



Palazzo Contarini Polignac

Isadora Duncan Dance Concert
1 March 2019, Venice



Autoportrait, 1882

*In homage to Winnaretta Singer
Princesse Edmond de Polignac
(Yonkers, 8 January 1865 - London, 26 November 1943)*

Les Amis de Winnaretta Singer

The Association “Les Amis de Winnaretta Singer” was created in 2015 in Paris, with the cooperation of the descendants of Princesse Edmond de Polignac.

The Association “Les Amis de Winnaretta Singer” falls with the continuity of her moral, artistic and intellectual heritage. The Association hopes to serve as a perpetual reminder of the important activities of Winnaretta Singer in behalf of the sciences, literature, the arts, culture in general, and philanthropy. Its goal is to make known and perpetuate this heritage by all possible means, specifically in the following areas: music, visual arts, literature, architecture, understood through commitment with their innovations and explorations, in the spirit of Winnaretta Singer.

In this spirit, where beauty meets modernity, Isadora Duncan was obviously part of Winnaretta Singer’s circle of the avant-garde artists that she welcomed both in her Salon in Paris, and here at the Palazzo Contarini Polignac, where our Association organizes cultural and musical events.

In tribute to Winaretta Singer and Isadora Duncan, we are happy to welcome today Jeanne Brescianny and The International Isadora Duncan Institute Dancers for the superb performance “Isadora in the Aura of Ecstasy”.

Marguerite de Sabran

President of the Association “Les Amis de Winnaretta Singer”

Edith Wharton missed Isadora Duncan early in Newport, RD, but saw her in Paris. There she beheld the dance that she , « had always dreamed of, a flowing of movement into movement, an endless interweaving of motion and music, satisfying every sense as a flower does, or a phrase of Mozart’s. »

She compared Duncan to Proust, a name, « destined like hers, to fly thorough our imaginations on a shower of spring blossoms.

The Isadora Duncan International Institute dances, based on Isadora’s original choreography, have been preserved by the Isadora Duncan International Institute. They include dances from the period of Grunewald School (1905-1908), which were subsequently taught by Isadora Duncan and her sister, Elizabeth to the “Isadorables”: Anna, Irma, Maria-Theresa, and Lisa Duncan. These dancers of the Isadorian tradition later translated the technique and choreography of Isadora to their own pupils.

The Isadora Duncan International Institute has brought this original choreography, as well as new works, to a wide range of audiences, both adults and children, in educational and theatrical settings. Arts-lovers, creative arts therapists, educators, choreographers, and specialists of archetypal psychology are just some of the groups with which the Isadora Duncan International Institute has engaged in fruitful collaboration.

Today Duncan’s art, philosophy and pedagogy thrive in the vast body of technique, choreography and expressive arts active within The Isadora Duncan International Institute. The organization stands as a living model of eternal ideals in present time. The miracles of stillness, silence and repose – modes rediscovered in the West by Duncan as a treasury for embodiment – serve the sacred dancer and all dancers as they walk, run, skip, leap, rise, fall, rest and spin in her footsteps. From the bastion of the IDII’s choreographic holdings, 200 strong, their art descends in direct lineage from Maria-Theresa Duncan and in second generation inheritance from Anna, Irma and Elizabeth Duncan via Hortense Kooluris, Julia Levien and Anita Zahn. It is the IDII’s special mission to present the art, philosophy and pedagogy of Isadora not only on the stages of theaters and classrooms, but also on sea coasts, mountain tops, ancient altars and sacred groves, temple steps and the far-reaching dimensions of our own and others’ transformative potential, in accord with Duncan’s poetics of movement and sense of the beautiful.

Sophie Eustache, IDII Ambassador to Venice

Programme



Isadora in the Aura of Ecstasy

Jeanne Bresciani
&
The Isadora Duncan International Institute Dancers

Jeanne Bresciani
Rosemary Cooper

Maille Biederman
Tiffany Bui-Rothman
Sasha Lehrer
Laurie Mlodzik
Eva Pullano
Ruth Rose Rae

Introduction

Jeanne Bresciani, PhD: "Isadora Duncan in Festive Enactment"

Performance: Isadora in the Aura of Ecstasy

A Baroque Follia
Corelli, *Violin Sonata in D Minor*, Op. 5, no.12 'La Follia'

'Jeune fille gravissant les marches'
Debussy, *Girl with the Flaxen Hair*

The Mists
Chopin, *Etude in E Major*, Op.10, no.11

The 'Mer'
Chopin, *Etude in C Major*, Op.10, no.1

Winaretta's Moment
Hahn, *L'heure Exquise*

Waters of La Serenissima
Chopin, *Barcarolle in F# Major*, Op. 60

For Edmond
Tournier, *Air à danser*

Ode to Nike: Triumph of the Human Spirit
Chopin, *Polonaise in A Major*, Op. 53, no. 6

Ceremony of the Bull
Ravel, *Boléro*

Choreography by Jeanne Bresciani after Isadora Duncan
Original Choreographies and
Reconstructions by Jeanne Bresciani

Isadora in the Aura of Ecstasy: Venice

“Venice, this is breath!” Lord Byron



Buoyed and buoyant upon the waves of the Canale Grande, we approach the watery threshold of Palazzo Contarini-Polignac and Venice at the time of Carnevale di Venezia, a pearl nestled within its own sonorous aura of ecstasy and shimmering appeal. Attuning to the incredible callings of La Serenissima, with a whole array of works new for Polignac, we offer a lively masque of music and dance harkening to the artistic heritage of the treasured precincts of the palazzo as well as to Isadora’s intense lifelong musical rapport with the great composers. By 1901 as the first dancer and choreographer on the Western stage creating dances to the classical music of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms et al, she braved the consternation of critics to launch a new genre of art that freed the human



body and the personal soul for expression, heretofore, perchance dreamt but never seen. A profound catalyst to Duncan’s not merely dancing to these masters of the past’s most splendid works in edifying surroundings to exalted accompaniment, but to Duncan’s meeting the living masters of her day, among them, Hahn, Ravel, Fauré and Debussy - were Winnaretta Singer and Edmond de Polignac. Amidst their circle of intoxicated in-breathing and fertile outpouring of creativity in the artistic capital of the world, Paris, and then in the miracle city of Venice, Isadora found herself in even closer proximity and familiarity with contemporaneous musical masters of Impressionism. She experienced atelier or salon accompaniment to works of



Chopin by Fauré, Debussy and Ravel. At the same time, she received shocked first reception, then awe, from Hahn’s critique while creating independently to the works of Corelli, Schubert, Franck, Strauss, Scriabin, among others.

Dancing within the incubatory domain of the palazzo, with its energy both romantic and avant-garde, we summon the magic of Carnevale in dances sacred and profane implicit to the original rites of this festival before avid seekers of the arts. Sourcing from the sublime and earthed mode

of Isadora Duncan’s ‘style transcendent’, Jeanne Bresciani & the Isadora Duncan International Institute Dancers, named the “Divine in Motion,” shall draw forth ancient and eternal marvels of this tradition-laden week, hoping to lend deepened sense impressions and greater felt experience to viewers. With the goal for art in performance to stir a rapture of the soul and the senses, we highlight the ecstatic aspects of Carnevale from Isadora’s own canon to new Isadora Duncan International Institute



works in tableaux vivants, movement visions and physical theater. In dances: entailing leave taking from the ball into the night’s subtle rocking of the gondola in Chopin’s Barcarolle; to the triumph of the human spirit alive within the peaceable Republic in Chopin’s Polonaise; and in the dreamlike, tempered moments of Hahn’s L’heure exquise, we reawaken the innate beauty and unmatched art at the heart of Carnevale’s ecstasy, endowed, enduring, native and natural, in perennial homage to this site and its seasonal mythsos.



Image Credits in Order :
Antonio Canova, Dancer’s with Veils and Crowns
Tiziano, Presentation of the Virgin
Philipp Otto Runge, Morning
Water Crane, Neptune’s Horses
Eugène Delacroix, Liberty Leading the People
The Bull-Leaping Fresco from the Great Palace at Knossos, Crete

Jeanne Bresciani, M.A., M.A., I.M.A., Ph.D. the main protégée of Maria – Theresa Duncan, adopted daughter of Isadora, serves as Artistic Director and Director of Education for the Isadora Duncan International Institute with affiliates worldwide, founded by Maria-Theresa Duncan and Kay Bardsley in 1977, and handed down to Bresciani, is recognized internationally as a solo performer, choreographer, educator and scholar of unparalleled authority in the Duncan oeuvre. Her lineage encompasses not only years of study with Maria-Theresa Duncan and Kay Bardsley but training and extensive performance with Hortense Kooluris and Julia Levien of the Anna and Irma Duncan lines and childhood tutelage with Anita Zahn, the primary Duncan pedagogue in America, from the Elizabeth Duncan School in Germany.

Bresciani received her first M.A. from Williams College where she was awarded a Kress Fellowship, in collaboration with The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute Graduate Program in the History of Art. Her second M.A., from NYU, culminated with the complete catalogue of Duncan's extant library held by Victor Seroff, Duncan's last lover and biographer. As NYU Faculty, she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and received her Ph.D. from NYU with the dissertation entitled, *Myth and Image in the Dance of Isadora Duncan*.

Her performances as Duncan soloist include Lincoln Center, The British Museum, The Joyce Theater, United Nations General Assembly, UNESCO, the Pushkin Library in Russia, Castles of the Rhine, Olympic Ceremonies in Korea and Japan, Asahi and New Parthenon Theaters in Tokyo, Massey Hall and The Ford Theater in Canada, Teatro Carcano, Opera Terni and the Vignale Festival in Italy. A major focus of IDII and Bresciani influence has been the great traditions and festivals of the West, namely those of the Italian and Greek world of inspiration with performances at numerous archaeological sites in Greece, particularly at Delphi where she serves as the Founding Chair of The Festival for the Reinstatement of the

Delphic Games, following Isadora's early interest in its renovation. Celebrated biennially, The Games are open to art enthusiasts from all over the world. Historically, second only to the Olympic Games, the Delphic Games celebrated art, music, dance, poetry, theatre and song in addition to sport. In Italy, IDII's dedication to the preservation of culture, while inventing and reconstructing new works of mythical and imaginal import to the ancient art of festival, has led to years of performance for Jeanne Bresciani and the IDII Dancers at Carnevale di Venezia and other annual events in palaces throughout Venice.

In addition to a celebrated career as a performer, Jeanne directs the first professional programs in Isadora Duncan Studies, which she established at New York University in 1987 on the Master's level. Today, Jeanne's education programs are regularly held at the IDII's Mother House Tempio Di Danza, at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY, at the 92Y Harkness Dance Center in NYC, Kaatsbaan International Dance Center, and at the New York Center for Jungian Studies. In 2014, Jeanne founded the first Isadora Duncan Certificate Program in Beijing under the auspices of The Apollo Institute, dedicated to the training and development of the first M.A. and Ph.D. candidates in Expressive Arts Therapies in China, and launched The IDII European Certificate Program in Isadora Duncan Studies in Spring 2016 adjacent sacred sites of early Modernism in Southern France, reoccurring annually in different European cities.

Among accolades, Jeanne Bresciani has been hailed by the American press as "the foremost interpreter of Duncan's dance in North America," "the Divine in Motion," "the keeper of the Duncan Flame," "the standard bearer of the Duncan tradition," "a force to be reckoned with," and "Dynamo of the Dance."

From Duncan's Autobiography

"One dark afternoon there was a knock at the studio door. A woman stood there. She was of such imposing stature and such powerful personality that her entrance seemed to be announced by one of those Wagnerian motifs, deep and strong, and bearing portents of coming events and, indeed, the motif then announced has run through my life ever since, bringing in its vibrations stormy, tragic happenings.

"I am the Princess de Polignac," she said, "a friend of the Countess Greffuhle. When I saw you dance your art interested me, and particularly my husband, who is a composer."

She had a handsome face, somewhat marred by a too heavy and protruding lower jaw and a masterful chin. It might have been the face of a Roman Emperor, except that an expression of cold aloofness protected the otherwise voluptuous promise of her eyes and features. When she spoke, her voice had also a hard, metallic twang which was mystifying as coming from her, whom one would have expected to have richer, deeper tones. I afterwards divined that these cold looks and the tone of her voice were really a mask to hide, in spite of her princely position, a condition of extreme and sensitive shyness. I spoke to her of my Art and my hopes, and the Princess at once offered to arrange a concert for me in her studio. She painted, and was also a fine musician, playing both the piano and the organ. The Princess seemed to sense the poverty of our bare, cold studio and our pinched looks, for, when abruptly leaving, she shyly placed an envelope on the table, in which we found two thousand francs. I believe such acts as these are habitual with Madame de Polignac, in spite of her reputation of being rather cold and unsympathetic.

The next afternoon I went to her home, where I met the Prince de Polignac, a fine musician of considerable talent; an exquisite, slight gentleman, who always wore a little black velvet cap, which framed his delicate, beautiful face. I donned my tunic and danced for him in his music-room, and he was enraptured. He hailed me as a vision and a dream for which he had long waited. My theory of the relation of movement to sounds interested him deeply, as did all my hopes and ideals for the renaissance of the dance as an Art. He played for me delightfully on a charming old harpsichord, which he loved and caressed with his finely tapering fingers. I felt at once for him the warmth of appreciation, and when he finally exclaimed, "Quelle adorable enfant. Isadora, comme tu es adorable," I replied shyly, "Moi, aussi, je vous adore. Je voudrais bien danser toujours pour vous, et composer des danses religieuses inspirés par votre belle musique."

And then we envisaged a collaboration. Alas, what a despairing waste there is on this earth. The hope of a collaboration, which would have been so precious to me, was soon afterwards cut short by his death."

Isadora Duncan

"My Life" Boni and Liveright, 1927 New York



Isadora at Lido by Raymond Duncan 1903

Credits

Director: Jeanne Bresciani, Artist-in-Residence

Assistant Director : Rosemary Cooper

Production Assistants: Stuart Orenstein & Gavin Krieger

Costumes: Janine Stockin and Karen Sanders

Lighting and Sound Engineering: Tecnoluci

Special Thanks

Special thanks go to Sylvia Kahan, Professor of Music, City University of New York, author of Music's Modern Muse and In Search of New Scales, Musical Director of L'AAWS.

Acknowledgement

To Sophie Eustache, Ambassador to the City of Venice on behalf of the IDII, with gratitude for her lasting commitment to Carnevale di Venezia and to the artistic legacy of Isadora Duncan

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