

DUNCAN CENTER - FRANCE

Compagnie La Bacchanale / Association L.A.C.

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Artistic Director - Carol Pratt

Newsletter N° 1 - Spring 1998

A HOMAGE TO ELENA VLADIMIROVNA TARENTIEVA

Pupil of Isadora Duncan's Moscow School, Soloist and Artistic Director of the Moscow Duncan Dancers (1930-49)

Moscow-May 25, 1913 • Moscow-February 7, 1998



As I sit here on a hot May afternoon in my Paris apartment, listening to those nostalgic waltzes and mazurkas familiar to all Duncan dancers, and thumbing through the years of photos of Elena Vladimirovna Terentieva, taken in Moscow between 1991 and 1996, I am filled with both sadness and great joy, because although she has left us, she will always be present and alive in the hearts and in the future dance work of all those who knew her.

Elena Vladimirovna would have been 85 this May. That is what all her pupils called her, although she was known as Lola, or Lolita to her friends and to the public that admired her talent during her performing years with the Moscow Duncan Dancers throughout Europe, America and China and the Soviet Union in the 1920s, 30s and 40s.

I first met Elena Vladimirovna in December 1991, nearly one year after Barbara Kane, Artistic Director of the Isadora Duncan Dance Group and Vera Belozorovich, Director of the Moscow School of Musical Movement, and myself, had met another of Isadora's pupils, dear Mussia Mysovskaya, thanks to a chance meeting with a charming elderly man Sergei Stebakov, who had kept in touch with the Moscow dancers since the forties and made the contact for us.

I had a long phone conversation with Mussia in my then poor Russian and she agreed to invite us to her apartment a few days before Barbara and I were leaving Moscow. We were brought to her home by her pupil and friend Lida Gicheva, who had joined the dance company when it was revived in the forties after the Second World War, and who continues to teach children in Moscow today. We cried out of joy, we reminisced, we danced the same dances, and looked at Mussia's photo albums: photos of Isadora, of the American tour in 1929 with Irma, and photos of China in 1926. It was the first link with the Russian Duncan heritage in long years, as phone books didn't exist and Isadora's art had been frowned upon until after Perestroika in 1986. All the former Moscow Duncan Dancers had been living discreetly, out of touch with the ballet world, and apprehensive to meet foreign dancers. They were unaware that new generations were carrying on the tradition in America, England, France and elsewhere. Barbara and I reluctantly left Moscow, as we weren't able to meet Yulia Vashentseva at the time, who was then hospitalized and passed away shortly thereafter, or Elena Vladimirovna, who was recovering from illness...

Vera continued meeting with Mussia from January to June of 1991, during which time Mussia wrote twenty pages of dance memoirs and compiled a Duncan dance training program with notes for several choreographies, which will soon be translated. Mussia unexpectedly passed away in June of that year. Vera called me immediately. A couple of weeks later, she and her pupils organized an evening tribute to Mussia at the Ermolova State Theatre Museum, the same performing space where Barbara, Vera and her group, and myself had all danced together the preceding December...

The project for a new school in the Duncan tradition was underway, and Vera was at last able to meet Elena Vladimirovna, who was delighted to discuss the idea. I was on the phone with Vera almost daily from Paris that summer of 1991. She arrived with her talented seven-year-old daughter Ania in Paris to give a workshop in the midst of the alarming *coup d'état* in Moscow which fortunately subsided quickly; she stayed for a couple of months, also visiting London where Barbara set up a workshop for her.

It was finally in December 1991, when I returned to Moscow after a year absence for a two-week dance exchange Vera and I had organized for 25 French dance teachers and choreographers, including Yvonne Berge, Denise Coutier and Vannina Guibert, that I met Elena Vladimirovna for the first time at the studio in Medvedkovo. She gave a wonderful Master Class for that program, and danced the famous Chopin "Prelude". Dressed in a beautiful pale pink and white silk tunic and scarf and assisted by Lida Gicheva, it was the first time she had given a class in forty years, since the years when she had been the artistic director and lead soloist of the company; at that moment, I knew I had to come to Moscow to work with her, and to work with Vera to help realize her ideas; I had to put to use my knowledge of Russian, in the aims of helping to record and preserve the Russian Duncan tradition.

Sponsors were found for the new school which was to be called the International School of Music and Movement, and Vera and I visited Elena Vladimirovna before my departure in January 1992. She agreed to be the honorary artistic consultant for the school and to privately coach and transmit the repertoire to Vera and myself. In that marvelously optimistic, yet chaotic period following Yeltsin's election as President, Elena Vladimirovna was officially employed by the school which was granted legal status, and I managed to get a two-year Russian residency card and working papers the day after Yeltsin was elected, as international coordinator for the school and dance instructor in Duncan technique for the children's classes. I returned to Paris for a brief two weeks to pack up, and set off by train to Moscow in a rustic Soviet wagon-lit in February 1992 with two American friends, who agreed to help with the transportation of about 200 kilos of donated office equipment, school supplies, food, dance material, etc...

I remember so well nearly every day of those first four months of life in Moscow, of working with Elena Vladimirovna, of the day-long expeditions to her lovely, spacious two-room apartment at 4/2, Kutuzovsky Prospekt, cozy and colorfully decorated, a contrast to the Stalinist gothic Ukraina Hotel just next door. Vera and I would usually go to her home two or three times a week - or sometimes I would go alone if Vera was busy. It was still winter, often way below zero, yet we'd joyfully leave our north Moscow neighborhood about 10 am and trudge through the still-virgin morning snow across the uniform housing complex where both Vera's apartment and the school were located. After a 20-minute walk (as I refused to take the scary overcrowded antiquated red buses that took the turns at top speed nearly toppling over), we'd arrive at the "Medvedkovo" metro stop (the end of the line), buy some defrosted carnations or produce from street vendors (that was a ritual in Moscow at the time to buy whatever looked edible on your way somewhere). One metro change and an hour later there we'd be at the "Kievskaya" station, just next to the frozen Moscow River. If we hadn't bought flowers already, we'd get some there, since the choice was better. We'd cross through a park, and sometimes stop off at "Sadko", a well-stocked Swiss supermarket (which took Western credit cards) to pick up chocolates, coffee, cheese and fresh fruits and vegetables for her. We'd inevitably be late each time, no matter how hard we tried not to, and poor Elena Vladimirovna would be pacing worriedly wondering what had happened to us.

We'd slip into our tunics and she'd immediately get us down to work in her salon - the chairs and tables all pushed to the sides, my pocket-size tape recorder as our sole source of music. The barre would always last at least an hour and would be very rigorous; Elena Vladimirovna demanded precision and perfection in the same way she had learned with Isadora and Irma: pliés after pliés, battement tendus, grands battements: front-side-back, leg swings, backbends, équilibres, stretching on the floor, repeated arm movements to strengthen both upper body muscle strength and fluidity, then a second hour of middle exercises: waltz turns, double skips, polkas with or without a scarf, grand jetés, pirouettes and falls. And finally, during the third hour we'd work on dances: duets with Vera, and solos for each of us that she had performed; there'd be Chopin, Strauss, Brahms, Schubert, Tchaikovsky, Scriabin: mazurkas, waltzes, polonaises, écossaises, études, préludes, and several choreographies composed for the studio by Russian choreographers: Jacobson, Lukin, Bourgmeister...

Elena Vladimirovna always insisted on expression, on 'living' the dance without anything superfluous - which meant you had to understand what was behind and beyond its creation. Why and when and where was it created? She taught us to listen to music in a different way, to absorb its diverse moods. She inspired grace, insisted on good placement and carriage, on developing one's dramatic abilities, on studying music - I can still hear her saying "pull in your stomach!, point your foot and get rid of the 'iron'! (which meant your foot was too flexed), or stand proud, plexus forward!, and always 'accent! accent!' which she required for certain marked wrist or hand movements or an accent of the head to coincide with the accent in the music.

Until she was totally satisfied, you would try over and over a short musical phrase, until your body memory integrated the right quality. She aimed for suppleness and fluidity that was controlled, musicality, and total mastery of the body and of one's

ISADORA, IRMA AND THE FIRST RUSSIAN PUPILS
PRECHISTENKA 20, MOSCOW, AUTUMN 1921

ELENA TERENTIEVA



ORCHESTRA HALL
Friday Evening, Nov. 15, 1929, at 8:15
LAST OF A SERIES OF THREE PERFORMANCES
Isadora Duncan Dancers

- FROM MOSCOW
directed by IRMA DUNCAN
DIRECTION BERTHA OTT
- | | | |
|---|--|----------|
| 1 | Excerpts from C Major Symphony
Irma Duncan, Alexandra, Tamara, Valya,
Vera, Manya, Lina, Lola, Maya, Lily | Schubert |
| 2 | Three Etudes
Op. 42, F flat major
Op. 42, D flat minor
Op. 8, D flat minor | Scriabin |
| 3 | Mazurka, Op. 33, No. 3 | |
| | Valse C Sharp minor | |
| | Valse D flat major | |
| | Mazurka, Op. 17, No. 7 | |
| 4 | Norwegian Dance | |
| 5 | Southern Roses (Waltz) | |
| 6 | Russian Songs
Ay, du, du
The Lonely Oak Tree
The Call of Spring
Lullaby
Ding-a-ling-a-ling (Dells of Moscow) | |
| 7 | Impressions of Modern Russia
Subota (Parade Song)
Dubinska (Work Song)
The Blacksmith
Russian Girl Scout Song
(rns. dwn. tre) | |
- IRMA DUNCAN
LOLA
ALEXANDRA
TAMARA
VALYA, MANYA
ENSEMBLE
IRMA DUNCAN AND ENSEMBLE
INTERMISSION
- Chopin
Grieg
Strauss
Gretcheninoff
- ENSEMBLE
At the Piano, MAURICE SHEVNE
MASON & HAMLIN PIANO, Courtesy Ampico Hall
Numbers on this program, if procurable, can be procured from Chyten F. Sunny Co.,
429 So. Wabash Ave. (Next door to the Auditorium)

ELENA TERENTIEVA



THE MOSCOW DUNCAN STUDIO PUPILS
AT THE RED STADIUM, 1924



ELENA FEDOROVSKAYA, SHURA AKSIONOVA, ELENA TERENTIEVA, YULIA VASHENTSEVA
"ROWING" FROM "SPORTS SUITE" (CHOR. LEONID JACOBSON, MUS. PROKOFIEV) - MOSCOW, 1948

Первое отделение

- Вальс, музыка Глазунова.
Постановка Засл. арт. РСФСР.
лауреата Сталинской премии
В. П. Бурмейстера *Исполняет группа*
- Ноктюрн, музыка Шопена
Постановка Л. Лукина *Исп. А. Аксенова*
- „Бабочки“, муз. Шопена
Постановка Е. Терентьевой
*Исп. М. Мысовская, Е. Федоровская,
Л. Гичева, М. Осипова, М. Воро-
нича, В. Емельянова, Р. Уханова*
- „Поры“, музыка Метнера
Постановка В. Лукина *Исп. Ю. Вашенцева*
- „Жига“, музыка Шуберта
Постановка А. Дуцкан *Исполняет группа*
- 14-й вальс, музыка Шопена
Постановка Е. Терентьевой *Исп. М. Мысовская*
- Этюд, музыка Скрябина
Постановка Л. Лукина *Исп. Е. Терентьева*
- „Масленица“, музыка Чайковского
Постановка В. Бурмейстера *Исполняет группа*
- Романс, музыка Чайковского
Постановка В. Бурмейстера *Исп. А. Аксенова*
- „Хоруми“. Постановка Л. Якобсон *Исп. Е. Терентьева
и группа*

Второе отделение

- Постановка Л. Якобсон. Художник А. Судакевич
- „Мать“, музыка Скрябина (две прелюдии)
исп. Е. Терентьева
- „Подвиг“, музыка Шопена (Прелюдия)
*Исп. Ю. Вашенцева, А. Аксенова,
Е. Федоровская и группа.*
- „Зоя“, музыка Чайковского (4-я часть Шестой симфонии)
Исп. Е. Терентьева и группа
- „Знамена победно шумят“, музыка Чайковского
(фрагменты из первого концерта
для фортепиано с оркестром)
Исп. группа
- ФРАГМЕНТЫ ПАРАДА:
- „Спортивная“ сюита, музыка Прокофьева (прелюдия)
- а) Теннис *Исп. А. Аксенова, Н. Балдина,
Ю. Вашенцева, Е. Федоровская.*
- б) Волейбол *Исп. группа*
- в) Водный спорт: плавание
Исп. М. Мысовская и Е. Федоровская
гребля
Исп. группа
парус
Исп. М. Мысовская
- „Стадион“ музыка Рахманинова (Прелюдия)
Исп. группа
- „Финал парада“, музыка Шопена (Вальс „Бриллиант“)
*Исп. М. Мысовская, Ю. Вашенцева,
Е. Терентьева и группа*
Танцуют с шарфом
*Н. Балдина, Л. Гичева, Л. Косты-
зов и Е. Федоровская*



TANIA TERESHKO CARRYING ELENA TERENTIEVA
"ZOYA" (CHOR. LEONID JACOBSON, MUS. TCHAIKOVSKY) - MOSCOW, 1948



CAROL PRATL, YVONNE BERGE, ELENA TERENTIEVA, VERA BELOZOROVICH
ISMM - MEDVEDKOVO STUDIO, MOSCOW, DEC. 1991



MASTER CLASS WITH ELENA TERENTIEVA
ISMM - MEDVEDKOVO STUDIO, MOSCOW, DEC. 1991



CAROL PRATL, VERA BELOZOROVICH, ELENA TERENTIEVA
AFTER A LESSON AT ELENA TERENTIEVA'S, MOSCOW, DEC. 1991



YVONNE BERGE, LIDA GICHEVA, ELENA TERENTIEVA, TANIA TERESHKO
ISMM - MEDVEDKOVO STUDIO, MOSCOW, DEC. 1991



BACK: PRATL, V. BELOZOROVICH,
E. TERENTIEVA, VOLODIA
FRONT: ANIA, KATIA, JULIA, VERONIKA
ISMM - MEDVEDKOVO STUDIO, MOSCOW, DEC. 1991



SIMA LEAKE'S VISIT TO MOSCOW
L TO R: CAROL PRATL, SIMA LEAKE, NATALIA FOMINA, ELENA TERENTIEVA, ELENA FEDOROVSKAYA
ISMM - MEDVEDKOVO STUDIO, MOSCOW, SPRING 1992



L TO R: ELENA FEDOROVSKAYA, ELENA TERENTIEVA, LIGOA DUNCAN, BILL SELIGMANN (BACK), LUCY BURKICZAK, TANIA TERESHKO, KIRA KACHATUROVA (BACK), LIDA GICHEVA
ISADORA DUNCAN RETROSPECTIVE - KINOCENTER, MOSCOW, JAN. 1993



ELENA FEDOROVSKAYA, ELENA TERENTIEVA, CAROL PRATL, TANIA TERESHKO
ISADORA DUNCAN RETROSPECTIVE - KINOCENTER, MOSCOW, JAN. 1993



ELENA TERENTIEVA AT HOME AFTER A COACHING SESSION
MOSCOW, FEB. 1995



ELENA TERENTIEVA, NATALIA FOMINA
CELEBRATING ELENA TERENTIEVA'S 83RD BIRTHDAY
MOSCOW, MAY 25, 1996



ELENA TERENTIEVA, CAROL PRATL
CELEBRATING ELENA TERENTIEVA'S 83RD BIRTHDAY
MOSCOW, MAY 25, 1996

emotional expressiveness. She couldn't stand imprecision, movements lacking energy or thrown away, or movements trying to be pretty, but without meaning just for the sake of moving 'naturally'. She wanted to see the breath of life going through the entire body and soul, and every session you wanted to give her your very all, just as much as you would in performance before a thousand people.

When she saw the flame, she would tell you sincerely, yet her encouragement was never gratuitous, because her objective was to transmit her life-long experience and her knowledge, to give us keys to help us to become well-rounded performers and teachers.

I cannot convey in words all the doors that this wonderful and generous pedagogue and human being opened for me, throughout those two school years I spent in Moscow, and throughout the time of the Isadora Duncan Retrospective we organized in January 1993, an international Duncan festival which she, as well as the lovely Elena Nikolaevna Fedorovskaya, also Isadora's pupil whom I saw recently and who is very well, Lida Gicheva, Tania Tereshko and many others who had studied for varied times at Prechistenka, attended daily for a full week in Moscow.

We met often during the several trips I made to see her after our beautiful school sadly closed due to subsidy cuts, and after I had moved back to Paris in September 1993, and Vera had moved to Portugal. I remember how delighted she was when I gave her a tape player and some tapes, including her favorite, Tchaikovsky's "Sixth Symphony" which she had danced as a young girl.

She opened our eyes to the endless exploration and discovery of oneself through dance, to the joy of always trying to go beyond oneself, and to the responsibilities and rigor necessary to transmit this heritage to the next generation. Working with her was an entire conservatory, an entire school of life within one person. More than a teacher and artistic mentor, Elena Vladimirovna became a close friend and someone I loved dearly as family.

By mid-afternoon, when we would finish our session with Elena Vladimirovna, exhausted, but so fulfilled and spiritually uplifted, she would insist Vera and I stay for a meal which she would have already prepared, meatballs or omelettes, salads, tea and cakes and her special black current liqueur which she made herself from berries gathered at the family dacha. We'd sometimes also find some pretext to have champagne, and she'd enjoy telling us stories, often with great humor, of the school at Prechistenka as a young girl, the entrance audition and her first dancing lessons, stories of Isadora, Esenin, Irma and Ilya Schneider, the school administrator, the enigmatic Moscow of the 1920s, both revolutionary and romantic, the evenings when all the girls would be asked to improvise to Schumann or Schubert in front of famous cultural figures, the very first performance at the Bolshoi in 1921, when all the children came on during the *Internationale*, cheeks spotted with Isadora's lipstick as she kissed each one of them, and the many tours; or she would talk through and describe entire choreographies and exercises, humming the melodies in a perfectly-tuned crystal-clear voice. I always listened like a wide-eyed child, fascinated, and would always return with Vera after these magical afternoons full of energy to give to our own pupils the following day. I've saved all the cassettes of these conversations which I plan to transcribe. Elena Vladimirovna also generously put Barbara Kane and myself in touch with another of Isadora's Moscow pupils, her friend and former dance partner Lily Dikovskaya Grann, who returned to her native England in the late forties with her daughter Leonora and currently lives in London.



Государственная Филармония
Концертный зал
им. П. И. Чайковского
(на Малого, 20)

ПРОГРАММА
ВЕЧЕРА ТАНЦА
МОСКОВСКОЙ СТУДИИ

имени

Айседоры ДУНКАН

Художественный руководитель Е. ТЕРЕНТЬЕВА
"Партия для Г. Аманджон и С. Точмакова"
Зав. постановочной частью Е. Воронина
Оркестр танцев Д. Гичева
Свет И. Кочетов
Бригада сцены И. Лобановская
Ведет программу Т. БОБРОВА

Понедельник, 25 апреля
С 8 30 Н
1948 — 49 г.

Sadly, Elena Vladimirovna was not able to write her memoirs. The original list of the first 20 pupils of the Moscow Duncan School, typed up in 1922, which is in the archives of the Akadémia Duncan, run by Ligoa Duncan, Bill Seligmann and Dorée Duncan Seligmann, simply states that pupil № 13 was "TERENTEWA, Elena, Russian born in Moscow/Russia/1913, mother a housekeeper." Elena Vladimirovna led a rich and amazing life alongside Isadora and Irma as a young student, then as a talented soloist and artistic director of the Moscow Studio in the decades that followed. She was one of the initial students accepted into the school after Isadora's arrival in the summer of 1921, and continued to carry on this beautiful art throughout her life. This humble tribute cannot tell but a small part of her contribution to the evolution of modern dance of our century, and to a tradition that she helped keep alive underground after the studio was officially closed in 1949, in spite of the oppressions that carried on in the USSR in the forty years that followed.

The last few times I saw Elena Vladimirovna, I often went with my dear friend, the concert pianist Natalia Fomina, the former musical director of our school in Medvedkovo. Our last moments together were in Moscow in May of 1996 when we worked further on her Scriabin solo, composed for her by Lev Lukin, to the same music Isadora used to create her "Revolutionary Etude", and on a Medtner composition also choreographed by Lukin. Thereafter, we stayed in touch by phone, and I remained in contact with her very kind daughter, Marina, and her family.

I didn't return to Moscow for a long year and a half as I had been attending the Laban program at the Paris National Conservatory, where I notated her Scriabin solo as my final project. When I finally went to Moscow last December 1997, hoping to spend some time together, I was not able to see her, as she was already quite ill and in the care of her daughter. But her inspiration was and is as strong as ever; it's an unwaning motivating force that, along with Isadora's, keeps one going, in spite of life's obstacles and difficult moments. It's that inner voice giving inner strength that every Duncan dancer, as well as any artist striving to maintain and develop a worthy tradition hears and follows.

Without knowing yet that Elena Vladimirovna had passed away into another world on February 7, our company gave a performance in Paris with Ligoa Duncan and Bill Seligmann as a tribute of thanks to her on February 20. She was strongly in my heart and mind and I know now, that her spirit and love were with us, too, as they will always be...

CAROL PRATL



ELENA TERENTIEVA - "PRELUDE" (CHOPIN)
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF MUSIC & MOVEMENT (MEDVEDKOVO STUDIO)
MOSCOW, DECEMBER 1991