable benefits like raising money for the Red Cross during the First World War. Whereas Duncan accepted only children as pupils and her students were full-time, tuition-free boarders, Noyes was far savvier as a business woman. Duncan was constantly dissolving and relocating her school (in countries ranging from Germany and France to America and Russia), and struggling to support it out of her touring profits. Noyes, on the other hand, at the height of her career, maintained four studios in New York, branch schools in at least ten major cities, and separate summer camps for men, women, and children at Shepherd's Nine.

Despite Noyes' visible public presence during her lifetime, there is no historical record of her life and work comparable to those memorializing Duncan. No full-length biography of her life exists. The only published account of major events in Noyes' life is the preface to

*Rhythm for Dance and Art*, a book documenting Noyes Rhythm technique exercises supplemented by class notes from students and published by the Noyes School of Rhythm Foundation in 1982. Valeria Ladd, a colleague and pupil of Noyes who succeeded her as head of the school upon Noyes' 1928 death, edited the volume. Other tidbits of Noyes' personal history can be found in interviews conducted after her death with her pupils and collaborators. Records of these interviews include at least three talks with Noyes School pianist and composer Bertha Remick and are published in the school newsletter *Rhythm*, which dates back to 1924.

During the summer of 2008, I conducted oral history interviews with long-term practitioners of Noyes Rhythm, hoping to glean as much information as possible about Noyes' background and the early days of the work. I found that, while there are a few cherished and, at this point, mythologized stories about Noyes, such as her love of running backwards and her quick retort in response to Auguste Rodin's praise of her right arm (she wanted to know what was wrong with the left), the community has remembered few details about Noyes' personal history. Noyes was hit and killed by a taxicab while crossing the street in Manhattan in February 1928; none of the remaining contemporary practitioners ever worked directly with Noyes herself.

In addition to the technique book edited by Ladd, there are a handful of sources documenting Noyes' movement technique and philosophy. In 1923, the Noyes Group Association published two books, *Rhythm: The Basis of Art and Education*, authored by Noyes in collaboration with Wolstan Crocker Brown, and *The Psychology of the New Education*, authored by Brown with Noyes collaborating. These volumes attempt to define a law of rhythm with psychological, artistic, and educational applications and to propose creativity as the basis for a new system of education; however, Noyes later renounced these publications as inaccurate articulations of her ideas, and she asserted that the only way to transmit her system was through personally training teachers to teach it.

An un-catalogued archive in the attic of the farmhouse at Shepherd's Nine documents both the artistic and the institutional history of the school. Numerous scrapbooks and boxes contain newspaper and magazine clippings, photographs, and films documenting public appearances by the Noyes Group, by Noyes as a soloist, and by solo dancers, including Grace Cristie, Hilda Carling, and Catherine Rapp, whom Noyes coached. The archives also house business records, correspondence, and bound volumes of newsletters describing the school's organizational structure. Noyes envisioned the main studio in New York, which housed the normal (or teacher training) classes, as the hub of a wheel. The branch schools, located in major cities, including Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Miami, and San Francisco, were the spokes. The school newsletter *Rhythm* was started in 1924 as a means for the branch schools to communicate with the main studio and to share information with the other branch schools about their strategies for finding studio space, attracting students, and advertising the work. The newsletters were posted on the bulletin boards of the various schools so that students all around the country could sense that their local community of practitioners was part of a larger movement. The teachers, who were all

members of the Noyes Group, gathered to continue their work together during the summers in Connecticut at Shepherd's Nine.

While this form of organization enabled the preservation of this practice to be controlled by a group of practitioners, rather than dominated by a single individual's vision, it also contributed to the relative isolation of the community. In 1958, the organizational structure of the Noyes Group Association changed to a nonprofit, educational, membership organization, called the Noyes School of Rhythm Foundation, with a current membership of about sixty practitioners. While the Noyes Rhythm community welcomes new practitioners, especially younger women interested in training to teach the work, and in recent years has established a website to attract new participants to the summer school, the contemporary community also values and seeks to protect the intimacy and intergenerational relationships cultivated by its small size. Contemporary practitioners have made a concerted effort to avoid integrating other movement modalities into the Noyes Rhythm practice, protecting Noyes' work from fusion techniques and also from commodification in the commercial marketplace. These protective preservation measures, combined with the small size of the contemporary community, have kept the work far removed from mainstream culture. Consequently, Noyes Rhythm has been invisible and largely inaccessible to dance historians and scholars.

In 2009, as a graduate student in the Performance as Public Practice program at The University of Texas at Austin, I focused my MFA thesis, *Florence Fleming Noyes: Cultivating Community through Rhythmic Dance Practice*, on beginning the process of historicizing Noyes and her school. In addition to this thesis, only two other projects documenting Noyes Rhythm have received university support. In 1977, Jeanne Hoge published *The Alexander Technique, T'ai Chi Ch'uan, The Noyes School of Rhythm: Three Methods of Movement Training*, as a master's thesis for the Department of Performing Arts of the American University. Drawing on her personal experience as a student of all three methods and on her studies of human anatomy and physiology, Hoge evaluated how the three methods work to affect changes in the body toward optimal alignment and functional efficiency. Pamela Quinn, with support from Kent State University and in collaboration with Noyes Rhythm teacher Arline Terrell, produced a 1989 documentary entitled *Dance of the Muses* that features footage of Noyes Rhythm classes in progress and interviews with Noyes Rhythm teachers, including one dancer who worked directly with Noyes. Both of these projects were produced by women working inside the Noyes Rhythm community.

Aside from newspaper and magazine articles published between the 1910s and the 1930s, no materials documenting the history of Noyes Rhythm have been produced by authors outside of the community of practitioners. This is due not only to the isolated nature of the community, but also to the ambiguous status of the work as a performance art. Noyes practitioners have a difficult time verbally articulating what the practice of Noyes Rhythm is. I have been told that the purpose of the practice is to stimulate innate creative capacities, and that dance performance is one form this creativity may take. Bodily movement is the medium of the practice, but the practice itself is not dance. It is not about

performance, yet performance is part of the practice. Noyes Rhythm is difficult to define; consequently, it is difficult to historicize.

Noyes Rhythm practitioners attribute the longevity of Duncan's historical visibility to her status as a professional performing artist. They narrate a tale in which Noyes sacrificed her own performance ambitions in order to develop her methods as a teacher so that others could benefit from her practice. While there is, no doubt, an aspect of truth to these claims, they simplify a far more complex historical picture. Both Noyes and Duncan doubly identified as teachers and performers. Dance scholars, grappling with Duncan's role as a public performer, have under-historicized her work as a teacher. Neither Noyes' performance work, nor her teaching, has been historicized at all.

In order to adequately historicize Noyes, it is important to understand how her dance practice blurred the boundaries between dance as a performance art and dancing as a life practice. Given the wide range of incarnations of Noyes' movement practice, from solo dance performance to suffrage pageants and from settlement houses to progressive education, Noyes' work spans multiple categories and, as such, is difficult to evaluate according to any one fixed set of criteria. Noyes' movement practice had not only aesthetic but also therapeutic and educational applications. Noyes herself saw the practice as a form of creativity training; she envisioned it as the basis of a Progressive-era education model emphasizing the value of experiential rather than rote learning.

Both Florence Fleming Noyes and Isadora Duncan advocated for dance to play a more prominent role in education and to be visible as a vital means of cultural expression. By bringing Noyes out of Duncan's shadow, I hope to further illustrate how this call for greater visibility and wider practice of dance movement by a range of movers was an integral element of the early twentieth century dance landscape in America and to position Noyes as a leading figure in this movement.

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# A POSTCARD FROM PARIS:

*Artist-in-Residence at the Akademia Raymond Duncan*

**Janaea Rose Lyn**

**Abstract:** This paper documents a talk with a Powerpoint presentation about the early career of Janaea Rose Lyn, a third generation Duncan Dancer who was invited to be the Artist-in-Residence at the Akademia Raymond Duncan in Paris, France, from 1979-80. While there, Lyn worked closely with Dorée Duncan and initially organized the archival materials, which appear in the book *Life into Art- Isadora Duncan and her World* by Ms. Duncan and co-authors Carol Pratl and Cynthia Splatt.

**Keywords:** Isadora Duncan, Janaea Rose Lyn; Akademia Raymond Duncan, Dorée Duncan, *Life into Art, Isadora Duncan and Her World*

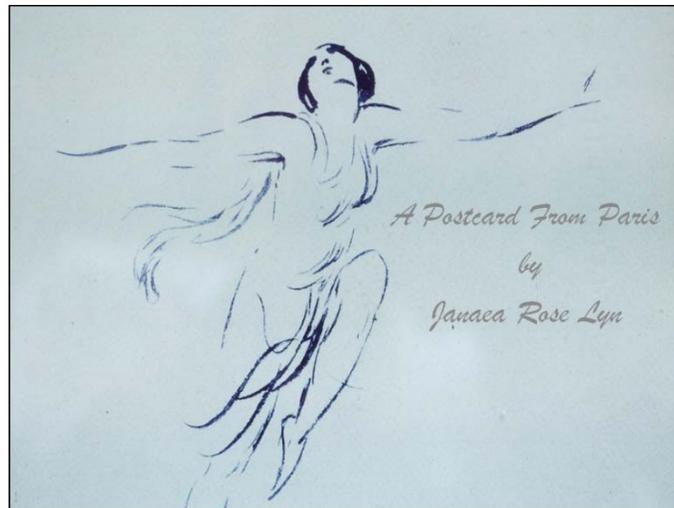
**Presentation Date:** June 18, 2013, 1:00-3:00pm

**Format:** Lecture/ Presentation as part of "Understanding Isadora through the Past: Historical Research Joint Session"

**Supplements:** Powerpoint images included with article

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## A Postcard from Paris



Cover image: Van Deering Perrine, blue pen & ink. Collection of Janaea Rose Lyn.

A third-generation Isadora Duncan dancer, I began my career in Isadora's hometown with Mignon Garland and the San Francisco Duncan Dancers. The year 1975 was a heady time of social change and with the women's movement there came a renewed interest in Isadora Duncan and the completely emancipated way she danced, lived and loved. Her philosophical focus on authentic and soulful movement that had meaning and intention was completely intoxicating to me and I immersed myself in her life and work. This photo is from my first performance at the Palace of the Legion of Honor.

I originally began teaching the Duncan work as Mignon's assistant while pursuing my dance in college, and in 1979, I graduated with my bachelor's degree in Dance from Sonoma



Figure 69. Janaea Rose Lyn in Paris, 1979. Courtesy of Janaea Rose Lyn.

State University. As part of my undergraduate work I received college credit for my own Duncan training, performance and research, and for teaching peer level classes in Duncan technique and choreography. That summer, on the recommendation of a fellow Duncan dancer who had recently traveled to Paris and met Ligoa Duncan, the daughter of Isadora's brother Raymond, I was invited to be the Isadora Duncan Dance Artist-in-Residence at the Akademia Raymond Duncan.

where the author George Sand had once lived. Connected by a courtyard, it contained several public spaces including a theatre, a gallery and artisan studios as well as private living quarters. Raymond and his second wife Aia Bertrand had run the Akademia at this site since 1929, hosting a range of creative endeavors including lectures, performances and classes. Because Raymond was the last surviving Duncan sibling, he inherited the personal artifacts of Isadora, Augustin and Elizabeth, which were housed as the *Musee des Duncan*. From this, a small collection of family photographs and art works by Abraham Walkowitz were on public display in the gallery area.

The Akademia was a collection of three 16th century buildings at 31 Rue de Seine in Paris,



Figure 70. Left: Placard outside the Akademia in Paris. Right: Doorway to the Akademia in Paris. Images courtesy of Janaea Rose Lyn.

After Raymond's death, activities at the Akademia continued under Aia, who died in 1977, the year of Isadora's centenary. The directorship of the Akademia then passed to their daughter Ligoa and granddaughter Dorée. A renewing interest in all things Isadora brought people from all over the world to the Akademia seeking to study Isadora Duncan dance, which had been passed down to a new generation of dancers through Isadora's original six pupils and adopted daughters known as the "Isadorables."



Figure 71. *The Isadorables*. Photo by Arnold Genthe. Courtesy of Janaea Rose Lyn.

As Artist-in-Residence I provided classes in Duncan technique and performed Duncan's choreography. People came from all over the world to study and in class we spoke a patois of French, English and dance-speak. Teaching and performing there was truly a life changing experience for me.



Figure 72. Lise Duncan. Collection of Janaea Rose Lyn.

I met many interesting people, some of whom had seen Isadora dance! I also had the opportunity to work with Madeleine Lytton, who had studied as a child with Lise Duncan, one of Isadora's adopted pupils who had settled in Paris. From the very first moment it was clear we were speaking the same dance language but with our own dialects.

For example, in "The Dance of the Blessed Spirits," from Gluck's *Orfeo et Eurydice*, we had the same structure and movements, but her steps were waltzed and mine were walked. She explained that when Lise was dancing in Paris in the 20s, she added waltzes to some of the dances to make them more her own. We exchanged choreographies as she only knew children's dances and I had a fuller range of the repertoire.



*Figure 73. Top left: Janaea Rose Lyn with Dorée Duncan in 1979 in Paris. Top right: Janaea Rose Lyn in performance during her residency at the Akademia. Bottom: Janaea Rose Lyn in the Duncan "Dionysian" movement. Images courtesy of Janaea Rose Lyn.*



*Figure 74. Madeleine Lytton. Collection of Janaea Rose Lyn.*

Audience members often see variations in Duncan's choreography when performed by different dancers because Isadora was interested in the individual. She firmly believed no two people should dance identically, as this was not honest or personal. She would give certain solos and roles to her dancers that best suited their individual personalities. The Isadora Duncan dancers then passed on their distinct versions to the next generation, who in turn interpreted and inhabited the works in their own way and then passed them to my generation.

But regardless of a difference in steps, a strong underlying Duncan technique is unmistakable when it is present in a performer, underscored by musically sensitive movement emanating from the core of the body and soul.

During my time at the Akademia, Ligoa traveled regularly between New York and Paris, while Dorée and I lived in Paris full time. As someone who had spent half her life in Paris, Dorée was my guide and translator, but most importantly, my friend. As contemporaries we got along well and worked closely together on many projects, from fixing the theatre floor to silk screening posters and printing programs on Raymond's original press.

We presented performances at the Akademia, the Eglise Americaine, and at other sites, with Dorée serving as both lighting designer and pianist. Artwork, often by Abraham Walkowitz, or other archival materials were exhibited as well. Ligoa would introduce the performances, and for this benefit concert I also presented new work in the Duncan style to music by Erik Satie, with the family's blessing.

An article was published in the Paris *Free Voice* about the renewal of activity at the Akademia, including the benefit performance and the intention of establishing a school and performing company as part of establishing the Isadora Duncan International Institute of Classical Dance. One stated aim was to “form a collaborative professional dance company with members of various centers to tour with an exhibit of original sketches programs and photographs of Isadora’s work.” Perhaps this is now finally in the realm of possibilities!

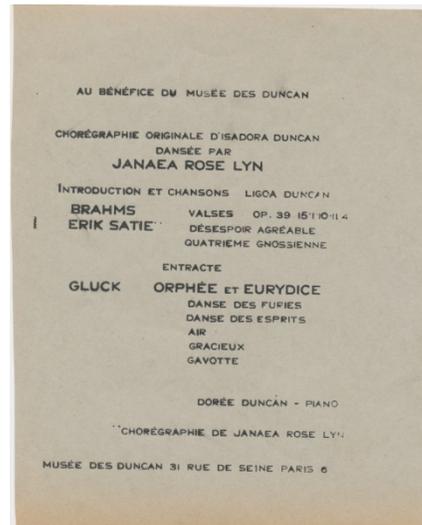
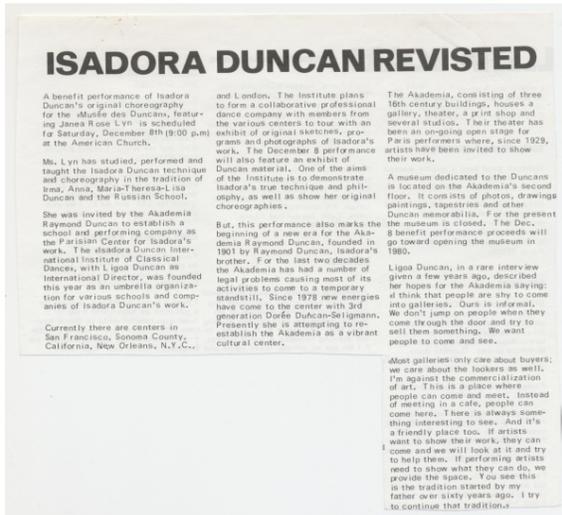


Figure 75. Left: Article that appeared in Paris Free Voice about Duncan Dance at the Akademia. Right: Sample program featuring Janaea Rose Lyn, Ligoa Duncan and Dorée Duncan. Collection of Janaea Rose Lyn.

One day Dorée took me through the middle courtyard to a back door that opened to a suite of rooms that housed the family’s previously unseen private collection of Isadora’s possessions. She asked me if I would organize them, in secret, and we would show the finished results to her mother once it was completed. Of course I agreed and was deeply moved by the trust she was placing in me.



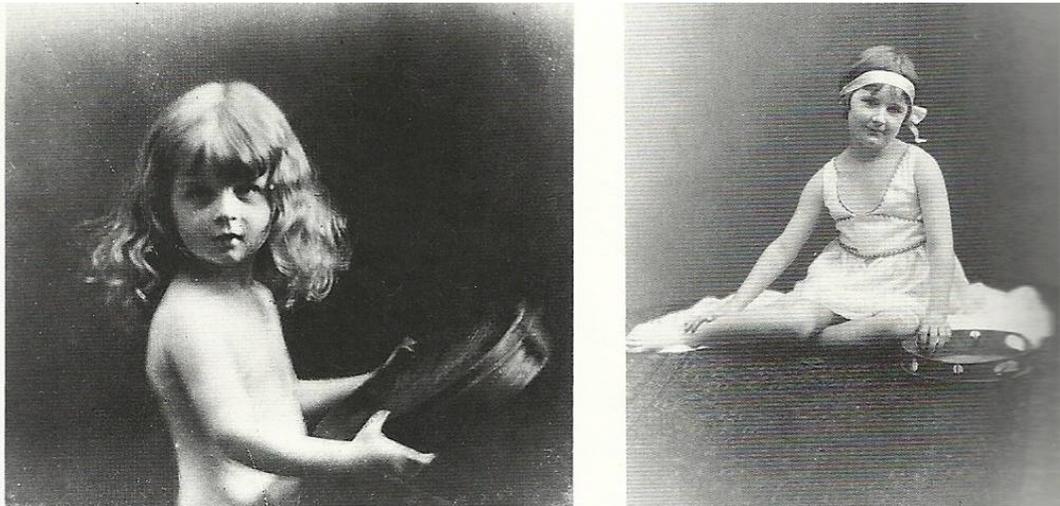
Figure 76. Courtyard at the Akademia. Collection of Janaea Rose Lyn.

I felt the awesome weight of the honor, privilege and responsibility I had been entrusted with - to use my knowledge of Isadora’s work and history to bring order and a structure to this collection to safely protect and further archive her artistic legacy. The suite was filled with random piles of books, artwork, programs, photos,

correspondence, sheet music and telegraphs, resting on furniture, on chairs, on the floor, everywhere.

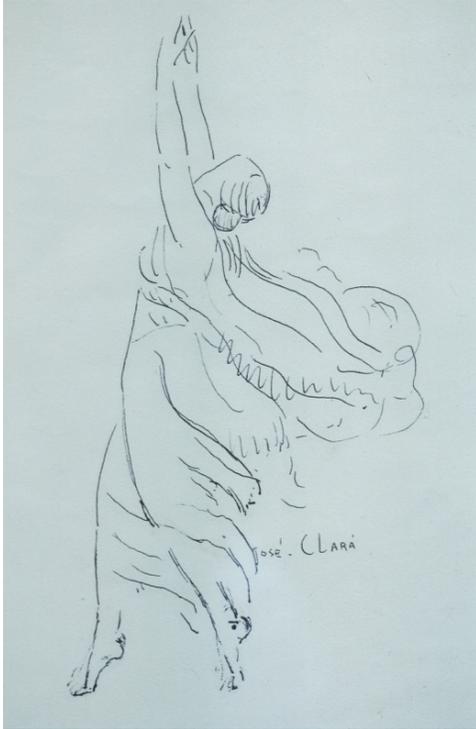
Standing alone among the artifacts of Isadora Duncan's life, I was deeply humbled but also overwhelmed and truly daunted. Where and how to begin?

As I stood taking in my surroundings, quiet except for the relentless rain outside, I was keenly aware of being in a centuries old building in Paris - the city that had loved and accepted Isadora and her art, that had born witness to the tragic loss of her children, and where she now rested with them at Pere La Chaise cemetery.



*Figure 77. Photos of Patrick and Dierde Duncan. Reproduced from Life into Art page 118.  
Collection of Janaea Rose Lyn.*

My eyes landed on a photo of her daughter Dierdre, which I had never seen before. Off to the side I saw a small alcove with a picture of Isadora on the wall. In a flash I knew what to do first: to bring her and her children together. Carefully I brought Dierdre's portrait and hung it on one side of Isadora and then found another of her son Patrick and placed it on the other. This felt right to me.

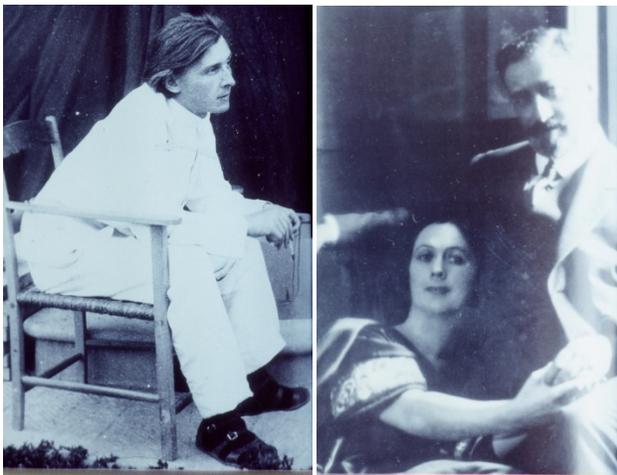


*Figure 78. Pen and ink drawing of Isadora Duncan by Jose Clara. Collection of Janaea Rose Lyn.*

As I turned to move back into the large central room, a ray of sun broke through and seemed to affirm that I had Isadora's blessing to proceed.

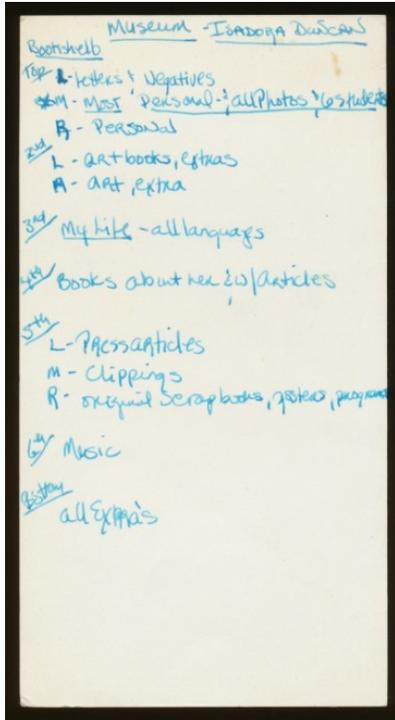
Over the next several months I worked diligently to sort and preserve her legacy. I had the time to just sit with the extraordinary collection of work by so many great artists she had inspired: the large pastels of Jules Grandjouan; the pen and ink drawings of Jose Clara, Antoine Bourdelle and Valentine Le Comte; and the watercolors of Abraham Walkowitz. I pored over the photos, many of which I had never seen before, and was particularly entranced by those of Arnold Genthe. They seemed to possess a luminous quality, as close to what I imagine it was like to have seen Isadora onstage.

I was moved to tears by her love letters, the handwritten and drawing-filled ones from Gordon Craig and the typewritten ones with formal but tender language from Paris Singer. One of the most interesting things I uncovered while organizing Isadora's effects were many love letter responses from Gordon Craig to Isadora.



*Figure 79. Left: Edward Gordon Craig. Right: Isadora Duncan with Paris Singer. Courtesy of Janaea Rose Lyn.*

Reading them was a window into their love affair in a way that seemed more balanced than my impression from reading "Your Isadora" published in 1974 by Francis Steegmuller, which was mostly her letters to him. Just reading her address book, filled with famous names, reminded me that in Isadora's life even ordinary details were somehow extraordinary.



While at the Akademia, I was also allowed to record notes from the programs for my own research. I chronicled Duncan's choreographic progression by painstakingly copying programs with the names of dances and when they were performed to create a working draft of a choreo-chronicle, a much different process than today!

I methodically and respectfully organized the materials along with legends for the family to use for locating different items. The list I am showing states the contents of a bookshelf:

- Top: Most Personal – Letters, Photos and Negatives
- 2nd Shelf: Art Books and Artwork
- 3rd Shelf: *My Life* in all languages
- 4th Shelf: Books and articles about her
- 5th Shelf: Press articles, original scrapbooks with clippings, programs, posters
- 6th Shelf: Music
- Bottom: Extra copies

Figure 80. Examples of notes taken during the archiving and research project of Isadora Duncan's papers and memorabilia at the Akademia. Collection of Janaea Rose Lyn.

Now it was time for the moment of truth. Dorée had seen and approved of the work I had done, but we both knew it was the opinion of Ligoa that mattered most. I was so nervous when she came in. She could be really tough to

please and could have also been angry with Dorée. I managed to unearth my journal entry from the time which states, "Mrs. D. really liked the job done in the museum!" I remember telling them both how much I appreciated the opportunity to study and organize these materials, and that my wish was that this remarkable archive could be shared with the world in a larger way.

This finally happened in 1993 with the publication of *Life into Art, Isadora Duncan and her World*, the wonderful book that Dorée produced with Carol Pratl and Cynthia Splatt. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity the Duncan family gave me to be a part of initiating that process and am so glad this remarkable volume now exists. Not only is it comprehensive and thoughtful, but it contains a wealth of previously unpublished images that provide a fuller representation of Isadora and her family.

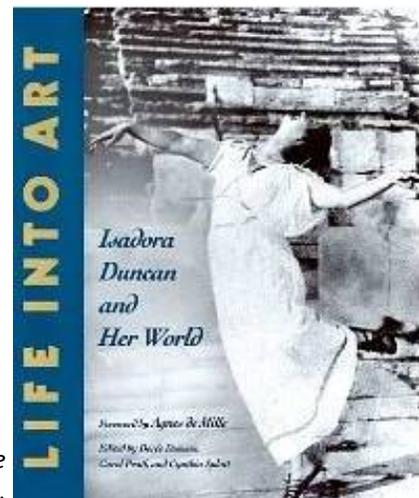


Figure 81. Cover *Life Into Art: Isadora Duncan and Her World*, by Dorée Duncan, Carol Pratl and Cynthia Splatt. Image courtesy of Janaea Rose Lyn.

Isadora Duncan was a woman who changed the way we live, we love and we dance, but she was not an anomaly. From my time with the Duncan family, I came to fully appreciate that Isadora and her siblings were raised to be free thinking, creative and compassionate individuals by their mother Dora.

The courage it took for her to nurture and support her children to go against the very restrictive Victorian culture of that time was modern in the truest sense of the word. This unfettered and creative approach to life and art has remained an integral part of the Duncan family's legacy. I believe this is what gave Isadora her unwavering confidence to follow her vision of what Dance could be. As Dorée so eloquently states in the 2013 restored edition of *My Life* by Isadora Duncan, "The importance of participating in the act of creation--in whatever form that might take in each of our lives--continues to be a dynamic force in Isadora's heirs, biological and otherwise."

Ultimately what endured was not an edifice, the physical Temple of the Dance that Isadora tried again and again to create, but a living legacy, handed to and through us from Isadora Duncan, her family and her students.



*Figure 82. Isadora at Sutro Heights, double exposure by photographer Richard Stoots.  
From the collection of Janaea Rose Lyn.*

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# UNPUBLISHED MEMOIRS OF ISADORA DUNCAN FROM FORGOTTEN SOVIET WRITER FABIAN GARIN

Elena Yushkova  
Russia

**Abstract:** The article represents an unpublished material on Isadora Duncan from the Russian State Archive for Literature and Arts (RGALI). The papers of the forgotten Soviet writer Fabian Abramovich Garin were submitted to the RGALI quite recently and have not been explored yet. The author was interested only in chapters of the memoirs devoted to Garin's meetings with Isadora Duncan which had taken place in Kiev, in 1924, before her final departure abroad.

**Keywords:** Isadora Duncan, Fabian Garin, Sergei Esenin, memoirs

**Presentation Date:** Tuesday, June 18, 2013, 1:30-3:30pm

**Format:** Lecture / Presentation in the "Understanding Isadora through the Past" Historical Panel

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## Unpublished Memoirs of Isadora Duncan from Forgotten Soviet Writer Fabian Garin

The forgotten Soviet writer Fabian Garin attracted our attention by his unpublished memoirs of the 1970s – 1980s, where he described his meeting with the American dancer Isadora Duncan<sup>10</sup>. It took place in 1924, in Kiev, just before her final departure abroad.

Fabian Abramovich Garin (1895-1990) was a writer for the *Gudok (Beep)* newspaper, the author of nine books, mainly documentary and historical novels, and a member of the USSR Writers' Union since 1957. He was a veteran of the Civil and Great Patriotic Wars, and was twice awarded the Red Star and medals. Garin wrote biographies of the Civil War heroes Blücher and Lazo, and later of Napoleon. One of his works was about the conquest of the North Pole; his war memoirs were published. The first of Fabian Garin books, *Towards the Pole: Collection of Articles and Stories about the Conquest of the North Pole*, was published in 1937<sup>11</sup>; his last work, *I Loved Them the Most*, about military journalists, came out in 1973<sup>12</sup>. The book about Napoleon starts with a foreword by the academician E. Tarle<sup>13</sup>. Garin was also interested in the art of dancing: one of his articles was dedicated to the Soviet ballet

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Garin, Fabian Abramovich. *Alone with the past*. Memoirs. Typescript with the author's corrections, 1970s-beginning of the 1980s. Rossiisky Gosudarstvennyy Archiv Literatury I Iskusstva (Russian State Archive for Literature and Arts, RGALI, Moscow), fund 2839, inventory 1, doc. 41, P. 107-135 (in the text we will use the page (sheet) numbers after citations)

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*Towards the Pole: Collection of articles and stories about the conquest of the North Pole*. Moscow, 1937

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Garin F.A. *I loved them the most*. Moscow. Sovetskaya Rossiya. 1973

13

Garin F.A. *Banishment of Napoleon*. Moscow. Moskovsky rabochy. 1948

dancer Olga Lepeshinskaya<sup>14</sup>.

A review of one of Garin's novels was published in *Novyi Mir (The New World)*, one of the leading Soviet literary magazines, in 1973; other reviews of his works are stored in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI)<sup>15</sup>.

His works have not been studied in full yet, as the writer lived until the 1990s and his papers were submitted to RGALI quite recently.

His memoirs, entitled *Alone with the Past*, written in the 1970s, attracted our attention mainly because they described a meeting with Isadora Duncan. The full analysis of the memoirs is beyond the scope of this article.

In 1924, the 29-year-old graduate of the Kiev Polytechnic Institute met the world-famous celebrity. He cherished the memories of that meeting for decades, describing it only in his later life. This is explained because Duncan was excluded from the Soviet culture for many years for ideological reasons, although she fruitfully worked in her Moscow school in 1921-1924. We can find the echoes of the Soviet attitude toward the dancer in Garin's memoirs.

It is hard to say whether Garin wrote his papers from memory (in this case, he had a phenomenal memory as he remembered a great number of different names of artists mentioned by Duncan in their talks) or used his notes. But in general, his descriptions seem quite realistic and credible.

It was a pretty tough period in Duncan's life: the Soviet government had promised to support her school, but then it completely gave up on its obligations, which it had only partially fulfilled. That's why she was going to the West, to earn money for her school.

As for her personal life, the year 1924 was right after her final breakup with Russian poet Sergei Essenin, to whom she had been married. She still felt attached to the young Russian poet and could not get rid of bitter memories about their short life together that was discussed all over the world. We can find the reflection of these thoughts in the memoirs of Garin, who was the same age as Essenin (they were both born in 1895).

The prehistory of Duncan's performances in Kiev was as follows. The tour was arranged by the Kiev musician Zinoviev, a friend of Garin. According to the memoirists Irma Duncan and Allan Ross MacDougall, Zinoviev went to Moscow, to the school at Prechistenka, in early 1924 and offered to organize Duncan's tour around the Ukraine. Duncan agreed, and Zinoviev traveled to Ukrainian cities and made all the arrangements for her performances.

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Garin F. Olga Lepeshinskaya. In the book: *Molodye мастера iskusstva (Young masters of arts)*. Moscow-Leningrad. 1938

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[http://guides.rusarchives.ru/browse/gbfond.html?fund\\_id=11346&bid=144&enc=eng](http://guides.rusarchives.ru/browse/gbfond.html?fund_id=11346&bid=144&enc=eng) – last visit 09.09.2013

In late January Lenin died, so Duncan's tour was rescheduled because of the national mourning. In February, 1924, Duncan appeared in Kiev<sup>16</sup>.

Zinoviev and Garin met by chance at one of Kiev's streets. The musician told the writer that Isadora "stays alone at the hotel and feels lonely" (p. 107) and asked Garin to keep company with the celebrity. The young man was slightly shocked by this request, but decided not to step back, though he imagined at once that he would make a weaker impression on Duncan compared to Gordon Craig and Essenin.

The reaction was quite predictable: "Isadora Duncan! It sounded like two snapshots. The world-famous dancer who was invited by crowned heads of Europe. Now she is in our place. Her name was often associated with the name of Sergei Essenin, there were talks that he was almost married to her, though I thought that her husband was the famous British director Gordon Craig.... In the evening I put on my suit made from the English greatcoat, tied a thin tie and went to visit her. How will I look after Craig or golden-haired handsome Essenin?" [p.107] But, as it turned out, he met the competition quite well.

Garin and Duncan spent several days talking; the future writer happened to be the only person who was able to accompany the dancer as he spoke German. During those few days he heard some very emotional and dramatic monologues, including those about the shameful oversea trips with Essenin, which Garin reproduced in the memoirs.

Garin was not very familiar with Duncan's art. He knew as much as any other man on the street. Therefore, his stories are full of unbiased and fresh impressions. Moreover, he is not very tactful in his descriptions; for example, in talking about the age of the dancer he insists that Isadora was "almost" 48 years old (p.108), calls her an elderly woman [p.125] and is even outraged by the fact that Essenin could fall for the old (sic!) (p. 135) woman. (Let's keep in mind that Garin was the same age as the poet and his perception of the situation was quite personal). In reality she was only 46, but the writer also admitted that she had looked younger (p. 108).

The description of their first meeting creates the dancer's image very well, contains a lot of accurate details and reproduces the atmosphere.

"Duncan was sitting on the couch with her legs pulled up, in a burgundy dress, trimmed with skunk fur and with a bush of chestnut copper hair. Her face was small, she had a small nose, she all seemed small, but cozy. The first impression, perhaps deceptive, was of an ex-star of some American silent movie... She stretched her thin hand, white, bloodless, with

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Duncan I., Macdougall A.-R. *Russkie dni Aisedory Dunkan I yeyo poslednie gody vo Frantsii* (Russian days of Isadora Duncan and her last years in France)/ Trans., ed. G. Lakhuti. Moscow. Moskovsky rabochy, 1995, p. 159; see also <http://www11.plala.or.jp/i-duncanslinks/index.html> [last visit 09.07.2013]

blue veins. There was not a single ring on her fingers..."(p. 107-10).]  
The conversation was about "her, Duncan, borrowing pictures for her dances from the Etruscan art ...

"Do you know where Etruria was?"

"I'm not a schoolboy, comrade Duncan. It was the territory of modern Tuscany in the north-west of Italy. Are you going to examine me further?"

"She smiled.

"You are a wonderful young man! He did not know that (I knew who was 'he'). I am ready to fall in love with you just because you called me a comrade, not missis. As for my imitating Etruscan dances, you are not quite right, but we will discuss it later. Now let's go to the movies...." [p. 108-109]

Thus, the talk about Essenin started almost from the very first minute of their conversation. And Garin was right: they compared him with the "golden-haired handsome man." But, oddly enough, the Kievan looked more advantageous.

Garin accompanied the celebrity around the city, and Duncan truly enjoyed these walks. She said, "It is a great pleasure to me to walk around the city as any other comrades (she liked that word) and no one pays attention to me. I am so tired of the disorganized life in Moscow, but it is my own fault." [p.109]. However, Irma Duncan and McDougall recall that she had too much attention from the public: her success in Kiev was outstanding and that is why Duncan was accompanied by crowds of fans along the streets, including the poor, for whom she filled the whole bag with coins (though neither of these authors took part in Duncan's tour)<sup>17</sup>.

Garin understood more and more clearly that Duncan was "still depressed by her breakup with Essenin, whom she continued to love without response" (p. 111).

From long talks with the dancer, Garin learned about the highlights of her life, the most outstanding people she had chanced to meet, and about the tragedies she had to overcome.

She shared with the young man her thoughts and impressions of the events in Russia in 1905, shortly before her tour. She told him about her other visit to Russia with the school girls in 1908 when "her students did not make any impression on the audience" (p. 110). She also talked about her tour in 1912 and suddenly said, "It looks like now I will stay in Russia forever" (p. 110) although it was already obvious she would have to go to the West

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Duncan I., Macdougall A.-R. Russkie dni Aisedory Dunkan, p. 160

to make money for her Moscow school, which the government could no longer finance.

Of her vivid memories of the sculptor Rodin, she said, "So, I was dancing in front of him. And then he got up, put out his hands and grabbed me. Oh my God, I will remember until I die what I did - I pushed him and escaped from his grasp. Oh, what if I had not done it, how different my life would have been..." There was a long pause. Duncan "put her hands on the railing and looked at the lights. Then she straightened her back and said,

'Would you travel abroad with me?'"(p. 113).

Garin was caught by surprise by such a proposal and suddenly remembered his beloved one, the singer Irena Enery, who had betrayed him, but for some reason answered as a patriot,

"I will never leave my country. I have nothing to do in the West."

Duncan asked surprisingly again:

"Will you not go with me?"

"I do not want to be your reflection" (p. 114).

It seems the dancer did not remain indifferent to the young man who paid so much attention to her. And Garin could not but feel it. But that offer took him unaware and definitely confused him; the image of his cunning girlfriend appeared in front of him and patriotic thoughts came to his mind.

Fabian Abramovich did not miss any of Duncan's performances, but he was disappointed by what he saw. "For a moment she seemed to me one of Odin's daughters, but the more she tried to express with her movements the images inspired by the revolution, the more I got disappointed. She performed Schubert's *Ave Maria*, his Symphony No. 7, Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, *March Slav* and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 (*Pathetique*), Chopin, Liszt, and of course, *The Internationale*. She believed that people needed to see natural movements of the body combined with the music, but, whatever she danced, it turned out the other way round: repetitive gestures, running barefoot across the stage in a red thin tunic and a light tulle scarf on her raised arms. Skinny legs without tights, saggy breasts (she was about 50) looked pathetic. She can open dance schools and teach her dancing technique, but it is time for her to leave the stage. No dancer or ballet-dancer is performing on stage at this age" (p. 114-115).

However, when Isadora decided to ask Fabian's opinion on her dance, he did not dare to be so frank.

"After the first show, she asked:

“Did you like it?”

“I shamelessly lied; I did not have heart to say what I thought. I thought like this: there were thousands of reviews, articles and even a monograph written about her dancing. I will look like a soldier who makes excuses: it is not me, but the troop that does not keep pace. I do not want to be known as a fool. But how then should we consider the reaction of the audience who left the hall with disappointment? Maybe twenty years ago it was a talented and exciting performance, and now...” (p. 115).

Garin and Duncan talked for several days. During this time the dancer managed to tell him about her first love, the Hungarian actor Oscar Beregi; Gordon Craig; the son of the explorer Scott who died during the expedition to the South Pole; Singer, who “asked me to leave the stage and become a housewife,” about the death of her children... (p.118). But of course the most painful topic was Essenin...

Having told Garin about her former lovers and her children’s death in the tragic incident in 1913, “Duncan stopped and began to cry. I was confused but quickly pulled myself together.

“Please, don’t cry,’ I started to comfort her clumsily.

“How can I not cry? I have no children, no Craig, no Paris, and now no Yezenin [sic! – E.Y.]. I have no one. I do not want to live...” (p. 118).

In one of her long monologues Duncan explained to Garin how important Essenin was in her life. She even tried to name all the contradictions in their relationship that eventually resulted in their breakup. Here is the quotation in full:

“...‘My life up to 17 years was about poor rooms, sleeping on the bare floor, odd jobs, almost begging. And then sudden success, lots of money, a tour around Europe and America. And again lack of money. Constant disorder... I met a lot of famous and talented people. They turned to me, but I often found it hard to live in their community. I made friends with the poet Dobson, he died two years ago, with the English writers and artists Charles Swinburne, Burne-Jones, Watts, James, with the French Sardou, Suzanne Valadon and her son Maurice Utrillo, with Renoir, Andre Bonnier, Loïe Fuller, with the son and widow of Richard Wagner, with the Russian stars: Kshesinskaya, Pavlova, Bakst, Benois. I was a good friend of Eleonora Duse, who used to tell me when we were walking by the sea: ‘The tragic dance is strolling with the tragic muse.’ I shed lots of tears in my life; I do not know a sadder woman than I am... After the tragic death of my children, I did not perform for a long time, while Paris secretly had fun and entertained himself. That time I was finally disappointed in love. Then when I got stronger and returned to the stage, I let myself do the same as Paris did. Every year we grew apart and became complete strangers. And three years ago, I met him [Essenin – E.Y.] at the scenic designer Yakulov’s house. Since the very first moment I realized that I would love just him, the second Lohengrin. During the whole

life a person makes mistakes, every time it seems to him/her that he/she is truly in love only today, everything what had happened before was just a passion.'

"Do you regret that you broke up with him?"

"Duncan was silent again for a long time. I knew that she had two different feelings fighting inside her: love and hate, and did not know which one to choose. After a deep breath, she went on:

"The Germans say: *Was Komt ist gut*, and they are right. I was happy and unhappy with him. He is 19 years [actually 18 or 17 – E.Y.] younger than me and could have been my son. If it had been the other way around, our marriage would have lasted for many years - we were officially married. But the reason is not only the age gap. Honestly, I'm not an easy person to deal with, but I am facile. What kills him is the vodka. I hate his drinking companions, don't want to remember anyone" (p. 123-124).

Her stories about travelling abroad with Essenin were full of sorrows.

Garin learned that Essenin "behaved well" (p.125) in Berlin, but almost "disgraced" Duncan in Naples. When they served frog legs for lunch in a restaurant, he left the place and deliberately cooked dinner on an alcohol burner in his room – he cooked meat richly flavored with onion and garlic that irritated the personnel of the hotel.

In Italy Essenin no longer controlled his behavior – he hit the dancer so that she "howled with pain" (p. 126). According to Duncan, "it put a crack in our relationship. You can glue a broken cup, but you cannot drink from it" (p. 127).

A trip to the United States was also rather painful. During the banquet in New York City, Essenin said to Jewish-Russian immigrants: "You there! You need to be smashed in a pogrom" (p.128).

In New York, the poet hit the dancer again. He "took a shoe from my foot and hit me with the heel into my eye. That very moment I swore to myself I would break up with him." There were a lot of people by the stage – reporters constantly guarded at the hotel across the road... "They were obsessed with the desire to take a picture of me beaten by the Russian poet..." (p.128).

Garin concludes that "it was hard to delve into the confession of the old woman" (p. 125), although he wrote his memories when he was himself in his seventies.

Why did it happen that such a great dancer opened her heart to a little-known young man? Of course, not only because he could speak German and accompanied her all the time. Garin thinks that the main reason was Isadora's loneliness and also some emotional affection that she felt for him for some reason.

“Duncan became so used to me that she honestly told me everything.

“Try to understand me. I'm so lonely. It is almost impossible to find a friend to whom you can pour out your soul. Not because you need to study or check him and make sure he is a noble person. Intuition is different, it should tell me. And it seems not to lie to me. That's why I invited you to go with me” (p. 135).

The dancer felt a bit uncomfortable after her confession, which took several days, and that is why she tried to apologize to her companion:

“What can you do? When a person unexpectedly falls in love, you can do nothing about it. It is like a sharp pain. It will pass off over the years, but it is hard to hold it back. I'm jealous your age and do not hide this feeling. I think you will understand my love for Yesenin and won't blame me for that unlike many other.’

“I don't blame you, I understand you.’

“Thanks a lot. Let me kiss you for that” (p. 135).

Garin's comment on the marriage of the American dancer and the Russian poet looks not only inappropriate, but even rude and too didactical: “Neither then, nor now, after almost half a century, am I going to justify Duncan and blame Yesenin or vice versa. I am just surprised by the fact that the poet ‘by the grace of God’ could have a mash on the old woman who understood neither Russia, nor its nature or poetry and could not talk to him at all. Facial expressions and body language will get you only so far. You won't need a common language for fun and pleasures of the body. But it is really required for a long-lasting marriage of two creative individuals even of different directions” (p. 135). Did he understand in the 1970s, that he had refused the role of Yesenin's successor? Judging by his comments, most likely he did.

The celebrity repeated her invitation to go abroad with her one more time, but Garin was relentlessly firm; he did not even hesitate to comment on her age this time, and showed her that “the Soviet people have their own pride”<sup>18</sup>.

“So, do you want to go abroad?’

“I have to repeat that I am just a grain of sand in the sea of people. I will carry neither an umbrella, nor a travel rug for you, and of course I will not clap you on the back. In Europe you will find famous people of your age.’

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The popular Soviet saying (originally – from Vladimir Mayakovsky poetry)

“I think she was offended. We did not talk about it again.

“A few days later we said goodbye and shook hands with each other. My last words were:

“Good bye, comrade Duncan!”

“For the first time during these few days she beautifully smiled and replied:

“I am going to Europe for two or three years. I want to live and die only in Russia.”

“When she left, I had a bitter feeling in my heart. I felt sorry for her unsettled life” (p. 135).

As we can see, Garin’s memories are filled with deep sympathy and compassion, but still we can clearly hear the echoes of the Soviet era there. His remarks about Duncan’s age are quite rude, the same about his amateurish opinion on her dance. It is worth adding that there was nothing written about Duncan up to the end of the 1970s. Her Moscow school (or rather the performance group consisting of her students) was officially closed in 1949, and the students’ request to the authorities to reopen the school was rebuffed in 1963<sup>19</sup>. Garin’s memoirs clearly justify that Duncan was trying to find a substitute for Essenin - and the poet’s successor had to be a man of his age and necessarily from the same country, i.e., Russia, with which she was deeply in love. She found such a successor later in France; he was seven years younger than Essenin and Garin. He was a Russian-born musician Victor Seroff (1902-1979) who immigrated to the United States in the late 1920s and became there a famous biographer of Russian composers. In 1971, in New York, he published a biography of Isadora Duncan<sup>20</sup>.

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# ISADORA DUNCAN AND THE ETERNAL IDEAL IN ART

Jeanne Bresciani, Ph.D.

**Abstract:** This workshop investigated the work of Isadora Duncan as an artist in relation to archetypal, ancient, and timeless artistic ideals, including those of the ancient Greeks, Egyptians and early Italians. Comparisons to other master artists, such as Pablo Picasso, assure the fundamental connection of contemporary art to the principles built and practiced through the ages.

**Keywords:** Isadora Duncan, Pablo Picasso, art, ancient Greek, Egyptian, early Italian Renaissance, painting, sculpture, dance, archetype

**Presentation Date:** Tuesday, June 18, 2013, 3:45-5:15pm

**Format:** Workshop/Master Class

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## Isadora Duncan and the Eternal Ideal in Art

*“To me there is no past or future in art. If a work of art cannot live always in the present it must not be considered at all. The art of the Greeks, of the Egyptians, of the great painters who lived in other times, is not an art of the past, perhaps it is more alive today than it ever was.” - Pablo Picasso 1923*

The above resounds the influence of Isadora Duncan as dynamic catalyst on the arts and artists of her time, and ever after, while echoing the dancer’s famous statement from 1902. In it, Duncan compared, to our ceaseless inspiration – “the dancer of the future” to the Egyptian, the Greek and the Italian, at the same time that she called for the “highest intelligence in the freest body.” Like Duncan, Picasso had inveighed upon both art and culture to wield the power and the portent of eternal forms and remake how people saw, heard and touched the world in which they lived. But Duncan had come first – and, as if thrice born – seemed to have walked across Egypt’s rolling sands, upon Attica’s ancient threshing floors, through the canvases of Botticelli, into present time.

Today we meet to marvel at these forms, and in this master class together, we enacted Duncan technique, studies and choreographies in order to be part of these shining exploits. We sought to body forth the ideals, values and principles that dwell within them and those who originally brought them to bear. We found the courage and creativity to grasp, interpret and express their eternal energies that include each one of us in their sweep. We engaged them not as dead copies or historical recreations, not as ballet modifications or Limon infusions - but as our own living treasures in direct descent. As we met in our nation’s capital for the first IDIS, may we have honored the great ones who have come before us and may we keep our eye on the constantly unchanging, to tap the “secret, middle place” of Duncan’s art for a living dialogue between soul and world.

# THE AESTHETICS OF FREE DANCE

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**Abstract:** This article focuses on the fundamental principles of free dance, its role and potential in personality development and the methods of teaching musical movement improvisation. Free dance is distinguished from traditional dance forms. Free dance practice is analyzed using the semiotic approach and the cultural and historic concept methodology. Answering the questions “What is free dance?” and “What type of activity does it represent?” we identify a specific nature of its goals, direction and inherent special aesthetics.

**Keywords:** free dance, aesthetics, dance history, Rudolf Steiner, Emile Jaques Dalcroze, Isadora Duncan, Constantin Stanislavski, Russian dance, Heptachor, improvisation, expression, psychology, art therapy, ballet

**Presentation Date:** Submitted as publication only

**Format:** Paper Submission

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## The Aesthetics of Free Dance

Free dance practices are born in a particular space, combining artistic goals and psychological development objectives at the interface of art and psychology, as well as art and pedagogy.

Such fundamental position allows us to see the place of free dance in culture and its role in the emergence of new synthetic languages, and to overcome gaps in the existing contraposition between scientific and artistic, personal and universal, didactics and creativity. The need for an approach revealing a person's creativity (prospective rather than individual approach to teaching) is becoming urgent. Not only to teach but also to develop, not only to select according to abilities and talents but also to discover and create conditions for their realization - a breakthrough in the 20th and the 21st century pedagogy. However, such pedagogy goes beyond common didactics and requires new ways of working, new relationships between the teacher and the student, new organizational forms; it is the highest art, literally. The founders of the free dance school such as Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, Isadora Duncan and others were genuine artists and at the same time created their artistic education system through rhythm, music, and dance. The unity of pedagogical, psychological and artistic problems in the evolution of free dance systems is illustrated by the activities of the leading representatives and founders of the free dance and musical movement school.

The rhythmic gymnastics of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze is widely known - the method helped shape musical performing skills and soon became a system of rhythmic education of the individual and a new artistic principle. Dalcroze's School in Hellerau embodied this holistic approach, in which the challenge of education, human development and art practice merged. Isadora Duncan's special mission was to create schools for children and to turn dance into a tool for educating the new person. She emphasized that through dance

practices and exercises, children gain the fundamentals of all other knowledge and get to know themselves. The psychological and pedagogical potential of Rudolf Steiner's eurhythmy was discovered in the anthroposophical Waldorf schools, as well as anthroposophical medicine and therapy; since its inception, eurhythmy has been viewed not only as a bright art practice but also as a method of psycho-spiritual development. In addition, its artistic value and value as an art form have been particularly emphasized.

The history of emergence of the Russian free dance schools and systems is interesting too. For example, speaking about the principles of admission to the Heptachor studio in the 1920s, S. D. Rudneva wrote in her memoirs:

“Most importantly, we were interested in their potential ability to dance, to express freely in movements their feelings elicited by music, their emotional responsiveness to music (rather than their looks or even motor capabilities). We also took into account their general personal qualities such as spontaneity, ability to work, enthusiasm. This reflected that (despite being fully oriented toward artistic musical movement and goal-oriented) we still viewed our work mainly from the standpoint of its human value, significance for the personality shaping, enrichment, ‘enlightenment’ necessary to create new life... Undoubtedly, it often impeded our subsequent work with those people, who were deeply committed to our idea but, for example, had no stage looks, etc.” (S. Rudneva, "Memories of a Happy Person," 2007, p. 308).

Free dance is a new type of art practice, where the subject matter of art is the human being and thus human identity and destiny.

The above statement puts free dance in a very special position, underlining that personal development is the primary and not secondary purpose of lessons and dance practice. Specifically, it implies changes in our understanding of the results, success criteria and the idea behind dance exercise. In the traditional approach, the result is created choreography as the “objectified” and fixed dance form, on the one hand, and the possibility of its precise performance and stage representation, on the other hand. When we say that the subject matter of art is human being, we imply that a student's progress and self-disclosure in dance gain paramount importance. The success criterion is measured by what extent the independent activity of each participant was awakened and psychological barriers and physical limitations were overcome. External unified standards of performance technique recede into the background, bringing to the forefront the ability to generate their own meaningful expressive movement (at varying levels of physical abilities). Focus on "personality" also implies the abandonment of competition and search for individual opportunities to manifest one's feelings in dance. The objectives of free dance (musical movement) practice are to reveal a person's individual image as expressed through movement rather than to demonstrate physical capabilities, to capture and to experience music in motion rather than to make externally preset motions. Creation of personality under the law of art is different from using art for the purposes of therapy and correcting emotional disorders (art therapy). First of all, such practices create an art form that reflects

a person's rise in the course of understanding music, giving birth to a gesture. An art form born in improvisation reflects a person's path of music comprehension and self-cognition, understanding and transforming the original emotional responses and messages. The transformation and deepening of feelings, the evolution and contradictory nature of actualized meanings are the content of the art form that crystallizes and evidences a person's path. Meanwhile, movement changes and transforms too: originating from everyday forms or impulsive emotional "emissions," it becomes a "dancing," musical, artistic movement; connects to experiencing space, time, and gravity and overcoming it in motion; in other words, movement turns into pure, abstract experiencing of existence.

Art form and movement are inherent in human-being, personal presence and inclusion. It reflects another facet of practice and the aesthetic program of free dance. A special quality of presence, existence brings free dance close to folk dance (as has been noticed since its inception) and, perhaps, with archaic, ritual dance.

The emergence of professional scenic dance and theater in ancient time was associated with losing its mysterial nature step by step and becoming conventional. Conventional and frivolous nature of what was happening on stage also manifested itself in the emerging culture of "mask," distinguished from the actor and the actor's personality. A mask could become a form without sensual and real life content, creating only the illusion of reality, hiding - and, by and large, ignoring - the actor's true face. Involvement in mummery put an actor, and all the more so a dancer, like a mime in the lowest position in social hierarchy. The situation started changing notably in the 20th century due to changes in the concept of theater, theater performance, professional dance and attitude to the actor's and dancer's personality. The Stanislavski system already offered a complex psychotechnique of play, when the actor uses intensely emotional memory to create a role and achieve genuine feelings on stage. The figure of the actor and, later, the director gains new meaning in the society, becoming influential and respected. One cannot overlook another (opposite, so to speak) trend - certain worsening of theatrical conventions all the way down to systematic destruction and reminder of the illusory nature of action and game (like Bertolt Brecht and others). Or intentional "depersonalization" of the theater and actor, who put on a mask, used special theatrical gestures and became a puppet (like Vsevolod Meyerhold, Gordon Craig, etc). The attempt to look deeply behind the conventions resulted in the loss or seductive abandonment of a person's individuality. As Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, the mystical world of Dionysus is a return to the "Mothers of Being," to the inmost "heart of things," the rejection of individuality. Dionysism suggests eternal life beyond ephemeral phenomena. Free dance was intended, in the opinion of its creators, to change the attitude toward dance and the dancer in the society. Return to "seriousness" was achieved by appealing to the mythological and mysterious origins of dance; however, an individual whose role rose so high, was becoming the conductor and embodiment of the mythological. Consequently, dance was turning into a personal statement, the boundary between role and personality was erasing; on the contrary, integrity, unity, and the merging between physical and spiritual, internal and external were sought in action and feeling.

The ballet, too, started experiencing new existence in dance: in Michel Fokine's opinion, dance should express the actor's spiritual state. Modern ballet touched on instinctive human impulses and tried to express them in dance. However, it is free dance that exists as a personal statement to the greatest extent, making the dancer not only a performer but also, generally speaking, a dance choreographer. A deeper look at the practice highlights the importance of the dancer's state of naked soul, without hypocrisy, the "no play" state of "conductor." A strange cultural metamorphosis is that in today's world a person experiences a feeling of being unreal, of playing a game in the social sphere that is in real life. Free dance, on the contrary, suggests that a person take off his social mask to find himself in the territory of genuine, to feel and to find his real self, to give up the game.

Finally, we would like to focus on the peculiarities of the free dance language but not on the more habitual aspect of changed movement repertoire (the use of more realistic, often everyday forms of movement, its natural, basic types); we would like to underline the special semiotic function and psychological role of expressive gesture-type movement in free dance.

However, we should start by identifying the special characteristics of dance movement as a sign. On the one hand, dance movement addresses the audience and is visually expressive; the dancer's body and motor apparatus become a "material" for dance aimed at creating a visual image. Dance movements of such type are characterized by visual expressiveness and completeness of a visual image; such gesture is thought of as existing on the body surface. Sign-image dominates the professional scenic dance, where it communicates certain artistic meanings and values. Analyzing the canon of dynamic contrast, Yevgheny Kharitonov compares it with the movement canons in which the body only symbolizes certain substance and content: "Typically, counterpose is missing in ecclesiastical medieval images - since the body is only viewed as a symbol of certain essence yet not in the sense of its own nature. The same is true of various scenic principles of plastics. The classical ballet canon took shape in the Baroque and Rococo traditions; the body is stretched and deformed to conform to certain idealized notions of beauty and symbolizes these ideas, dynamic contrast is not possible" (p. 65). Such principle applies not only to the dance culture but also, broadly, to the physical culture of society: "The military bearing demands - shoulders thrust back in a special manner, chest pushed out, chin up, frontal hand cue - bring the body closer to symmetry, as if symbolizing the simplest and clear type of order, as well as plastics still associated with the idea of good manners - absolutely straight body, as if corseted in one's mind's eye, elbows thrust back, strictly fixed hips, chin up high - symbolize certain class notions of dignity" (Yevgheny Kharitonov, "Tears in Flowers," V. 2, 1993, p. 64). Imitating something with his body, the dancing person changes psychologically too; he identifies himself (which does not happen in imagination) with what he represents: in this case with music, one way or another. In free dance, as in the original chaotic dance, gesture has an internal focus, serving as a tool for generating the dancing person's inner feeling. To understand the difference between various types of gestures, let us take the examples of representation and "imitation-based" approaches. If you are given the task to "represent a bird," your gesture must convincingly reproduce the

external characteristics of a bird's movements and body image. Trying to experience the flight with the help of movement is a totally different task - it could be a jump or simply fast running or just a soft sigh, or it could be lying on the floor. The dancing person's inner experience would be different. In case of representation, the dancing person can feel nothing but hard work of his muscles. In case of imitation, the dancing person experiences the state expressed in movement. There are numerous possible examples. Every time, the crucial difference is the difference between showing and becoming - a tree, a rock, a wave or wind, etc.

The question about the aesthetics of free dance can only be answered by understanding its specific creative tasks and language features. As mentioned above, emphasis shifts from the external, physical achievements in motion and the outward expression of the dance form to the dancing person's state and quality of presence in dance.

What matters is not virtuosity, as such, but the organic unity of internal content and external expression; the content and semantic dependence of a gesture gain paramount importance. In contrast to scenic dance, individual movement is aestheticized. Therefore, different levels of physical ability of dancing people and a variety of different body types are possible. Free dance, by contrast, expresses the inclination to perform a movement filled with inner content; the psychological component of movement is equally important as the physical external component; it is their unity that creates the phenomenon of "live" and "free" movement. The technique detached from meaningful free movement, from the generation of movement is denied. It gives the floor to work that regulates, to a given extent, the psychological aspect of movement and controls the human state, which requires a new structure of knowledge, new training techniques, and a new approach to training.

Summing it up, it is safe to say that free dance changes (but not cancels) the ideas of aesthetic, such that the aesthetic reality gains new dimensions and shapes. The new subject of perception is the human condition, the depth of penetration into music, the genuineness of expressed feelings, a somewhat transformed reality, yet not the reality of represented world but that of the action participant - the transfiguration of his soul, which is inseparable from the transformation of human body.



Figure 83. C.W. Gluck., *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Overture. Heptachor, studio of Musical Movement. Choreography by Aida Ailamazian. 2005. Photo by M. Burygin.



Figure 84. A. Scriabin, *Le Poeme de l'extase*. Choreography by Aida Ailamazian. Fifth International Moskovskoe Deistvo. Festival of Authentic Music and Theatre Art, 2005. Photo by Gortinskiy.



*Figure 85. A. Scriabin, Le Poeme de l'extase. Choreography by Aida Ailamazian. Fifth International Moskovskoe Deistvo. Festival of Authentic Music and Theatre Art, 2005. Photo by Gortinskiy.*



*Figure 86. Compositions to music by F. Schubert, C. Czerny. Choreography by Aida Ailamazian. 1998. Photo by Udov.*



*Figure 87. Compositions to music by F. Schubert, C. Czerny.  
Choreography by Aida Ailamazian. 1998. Photo by N. Tikhomirov.*



*Figure 88. C.W. Gluck, Orfeo ed Euridice, Overture. Heptachor, studio of Musical Movement.  
Choreography by Aida Ailamazian. 2005. Photo by M. Burygin.*



*Figure 89. C.W. Gluck, Orfeo ed Euridice, Overture. Heptachor, studio of Musical Movement. Choreography by Aida Ailamazian. 2005. Photo by M. Burygin.*

# MODERN ANCIENT DANCE

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**Abstract:** In this paper we speak about polyphony of human culture, which has a lot of voices and each voice has its echo in time and space. We discuss the phenomenon of free dance in this way. We take the *Heptachor* studio history as an example of Antiquity voice, which echoes nowadays and embodies in new forms.

**Keywords:** Free Dance, Heptachor, ancient dance, dance history

**Presentation Date:** Submitted as publication only

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## Modern Ancient Dance

I would like to speak about such an interesting cultural phenomenon as free dance. I mean that branch, which finds its source in Isadora Duncan's art. Even Isadora herself realized that her dance, which was called "Greek," had been born by American nature and the Pacific Ocean shores. So, what is it?

Creating a new human being (in spiritual sense) was a fantastic ideal of different art practices at the first quarter of the 20th century (in Russian culture this period is often called *The Silver Age*). At this point pedagogy and art cross and make a new form of work: it isn't simply a teaching practice or branch of art; an art is comprehended as a means of personal growth – it becomes a way of artistic formation of the person in its entirety (by lectures of A.M. Ailamazian). This program has been put into practice, but how?

In Russia there is an original method of teaching free dance and improvisation that is called *Musical Movement*. This method was originated by historical studio *Heptachor* (which means "seven dancers") in St. Petersburg at the beginning of the twentieth century. (It will celebrate its hundredth birthday soon.) Its appearance was inspired first by Isadora Duncan's tours in Russia, but from the very first days of its existence it became an original system, which worked with music and movement in a very particular way.

Historical *Heptachor* made a special training, which contains a lot of miniatures. Its musical and movement forms are based on entire inner image (as one of the *Heptachor* founders S.D. Rudneva wrote in her methodical texts). You shouldn't simple copy them, but you may have an emotional experience through these forms due to musical and movement unity in a profound sense.

Such work prepares your body and your soul; it makes you ready to give your *own* answer to the music. You become able to listen to whole music on the one hand (not only to its melody or rhythm or separate musical phrase, etc.) and to hear different nuances in music. On the other, you become able to comprehend the sense of music in its entire development

and to turn it into dance. The motion helps you to be attentive to the music and to enjoy it. So it's very important what kind of music you use: your dance is born from it. That's why collective improvisation is possible: we work together on one piece of music.

*Musical Movement* becomes a way of personality's transformation thanks to special comprehension of music and dance: psychological experiences are not only embodied in music and movement, but are converted into an art form (it is the main idea of *Psychology of Art* by L.S. Vygotsky). So it isn't just self-expression (it would be too easy), but the real (and hard!) artistic work. The other way around, an art doesn't only play with forms and technique, but it touches you personally. Thus, we are talking about particular *psychotechnics* of creative work in case of *Musical Movement*: improvisation becomes a way of creating an art form, and you may find a catharsis through it. Working on an art form, you're working on yourself. So the idea of psychophysical unity is realized through special comprehension of dance as the wholeness of music, movement and your soul. This is the quintessence of the *Musical Movement* method.

The system of *Musical Movement* is based on the main principles of free dance:

- no movement could be meaningless, but each gesture has its sense;
- any movement comes from the solar plexus, which is understood as a center of the entire movable body (Isadora Duncan remembered how she had been staying in an empty room and had been waiting for the first impulse of movement: she sensed it in the solar plexus);
- one movement engenders another one, so dance is a continuous motion that acquires a special quality of fluidity – with pauses but without stops and breaks;
- the principle of dynamic (unstable) equilibrium means that the center of gravity is movable, so you always are ready to move in any direction;
- verticality in your body is comprehended as a symbol of your spiritual aspiration (as opposed to verticality deviation in some other dance practices);
- the principle of contraposition means that different parts of the body are dynamically organized in relation to each other (as opposed to static symmetrical fixation in more tough system of movement): the dancing body is harmoniously organized by interacting axes;
- breathing (“breathness” would be more precise) as a particular artistic quality of every movement (it means that you breathe not only for transporting an oxygen to the cells and dispatching carbon dioxide back from it, but your breathing turns into special expressive means).

These principles of movement are described by S.D. Rudneva in her methodical notes and by A.M. Ailamazian in the book *The Dancing Practices: Semiotics, Psychology, Culture*, (Moscow 2012).

I would like to clarify that these principles are relevant to that branch of free dance, which springs from Isadora Duncan's creative work. On the contrary, German expressionistic

dance exploits other principles of free dance: one movement results in another – but in a very strange and impulsive mode (the movement is polycentric, the vertical line is broken). Loss of physical balance in the movement turns into disequilibrium in your soul. As a result, such dance gives you an impression of something destructive in the world, a sense of collapse and discord.

We can find most of the afore-cited principles in the Ancient Greek sculpture (L.D. Mendeleeva-Blok, P.D. Volkova, A.M. Ailamazian point it out). It's very interesting that hereafter some of these antique principles of motion have been cultivated in different ways. So, for example, the basis of the classical dance school is vertical organization of the body. It's one of the main principles of classical ballet, which was inherited from Antiquity (the evolution of professional dance technique was systematically retraced by L.D. Mendeleeva-Blok<sup>21</sup> in her great research work *Classical Dance: the History and the Contemporaneity*, Moscow 1987). The idea of verticality has a special sense; it is not just a technical point: the great Russian ballerina Uliana Lopatkina has said about it that it is like Ascension (that's why the classical ballet is danced on tips of the toes! It isn't just a physical effort – it's a requirement of the dancing soul). So we can see that free dance and classical ballet are not so far from each other as we think about it out of habit: both of them trace their roots back to Antiquity. But the ballet verticality has a very strict fixation in different attitudes, which has no fluidity – such an important quality of free movement.

The reformer of classical ballet Michel Fokine wrote in his book *Against the Stream* about Isadora Duncan's art and about those who shared her ideas: "A barefoot dancer has a very good side. At the bare foot it is impossible to spin, to jump on your toes etc. That's why the path of technical difficulties, tricks and everything which often brings dance more to sport than to art is cut off for the dancer who took off the shoes. In this case the dancer is to seek for one thing: the beauty" (M.M. Fokin, *Against the Stream*, Leningrad 1981, p. 299).

*Musical Movement* as a peculiar method tries to seek for the beauty in its own way: it gives rise to a new theatrical genre – vocal and plastic action ("deistvo" in Russian; it was created by *Heptachor* with its artistic directors Aida Ailamazian and Maria Ganeshina). Such performances come into being during joint dancing improvisation, which follows the music. The method of *Musical Movement* is the main instrument of creative work; it helps to find the proper artistic form. Of course, the director's work has a place – especially if we speak about public performance. But the principal feature of the *Heptachor's* spectacles is that they aren't invented by anybody but are born from music by common physical, mental and emotional efforts; so each participant is a co-author, which means especial mode of existence on the stage.

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She was the daughter of the great Russian chemist D.I. Mendeleev, the wife of the famous Russian poet A.A. Blok and the outstanding historian of dance theater herself.

*Heptachor's* spectacles have been played on different stages, but the ancient scene of the Chersonese amphitheater was the right place for such performances. Why? *Heptachor* didn't reconstruct the ancient Greek theater; it's impossible (L.D. Mendeleeva-Blok pointed that *we would never know what it had been in reality*). We don't know ancient Greek music, in fact, but the ancient Greeks left one of the most enigmatic myths to us – the myth of Orpheus, about the mysterious nature of music and its power. We may say that this myth finds an embodiment in the whole history of the European classical music (by lectures of A.M. Ailamazian). So the music that is used in *Heptachor's* spectacles is from other epochs (usually it is classical music; rarely – some modern compositions). The forms of theatrical action are also another (*it isn't ancient Greek tragedy or comedy*). So there is nothing literally Antique, but the ancient amphitheater is that place where *Heptachor's* spectacles are played absolutely as on its “native” stage. So, why? Free dance and free voice meet with the architectural space of the amphitheater and the nature itself responds to spirit of music and performance. That is the answer. So we may state a very interesting cultural fact: something absolutely new and modern is originated in ancient days; the spirit of the bygone epoch revives nowadays in new forms.

This paper is called “Modern Ancient Dance” for two reasons: 1) *Heptachor* appeals to Antiquity, to its ideals and aesthetics – that's why it is an *ancient* dance; 2) but *Musical Movement* is certainly *modern* dance because it appeared in the twentieth century, so it carries many features of the epoch.

*Heptachor* (and *Musical Movement* as its special method of work) is a baby of *Antiquity* and *Nowadays*. The genre of vocal and plastic action *is* in tune with the times – but it *springs from Antiquity, from our dream about Antiquity* (by lectures of P.D. Volkova). However seriously we studied vase painting and sculpture, we cannot know how ancient Greeks danced – we may only imagine it or create it again. Isadora's dancing is such re-creation – recreation, but not reconstruction (A.A. Puzirey), it's only a dream about Ancient Greece, harmonious human and world – not more, but not less. It's an idea – idea of *kalokagathia* (Ancient Greek καλοκαγαθία), which revives nowadays. What is it? Polyphony of human culture (M.M. Bachtin), close echo of distant voices.

## Appendix I

### Session Schedule

Isadora Duncan International Symposium  
The George Washington University  
Washington, DC  
June 16-18, 2013

#### Sunday, June 16, 2013

10am-12pm	Registration	
12-12:30pm	Welcome Session	
12:30-12:45pm	Break	
12:45-2:15pm	"Duncan's Core Threaded into Contemporary Work" Workshop/Master Class	Beth Jucovy
12:45-2:15pm	"The Essential Isadora: Finding the Inherent Characteristics of Isadora's Technique" Presentation and Group Discussion	Valerie Durham
2:15-2:30pm	Break	
2:30-4pm	"I Always Dance the Chorus" Workshop/Master Class	Alice Bloch
2:30-4pm	"Exploring the Role of the Solar Plexus in Duncan Dance" Workshop/Master Class	Laura Pravitz
4-4:15pm	Break	
4:15-5:45pm	"Teaching Isadora's Art: Best Practices from Creativity and Experience" Duncan Dance Education Panel	Alice Bloch Valerie Durham (moderator) Beth Jucovy Janaea Rose Lyn Adrienne Ramm Andrea Seidel
5:45-7pm	Dinner Break	
7-8:30pm	"She Lives Among Us" - Invoking the Dancer of the Future .Duncan Dance as Sacred Movement Ceremony. Workshop/Master Class	Paola Blanton
7-8:30pm	"Contemporary Duncan" Workshop/Master Class	Meg Brooker Julia Pond

#### Monday, June 17, 2013

7:30-8:45am	"Body Conditioning for Barefoot Dancers" Workshop	Jennifer Sprowl
9-10:30am	"Dancing Duncan: The Art and Soul of Isadora in the 21st Century" Workshop/Master Class	Andrea Seidel
9-10:30am	"Why Are You Dancing? Exploring Intention as a Foundational Concept of the Duncan Dance" Workshop/Master Class	Janaea Rose Lyn

10:30-10:45am	Break	
10:45-12:15pm	"The Healing Art of Isadora's Dance: Therapeutic Modalities in Duncan Dance" Dance Therapy/Healing Practices in Duncan Dance Panel Discussion	Pattee Russell Curry Marybeth Hraniotis Dicki Johnson Macy Laura Pravitz Jennifer Sprowl (moderator)
12:15-1:30pm	Lunch Break	
1:30-3pm	"Musicality and the Line" Workshop/Master Class	Lori Belilove
1:30-3pm	"Sun Dancer: Duncan Dance as Sacred Dance" Presentation	Pattee Russell-Curry
3-3:15pm	Break	
3:15-4:45pm	"The Dance of the Future: New Visions of Duncan-based Performance" New Choreography & Theater Panel Discussion	Jeanne Bresciani Catherine Gallant Rachel Herzog Julia Pond Elyssa Rosenberg Cynthia Word (moderator)
4:45-5pm	Break	
5-6pm	"Issues of the Field" General Session	Peter Di Muro (guest moderator)
6-7:30pm	Dinner Break	
7:30-9pm	"Dances by Isadora: Technique to Choreography" Workshop/Master Class	Catherine Gallant
9-9:30pm	Memorial Tribute to Sylvia Gold	
<b>Tuesday, June 18, 2013</b>		
7:30-8:45am	"The Alchemy of Dance: Self-Care for Dancers" Workshop	Marybeth Hraniotis
9-10:30am	"Duncan Meets Dalcroze: Together Again!"	Monica Dale
9-10:30am	"Moving Beyond Duncan with Duncan: Dance in Relation to Theater Now" Presentation	Word Dance Theater (Cynthia Word, Ingrid Zimmer)
10:30-10:45am	Break	
10:45-12:15pm	"Singing the Steps: Remembering Anita Zahn's Duncan Pedagogy for Children" Workshop/Master Class	Dicki Johnson Macy
10:45-12:15pm	"Renaissance of a Legacy" Workshop/Master Class	Adrienne Ramm
12:15-1:30pm	Lunch Break	
1:30-3:30pm	"Understanding Isadora Through the Past" Historical Research Joint Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical Archival Video from Hortense Kooluris and Julia Levien</li> <li>• Noyes Rhythm as a Related Discipline</li> <li>• "La Belle Epoch"</li> <li>• "A Postcard from Paris: An Artist in Residence at the Akademia of Raymond Duncan"</li> <li>• Historical Archival Video and Teaching Technique from Anna Duncan and Julia Levien</li> <li>• "Unpublished Memoirs of Isadora Duncan from Forgotten Soviet Writer Fabin Garin"</li> </ul>	Lori Belilove Meg Brooker Pamela de Fina Janaea Rose Lyn Adrienne Ramm Elena Yushkova Ingrid Zimmer (moderator)
3:30-3:45pm	Break	

3:30-5:30pm	"Diaghilev & The Ballets Russes: When Art Danced with Music" Exhibition and Tour at the National Gallery of Art	
3:45-5:15pm	"Isadora and the Eternal Ideal in Art" Workshop/Master Class	Jeanne Bresciani
3:45-5:15pm	"A Conversation Space" Open Discussion	
5:15-5:30pm	Break	
5:30-6:30pm	"In Honor of Our Teachers" Concluding Session	
7:00pm	Celebratory Reception Gathering (Fortuny Room, Lombardy Hotel, 2019 Pennsylvania Ave) Light Refreshments \$10 per person	

## Appendix II

### Workshop Descriptions

#### Isadora Duncan International Symposium

The George Washington University

Washington, DC

June 16-18, 2013

Sunday, June 16, 2013

*Sunday, 12:45-2:15pm*

“Duncan’s Core Threaded into Contemporary Work” Workshop/Master Class by Beth Jucovy

How can Duncan dance be incorporated into contemporary classes and into choreography?

Predicated on the belief that there is a strong need and strong place for Duncan’s view of the art of dance in the contemporary dance world, this workshop and master class will demonstrate ways in which the technique is incorporated in both classical and contemporary dance classes. The session will include a section of a piece of Jucovy’s own choreography that uses many aspects of the technique and demonstrates how Duncan dance can inform a contemporary dance work. Lastly, the workshop will help participants to explore ways in which to integrate Duncan concepts, technique and aesthetics into their own dance traditions. Some of these concepts include movement coming from the center and radiating outwards, the sensitivity to the nuances of the music, the idea of that every movement has meaning and the harmony of the entire body while moving.

*Sunday, 12:45-2:15pm*

“The Essential Isadora: Finding the Inherent Characteristics of Isadora’s Technique” Presentation by Valerie Durham with Group Discussion

This presentation will explore the integral qualities of the Isadora Duncan technique and philosophy of dance based on Valerie Durham’s 2012 thesis project, *In/And/Of/Through* at the University of Maryland. Through ancient artwork from various world cultures, housed at the Freer/Sackler Galleries of the Smithsonian, the presentation will trace the ways in which these integral qualities in technique and philosophy can be applied to diverse aesthetic forms. The presentation will conclude with a group discussion of the essential qualities valued by the Duncan practitioners present.

*Sunday, 2:30-4pm*

“I Always Dance the Chorus” Workshop/Master Class by Alice Bloch

Isadora’s statement, “When I have danced I have tried always to be the Chorus...I have never once danced a solo” (*The Art of the Dance*, p 96), infuses her technique and pedagogy with a democratic sensibility that radically opposed the dance of her day. Isadora’s practice of experiencing dance as communal imbues her movement and shaped how it is taught. This workshop begins with a discussion of Duncan’s philosophy and how it shaped her educational theories and technique as it has come down to us today. Participants then learn characteristic movements like the “Universe,” and explore how her use of the solar plexus, gravity, wave forms, and counterbalance contributes to her technique’s warm-heartedness. These experiences will be compared to movements and classroom structures from other dance styles, such as ballet *port de bras* and Limon swings. Finally, participants will learn group patterns that exemplify the democratic essence of Duncan’s dance.

*Sunday, 2:30-4pm*

“Exploring the Role of the Solar Plexus in Duncan Dance” Workshop/Master Class by Laura Pravitz

The solar plexus operates as central and key to our Duncan dance. It unites our movement and serves as stationmaster, transmitting, regulating and managing the cycle of our expression and self-renewal. It is also our hearth and home, where we return to take stock, stoke our fire and replenish. Our moods, imaginings, and intentions radiate from and return there, giving to our dance its particular quality of continuity and fecundity. The solar plexus also grows the ineffable quality of unification that we see and feel in Duncan dancing through a play between shadow and light. This movement workshop will explore the teaching of Isadora’s wonderful discovery, seeking to unpack and unravel its mystery and relevance through the lens of Laban Movement Analysis, the Dionysian, and natural form.

*Sunday, 4:15-5:45pm*

“Teaching Isadora’s Art: Best Practices from Creativity and Experience” Duncan Dance Education Panel. Moderated by Valerie Durham with Panelists: Alice Bloch, Beth Jucovy, Janaea Rose Lyn, Adrienne Ramm, Andrea Seidel

This panel discussion will explore the roots and essential aspects of Duncan Dance education, as well as the development of effective practices, stemming from teachers’ experience and creativity in teaching Duncan technique to children and adults.

*Sunday, 7-8:30pm*

“She Lives Among Us” – Invoking the Dancer of the Future. Duncan Dance as Sacred Movement Ceremony. Workshop/Master Class by Paola Blanton

This is a workshop featuring movement sequences from the Duncan repertory, arranged as a ceremony invoking the Dancer of the Future. The ceremony’s story is the journey of Modern Woman and her search for higher meaning. Paying homage to our Teacher, Isadora Duncan, we contact her wisdom through practicing her movements and philosophy. But at the same time, we reach for her vision, the Dancer of the Future – the ultimate merging of soul, mind, and body. We continue her story through consciously communing with the Dancer of the Future, seeking to bring Her presence among us and interpreting what that may mean to us, to our communities, to the world, and to the Universe. An open-ended narrative guides the experience, with room for improvisation and personal interpretation.

*Sunday, 7-8:30pm*

“Contemporary Duncan” Workshop/Master Class by Meg Brooker and Julia Pond

Training in Duncan’s classical modern dance technique and studying her repertory of dance gems is an invaluable experience for any student of modern dance. Duncan’s dance art is honored as a historic movement practice. Yet, for many, the interest stops there—Duncan’s repertory has a reputation for being valued as historical dance artifact. But where does that leave those who practice and perform her work? How does Duncan’s classical modern dance technique translate into a landscape of contemporary modern dance? In our Contemporary Duncan workshop, we will explore the following questions: Where does the impulse for expression originate, and what are its essential elements in Duncan technique? What if you take away the Greek shapes and move with just solar plexus? Can Duncan’s movement vocabulary be adapted and modernized? The class will begin with Julia Pond teaching a structured Duncan technique for the 21st century. Meg will approach the work improvisationally. Both seek a purity of intention and expression, a way to express the Duncan technique for our times.

Monday, June 17, 2013

*Monday, 7:30-8:45am*

“Body Conditioning for Barefoot Dancers” Master Class by Jennifer Sprowl

This 75-minute lecture/practical presentation will educate the dancer in specific exercises for strength development, stability, flexibility and injury prevention. The material stems from Physical

Therapy and Active-Isolated Stretching/Strengthening (AISS). The focus will be on feet, ankles, and calves as well as the back, quadriceps and hips.

*Monday, 9-10:30am*

“Dancing Duncan: The Art and Soul of Isadora in the 21st Century” Workshop/Master Class by Andrea Seidel

The goal of this presentation is to explain and demonstrate methodologies for the contemporary teaching of Duncan technique and repertory. While the methods seek to maintain the integrity of the style as transmitted through subsequent generations over the past 100 years, they also explore and integrate 21st century strategies that ultimately create luminous, radiant performances that resonate with enhanced relevance for contemporary dancers and audiences. The methodology to be presented emphasizes the cultivation of a clear sense of the authentic, contemporary dancing Self through the development of emotional integrity, spiritual presence, self-awareness, and deep mindfulness. These qualities are taught within the historical/social/narrative context of each specific dance and are integrated with improvisational exercises that foster musicality, dramatic ability, and other essential technical and performance skills relevant to Duncan dance. The methodology draws deeply on “psycho-spiritual” techniques that access the deeper layers of the psyche and the mind/body connection integral to creating authenticity in Duncan performance. The presentation also includes strategies for creating a nurturing dancing environment and sense of community that transcends the often-prevalent sense of competition, self-negation, and conflict that undermines the development of a true sense of ensemble. The presentation includes a narrative lecture, DVD clips, and a workshop component that will directly demonstrate the instructional principles and techniques. The presenter draws upon over thirty years teaching Duncan dance as a company artistic director, as well as upon 22 years of teaching in a variety of discrete academic departments and disciplines.

*Monday, 9-10:30am*

“Why Are You Dancing? Exploring Intention as a Foundational Concept of the Duncan Dance” Workshop/Master Class by Janaea Rose Lyn

This dance-based class will focus on Duncan’s philosophy, technique and movement vocabulary as a teaching tool for enhancing dynamic quality and expressivity in contemporary dancers of all styles. It will help educators connect the relevance of Duncan work to other dance forms through its foundational application of intention, directly informing the clarity of the resulting movements and enhancing the presence and power of the performer.

*Monday, 10:45am-12:15pm*

“The Healing Art of Isadora’s Dance: Therapeutic Modalities in Duncan Dance” Panel. Moderated by Jennifer Sprowl with Panelists: Pattee Russell Curry, Marybeth Hraniotis, Dicki Johnson Macy, Laura Pravitz

This panel will engage in an indepth discussion concerning the psychological, physiological and musculoskeletal facilitation in healing mind/body for Duncan dancers. Additionally, panelists will share their experiences and knowledge of how Duncan dance has been beneficial, instrumental or informative in their work in Dance Therapy and other therapeutic modalities.

*Monday, 1:30-3pm*

“Musicality and the Line” Workshop/Master Class by Lori Belilove

This master class will focus on the spirit and the clarity of the classwork, specifically through the internal purity of intention to discover the exact line of the body within the technique. Additionally, the class will focus on the use of musicality within the technique and choreography. Starting with an overview about Duncan’s work, what is known and unknown, followed by a demonstration of a class utilizing the lesson plan booklets and examples of the Duncan plie, barre work, porte de bras, use of the torso, and the locomotion steps found in the Duncan waltz, polka, skips and flying jumps, followed by a performance of one or two of her dances, the class will close with a dialogue on the challenges of teaching Isadora Duncan dance to today’s youth.

*Monday, 1:30-3pm*

“Sun Dancer: Duncan Dance as Sacred Dance” Presentation by Pattee Russell-Curry

This presentation will begin with a discussion of Russell-Curry’s entry into Duncan dance through a liturgical dance troupe that was informed by Duncan dance through the lineage of West Coast Duncan dancers influenced by dancers at The Temple of Wings in Berkeley, as well as Mignon Garland, Lori Belilove and others. Duncan dance lends itself beautifully to the ecstatic lift of the ribcage up into the heavens, eliciting a spiritual experience of ecstasy. The Sun Dancers was a liturgical Sacred Dance Troupe based in Tiburon, Marin County, CA during the 1980s. They danced at the Community Congregational Church (CCC) in an alternative open space with art all around, or outside on their lawn overlooking the Sausalito harbor. The troupe performed environmental pieces in community venues and participated in the Harmonic Convergence observed on Mt. Tamalpais. Dancers were pictured in Newsweek’s Year in Pictures. Annah McCluskey, director, was formerly with the San Francisco Dionysian Dancers. Her beautiful Duncan essence informed,

guided, and inspired original choreographies crafted for worship meditation, and honoring the earth. Her Goddess Series was a women's healing retreat using Duncan dance in self-discovery.

*Monday, 3:15-4:45pm*

"The Dance of the Future: New Visions for Duncan-based Performance." New Choreography and Theater Panel Discussion. Moderated by Cynthia Word with Panelists: Jeanne Bresciani, Catherine Gallant, Rachel Herzog, Julia Pond, Elyssa Rosenberg

This panel discussion will begin with a short statement from each of the panel participants regarding how they are attempting to infuse the Duncan technique and philosophy into contemporary choreography. The moderator will then ask the panelists specific questions to which they can respond and react. Lastly we will invite the audience to provide questions/comments for the panelists.

*Monday, 5-6pm*

"Issues of the Field" General Session Discussion. Moderated by Peter Di Muro

A general discussion of important challenges facing the field of Duncan dance, such as the responsibility of passing on dances and technique, the process and accessibility of archival material, the reputation and relevancy of the Duncan technique within the larger dance community, the outreach to other dance genres with similar philosophic and practical approaches, as well as the inclusion of men into the Duncan community. Moderated by Peter Di Muro, this group discussion hopes to identify challenges, share ideas and experiences, work toward solutions, establish best practices, and broaden the accessibility and success of Duncan dance as a dance form.

*Monday, 7:30-9pm*

"Dances by Isadora: Technique to Choreography" Workshop Followed by Choreography Showing by Catherine Gallant

This session includes a 45-minute participatory workshop led by Catherine Gallant and Loretta Thomas followed by a 45-minute presentation of new stagings from the repertoire of Isadora Duncan and recent choreography by artistic director Catherine Gallant. Through introductory exercises and improvisation we will explore our dancing through inquiry. What is Duncan technique? How does the Duncan technique support other movement vocabularies? What innovations support development of the technique for contemporary students and choreographers? Using thematic and kinesthetic content of an original work of Duncan, the first half of our presentation will culminate in a group dance-making experience. Time will be allocated for analysis

and discussion. The second half of the session is a presentation of new stagings of selected Duncan repertoire along with recent contemporary works by choreographer Catherine Gallant.

*Monday, 9-9:30pm*

Memorial Tribute to Sylvia Gold

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

*Tuesday, 7:30-8:45am*

“The Alchemy of Dance: Self-Care for Dancers” Workshop by Marybeth Hraniotis

This interactive, experiential and informative workshop will explore the ways in which dancer/athletes can train, hone, and care for themselves. Dancers at any age are at risk for injuries due to long rehearsal hours, performance schedules and the normal wear and tear from the technical discipline/genre to which they are attuned. In this workshop we will discuss techniques that support recuperative work to maintain strength and flexibility “from the inside out,” thus gaining an experience of the dancer to connect back to the core still-point of neutral. The methods we will be accessing are The Alexander Technique and GeoSpatial™.

*Tuesday, 9-10:30am*

“Duncan Meets Dalcroze: Together Again!” Workshop by Monica Dale

There’s no clear evidence that Isadora Duncan and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze ever met, although they share much commonality. They were contemporaries in Europe; their stated philosophies overlap; their visual aesthetic was similar, right down to the togas; and they both sensed deeply the connection of movement and music. But while Duncan was a dancer with an innate sense of music, Jaques-Dalcroze was a musician translating music to movement. If only they had connected in person! In this workshop, we’ll create a new connection and expand possibilities with a view toward the modernism that followed Duncan and Dalcroze.

*Tuesday, 9-10:30am*

“Moving Beyond Duncan with Duncan: Dance in Relation to Theater Now” Presentation by Word Dance Theater (Cynthia Word and Ingrid Zimmer)

Using a combination of video footage and commentary, Cynthia Word and Ingrid Zimmer will discuss Word Dance Theater’s model for incorporating dance, story, and music into multi-media theatrical experiences that present Duncan’s original dances as well as new Duncan-inspired

choreography in contexts that illuminate the dances in new ways and introduce Duncan to new audiences. Presentation will include time for discussion between audience and presenters.

*Tuesday, 10:45-12:15pm*

“Singing the Steps: Remembering Anita Zahn’s Duncan Pedagogy for Children” Workshop/Master Class by Dicki Johnson Macy

This workshop will bring to our Duncan attention one of the heritage’s unsung and devoted heroes: Anita Zahn, one of the German students of Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan, who established the American branch of the Elizabeth Duncan School in New York in 1924. Hortense Kooluris and, later, Jeanne Bresciani and Dicki Johnson Macy were among her many students. Elizabeth was considered to have concretized the Duncan pedagogy for children and maintained Isadora’s school in her absence. Anita carried with her that pedagogy. Dicki has developed a curriculum based on Anita’s teaching for children aged two years to young adult. She has continued to teach children of all ages, both abled and disabled, for 25 years. Dicki has also adapted the Duncan work to address the needs of children and adults who have been physically, emotionally, and environmentally violated. Her work is internationally recognized. In this workshop she will share, via experiential, didactic, and film presentation, a representation of this children’s curriculum.

*Tuesday, 10:45am-12:15pm*

“Renaissance of a Legacy” Workshop/Master Class with Adrienne Ramm

The Dancer of the Future is one who discovers inherent harmony and can express the shared essence of all humanity. Having had the good fortune to have trained exclusively in the Duncan legacy her entire life by her mentors Julia Levien, Anna Duncan, and Hortense Kooluris, Adrienne will focus on demonstrating the pure style and classical line of Isadora’s timeless Art. With music and images being the inspiration, classroom exercises, mythological and archetypical explorations will provide participants a wonderful connection of mind, body, and spirit. Focus will be on movement originating from the solar plexus and radiating upward and outward. The workshop may be followed with a showing of rare video footage of Anna Duncan teaching young students, including this presenter, and clips from memorial tributes to Julia Levien and Hortense Kooluris, “Celebrating a Legacy,” during the lunch break that follows.

*Tuesday, 1:30-3:30pm*

“Understanding Isadora through the Past” Historical Research Joint Session. Moderated by Ingrid Zimmer

- Historical Archival Video from Hortense Kooluris and Julia Levien/Lori Belilove
- “Moving in Context: Duncan Contemporaries Florence Noyes & Stephanie Rudneeva”/Meg Brooker
- “La Belle Epoch”/Pamela de Fina
- “A Postcard from Paris: Artist in Residence at the Akademia Raymond Duncan”/Janaea Rose Lyn
- Historical Archival Video and Teaching Technique from Anna Duncan, Hortense Kooluris, and Julia Levien/Adrienne Ramm
- “Unpublished Memoirs of Isadora Duncan from Forgotten Soviet Writer Fabian Garin” /Elena Yushkova

This joint session offers multiple presentations from a range of perspectives to address Isadora Duncan’s life and work through archival materials and scholarly research.

*Tuesday, 3:30-5:30pm*

“Diaghilev & The *Ballets Russes*: When Art Danced with Music” Exhibition and Tour at the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

This tour of the beautiful exhibit, featuring costumes, artwork, scenery, video footage, props and much more, explores the dynamic and impressive *Ballets Russes* dance company, which Isadora Duncan helped to inspire after her first tour of Russia in 1904. Her performances there launched the dance revolution by the likes of Michel Fokine, Anna Pavlova, Vaslav Nijinsky and many others. We will receive a private guided tour of the exhibit by National Gallery lecturer David Gariff. The group will travel via Metro together for a tour of the exhibition, and return for the concluding session at 5:30pm. See more information about the exhibit [here](#).

*Tuesday, 3:45-5:15pm*

“Isadora and the Eternal Ideal in Art” Workshop/Master Class by Jeanne Bresciani

*“To me there is no past or future in art. If a work of art cannot live always in the present, it must not be considered at all. The art of the Greeks, of the Egyptians, of the great painters who lived in other times, is not an art of the past; perhaps it is more alive today than it ever was.”—Pablo Picasso 1923*

The above resounds the influence of Isadora Duncan as dynamic catalyst on the arts and artists of her time, and ever after, while echoing the dancer’s famous statement from 1902. In it, Duncan compared, to our ceaseless inspiration – “the dancer of the future” to the Egyptian, the Greek and the Italian, at the same time that she called for the “highest intelligence in the freest body.” Like Duncan, Picasso had inveighed upon both art and culture to wield the power and the portent of eternal forms and remake the art people saw, heard and touched the world in which they lived. But

Duncan had come first – and as if thrice born – seemed to have walked across Egypt’s rolling sands, upon Attica’s ancient threshing floors, through the canvases of Botticelli, into present time. Today we meet to marvel at these forms, and in this master class together, we will enact Duncan technique, studies and choreographies in order to be part of these shining exploits. We will seek to body forth the ideals, values and principles that dwell within them and those that originally brought them to bear. We will find the courage and creativity to grasp, interpret and express their eternal energies that include each one of us in their sweep. We will engage them not as dead copies or historical recreations, not as ballet modifications or Limon infusions – but as our own living treasures in direct descent. So as we meet in our nation’s capital for the first IDIS, may we honor the great ones who have come before us and keep our eye on the constantly unchanging, to tap the “secret, middle place” of Duncan’s art for a living dialogue between soul and world.

*Tuesday, 3:45-5:15pm*

“A Conversation Space”

Participants and presenters will have the opportunity to meet, network, talk, and explore possible collaborations, and follow-up on session discussions and experiences.

*Tuesday, 5:30-6:30pm*

“In Honor of Our Teachers” Concluding Session

*Tuesday, 7:00pm*

Celebratory Reception Gathering

Fortuny Room, Lombardy Hotel, 2019 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington DC

Light Refreshments and *hors d’Oeuvres*

\$10 contribution per person is requested

RSVP by Thursday, June 13 via email: [info@duncansymposium.com](mailto:info@duncansymposium.com)

*Underwritten in part by the Bernstein Foundation and the Isadora Duncan International Symposium*

## Appendix III

### Presenter Biographies

#### Isadora Duncan International Symposium

The George Washington University  
Washington, DC  
June 16-18, 2013

#### Lori Belilove



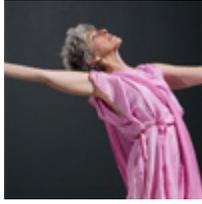
Lori Belilove's direct lineage and prestigious performing career have earned her an international reputation as the premier interpreter and ambassador of the dance of Isadora Duncan. She has been hailed as "...one of the most impassioned and authentic Duncan interpreters around" (Janice Ross, of the *Oakland Tribune*). Through her performances, master classes and workshops, children, college students and professional dancers have experienced the purity, timelessness, authentic phrasing and musicality that have been passed down to Lori through the direct line of Isadora Duncan dancers. Among her first Duncan teachers were second-generation Duncan dancers Julia Levien, Hortense Kooluris and Mignon Garland. She was coached for performance and technique by first-generation Duncan dancers Anna Duncan and Irma Duncan, two of the six adopted artistic daughters of Isadora, also known as the Isadorables. Lori received a B.F.A. in dance, religion, and classical studies from Mills College. She maintains a studio, school, and internationally renowned professional dance company in New York City and is considered an important source for the documentation and interpretation of the Duncan technique and repertory. In 2010 Lori was the recipient of the Mills College Distinguished Achievement Award.

#### Paola Blanton



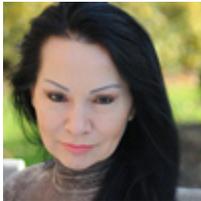
Rooted in Balkan ethnicity and dance, Paola Blanton works with her Macedonian culture in a yearly festival. She delved into an intensive study of Oriental Dance in 1992, in search of feminine fluidity and lyrical musicality. In 2004, she was led to Isadora Duncan by her desire to delve more deeply into the sacred nature of the body and the Dance. A trip to Delphi, Greece to learn from Jeanne Bresciani in 2005 began her journey in Duncan dance. She subsequently became a student of Lori Belilove for several seasons and now teaches Duncan dance in São Paulo, Brazil.

### **Alice Bloch**



Alice Bloch has a doctorate in dance history from Temple University and a choreographic MA from UCLA. She is a nationally recognized specialist in the historic modern dancer, Isadora Duncan, and has written on Duncan for *Dance Magazine*. She collaborates with Rumi scholar Dr. Fatemeh Keshavarz in peace-themed performances, and has presented her choreography throughout the United States and at the Gerard Manley Hopkins Festival, Ireland. Alice is a board member of the Missouri Dance Organization and Missouri Alliance for Arts in Education, and a specialist in dance for seniors. She adjuncts in Duncan dance and dance history at Washington University and the University of Missouri, St Louis.

### **Jeanne Bresciani**



Jeanne Bresciani, hailed as “the foremost interpreter of Duncan’s work,” “the divine in motion” and “the keeper of the Duncan flame,” is the only dancer performing today who combines the Isadora Duncan theatrical lineage: directly from Maria-Theresa Duncan; from Anna and Irma Duncan indirectly through Hortense Kooluris and Julia Levien; and from Elizabeth Duncan’s pedagogical lineage via childhood study and adult internship with Anita Zahn. Bresciani, recognized internationally as solo artist, educator and Duncan scholar of great authority, has served since 1987 as Artistic Director and Director of Education for the Isadora Duncan International Institute, Inc., founded by Maria-Theresa Duncan and Kay Bardsley. The IDII, celebrating its 35th Anniversary this 2012 – 2013 season, is based at the historic home of Modern Dance in America, The Harkness Dance Center of the 92nd Street Y in New York City; at IDII’s, Tempio di danza, in High Falls, NY; and at the Skidmore College Department of Dance – where among these sites Bresciani leads three original programs in the art, education and foundations of Isadora Duncan dance and directs the performing company Jeanne Bresciani and the Isadora Duncan International Institute Dancers.

### **Meg Brooker** (*IDIS Organizing Committee*)



Meg Brooker, Artistic Director of Thel Dance Theatre, Founder of MB Arts, and “Texas’ leading Duncan scholar” (Nancy Wozny, Culture Map Houston) danced original Isadora Duncan repertory with Lori Belilove & Company, resident performing company of the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation. Meg has performed original Duncan repertory and new choreography in Duncan technique nationally and internationally in Russia, Ukraine, and Italy. Meg is also a certified teacher of Noyes Rhythm, and she draws on these natural dance techniques to create contemporary work. Meg has taught dance for students of all ages and abilities in public schools, private studios, summer camps, international festivals, and colleges and universities. She has served on the

faculties of several studios in New York and Texas, including the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation, the School at Steps on Broadway, and Tapestry Dance Academy. Under the mentorship of Lori Belilove and Cherlyn Smith, she earned her Basic Certification in Isadora Duncan dance studies in 2005, and she completed her Advanced Studies project in 2006. Meg is also a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT) and an active dance writer and scholar; she earned an MFA in Performance as Public Practice from UT Austin and a BA in Theatre Studies from Yale.

### **Pattee Russell-Curry**



Pattee Russell-Curry: B.A. Women's P.E. Dance: Dance Therapy Emphasis, M. A. Clinical Psychology with a Dance/movement therapy specialization; Board Certified Dance/Movement Therapist with the American Dance Therapy Association; Classical Ballet Teacher Associate I and II with the Cecchetti Council of America; founding member of the Merced Scottish Country Dancers; teacher training program in Manhattan, NY in the Isadora Duncan method with Lori Belilove, (internationally recognized Duncan expert), and studied with Julia Levien and Sylvia Gold (second-generation Duncan dancers). In the Bay Area: Kathryn Cassis (Lester Horton Award for her Duncan work and protegee of Hortense Koulouris), Ann Cogley and Christina Fessenden (protegee of Mignon Garland), Annah McCluskey (San Francisco Dionysian Dancers) and The Sun Dancers. One year of Integrated Movement Studies in Laban Method, and Kestenberg with Ed Gross, Janice Meaden and Peggy Hackney. Pattee is a founding member of Merced Bellydancers Company, training with Gzitan Bianca Gonzalez of New York and California. Pattee was the founding director/choreographer for Women at the Well, an ecumenical Sacred Dance Troupe informed by Duncan dance, which toured the San Joaquin Valley of California for over 13 years. Pattee has taught ballet, Duncan and early modern, creative movement and Scottish Country dance locally at various schools including Merced College, Merced Academy of Dance /Emma Grace Academy, Joyce Norris Dance Studio, Eve Fox Beekman's Children's Dance Theatre, and in schools throughout the county through the ArTree program with Merced County Arts Council, and her own studios over the years.

### **Monica Dale**



Monica Dale (M.M. Piano Performance, Ithaca College; B.A., Connecticut College; Jaques-Dalcroze License) is a leading proponent of Jaques-Dalcroze Eurhythmics and founder of MusiKinesis, a contemporary American approach to the traditional European method. Her professional dance background brings a unique dimension to her work. She has published six books and numerous articles, and has presented workshops and courses for schools and organizations nationwide. Monica has taught piano, dance, and Dalcroze studies for all levels in

schools, conservatories and universities. She is a frequent teacher at the Eastman School of Music, the Kennedy Center Summer Music Institute, and co-founded The Institute for Jaques-Dalcroze Education.

### **Pamela De Fina**



Pamela de Fina, member, CID-UNESCO, art historian, choreographer, dancer, will present an illustrated discussion celebrating dance as one of the great arts as it was at the time of Sophocles. She will lead us on a journey to the cultural centers of Western European and North American history, beginning with Ancient Greece. Italian Renaissance paintings by Michelangelo, Botticelli, the sculpture of French Artistsartists, Rodin, and Bourdelle, and the American art nouveau artists the Mathews will be displayed to reveal the connections between the visual arts and the dance. After having attended the Grad. School of Fine Arts, Villa Schifanoia/Rosary College, M.A Art History program, and researching at Bernard Berenson's Villa i Tatti, Pamela moved to New York City, and returned to the Harkness House of Ballet, where she had received a trainee scholarship to at 16. She began studying ballet and modern at the age of five at Imperial Studios in Palm Beach, FL, and performed in many productions at the Palm Beach Playhouse with some of the world's most famous ballerinas. She was searching for the dance of Isadora Duncan, and was led to Maria Theresa Duncan, while visiting the Raymond Duncan Gallery in Paris, France. Pamela was chosen immediately by Maria Theresa, and performed in the Maria Theresa Duncan Heritage Group for a brief period, and afterwards, studied privately with her from 1978-1987, whereby, she learned and created unique choreography directly from her, which is held at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, NYC. Pamela also produced a CD based on the original documents, photos and, programs, that she was given by Rano Bourgeois, her son, of Maria Theresa's son, with a letter of permission to use them. He also said, "No one can tell you not to dance; my Mother chose you for your talent!" Pamela de Fina has lectured, taught and performed internationally, including, at the Norton Museum of Art; the Society of the Four Arts, Palm Beach, FL; the Lannan Museum, Lake Worth, FL; the United Nations; the Sorbonne University, Paris, France; the Mandel Library, West Palm Beach, FL;. and others. Last but not least, as a breast cancer survivor, Pamela has found that dance has been very helpful in the healing process.

### **Peter DiMuro**



Peter DiMuro has woven a career as a choreographer, director, teacher, facilitator and arts practitioner/engager. His company, Peter DiMuro Performance Associates, and his fifteen-year collaboration (including five years as artistic director) with Liz Lerman Dance Exchange laid the foundation for his current creative umbrella, *PDM: Public Displays of Motion*, housing artistic works along with dance and arts literacy, advocacy and engagement. Peter's work has appeared on tour and has been commissioned internationally, including at The

Kennedy Center/DC, DanceNow/NYC, the Emerson Majestic/Boston, Bates Dance Festival, Clarice Smith Center for the Performing Arts/MD, Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, AURAS/Lithuania, LATC/Los Angeles, DanceNOW/NY, as well as on a nationally aired television commercial for the National Institute on Aging. He has taught throughout the world including at festivals and universities in Croatia, Poland, Japan, Mexico, Canada, Ireland, Great Britain, Hong Kong and in 42 US states. Peter was named a White House Millennial Artist in 2000, a 1995 Mayor of Boston/ProArts Arts Award recipient, and he has received grants from the National Performance Network, the Mass Artists' Foundation, Mass Cultural Council, MetLife Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Upcoming works include *Future Preludes* at Dance Place/DC, where 12 artists from diverse genres – including Cynthia Word – go “artistic-speed-dating” to create new preludes to music by Rachmaninoff, generously supported by a Westphal College mini-grant. Follow Peter at [www.publicdisplaysofmotion.com](http://www.publicdisplaysofmotion.com).

**Valerie Durham** (*IDIS Organizing Committee*)



Valerie Durham, MFA, is a direct lineage Duncan dancer who has studied this beautiful form since 1992. She is the artistic director of Persephone's Circle, an Isadora Duncan dance company, and the executive director of the Isadora Duncan School for Creative Movement & Dance, based in Washington, DC, which features a progressive Duncan technique curriculum and creative movement based on the Duncan philosophy of dance.

She completed her MFA in Dance from the University of Maryland in 2012, and is a Kennedy Center Teaching Artist. She has studied with several Duncan masters and teachers, including Lori Belilove, Jeanne Bresciani, Julia Levien, Hortense Kooluris, Barbara Kane and many others, and has performed as a company member and soloist with Lori Belilove & Company. Her choreography has been performed in New York, Washington DC, Las Vegas, Florida and Chicago. Her work has been published in *Bourgeon* (online and anthology), *Centrífuga. Revista de Investigación Dancística* and in various newspapers and periodicals. As a founding member of the Isadora Duncan International Symposium, Valerie works to aid in the transmission and expansion of the Duncan traditions, with contemporary relevance, into the 21st century.

**Catherine Gallant**



Catherine Gallant directs Dances by Isadora and Catherine Gallant/DANCE. Recent productions at City Center Studios, Chashama, Joyce Soho, The Yard and at the Merce Cunningham Studio. Ms. Gallant has received funding for her choreography from the Harkness Foundation for Dance, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the Bossak/Heilbron Charitable Trust, City Parks Foundation and NYFA. Ms. Gallant began her study of the

Duncan work with Julia Levien in 1982. As a performer in the 1980s, Catherine appeared with the Limón Co.,

Ze'eva Cohen and Dancers, Anna Sokolow, and Muna Tseng. She was the assistant director of the 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Center from 1994-96. Catherine is now the dance educator at PS 89 in Manhattan. Ms. Gallant is a graduate of the Boston Conservatory and holds an MFA in Dance from Temple University.

### **Rachel Herzog**



Rachel Herzog has been studying the work of Isadora Duncan under the direction of Lori Belilove since she was ten years old, performing over thirty works of Duncan repertory at over fifty venues in and around New York City. She is currently earning her BA in Classics from Barnard College, and is an executive board member at the Barnard/Columbia Ancient Drama Group. She received her training in theater from the Professional Performing Arts School.

### **MaryBeth Hraniotis**



MaryBeth Hraniotis is the Director of Programs at The Meadow Dance and Integral Healing Arts Center in Montgomery NY and Co-Founder of Holistic Health Consultants of the Hudson Valley. MaryBeth has been teaching the Alexander Technique in private practice since 1993 and has merged her performing arts education and background specializing in the Integration of mind/body practice through a movement/performing arts lens as a vehicle for inspiring transformative learning and wellness for 20 years. MaryBeth provides training in human caring science for programs in healthcare, which include nurse certification in Reiki Energy for In-Patient care. She advocates the use of essential oils for health and wellness, self-care in healthcare, taking care of yourself while caring for others and human caring in healthcare practice. This practice includes an immersion of the senses that include the emotional/spiritual renewal of the Individual. She has created and implemented programs for groups using holistic health practice within a multi-disciplinary approach with great success. MaryBeth has been an active member of the Isadora Duncan International Institute, Inc. in education and performance since 1997 and currently serves on its board of directors.

### **Dicki Johnson Macy**



Dicki Johnson Macy, BC-DMT, M.Ed., L.M.H.C., third-generation lineage holder in the Art/Technique of Isadora Duncan (having studied first as a child with Anita Zahn) and director of the “Boston Children’s Foundation,” is the creator and founder of Rainbowdance. A tireless and dedicated pioneer in the field of trauma-focused stabilization and resiliency programs for young children and their communities, she is also the co-founder of the acute trauma response and intervention, CBI. For the past 25 years, in her career as

a dance therapist, she has created international healing rituals for children isolated by developmental and neurological disorders and exposure to conflict and natural disaster. She continues to guide children, caregivers, and dancers of all ages with her Isadora inspired workshops and trainings.

### **Beth Jucovy**



Beth Jucovy has been an Isadora Duncan dancer throughout her life. A protégé of Julia Levien, she studied with her as well as with Anna Duncan from early childhood. A member of Anna Duncan's children's company, she has been performing the repertory professionally since 1977 beginning with the Commemorative Company. Beth is director and choreographer of *Dance Visions NY*, a company devoted to preserving the Duncan aesthetic as well as creating original works. They have presented Duncan programs for Workman's Circle, the 92nd Street Y, many museums, universities, parks, libraries. Beth is director of Children Dancing and teaches at the Dalton School.

### **Julia Pond**



Julia Pond is an American dancer/choreographer based in London. Her 2012 work, *Bach Motets*, a choreographed concert conceived by Crispin Lewis and performed with baroque ensemble the Musically Compass, premiered at St. John's Smith Square, London. Andrew Benson-Wilson of Early Music Review said that the "choreography was flowing and coherent, the mood of the two dancers ranging from exuberance to gentle intertwining in a series of evolving tableaux, some evoking recognizable baroque sculptural groupings – for example, a couple of Pietás." Julia's 2010 work "Song of the Sibyl" has been presented by London's Cloud Dance Festival and Scenepool Festivals, Rome's Exitart, Jennifer Muller/The Works NYC, Noyes School of Rhythm and Katharine Hepburn Theater, Old Saybrook, CT. Reviewers from the Cloud Dance Festival called it "urgent, beautiful and lonely all at once" and said that "one is able to witness the simplicity and power of Duncan's pioneering technique." As a performer Julia collaborates regularly with London artist Serena Korda. A member of Lori Belilove's Isadora Duncan Dance Company from 2001-2005 and an international affiliate from 2005-2010, Julia is a fourth-generation Duncan dancer and teaches and performs the Duncan technique and repertory internationally. The technique is a major influence on her work. Julia currently works with the Isadora Duncan Dance Group London/Paris and Barbara Kane, and joined the IDIS Organizing Committee in early 2014. Trained at the Boston Conservatory, Julia graduated magna cum laude in 2000 with a BFA in Dance. From 2007-2009 she lived and worked at the Art Monastery Project where she helped to develop the project's unique social sculpture of contemplation and artistic process. [www.juliapond.com](http://www.juliapond.com)

### **Laura Pravitz**



Laura Pravitz, IDMA; CLMA; MSW is a graduate in advanced standing from the Isadora Duncan International Institute (IDII). She performs and teaches Duncan dance and movement exploration classes in schools, senior homes, museums and studios in the Pioneer Valley and Boston, and performs with the IDII dancers and The Dance Generators, an intergenerational dance company based in Northampton Massachusetts. She produced and directed concerts at Holyoke's Wistariahurst Museum, to notable acclaim. Ms. Pravitz is also a Laban Movement Analyst and Clinical Social Worker, specializing in working with elders.

### **Adrienne Ramm**



Adrienne Ramm feels very fortunate to have trained since childhood in the Isadora Duncan Technique. A protégé of Julia Levien and Hortense Kooluris, she was also coached for several years in her youth by Anna Duncan. Adrienne was an original member of the Isadora Duncan Centenary Company in 1977 and a soloist with the Commemorative Company for its duration (1978-1982). In the U.S., she has performed at universities, festivals, museums, galleries and conferences as well as several documentary and archive projects. She has also taught many master classes and workshops throughout the U.S. In Europe she has performed in France, Austria, Greece and a seven-month tour of Italy with solo concerts in Reggio Emilia, Rome, Naples, Sardinia, and culminating in Florence at The Pitti Palace and Rondo di Bacco for the opening gala celebrating the restoration of Botticelli's "Primavera." Adrienne is a sought-after coach of the Duncan repertory for the current generation of dancers. She has danced the Duncan repertory with Dance Visions NY since its inception in 1989. Adrienne Ramm is also a composer/pianist/accompanist for dance and has always felt that the merging of music and dance expresses her creative spirit and spontaneous musical style. She has worked with many dance companies, dance schools, and educational institutions including the Mark Morris Dance Group, Harkness Dance Center, Long Island University, Dance New Amsterdam, and Joffrey Ballet School among many others. She has performed her original piano compositions, which have been choreographed by dance companies and presented in New York at The Riverside Church Dance Festival, Joyce Soho, Symphony Space, Old Westbury Gardens, Tilles Art Center, 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y Harkness Dance Center, St. Marks Church as well as several programs in Europe. The current CD of her original piano music, "Reminiscence Isadora: Songs of the Dancing Muse" is the embodiment of the merging of music and dance.

### **Janaea Rose Lyn**

Janaea Rose Lyn is a third-generation Isadora Duncan Dancer, Educator and Historian. She began her career with Mignon Garland and the San Francisco Duncan Dancers and was a member of the Dionysian Duncan Dancers. She was invited to the Akademia Raymond Duncan in Paris as the resident artist, initially curating the archives that appear in *Life into Art, Isadora Duncan and Her World*. Active as a Duncan dancer throughout an international career as a modern dance artist, Janaea was artistic director of Convergence – Dancers and Musicians, Dance Matrix and was Assistant Professor of Dance and at Cecil College in Maryland. Janaea now resides in Phoenix, AZ. [www.janaearoselyn.com](http://www.janaearoselyn.com).



### **Andrea Mantell Seidel**



Andrea Mantell Seidel, Ph.D., is Professor of Dance and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Florida International University. Additionally, she serves as trustee of Eleanor King's choreographic legacy and as artistic director of the critically acclaimed Isadora Duncan Dance Ensemble. Dr. Seidel has lectured, presented papers, and performed as soloist in the work of King and Duncan throughout the U.S. and abroad, including Internationales Tanzfestival, Germany; Kennedy Center, Washington; Hong Kong International Festival; and Goethe Festival, St. Petersburg, Russia. She is recipient of NDEO's Visionary Award (2007); Fulbright Senior Scholar award (2010, National School of Dance, Honduras); and producer/director of two DVDs: *Isadora Duncan Technique and Repertory* and *Isadora Duncan Masterworks*, widely distributed by Princeton Book Company. Her forthcoming book, *Dancing Duncan: The Art and Soul of Isadora in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, will be published by McFarland Press. <http://spiritdanceart.org>

### **Elyssa Dru Rosenberg**



Elyssa Dru Rosenberg is founder and director of isadoraNOW. She holds an M.A. in Dance Education from NYU and B.A. in Political Science from Tufts. She has studied Isadora Duncan's work with Carrie Tron, Patt Adams, and Lori Belilove. Elyssa has authored papers about Isadora Duncan, dance history and dance theory, including "The Philosopher's Dances: The Influence of Politics on Isadora Duncan's Creative Process," "Body, Mind, Spirit: Choreography by Duncan, Laban and Hawkins," and "A Call to Arms: Isadora Duncan's Military Works." She has presented at conferences for the National Dance Education Organization and the Society of Dance History Scholars.

**Jennifer Sprowl** (*IDIS Organizing Committee*)

Jennifer Sprowl is a fourth-generation Duncan dancer and founding member of Lori Belilove & the Isadora



Duncan Dance Company in New York City. Training directly with Duncan dance luminaries Lori Belilove, Hortense Kooluris and Julia Levien, Sprowl developed wide ranging dance credits including Rebecca Kelly Dance Company, Pennsylvania Ballet, Pennsylvania Dance Theater and Dayton Ballet Company. She has worked extensively with modern dance masters Bill Evans, Eleanor King, Bella Lewistky and Hannah Kahn.

Sprowl currently serves as faculty with the Joffrey Academy of Dance, Chicago and teaches classes dedicated to the preservation and extension of Isadora Duncan technique for the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the American Rhythm Center, Chicago. A specialist in the field of pre/post rehabilitation for dancers, Sprowl is a graduate of the Ohashi Institute of Shiatsu, certified as an Active Isolated Stretch practitioner based on the work of Aaron Mattes, is a Certified Flexibility Technican and has extensive training in Gyrokensis, Yamuna Body Rolling and Power Pilates. Much in demand for her highly specialized training, Sprowl is regularly invited to present master classes and guest teach at prestigious universities and dance companies throughout the United States and internationally. Jennifer's innovative staging of the Duncan dance repertoire in Chicago includes works for Momenta, The Chicago Academy for the Arts, and her own company, Duncan Dance Chicago. Her uplifting and motivating approach renders her classes and coaching in the Duncan technique a pure, authentic and powerful experience. <http://www.duncandancechicago.com>

**Cynthia Word** (*IDIS Organizing Committee*)



Cynthia Word, MFA, is the founder and artistic director of Word Dance Theater. Born and raised in Abilene, TX, she began her modern dance training at the University of Illinois with choreographers Beverly Blossom, Chester Wolenski, Mary Anthony and Sarah Rudner. She later received her Master in Fine Arts from The George Washington

University, where she later served on the teaching faculty. Based in Washington, DC, Ms. Word has created six major dance/theater productions. In 2005, Dance/MetroDC Awards nominated her fas “Best Emerging Choreographer” for *States of Mind*. In addition to her dance/theater productions, Word has performed in Austria, England, Scotland and Iran. Most recently she toured Greece with the Isadora Duncan International Institute. She is a recipient of an honorary certification in teaching and performance from the Isadora Duncan International Institute, and serves as a Dance Education Consultant with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Cynthia was the recipient of the Maria-Theresa Duncan Award in 2011.

**Elena Yushkova**

Elena Yushkova (Russia), Ph.D., scholar of Isadora Duncan, former scholar-in-residence at the Kennan Institute (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC), 2007-2008. Published more than 20 academic articles on Isadora Duncan in the past five years (in Russian). Author of the book *Plastique of the Overcoming: Short Notes on the History of Russian Plastique (interpretative) Theater in the 20th Century* (2009). Currently working on a monograph on Duncan.

**Ingrid Zimmer** (*IDIS Organizing Committee*)



Ingrid Zimmer received a Bachelor of Arts in Dance/Theatre from Pomona College, where she was trained in the Limon Technique. Upon graduating, she moved to Europe where she toured, performed and studied dance at the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen, Germany under the artistic direction of Pina Bausch. Ingrid has been dancing professionally, teaching and choreographing in the Washington, DC, area for the past 14 years. She has danced with local companies Bowen McCauley Dance, and Rincones and Company. Ingrid has performed in national and international venues, including the Kennedy Center, Jacobs Pillow, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, France, and the Gran Festival Internacional de Danza Contemporanea in Monterey, Mexico. Ingrid is currently in the Certificate Program at the Isadora Duncan International Institute where she is learning Duncan's original choreography and pedagogical techniques.



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