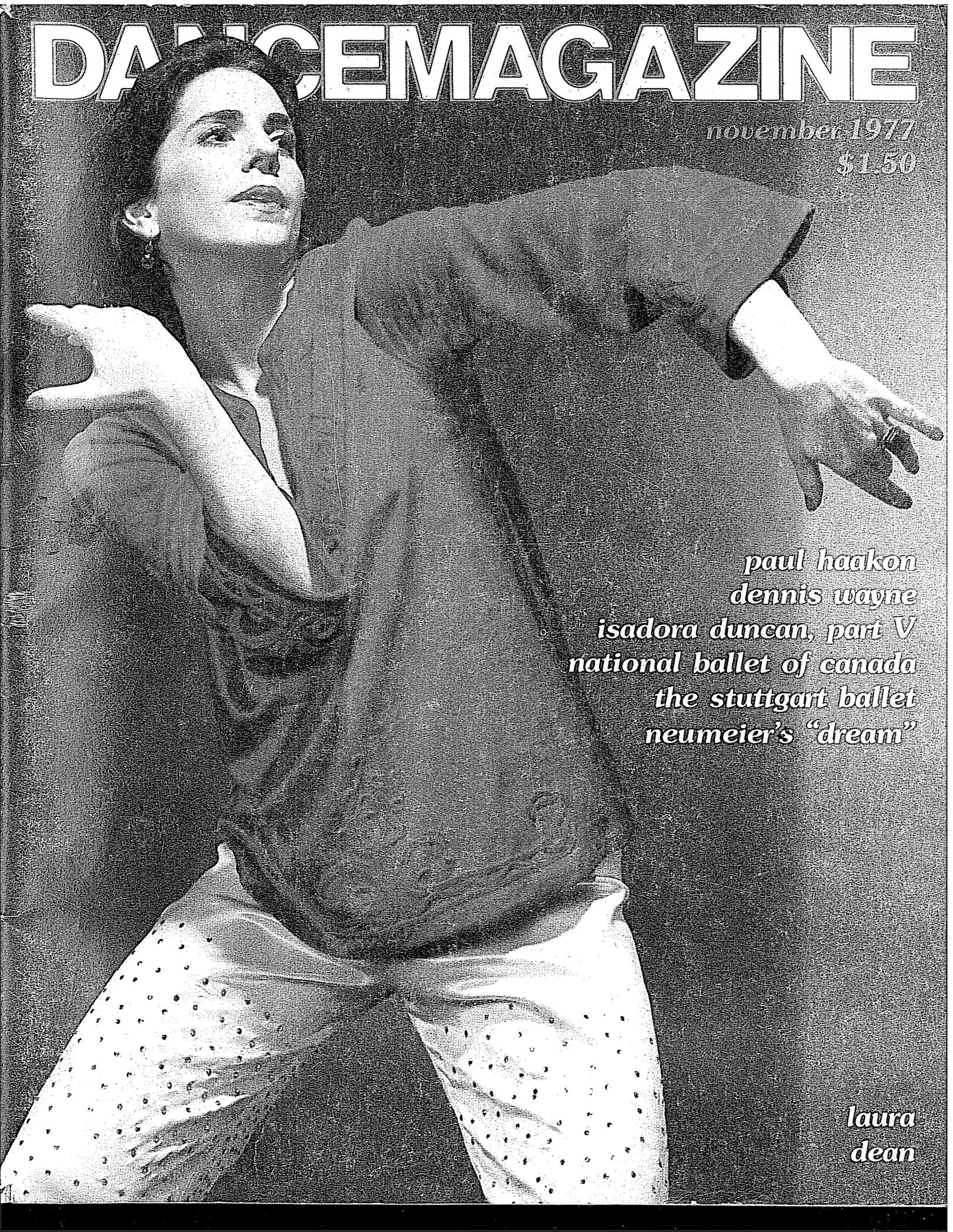


DANCEMAGAZINE



november 1977

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*paul haakon
dennis wayne
isadora duncan, part V
national ballet of canada
the stuttgart ballet
neumeier's "dream"*

*laura
dean*

DANCEMAGAZINE



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IN THIS ISSUE: The dance world of today offers a far greater chance for serious self-expression than that of the past: Witness the career of Paul Haakon. As a successful performer in the 1920s and '30s, primarily in musicals, vaudeville, and nightclubs, this gifted and versatile dancer struggled to fulfill his potential as a serious artist. His story proves fascinating, as told in our portfolio this month. At left, Haakon is pictured with Cecile Mather from the time they were both with Pavlova's company in the early 1930s. Laura Dean and Dennis Wayne are two innovators who are succeeding on their own terms today, with the help of a friendlier dance environment: Dean as an avant-garde choreographer/composer; Wayne as director of his own ballet company, Dancers. We look at what moves them, and where they're headed. **Also in this issue:** Visiting foreign companies to New York City, the Stuttgart Ballet and National Ballet of Canada are reviewed, as is John Neumeier's new production for Hamburg State Opera Ballet of *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

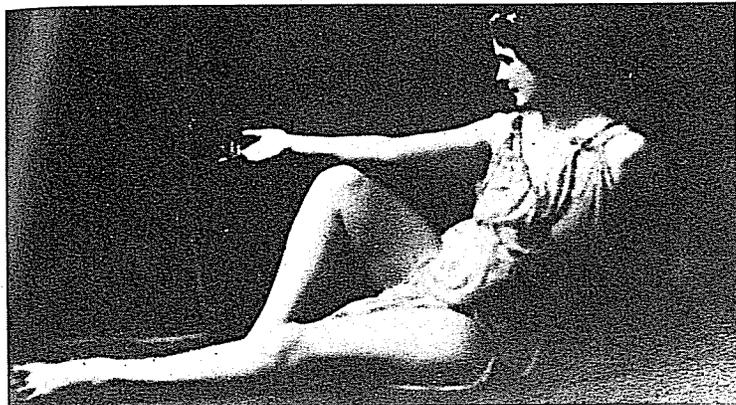
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part V, isadora and paris singer
by nesta macdonald

isadora reexamined:
lesser-known aspects of the great dancer's life



"I actually met Isadora at the same time as my father did. He was very good-looking, and women threw themselves at him, and he'd had a great many affairs—but when he saw Isadora he fell straight in love with her before she fell in love with him, which was quite the other way round usually.

"He had asked me to come because he thought it would interest me, but he said, 'Don't stay too long because I have business to discuss with her. You go to her dancing children—they sing in German, but then you know German—and you be with them. . . .'"

In 1976, I was listening entranced to Paris Singer's daughter, whom one may perhaps call Winnaretta II, to distinguish her from his elder sister, the famous patroness of modern composers, the Princesse Edmond de Polignac, Winnaretta I. It was she who had befriended Isadora in 1900 or 1901, and left her a discreet gift of a generous cheque—probably more than once. Time had given Winnaretta II a dispassionate and even compassionate view of matters which had undoubtedly caused hurt to Paris Singer's family while they were active, and outrage when dramatized with a lurid gloss for the film. Once again, it is as well to take stock of the situation of each of the parties at the moment of this impact.

Despite the undying love she so ardently proclaimed for Gordon Craig, Isadora must, by 1909, have come to realize that he would never return to her. She did not take seriously her passing *affaires*, such as that with Alban Head; she toured and earned and spent as before. The expenses of the school in Grünewald had become increasingly worrying. Having made Berlin her home for many years, by 1908 Isadora had decided to set up her base once more in Paris.

In 1909, Isadora had a season at the Gaîté Lyrique (matinees only, on February 22, 24, and 25, and March 1 and 3). Her return was announced for May. Whereas in 1903 it had been mainly the artists who had appreciated her and in 1908 the Russian fever had distracted attention from her, this time her success was complete.

Isadora never subscribed to the doctrine of some great dancers, that they should be seen but never, never heard. She constantly made speeches at the end of her performances, quoting her favorite philosophers and poets, and, at this period, craving help for her school. (Later this habit turned into political outbursts.)

Early in 1909, as she pondered her worrying financial state, Isadora was to be heard saying, Coué-fashion, "I must have a millionaire." And, Coué-fashion, this thinking worked. A visiting-card was sent in to her dressing-room after one of these matinees, followed hard upon by the millionaire.

And what a millionaire!

Handsome, forty-ish, six-foot-four, curling auburn hair and beard, generous, sociable, clever, beautiful manners, and very, very, very rich. Many times a multi-millionaire. The name on the card was Paris Singer. He was the third son of the ultimate family of the fabulous Isaac Merritt Singer, whose ideas solved the problems of the earlier inventors of sewing-machines which just wouldn't work. In so doing, thanks to his patents and a brilliant business partner, he changed from a poor man into one whose huge income never stopped rolling in.

Isadora said that when this tall man walked in, her immediate thought was, "Lohengrin" (Lohengrin was sent by The Grail to help Elsa). He must have carried with him an air of reassurance. What she did not say was that he was accompanied by his nineteen-year-old daughter. When Isadora's book, *My Life*, was prepared for publication after her death, many passages referring to Paris Singer had been deleted. The picture of him that remained is so unflattering that it is hard to imagine that anyone on his side approved the text. He was presented as a cardboard figure, without interests or responsibilities. The truth was very different.

Paris Singer's situation in 1909 was that he had four sons and a daughter, but had separated from his wife. Isadora had nothing to do with that. His possessions were vast: a whole block of huge houses in Sloane Street, London; the lease of an apartment in the Place des Vosges, in Paris, which he had made fashionable; a villa in the South of France; a 400-ton yacht; and Oldway, the mansion built by his father in Devon. In his immediate family, his two elder brothers based their lives on England. Both were typical of the wealthy sporting amateurs to whom aviation and motoring owe so much of their development. Mortimer's flying licence was No. 8; he beat

(over)



Top: Isadora Duncan, photographed in New York City circa 1916, in a pose from her Unfinished Symphony, to Schubert's Symphony No. 7. (Photo: Arnold Genthe, Irma Duncan Collection, Dance Collection, Library and Museum of Performing Arts, Lincoln Center)

Above: A photo portrait of Isadora Duncan, circa 1912. (Dance Collection, Library and Museum of Performing Arts, Lincoln Center)

Isadora Duncan (Cont'd)

Charlie Rolls in a balloon race, landing at Hurlingham, in 1909; he was knighted in 1919, having turned his Berkshire home into a hospital for 200 N.C.O.'s, which he ran at his own cost throughout the war. Always a keen yachtsman, later in the 1920s he planned an assault on the America's Cup, and took delivery of *Astra*, which he had commissioned; but sadly, he died before she could race for him. Washington's great ambition was to win the Derby, but he never pulled it off; in 1932, he owned the favorite, but was beaten by April the Fifth, an outsider owned by the actor Tom Walls.

The younger sister married the duc Decazes, and died young, leaving a daughter who became famous as the Hon. Mrs. Reginald Fellowes, arbiter of taste and a barbed wit, who was for many years editor of French *Vogue*.

Though he did not have to indulge in the time-wasting pastime known as making money, Paris had been trained as an engineer, and designed a petrol-driven car which was built in Clapham, South London, in 1900, and modified American-purchased electric cars. (He put the electrical installation into Sandringham at about this time, and lent an electric car to Queen Alexandra.) In 1904, he spent a fortune or so on Oldway, giving it monumental façades (each exhibiting a different Order of Architecture,) transforming the theater into a ballroom, and putting in a marble staircase to a design by Lebrun which had been made for Versailles, but never carried out there.

While his sister, the Princesse de Polignac, was famous for her excellent taste, his was lower-brow, but he liked the best at that level, and loved French music-halls and cabarets.

The children were, in 1909, about twelve years old, and not exactly in the confidence of any of their elders! After Isadora's last performance in March, Paris whisked them all off to the Côte d'Azur; then he and Isadora left them with governesses, and went off on the yacht for a cruise. They took Deirdre with them. It was an episode of high romance.

The romance was, however, to run a chequered course. Winnaretta II expressed it this way: "They were off and on. . . they were both very self-willed. . . ." The simple fact was that both had streaks of great generosity, and both had streaks of great selfishness. Paris loved to plan "treats" for people about him, but if circumstances forced them to refuse his offerings, he was liable to be annoyed. In other words, he was a bit spoilt. Paris really suffered the more in their turbulent relationship, for he loved Isadora sincerely; one does not emerge from this study feeling that she had any real love for him. There is one matter in which his procrastination seems odd, and that was the very problem which had brought about their first meeting: Isadora's school.

Isadora's next season in Paris opened on Saturday, May 15, 1909, to acclaim. The following Tuesday, she was one of the "beauties" invited by the impresario Gabriel Astruc, blonde alternating with brunette, to occupy the front row of the Dress Circle—*La Corbeille*—at the famous opening, the *répétition générale*, when Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* first exploded in western Europe.

Isadora's own performances were given on May 15, 17, 19, 25, 28, 29, and 30, and June 1, 5, 10, 15, and 20. Her private life changed, monopolized by Singer. (She said that he *took* her to Poiret for clothes, which would have showed great *savoir faire*, for he was undoubtedly the most suitable of the great couturiers for her. Poiret, however, said that she was one of his oldest and staunchest clients. Perhaps she let Singer think the idea had been all his!)

A very long article appeared in *L'Illustration*—the equivalent then of *Paris-Match* or the late-lamented *Life Magazine*. First, it eulogized about her and the children, in poetic prose; and it sighed with her for a millionaire. "Surely in France, where art and artists are appreciated, someone will understand what I am trying to do, to educate these children to be real artists?" Being a Frenchman, the writer said straight out that Isadora was not a beauty, but that she had the ability to seem so. One can only conclude that an editor had held the article over from the earlier season, and now produced it without bringing himself up-to-date. Alternatively, Isadora might have felt that the publicity would act as mild blackmail, spurring Singer to make positive arrangements to endow a school for her.

After this season, the children were sent to their families for holidays, and Paris again whisked Isadora off on the yacht. They went to Venice, and met Nijinsky on the Lido. They went to Egypt, where Singer had another villa. (Winnaretta II had been supposed to spend this holiday there, but when she arrived, her father packed her off to Germany because Isadora was there. She never actually met Isadora again after that one time, but often went to see her dance.) In August, Isadora became pregnant. Despite this fact, they

decided that she could carry out a tour she had arranged in the United States, and sailed with full millionaire treatment. It was the first time Paris Singer had ever visited the land whence came his wealth.

She danced until her condition became obvious, then returned to Europe, where their son, Patrick, was born in the villa at Beaulieu on May 1st.

Paris adored this child; he had happily accepted Deirdre into his life. Nevertheless, with their temperaments, they were, as Winnaretta II said, "off and on." Isadora's book gives little idea of their way of life; for what was to him the novel reason that he had fallen in love with her first, he tried to put up with almost anything.

It is from diaries kept by Kathleen Bruce—Kathleen Scott, as she now was—that one can catch glimpses of the domestic life of the glamorous couple. In April 1911, when Paris was away somewhere, Kathleen spent a weekend with Isadora at her studio in Neuilly. Isadora's babies played on her bed; they went to watch some flying, which Kathleen adored, and to the play. They dined out, having only Isadora's pianist, Hener Skene, to accompany them. Isadora danced in her studio after the theater. Nothing else happened.

On July 31, 1911 Kathleen took her two-year-old son, Peter, and the nanny to Boulogne, to spend a holiday with Isadora and the family. Isadora and Deirdre came in a big motor to meet them, "both exquisitely dressed in Poiret gowns looking perfectly beautiful." Paris did not join them until August 7th, but Elizabeth and Augustin Duncan did. They stayed in the most luxurious hotels, and drove about the coast and lunched and dined in many others. They encountered two young officers with whom Kathleen had a trifling acquaintance, who had come over with their 40 h.p. Napier car for a spree, to let it out a bit on Continental roads. Isadora's car was the same h.p., so they raced wildly. They went to the casinos and theaters. On one such evening, Kathleen wrote in her diary, "One of the officers, Captain Wood, 'eloped' with Isadora." Of Captain Sykes, Kathleen said, "He is very intelligent and very nice and beautifully a gentleman; the charming way he warded off Isadora's advances was delightful. . . ."

Then, on August 7th, Paris arrived, tired from traveling, wishing to relax. And what happened? Isadora turned into the most suburban of housewives, boring him with nagging tales of the iniquities of the nannies—until he could stand it no longer and flounced off. That night they went to their individual bedrooms, and did not make it up by using the communicating door. At six in the morning, Isadora sailed into Kathleen's room and said that she was off to Paris (at least six hours away at that time). She made the pretext that she had to go and see about the car's insurance.

The others seem to have had a very happy time while she was away! Singer played host delightfully to Isadora's family, but none of his own came to join them. They walked along beaches, talking about the things that interested him—engineering, medicine, his charities—he told Kathleen of one he had devised to help the deserted wives of poor clerks (in the days long before Social Security) by buying food, et cetera, wholesale, and letting them buy at low prices. He does not seem to have told her that only just before, the first Fondation Singer-Polignac had been opened in Paris—quite a different thing from the Institute which now bears the same name, but supports the Arts and Sciences. This was a "Housing Trust" development near the Gobelins, with a specially designed house produced in multiple fashion.

Then the yacht arrived, and they decided to move and live aboard. Paris was planning a cruise to Stockholm and St. Petersburg, and wanted Kathleen to go with them. She, however, refused to leave her small son, but offered to stay and take charge of all the children instead of leaving them only with the nannies. Isadora sent them a telegram—then arrived—no one said anything about a quarrel, and they started off for England, with the idea of collecting some belongings. It was very rough, and they were all sick, and had to turn back. The cruise went ahead, and Kathleen devoted herself to building up more strength in Patrick.

The lives of Paris Singer and Isadora continued like that. Isadora kept her own studio in Neuilly, but she does not seem to have come into contact with any of Singer's family. Paris took her and the children to Oldway, and they danced on the terrace and in the ballroom.

In 1912 Isadora inadvertently added another London appearance to her list, at the Court Theatre in Sloane Square, which was only a short distance from the house of Mrs. Paris Singer, where preparations were going on for a big ball for Winnaretta II's twenty-first birthday. Brother Raymond had been forced to cancel three performances of Greek tragedies in Greek. Brother Augustin

took over the bookings, and presented evenings of "Dramatic Interpretations of the Poems of Walt Whitman," who was little read in England. Isadora, to whom Walt was another idol, gave a discourse about him, and displayed some "poses." Both Isadora and Augustin wore, rather unsuitably, Greek robes. No wonder Whitman "spoke" to Isadora, for her Greece was exactly the same thing as his America—a "dreamed and inward country." For all her inconsequence, bad behavior, lack of respect for conventional morals, and, as Gordon Craig himself said, insensitiveness towards the feelings of others, Isadora was a poet. Augustin had a magnificent voice and delivery, and the programs were simply something very unusual and outside the mainstream. Kathleen Bruce was there, and it was probably during this visit that she modeled Isadora in the nude, with her two babies. Another visitor was Martin Shaw, who had tea with Isadora in Sloane Street, where she was installed in one of Paris Singer's other houses. (There were rumors of a communicating door.)

The following year, ten years since Rodin had joined the hands of the two girls in his, disaster struck them both.

Kathleen's husband, Captain Scott, was scheduled to reach New Zealand about February 1913, after spending two-and-a-half years in the Antarctic. While the ship in which she was traveling out to meet him was incommunicado, owing to the limits of its radio, the news came through that the bodies of her husband and his companions had been found. They had been dead since March 1912.

Kathleen reached London again in April, and in the very same week, Isadora's two children, and their governess, were drowned in the Seine, when the car rolled backwards into the river.

The horror was enough to turn anyone's brain. Paris Singer was as stricken as Isadora. The next few months she spent traveling restlessly, trying to return to life. For some weeks she stayed with Eleonora Duse at Viareggio; and during this visit she became pregnant by an Italian (dignified by the title of sculptor). She then joined Raymond for a while, where he was organizing refugee camps in Albania and making money out of the craft objects they produced, which he sold well.

When she returned to the city of Paris, Singer had arranged for her to live at the Hotel Crillon, in the greatest luxury. Can it be wondered that, when she told him of her pregnancy, he put his head in his hands?

Even in this, however, his love for her made him very forbearing. At last, he did what he had seemed to have intended to do in 1909. Early in 1914, to distract her with plenty of occupation, he bought her the Château de Bellevue, on the outskirts of Paris. It had been a hotel, and would readily adapt to house her pupils.

As if the horror about to engulf the world were not enough, more tragedy was to be theirs. Just as war was declared, Isadora gave birth to a beautifully formed boy child. Winnaretta II said, "As she came round from the anaesthetic, they put the babe in her arms, and she said in her daze, 'Are you Deirdre? Are you Patrick?'" An hour later, the child died."

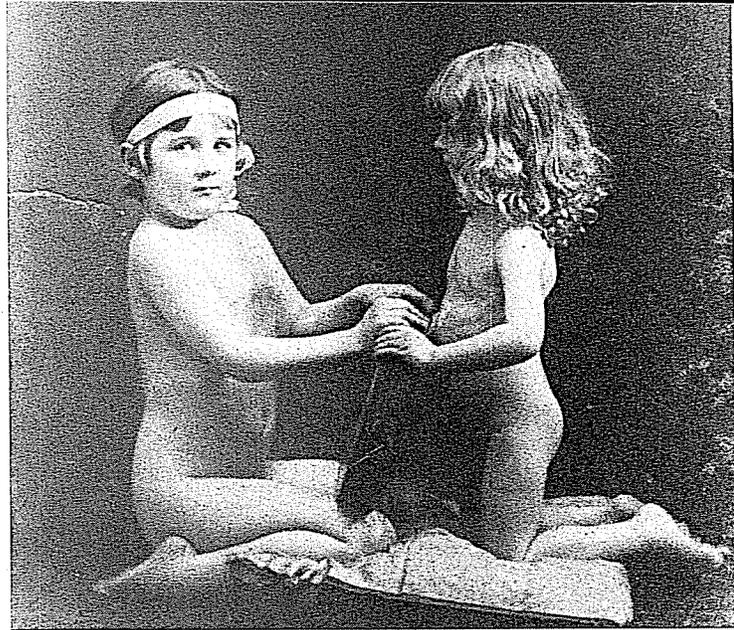
This is not the place to tell the detail of the next few years. Paris Singer took the German children with them to America. (They were now aged about nineteen, and had no passports.) He arranged for Isadora to give a performance at the Met, and arranged a great party afterwards. At this party, Isadora behaved outrageously. It was too much. He could stand such humiliation no more. He withdrew all his support.

The wanderings of the War years, the financial straits and stratagems, culminated in two major events. One was that Isadora showed unusual practical sense in realizing that the girls needed to be able to have proper passports for the rest of their lives. She conducted a long-winded procedure and was ultimately enabled to "adopt" them legally, and they obtained U.S. passports.

The other was that she and Kathleen met several times in 1918, first in London, and then in Paris. In March 1918, Isadora was installed in a flat in Duke Street, Mayfair, probably lent her by Gordon Selfridge, whom she had encountered on the voyage over, and whose store was close by. Kathleen recorded rather coolly that Isadora was "very fat, but still Isadora." Penniless as she was, Isadora appalled Kathleen by returning to the flat in the middle of the night with "a fat old Greek."

Kathleen's war work took her to Paris for several weeks. (It was during this period that the capital was being shelled by Big Bertha.) Isadora was at the Hotel Quai d'Orsay, without funds. Cecile Sorel, star of the Comédie Française, provided them with boxes at the theater, and hospitality. Nevertheless, it was obvious that Isadora took one lover after another.

Raymond and his son, Menalaus, were almost starving. Kathleen



Above: Deirdre and Patrick Duncan, 1912, in Paris. (Photo: Otto, Irma Duncan Collection, Library and Museum of Performing Arts, Lincoln Center)



Left: Paris Singer. (Photo: Arnold Genthe)

"went to see Isadora and later to the Comédie Française with her two socially impossible charming little girls." She had, however, summed up Isadora's situation when, on March 30th, she recorded that "Isadora wept at her lonely and sorrowful condition. *Ratée.*"

Does the word need to be translated? It means *kaput*, finished.

Fifteen years had passed since Rodin had joined Isadora and Kathleen's hands together, and said, "You artists must understand each other." Kathleen had always bowed before what she considered to be Isadora's genius. She had been Isadora's companion for the birth of Deirdre; she had appreciated Craig as an artist, and tried to look tolerantly upon him as a person. She had liked the father of Isadora's second child. She had looked the other way when Isadora had indulged in some of her escapades. Now, she could stand it no more.

On April 6, 1918, Kathleen had mentioned that after a performance, they had gone to Sorel's dressing-room, and there met Sert (the Spaniard who designed for Diaghilev, and was the third husband of Misia, Diaghilev's great friend). "Isadora behaved her very worst."

It was all too much. After April 18th, when Kathleen said that Steichen, friend of their youth, had visited Isadora and given her lilies, she never mentioned "her dancer" again. □

(Thanks are offered by the author to Lord Kennet for permission to study and print excerpts from the diaries of his mother, Kathleen Bruce.)

Next Month: Isadora's farewell to London, and to Ellen Terry. The six articles by Nesta Macdonald published in *Dance Magazine*, July through December 1977, are excerpts from Isadora Duncan, to be published by Oresko Books, London, in spring 1978. Nesta Macdonald is also the author of *Diaghilev Observed*.