



Palazzo Contarini Polignac

Isadora Duncan Dance Concert
9 February 2018, 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 by Henri-François de Breteuil and Daniel Popesco, with the cooperation of the descendants of the Princesse Edmond de Polignac.

The Association “Les Amis de Winnaretta Singer” falls within 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 on behalf of the sciences, literature, the arts, culture in general, and philanthropy. Its goal is to make known and to perpetuate this heritage through all possible means, specifically in the following areas: music, visual arts, literature, architecture, understood through engagement with their innovations and explorations, in the spirit of Winnaretta Singer. The Association organizes cultural and musical events at the Palazzo Contarini-Polignac in Venice. The high point of these events is the Weekend musical at the palazzo, which takes place annually in November.

We are happy to welcome today Jeanne Bresciani and The Isadora Duncan International Institute Dancers for an exceptional dance recital, which will be preceded by a pre-performance talk by Madame Bresciani.

Finally, I would like to announce that, after numerous exchanges with our French tax authorities our tenacity has born fruit: as of 2017, our Association is authorized to give out fiscal receipts for the gifts and dues paid by its members. I would like to thank all the members of our Association; their generous support of our activities is essential.

Henri-François de Breteuil

President of the Association « Les Amis de Winnaretta Singer »

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.

Duncan’s later dances, such as those of Duncan’s Russian period, were passed down to the Isadorables and have been preserved by the Isadora Duncan International Institute in notated and video formats. 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.

Jeanne Bresciani, Ph.D., serves as Artistic Director for the Isadora Duncan International Institute, Inc. (IDII), founded by Maria-Theresa Duncan, ‘the last dancing Isadorable’ and Kay Bardsley in 1977. Ms. Bresciani is recognized nationally and internationally as a solo performer, choreographer, educator and scholar of unparalleled authority on Isadora Duncan’s life, works and performance repertoire.

Her background encompasses years of intensive study and performance with Hortense Kooluris and Julia Levien of the Anna and Irma Duncan heritage, as well as childhood dance training and young adulthood internship with Anita Zahn of the Elizabeth Duncan School.

She has performed as soloist within the United States at many renowned venues; in the United States: Lincoln Center, The Joyce Theater, Kaatsbaan International Dance Center, Bardavon Opera House, Woodstock Playhouse, Baltimore Museum of Art, National Museum for Women in the Arts, National Museum of Dance, The Egg, Landsburgh Theater, Atlas Theater, before the United Nations General Assembly and at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival; in Canada: Massey Hall, Toronto Centre for the Arts and the Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain; in Europe and the UK: the British Museum, the Teatro Carcano (Milano), Vignaledanza (Torino), Opera Terni, Teatro Sociale (Bergamo), Centro Teatrale di Ricerca & Palazzo Pisani Moretta (Venice), Théâtre Regard du Cynge (Paris), the Darmstadt Orangerie and Fulda Castle (Germany), Smolny Cathedral and the Pushkin Library (St. Petersburg), The National Dance Theater (Budapest), The Delphi Museum and many archaeological sites in Greece; in Asia: the TAMA New Parthenon, the Akasaka Theater and Asahi Theater (Tokyo), MODAFE (Seoul); throughout Taiwan in The Soul of Nature Tour; and in Brazil at Artur Rubinstein Hall, the National Theater, Pallas Athena and Teatro SESC Pompeia.

Sophie Eustache

Programme

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



*Winnaretta Singer and Isadora Duncan
in "Realization" of Art, Love and Life*

Jeanne Bresciani
&
The Isadora Duncan International Institute Dancers

Jeanne Bresciani
Rosemary Cooper

Peter Hraniotis
Laurie Mlodzik
Eva Pullano

Ruth Rose Rae
Celeste Royo
Mari Sakahara

Edouard Lestournelle, Guest Artist

Lecture

Jeanne Bresciani, PhD: "Isadora Duncan and the Muses Among Us"

Performance: A Lasting Luminescence

Benediction

Angels of the Polignacs

Gabriel Fauré, *Pavane*, Op. 50

Inherited Grace

Claude Debussy, *La fille aux cheveux de lin*

The protective spirits of the ancient palace arise and rouse the creative genius throng of ancestral and present energies for the renaissance of the sonorous, terpsichorean Muse, personified in a tiny, burgeoning, maiden spirit.

Art

Awakening of Auras: An Isadorian Inspiration unto Winnaretta and Edmond Paris En Route to Venice

Apparition of Isadora

Johann Strauss, *The Blue Danube*, Op. 314

Rêverie : Their Splendid Vision

Edmond de Polignac, *Rêverie*

In the Salon with Fauré, Fortuny, Diaghilev & a Mysterious Visitor from the East

Edmond de Polignac, *Polonaise Fantaisie*

Trio of Waltzes: Into the Romantic Dream, His, Hers, & Theirs

Her Ball Play

Frédéric Chopin, *Waltz in Gb Major*, Op. 70, no. 1

His Narcissus

Frédéric Chopin, *Waltz in C# minor*, Op. 64, no. 2

Their Butterfly Duet

Franz Schubert, *Valse sentimentale*, Op. 50, no. 13

Ride of the Valkyries: A Mission in Flight

Richard Wagner, *Ride of the Valkyries* from *Die Walküre*

Love

The Agony and the Ecstasy: Isadora & Paris Singer in Abundance & Abandon Within the Shell of Venice

On the Boat: Love's First Light

Claude Debussy, *En Bateau*, L. 65. no. 1,

Isadora & the Isadorables: In the School of Life

Respighi, Belkis, Queen of Sheba

Un Amour Brillant: In Worldly Rapture

Frédéric Chopin, *Valse brillante in Ab Major*, Op. 34, no. 1

Love in the Crucible: "Wisdom or Reason or Joy or Sorrow Eternal"

Frédéric Chopin, *Prelude in G# minor*, Op. 28, no. 12

The Triumph of the Human Spirit: Through Love and Loss

Chopin, *Polonaise in A major ("Military")*, Op. 40, no. 1

Life

Emanating from Isadora and Nijinsky: To the Magical and the Mythical In the Carnevale di Venezia of the Imagination

Stranger in Paradise: In Your Very Midst

Alexander Borodin, *excerpt from Polovtsian Dances*

Faun Forest Precinct: Of Primordial Pleasure

Claude Debussy, *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*

The Rose Remembered: In Innocent Refrain

Alexander Borodin, *Notturmo*

The Magic Fire: Of Every Longing

Richard Wagner, *Magic Fire Music from Die Walküre*

The True Reverence: In Paradisum

Gabriel Fauré, *In Paradisum from Requiem*, op. 48

Original Choreography by Isadora Duncan

Original Choreography and Reconstructions by Jeanne Bresciani

Art, Love and Life at the Heart of Palazzo Contarini-Polignac

I. Art

"the glorious childbirth of the dance" ID

A solo figure emerges onto the western stage, veiled in the cloak of past, present and future – Isadora Duncan would become portent, beacon and catalyst at the threshold of modernism. It was said she would appear and disappear as if an apparition before your eyes, so sublime was her new art of the dance. Fortuitously, meeting the Prince and Princesse de Polignac, following a 1901 Paris Salon performance, young Isadora began a real and imaginal 'co-mission' with the Singers toward a shared artistic vision, calling further to us for fruition today. Merging arts terpsichorean, musical and theatrical, Duncan, soulfully forged her art from sources primordial and eternal, envisaging it born anew from a long, dormant



rest. She sought radical diversion from the coquetry of the court ballet and embraced a self-modeled, Wagnerian "gesamtkunstwerk," inclusive of science, literature, art, myth, history and psychology. Working at a distance from mimesis, Duncan called instead upon mnemosyne, the Mother of the



Muses, in the task to recollect and reinfuse true, good and beautiful movement potential for humankind. She professed, "To express the most moral, healthful and beautiful in art," saying "that is the mission of the dancer, and to this I dedicate my life." Duncan had only to body forth these ideals with a naturalness and harmony of movement, heretofore, lost to the generations before her. She called into play body, mind, heart, spirit and soul



for an artistic imperative, as in her mandate for "the highest intelligence in the freest body." She summoned tutelary spirits of the great thinkers of the West, here and gone, as well as the virtuosic artisans spanning from Ancient Greece through the early 20th century. Absorbed in potent ideas and forms, Isadora had no desire to revive the Greek Dance, but rather to create with live boldness, new choreographies of architectonic stature to announce a clear and immediate call for the "dance of the future." Shockingly, and without precedence, they were presented in simple tunics outlining the body

and fused to the music of classical composers. In so doing, they appeared as the first modern dances, hailed as "visible music," and became statements on the burgeoning self in movement, accruing that moving self incrementally to mythic proportion.

The momentous surge and the principles underlying it that transported Duncan from the shores of the Pacific Ocean to the Venetian lagoon and beyond, was undoubtedly her "wave theory." Her dance evocations on the oneness and wholeness of an individual, authentic being in the purity and originality of powerful solo forms were to spawn in ways oceanic, not only into what is known as performance art today, but through generations and continents of influence in dance, improvisational movement and theater, creative movement for children and the field of dance therapy.

In homage to the Polignac-Singer lineage, whose coupled, first sightings and support of Duncan generated a turning point for Duncan and many other artists, we offer this segment of Isadora at her inspired origins to the music of Strauss, Schubert, Chopin, Wagner and Edmond de Polignac with presentiments and postludes of the shock and after-shock of her profound influence portrayed by some of her exponents tonight upon the Polignac stage.



II. Love

"Love, the highest ecstasy

Is all mine to give

Mine to give –

To those who have need of it." ID

Born from the efflorescent garden of the once standing Palazzo Paradiso adjacent Palazzo Contarini-Polignac, Isadora Duncan and Paris Singer shared a romantic love, a passionate life and a titanic loss equivalent to energies that, perhaps, only a place as consummate as Lady Venice's La Serenissima could bestow and support. These magical isles are a sacred topography, surpassing, as an intricate admixture of nature and culture, perhaps all else on earth - synonymous to the impossible. Like Venice herself, Duncan



was an organic protagonist with a newly born urgency for art and beauty, replete with the numinous in service to only one thing greater than art, namely - Love. We hear this in Duncan's wide call to her disciples, beseeching them to, "unite and create this miracle of love."

Art, love and the miraculous, qualities of Venice and gifts inherent to Edmond de Polignac and Winnaretta Singer, duly set the stage for a beneficence that flourished within the ancient walls of the palazzo and its guardians for decades to come. Similar shared ideals set amidst a social whirl, simultaneously tinged with tumultuous agonies and ecstasies, enlivened the cultural bond and

munificent outpouring that marked the Duncan-Singer relationship. Over years, Palazzo Contarini-Polignac remained a cultural epicenter for ground breaking classical musicians such as Fauré, Ravel, Stravinsky and others, who articulated platforms of modernity contemporaneous with that of Duncan. Today the Polignac-Singer legacy energizes artistic renewal, continuing to manifest eloquently.

In Proustian mode, theatrically, one might envision the chambers of the heart amidst the 'historic' sala of the Palazzo Contarini-Polignac – telling 'his-story', 'her-story', and the human story. To experience any aspect of Edmond's throbbing sound "building in motion" commensurate to Duncan's profound "emotion into motion," may give to us a glimpse of his artistic dream and her root cause. A reach toward atmospheres and stratospheres of musical and artistic heights, tinged with the romantic energy that held Isadora and Paris Singer in sway for many years, becomes our goal. Amidst these halls we bear witness today to great loves and artistic fulfillment, gained, lost and regained.



In grief, Duncan related, "My life has known but two motives – Love and Art. And often love destroyed art – and often the imperious call of art put a tragic end to love – for these two have known no accord but constant battle." We take up a blatant sword and a reconciliatory aegis with sensitivity and immediacy to invest a richness, purpose and meaning into the powerful memento of felt experience that Isadora's dances carry as 'the many faces of love'.

We recognize during this Valentine season, Duncan's prescription of love for all ills. She, for whom the "only cure is love," and for whom "the dance is love, it is only love, it alone and that is enough." We remember to sketch the panoply of human emotion and embody the dreamscape for which Edmond and Winnaretta, Duncan and Singer, gave to us blueprint that a 'resonance unto rapture' might peel forth here through an impassioned legacy of dances

to Chopin and, thereafter, to Debussy and Respighi.

~

III. Life

"Very little is known in our day of the magic which resides in movement." ID

Poised between East and West, Venice, as a threshold, a cross roads, a port of call, amid many currents from its earliest inception, flowed in and out with the confluence of the exotic and the mysterious. Never, more so, do those forces of otherness, the primitive, the elegant, the fantastical and the strange, intermingle than in the evocative ways and circuitous routes of Carnevale di Venezia. Therein, man metamorphoses before the eyes of all to the creaturely, mythical and magical. What is known under the shimmering light of day becomes, at once, obscure and intoxicating by night, and through the shape shifts of anthropomorphosis begs curious examination.



Magnetically drawn, Diaghilev under the universal spell of Duncan's originating, enigmatic art, transposed many of the same paradoxical impulses to the stage of the Ballet Russe.



In our recreations inspired by the imaginal fusion of Duncan and Diaghilev, where Strangers embrace as lovers in a floating paradise, or are masked in passing on the calle, one can sense the imminent, chimaerial meeting of Isadora and Nijinsky within the mise-en-scene of a Diaghilev production. Rose Remembered, flanked by the memory and mirage of euphoric first encounter, harkens to Duncan's early dances of blooming love, replete with auras of light and shadow. So, too, within the Faun Forest Precinct, the young Pan of preternatural impulse stuns the coy nymph, reed pipe in hand and animated with the geometry of desire. As Antoine Bourdelle wrote of Nijinsky, "He is filled with the dark effluvium of free animals..." like unto that said of Isadora by Élie Faure, "...we eagerly watched her rediscover that primitive purity which, every

two or three thousand years reappears from the depths of the abyss of our worn out conscience to restore a holy animality to us again..."

Imagine Duncan, resuscitator of the raw and primal in dance, and the young, malleable, adherent Nijinsky, who seek succor and sip the sup at the source from wellheads of Venice. Might Casanova pale in comparison or might he be the ancestral key? Tonight we go again to the pitch of sudden, startling emotion. Let the emphatic, untamed response, visioning and envisioning of the seen and unseen duet of "inhuman reach" go on.

To the music of Fauré, Debussy, Borodin and Wagner, may we cross every impasse to the light brimming regions of art.

Image credits as they appear:

- Edward Steichen: *Isadora Duncan in the Parthenon*
- Parthenon Pediments Friezes (partial)
- Temple of Apollo at Delphi
- Unknown photographer, *Isadora Duncan and Paris Singer*
- Mariano Fortuny, *The Embrace of Sigmund and Sieglinde*
- Antonio Canova, *Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss*
- Gustave Moreau, *The Chimaera*
- Antoine Bourdelle, *Isadora Duncan and Vaslav Nijinsky*
- Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Lock*

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."



Isadora at Lido by Raymond Duncan 1903

Credits

Director: Jeanne Bresciani, Artist-in-Residence

Assistant Director : Rosemary Cooper

Production Assistant: Johannes Telscher

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, who recorded the two piano works by Edmond de Polignac.

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

Palazzo Contarini Polignac gives thanks to: Martina Lucarda Grimani, Fem Offset, Tecnoluci

Palazzo Contarini Polignac
874 Dorsoduro
30123 Venezia
www.palazzocontarinipolignac.com

Cover Illustration
Carnavale in Piazzetta - Toni Lucarda