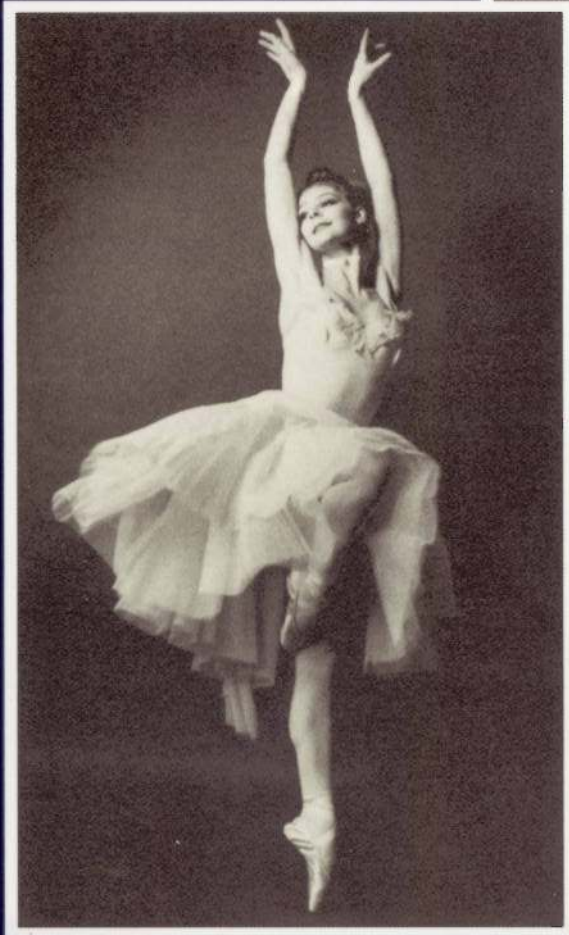
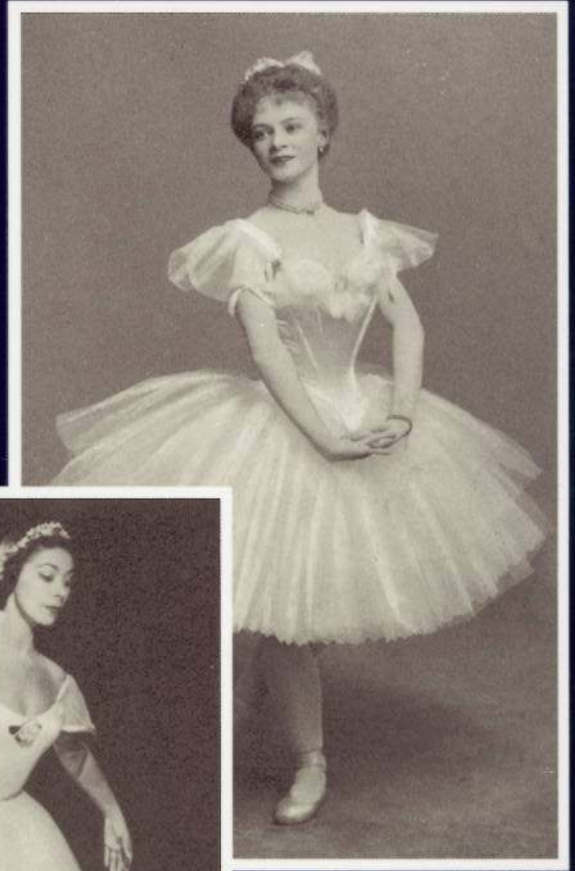




# *Royal Academy of Dancing*

## *The First Seventy Five Years*



*Derek Parker*



*Royal Academy of Dancing*

***The First  
Seventy Five  
Years***

*Derek Parker*



## In the beginning.

There was plenty of good dancing to be seen in England in 1920. In April of that year Pavlova appeared at Drury Lane with her own company. In June and July you could have gone to the Royal Opera House in London, or later in the year to theatres in Bournemouth, Leicester, Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds, Liverpool and Birmingham and seen

English dancers were not, however, famous throughout Europe – except those Diaghilev had taken up and re-named. These were exceptional beings – though apart from Pavlova, whose company was not notable for dancers who could even begin to rival her either technically or in stage presence, there were one or two more who were favourites of the public: certainly Adeline Genée, perhaps the equal of

it was clear to most people within the profession that there might be more if the country possessed better teachers – or rather, if the good teachers were promoted and encouraged. When Marie Rambert first came to London during the first world war, she was appalled at the abysmal standard of teaching: 'I had visited several English schools and to my amazement saw little girls of three or four put into hard, real ballet shoes and running about on their points with contorted legs.'

There were of course some excellent teachers: Malvina Cavallazzi, Édouard Espinosa, Katti Lanner, Lucia Corman, among them. But of the two thousand dance teachers said to be working in England, only about a hundred were competent. The teaching profession was entirely disorganised and unregulated: indeed, it could scarcely be called a profession, for anyone could set up as a teacher, and many who did turned out pupils with only the most rudimentary technique. Something must surely be done to make it less easy for bad teachers to wreck the chances of young dancers by incompetent teaching.

The first flicker of a light which was to change the situation came with the publication in the *Dancing Times* in 1916 of a teaching syllabus devised by Édouard Espinosa and headed 'What every Teacher of Operatic Dancing OUGHT TO KNOW AND BE ABLE TO TEACH'. It caused considerable interest. Espinosa insisted that though he had rationalised it, it was not his invention – there was nothing in it that had not 'gradually been handed down from the Masters of the Past' – including Beauchamps (ballet master at the Opéra in 1664) and Pecour, Vestris, Dauberval, Perrot, Taglioni, Petipa and Leon Espinosa, Officier



Édouard Espinosa in costume, with Ruth Berney.

The R.A.D.'s earliest syllabus was based on his 1916 article in *The Dancing Times*.

Diaghilev's company in *Pulcinella* and *Le Chant de Rossignol*, with Karsavina and Massine – and also with a number of English dancers, heavily disguised by *noms-de-danse*: Vera Clark as Vera Savina, Hilda Munnings as Lydia Sokolova. As soon as the Russian company left Covent Garden, Adolph Bolm led a small group into the theatre, while after the tour Karsavina gave a season with her own dancers at the Coliseum.

Pavlova where sheer popularity with the public was concerned, and Phyllis Bedells, who in 1914 had succeeded Lydia Kyasht as prima ballerina at the Empire Theatre.

But if there were some English dancers who commanded affection, admiration and respect,

### WHAT EVERY TEACHER OF OPERATIC DANCING OUGHT TO KNOW AND BE ABLE TO TEACH.

#### Positions.

**Side Practice.**—Pliés, grand battements, fouetté-battements, battements, tendus, rond-de-jambe à terre, assemblés, soutenus, battements on the col-de-pied, ronds-de-jambe en l'air, développés, ballottés, fouetté-ronds-de-jambe en tournant.

**Centre Practice.**—Same as above. With alternate feet and use of both arms.

**Arms.**—Bras bas, demi-bras, seconde, attitudes, double bras or couronne, opposition, arabesques, croisé, attitude grecque.

**Adage (Slow Movements).**—Dégagés, chassés, coupés, pasés, attitudes, arabesques, détournés, assemblés, soutenus en tournant, grand rond-de-jambe, demi-fouetté, fouettés, relevés, relations, préparations for pirouettes. All pirouettes, grand fouetté, mélange de points.

#### Porte de Bras.

**Steps.**—Pas Marchés, glissades, assemblés, jetés, échappés, ballonnés, temps levés, pas de basque, pas de chat, pas de cheval, fouetté raccourci, pas de bourrée, embolités, débolités, sissones, temps de fêche, temps de culso, compound steps, coupé fouettés, temps de points.

**Petite Batterie.**—Briés, entrechats, 3, 4 and 5, small cabrioles, jetés battus, simple royales.

**Grande Batterie.**—Advanced cabrioles, entrechats, 6, 7, and 8, double royales, sissones battues, entrechats de volée, and en tournant, grands jetés battus.

**Steps of Elevation.**—Changements soubresauts, ronds-de-jambe en l'air, temps de l'ange, temps de poisson, temps collé, temps plané, etc., etc., etc.

The above list was prepared by Espinosa. It was not invented by him. It has gradually been handed down from the Masters of the Past.

Reprinted from the September issue.



d'Académie, who himself had been taught by Taglioni, Petipa and a number of their contemporaries.

In his account of the foundation of what was to become the Royal Academy of Dancing, written rather endearingly in the third person and published by himself in a rare little book almost thirty years after the event, Espinosa recalled 'the tremendous amount of correspondence' which followed that publication.

'One of the first letters of congratulation came from Madame Adeline Genée,' he said, 'who thanked [me] for having undertaken the crusade against the bad teaching in this country.' The non-dancing press took up the subject. Espinosa gave a number of interviews. 'It is absolute nonsense to say that the English temperament is not suited for dancing,' he told a reporter from *The Lady's Pictorial*. 'The English girls I have taught are admirably suited in figure and in temperament, and they have done some beautiful and artistic work. If they will only take art seriously, and are able to afford the proper training, they should make perfect dancers.' At sixteen or seventeen, he added, a girl should be quite capable of making a living by dancing 'provided of course she has been an apt pupil and is temperamentally and physically fitted for it.'

P. J. S. Richardson, the Editor of the *Dancing Times*, was extremely interested not only by the article but by the response to it. But in 1916 the country was in the third year of war; it was not a good time to attempt to put Espinosa's ideas – which included the revolutionary notion that teachers of ballet should actually be examined on their work – into practise. Moreover, as Richardson

put, it 'the leading members of the profession did not know one another and, frankly, were a little distrustful.'

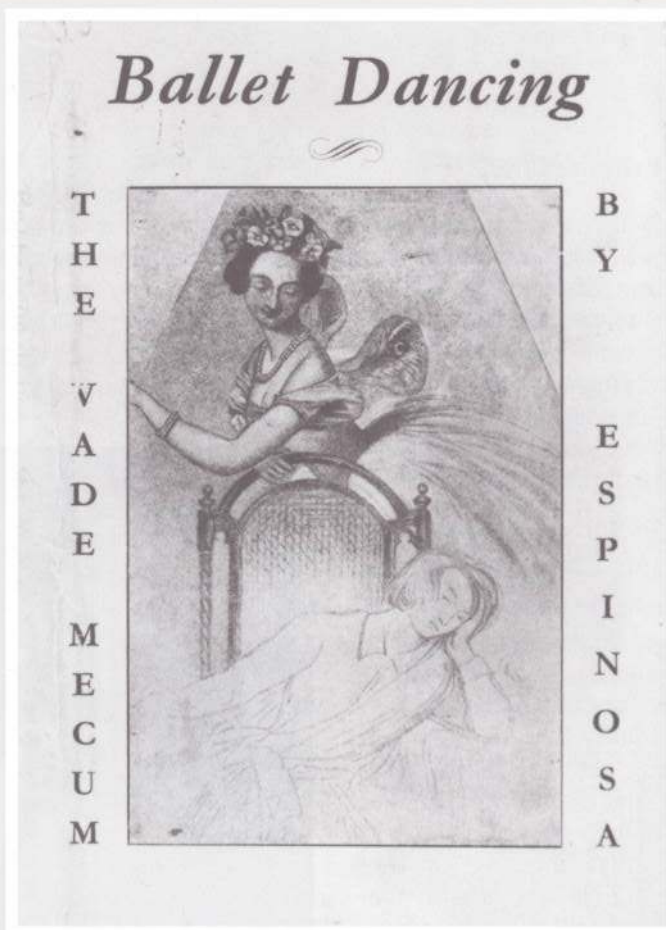
### *Teachers 'don't know the rudiments.'*

Espinosa however continued to champion his syllabus and his plans for it. 'It is little short of criminal', he said at the time, 'that people should be permitted to pose as teachers of dancing and take money from others when they do not know the very rudiments of the art which they profess to teach.' In 1917, rehearsing for a royal matinée at the Gaiety Theatre, he encountered Philip Richardson, and once more tackled the editor on the subject of establishing his syllabus for the teaching of the dance: 'What I say is this: if a teacher does not know those terms, and teach according to that syllabus, he or she does not know his or her business.' He

even offered – and Richardson printed the offer – to vet and correct any syllabus devised by a teacher and sent to him at the *Dancing Times*; though how many he received is not recorded.

Later in 1917 Espinosa went to teach in South Africa (leaving his school in the hands of Ninette de Valois) and remained there for two years, apart from a visit to Australia (where he found 'an established monopoly of teachers minus technique!') In 1920 he returned to England; the war was over; the moment seemed propitious – and he had several allies eager to take up the cause of what he thought should be an Association of Operatic Dancing. (Incidentally, what seems to us to be a rather curious title was rational in its time, when 'operatic' dance was synonymous with 'classical', as used on the continent; in England, 'classical' dancing more commonly meant Greek.)

*In a small, privately published book, Espinosa told the story of the founding of the Academy.*





### *Rivalry and coolness.*

Philip Richardson was still not particularly sanguine about the possibility of getting British teachers to act together in the cause of improving standards. There was very considerable rivalry for pupils, and where there is rivalry there is generally a certain amount of, if not bitterness, at least coolness between the rivals. With considerable perception, he decided as a first step to form a sort of club where (as he put it) 'the leading teachers of stage dancing, whether operatic, classical or step, could frequently meet together, get to know one another, and discuss the different phases of their art.'

The first meeting of the Dancers' Circle was held in the Oak Room at the Trocadero Restaurant in London on July 18, 1920, with Espinosa, Genée, Karsavina, Lucia Cormani and Phyllis Bedells (the last currently appearing with George Robey in the enormously successful show *Johnny Jones* at the Alhambra Theatre) as guests of honour – the five, as was pointed out at the time, representing five different schools of teaching: the Bournonville, the Imperial Russian, the Italian, the French and the English (such as that was). About thirty people sat down to dinner (12s. 6d., or 60p, a head, wine not included). Among them were some of the country's best-known teachers – Seraphina Astafieva (at whose studios, The Pheasantry, in the King's Road, you may now sit down to a rather more expensive meal), Carlotta Mossetti, Edouard de Kurylo, Louis d'Egville, Jeannie Smurthwaite, Charles d'Albert, Lena King...

In his introductory remarks, Richardson hoped that the occasion might prompt those

present to meet once or twice a year in order to exchange ideas, and possibly even in time to form an association whose aim should be to raise the standard of teaching and prevent charlatans from ruining young dancers' physique by bad training: 'Until

at the Trocadero three months later that the Oak Room was not large enough to house them, and they had to remove to the larger Balmoral Room, where seventy stayed on to dinner, including this time some teachers who were still dancing professionally – among



*P.J.S. Richardson (photographed by Paul Wilson).*

teachers really get to know one another, they can never really work together,' he said. The aim should be, he thought, the formation of an Imperial School of Dancing.

Various teachers and dancers joined the discussion – Karsavina strongly advocating a course of fencing for dancers, to help their sense of balance: fencing was an obligatory subject at the Imperial Russian School, she pointed out. Finally, Mr Richardson announced another meeting, at which the whole subject of forming an Association of Operatic and Classical Teachers would be discussed.

So many teachers turned up

them Judith Espinosa and Ninette de Valois. After dinner and a little light relief – a talk by the manager of the London Coliseum on 'dancing from the Manager's point of view' – the meeting got down to business: Mr Richardson firmly put the proposition that this was just the time for England to become the centre of the world of the dance – after all, little was heard today of the Paris School, the Italian school of La Scala was a thing of the past, Russia was in chaos: if the slight differences of style between these various schools could only be coordinated under the aegis of an association of English teachers...



## A school for teachers?

It was a thought which immediately took the imagination of the teachers present, and there was a buzz of ideas: couldn't pupils be examined in some way, to ensure that a proper and coherent standard was obtained, asked one of the Cone sisters? Perhaps there could be an annual school in technique, suggested Miss Derra de Moroda, 'the famous Grecian classical dancer.' And what about a school for teachers themselves, asked Madame Edith Baird?

Édouard Espinosa then proposed, and Miss de Moroda seconded, a resolution 'that in the opinion of this gathering the time is now ripe for the formation of an Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing in this country', and that the five distinguished guests (with Genée as President) should form a Committee to take the plans further – Karsavina prettily suggesting that she did not know how much help she would be, since she was 'not a teacher, but still a pupil'.

There is no doubt that everyone present at those early meetings was thoroughly enthusiastic about the project, and encouraged by Mr Richardson some of them expressed their enthusiasm in various articles which appeared in the *Dancing Times* over the following months. Madame Genée was quick to point out that though young people demanded higher standards – realising for instance that 'a mere knowledge of how to cut *entrechats* and execute *pirouettes* was not sufficient to make a great dancer' – unfortunately those teachers to whom they were sent did not necessarily share that realisation. Karsavina, in a fascinating article, wrote about some of the prejudices which still existed in

England to hold back the development of the ballet – the 'national prejudice against male dancers', for instance – and regretted that 'your educational system precludes the possibility of any such school as the Imperial Ballet School in St. Petersburg, in which we were trained from the age of nine to the age of seventeen not only in dancing but in declamation, gesture, music, painting, and the history of art, besides of course all the other things which one learns in schools...'

## The first syllabus.

The Syllabus as Espinosa first proposed it is worth reprinting in full:

**Positions:** Five positions in which the weight of the body is evenly distributed on both feet. The fourth position may be *ouverte* or *croisée*.

**Exercises: Side Practice**  
*Pliés, grand battements, battements tendus, battements en rond, ronds-de-jambe à terre, assemblés soutenus, battements frappés and battements sur le cou-de-pied, ronds-de-jambe en l'air, développées, fouettés ronds-de-jambe en tournant, and exercises on the demi pointe.*

**Arms:** First, second, third, fourth and fifth position.

**Centre Practice:** Same as Side Practice with alternate feet and the use of both arms.

**Adage:** *Dégagés, chassés, coupés, posés, attitudes, arabesques, détournés, fouettés, relevés, rotations, assemblés, soutenus en tournant, preparations for pirouettes, pirouettes sur le cou-de-pied, exercises on the demi-pointe and ports de bras.*

**Steps:** *Pas marchés, glissades (devant, derrière, dessous, en avant, en arrière), assemblés (as glissades), jetés, échappés, ballonés, temps levés, pas de basque, pas de chat, pas de cheval, fouettés, pas de bourées, emboîtés, deboîtés, temps de flèche, temps de cuisse and elementary temps de pointes.*

**Simple Steps of Elevation:**  
*Changements, soubresauts and sissones.*


**Petite Batterie:** Simple *royale* and *entrechat quatre*.

The Committee met a number of times, usually at Genée's house in Hanover Terrace, to discuss the syllabus. There was naturally some contention among the five representatives of schools which emotionally, at least, were very different; but agreement was reached with – we are told – only one change: Espinosa's *fouetté battement* was renamed *battements en rond*.

Once the syllabus was agreed, it was on December 31, 1920, at a meeting of over a hundred teachers organised by Richardson at the Grafton Galleries in Regent Street, that the Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain was born, intent upon 'the improvement of the standard of teaching of operatic (ballet) dancing in this country (a) by seeing that all teachers adopt similar methods and (b) by accepting into membership only those teachers who, in the opinion of the Committee, are properly qualified to teach elementary operatic (ballet) dancing, and (c) by undertaking from time to time such activities as may help to bring about these objects.' Genée was confirmed as President, with the other four members of the original Com-







mittee joined by Philip Richardson as honorary secretary and treasurer.

The Association was to consist of 'probationers' and 'members': any professional teacher could become a probationer by applying to and being approved by the Committee, on payment of an annual subscription of one guinea (£1.05p), which included entry in any examinations. The Committee constituted the first five members of the Association, and could admit to membership any teachers 'whose abilities are sufficiently well known to the Committee' (Judith Espinosa and Frederick Browning were early members appointed 'without examination'). Soon over fifty teachers and dancers were accepted as probationers.

There were to be at least two technical examinations every year, and probationers who passed would be registered as full members after giving a guarantee that they would 'teach in accordance with the syllabus laid down by the Committee.' Their subscription would then rise to two guineas. Students under 17 who passed would be described on their membership certificates as 'Student Teachers'.

The Committee believed that membership would increase fairly quickly during the first few months of the Association's life – provided that teachers could be convinced that the Association was worth joining: 'There are teachers in this country so good that if they apply for membership they will be accepted almost at once,' wrote Richardson. 'Some of these may think that they are so well known and established that there is no need for them to join. From their own point of view, perhaps there is not – but from the point of view of dancing,

it is their duty to give every help they can to the new Association by giving it the support of their names.'

The Association's first office was in Wellington Street, where it shared the offices of the *Dancing Times*. An assistant secretary, Susie Lee, was employed to help Richardson with the paper work, which was considerable. Soon after the organisation had moved to Holland Park Avenue, Miss Lee decided on a week's holiday, and looked around for some temporary help to keep the office running while she was away. A Miss Kathleen Gordon was introduced to her by a friend, and after a perfunctory interview with Espinosa was engaged, and settled into an office resembling (she later recalled) 'a glorified horse box, with one window opening onto the passageway and the other onto the dustbins.' There was no table – the telephone stood in the middle of the uncarpeted stone floor – though there was a chair with one leg missing. Miss Gordon was given two pounds to furnish the office, went off to Shepherd's Bush Market, and did so, though she could not afford a stove, and got chilblains during the first cold winter.

Of Irish and Scottish parentage, Miss Gordon knew nothing whatsoever about ballet, but 'after a week of my invaluable services – my shorthand was peculiar to say the least, and my typing odd – Miss Lee asked me if I could bear to stay another three weeks. By this time I own to being intrigued, and having done a considerable amount of the spade work I wanted to see the examinations really happen: so I agreed.'

She stayed for almost 45 years, and became a pivotal figure in the Association's history.

### *The founders.*

The fact that the founders were so distinguished and popular was certainly responsible for getting the organisation off the ground so quickly. Tamara Karsavina was perhaps the most prestigious. Born in St Petersburg in 1885, she studied at the famous Imperial School under Paul Gerdt (one of the best *danseurs nobles* in the history of Russian ballet), and under Enrico Cecchetti, the teacher of Kschessinska, Fokine and Nijinsky, known in Europe mainly because of his association with Diaghilev. In 1909 she left St Petersburg to join Diaghilev's company, where she created major rôles in *Firebird*, *Petrouchka*, *Spectre de la Rose* and other ballets, and formed a legendary partnership with Nijinski. In 1917 she settled in London, and was to keep up her connection with the Association and later the R.A.D., as Vice-President, for over thirty years (also, incidentally, publishing the most charming of all dancers' autobiographies, *Theatre Street*).

Adeline Genée, although her name is now probably less familiar to the general public, was in her time quite as well-known and celebrated in England as Karsavina. She was Danish by birth, and seven years older than her colleague. At the age of 15 – already a veteran of five years on stage – she had danced at the Zentralhallen Theatre at Stettin, and at 17 appeared at the Imperial Opera in Berlin, whence she moved on to dance in Copenhagen and London (where she appeared at the Empire Theatre, Leicester Square, between 1897 and 1907), took her own company to America, and toured Australia and New Zealand before retiring in 1914 (although as we shall see, she came out of retirement for several charity





Tamara Karsavina is shown above.

The other pictures show Adeline Genée as *The Dancing Doll*, and signing and darning her shoes.



performances). Her best-loved rôle was probably that of Swanilda in *Coppélia*, and she is still remembered for the gravity-defying lightness and springiness of her dancing. Opening the 1994 Assembly, Dame Ninette de Valois remembered Genée's style: 'She could do thirty-two *entrechats six* right down the middle of the stage... she positively *bounced!* – the ground was always too hot for her to stay on.' She was the first President of the Academy, and worked relentlessly to establish it, not only in England but in North America. She died in 1970.



*Phyllis Bedells in Gavotte (1926).*

Genée's work for the Association began at the beginning, and ended long after she had retired from the Presidency. Her word was law; but she used her power – which was purely that of personality – sparingly if decisively. Kathleen Gordon recalled 'the first day she came into my office with that incredibly immaculate appearance which always distinguished her. She extended a hand gloved in snowy whiteness, into which I placed my grubby paw, and in her deep and husky voice (so unlike a dancer's) said, "That curtain is damnable! Get rid of it!" (There was a hideous blue curtain over the window which had been there since before I arrived and for some reason we thought we should preserve...) I loved her sense of the ridiculous, allied to the impishness which would peep out every now and then in her dealings with Philip Richardson and certain of the more pompous members of what later became known as The Council. This aspect of her was all the more enchanting because entirely unexpected.'

Édouard Espinosa was famous as teacher rather than a dancer – born in Moscow in 1872, he was a *maître de ballet* and choreographer (arranging dances for over three hundred West End shows) who founded a school in London in 1908 which was the first to hold examinations and issue certificates.

Phyllis Bedells was, like Genée, acclaimed for her performances at the Empire, Leicester Square, where she became prima ballerina just after the start of the war, and danced for three years (she was the first English dancer to hold that position). She had been born at Bristol (in 1893), and had been taught by (among others) Cecchetti, Genée herself, Pavlova and her partner



Adolf Bolm. She toured extensively, and was prima ballerina in Sir Thomas Beecham's seasons at Covent Garden before illness forced her into retirement in 1921 – though she made a come-back in 1925 and performed for another decade, finally retiring (after a performance which showed, several critics asserted, that she was dancing as well as ever) in 1935. Her schools first in Bristol then in London were widely recognised; she was to become a Vice-President of the R.A.D., and tells the story of its foundation in her autobiography *My Dancing Days*.

Finally, Philip Richardson, the editor of the *Dancing Times*. Born in 1875, he took over the pretty well moribund magazine in 1910, and turned it into an essential journal for all those interested in the art. He was a founder of the Camargo Society, chairman of the Board of Ballroom Dancing, and a ubiquitous figure in British dance circles for well over 40 years. He was elected

an honorary and in a sense unofficial early Fellow of the R.A.D., and for many years was the only one. Kathleen Gordon worked with him in close and sometime exasperated partnership for many years, and in an article in the *Dancing Times* after her own retirement recalled her first meeting with him:

'He appeared to be about two miles high, with the piercing beautiful blue eyes that often go with colour blindness, enlarged by very powerful eye glasses. A cigarette drooped perennially from the corner of his mouth, the ash never falling until the last quarter of an inch had been reached, when it cascaded down his waistcoat and was never brushed away.'

Richardson died in 1963 – three years after the Academy instituted more official Fellowships, and elected him as the fourth of these (with Idzikowski, Karsavina, and Genée).



## Teachers, not dancers.

The simplicity of that first syllabus might suggest to teachers and pupils in the 1990s that passing the early examination was relatively simple: but that was not necessarily so. A surprisingly large number of teachers could not cope with it (some of them because they were not themselves, and never had been, dancers, relying on a theoretical knowledge of technique). Their difficulty with the positions of the arms, for instance, is underlined by the fact that Genée was asked to pose for photographs showing the correct arm positions, which were published in the *Dancing Times* together with text explaining the new Association's views on the matter:

There are many "sets of positions" for the arms, and no agreement upon the subject. The Committee have

adopted a set of "Five Arm Positions" which, with certain intermediate positions, are now illustrated by Madame Genée, so that candidates will not be hopelessly confused.'

A year later Genée was to give a demonstration of 'the five arm positions which the Association has agreed to adopt as fundamental ones'.

Within the first three months over fifty probationers had been registered, and the first examination was announced for May 8 and 10, at Madame Cormani's studio in Fitzroy Street, near Goodge Street Station: 'Practice dress should be worn – not ballet costume. Nothing would be more suitable than a dark "gym" costume', said the announcement. A year later examiners requested 'pink ballet shoes and stockings or tights, and ballet skirts'. The suggestion was necessary: one candidate had



Scholars' dress in 1925.



Pat Beadle in her 'full ballet dress', 1937.



Genée with some young scholars.

turned up in a butterfly costume. But there was some confusion. A candidate appeared in the secretary's office to complain 'I may spell Claude with an "e", but that's no reason to tell me to wear pink tights and pink satin ballet shoes.' Claude Newman went on to be director of a ballet school at Bahia.

Later, as Pat Beadle recalls, there was 'the full ballet dress – mine was made by a Mrs Gillie. It was beautiful – laced all the way up the back, boned in the basque and bodice. The many skirts of net sprang to life when you danced – it was a dream. The last touch to show you were a student was the compulsory three inch soft frill that went round the neck and back.'





Madame  
Cormani,  
a first examiner.

### *Several fell over.*

The examiners at the first examination were Genée, Karsavina, Cormani and Phyllis Bedells; Espinosa had set the work to be examined. Kathleen Gordon remembered the first two or three examination sessions well:

'In those days they began at 9.30 a.m. and finished at 5 p.m.; there were 42 entries in at a time, with four judges and the examiner. The slogan was "Never take your shoes off at the lunch interval, or you won't get them on again for the afternoon session." I had to get down to the Association by 9 a.m. and number the candidates back and front. Mr Richardson stood over me, barking in a shattering way, but this had its uses as it engendered a certain alliance between me and the candidates, one of whom hissed "Tell him to buy a cough lozenge, give himself a good brush, and go home." Strange to say, I did not.'

At the first examination session some well established teachers were examined – many of them, Phyllis Bedells recalled, 'no longer really young' (Miss Jeannie Smurthwaite and Miss Theresa Heyman were commended and 29 others passed) – and at the second 'other teachers and the younger probationers', another 24 in all: among them two men. The examination cannot be described as particularly demanding: no pointe work, only the simple *royale* and *entrechat quatre* in *petite batterie*, and elevation limited to *changements*, *soubresauts* and *sissones*. A number of dancers seemed to find balance particularly difficult, and several actually fell over.

However, Espinosa was able to report in the *Dancing Times* that seventy percent of applicants had passed, which he saw as a very positive sign, though he pointed out that 'some of the older teachers have not had the advantage of correct operatic training, and through this failed.' This, he suggested, underlined the fact that it was still believed in some quarters that 'it is possible to teach well without having any personal execution.' In the Committee's view, however thorough the teachers' technical knowledge might be, that was not the case.

The examiners were clearly determined from the beginning to take a firm line with the failings they saw in applicants for membership. After the second examination in 1921, Espinosa particularly criticised the arms and hands of several teachers and students, and the whole attitude of those 'teachers of more mature years' who insisted on entering the examinations though they simply could not dance. 'It is advisable for them to send up for examination junior assistants who could hold the Association's

Certificate for their school', he said; those who entered the examination only on the basis that they knew the theory, without being able to perform the exercises, simply would not pass, and that was that.

By the Association's first birthday the Committee could be well pleased with its progress: of 161 candidates during the year, 107 had passed the elementary examination and been accepted as members. And now, an Intermediate Syllabus had been agreed, which would be open only to members: the first examination would be held in June. Meanwhile, members of the Committee – and Espinosa in particular – carried an increasing work-load; in the spring of 1922 he took the stage of His Majesty's Theatre for two lecture demonstrations on the syllabus for both grades, and did not mince his words when he came to speak about the teaching standards in some schools:

'A case which came under my own eyes yesterday was heart-breaking... The girl had received two years' training in London, and was considered excellent by her teacher. The child danced for me – fine toes, well shaped girl, naturally graceful in arms, legs and body, but was using positions and steps absolutely against all rules, technique or laws of art. I requested the child to do an *assemblée* – she executed a series of kicks. I asked her for the five positions – they were wrong. I handed her a syllabus of the elementary examination – she knew practically nothing of it. But she said she did know the *Taglioni changes*. Needless to say, there is no such step.

'When I informed the mother that the child would have to start again from the beginning, the mother was horrified and the child heart-broken.



'Mothers will ask, "How are we to know what is right and what is wrong?"

'If the teacher to whom you take your child is a member of the Association, and holds, be it only the Elementary Certificate, you are safe to leave your girl in her charge.'

### *Numbers too great for comfort.*

It was not long before the number of candidates for examinations was large enough to be an embarrassment: Espinosa, reporting on the intermediate examination held in June 1922, suggested that 'the numbers were too great for comfort, and this point will be remedied at future examinations'. It may be that the best teachers had already applied for membership, for 'the standard was most decidedly poor... On one occasion a single simple question had to be repeated to twelve or more candidates before a correct answer was given, and many could not say how many open and how many closed positions for the feet there are.'

Espinosa also gave a warning to teachers: 'It is foolish and unfair to accept any and every pupil who comes along, whether they have the natural ability, suitability, limbs, feet, form and face, or not. Refuse a guinea or two and accept only suitable students, be it as teachers or dancers...'

### *South Africa.*

Surprisingly, the Association's syllabus was taught in South Africa as early as 1922 – by Ivy Conmee and her sister. It is always said that interest in ballet (as opposed to 'fancy dancing') stemmed from Madame Ravodne's performances at the Empire, Johannesburg, in 1920,



Ivy  
Conmee.

and from the annual displays she put on. Ivy Conmee was one of the young dancers who were impressed, and went to London to study. She brought the teacher's diploma back from the Association at the age of fifteen. In 1926 she and two other teachers, Marjorie Sturman and Poppy Frames, asked that an examiner should be sent out. In fact, they telegraphed Espinosa and guaranteed £500 (which they did not have) to cover his journey. He agreed, and (Marjorie Sturman said) 'we became frantically busy arranging cake sales, book sales – any sales – raffles, competitions, every possible thing we could think of, to raise that vast sum of money.'

Espinosa appointed Ivy Conmee, Poppy Frames and Marjorie Sturman as the Association's first examiners in South Africa.

Mignon Furman took her Grade IV examination with Ivy Conmee, and remembers the early days in Cape Town – remembers, for instance, one visit from the much-loved Sybil Spenser, 'who came to a party for the examiners at my home with newspaper wrapped around the heels of her shoes. We all pretended not to notice, although we were mystified. It was only

when she returned to her hôtel that she discovered that she had neglected to remove the newspaper that she used to protect her shoes when packing. She asked me if I thought anybody had noticed.'

Ms Furman's work for the Academy was enthusiastic – and ingenious. She was outraged – and worried – when in the 1950s the London office decided that Cape Town was too small to be a centre for Major examinations, and decreed that all candidates should travel to Johannesburg. Unable to persuade London to change the decision, Ms Furman simply invented a number of fictitious candidates, paid their entry fees, and by thus bringing the numbers up retained the Majors for Cape Town.

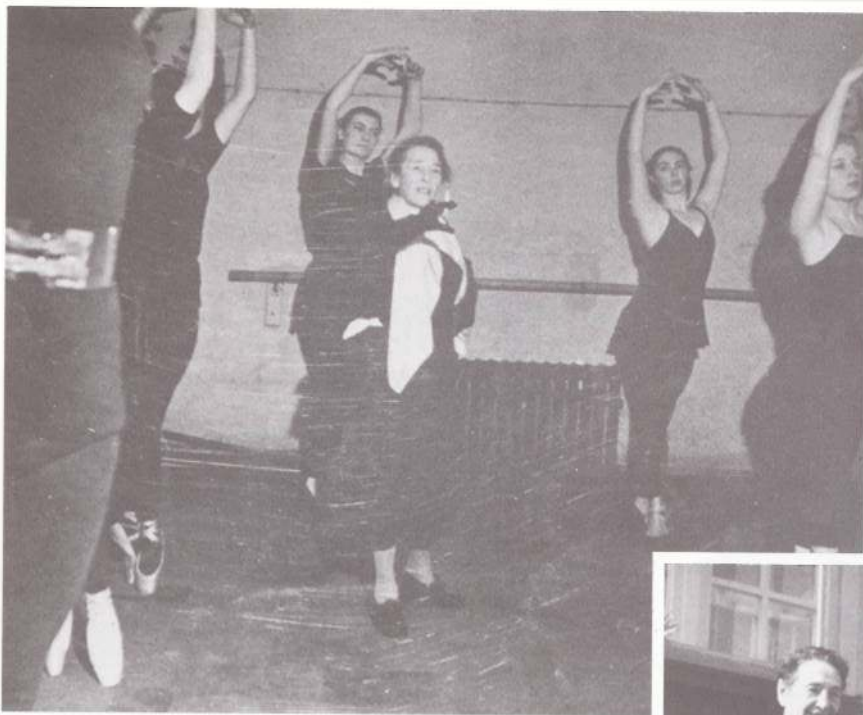
### *'Kiss your uncle'.*

One Cape Town student was Eve Borland, who was examined for Grade I by D. G. MacLennon, a well-known figure in the Association's early days: a tall, slim figure with a pince-nez on a broad black ribbon. Though in London he always wore 'formal morning dress, and had manners to match,' as Miss Gordon put it, on this occasion little Eve reported to her teacher Miriam Kirsch that he had been wearing odd socks. Ms Kirsch replied: 'Learn to lift your eye line.'

Later, in front of Édouard Espinosa, Eve 'fell about most badly with *fouettés*, but ended with a grand presentation and smile. He called me up to his table and said 'A little less personality and a lot more attack will help!' Believe me, it did.' The examiner's sister Judith later examined in Cape Town, and once called a student to her table and said 'I shouldn't bother to come back this afternoon – it would be a total waste of time.'







Above and centre,  
Judith Espinosa:  
"We'll have a  
waltz!".

Judith Espinosa is remembered with a mixture of pleasure and amusement: she was greatly loved by many of her students, had a great sense of humour, and could certainly be described as 'a card'. She spoke Cockney in the old Dickensian manner, with w's taking the place of v's ('Wery pleased to meet you') and was rarely seen without a 'ciggy' in her hand.

Elsa Corthésy remembered her visits to Australia with enthusiasm: 'When she entered the classroom one could hear a pin drop. She could roar like a lion, she knew how to get the best out of her pupils, and knew exactly how much talent a pupil had. We all loved her for her sincerity: what vitality and energy she had – though using all her strength in shouting must have been detrimental to her health.' Andrew Hardie used to recall the famous choreographed *scenas* she set in class:

'You're fishermen's wives – you're waiting on the beach for the boats, but there's news that all your men have been drowned in a storm; you're wild with grief. [To pianist] We'll have a waltz.'

Many other visiting examiners and teachers are remembered



with equal enthusiasm: Martin Rubinstein, John Martin, Winifred Edwards, Louise Browne, Ruth French – and René Bon, who called ballet 'balet', and advised students to 'Kiss your uncle' when doing a leg stretch.

The work of and for the Academy in South Africa has continued with enormous vigour over seventy years – through the war, with all its difficulties, and on into the later '40s, when there were certain financial stringencies: pianists for examinations were expensive at five shillings an hour – on top of which they had the impertinence, in Johannesburg, to claim tram fares! (Mr Cecil Savory, Secretary, reported that the hall was inside the three-penny tram stage, and after consideration it was decided that the tram fares should NOT be paid.)



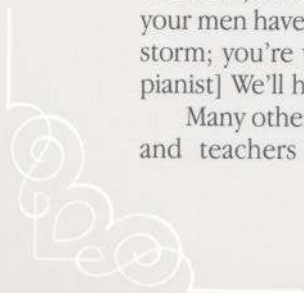
Margot Fonteyn, in Johannesburg,  
receives a gift (c.1960).

Margot Fonteyn's visits are still remembered with enormous pleasure: Joyce Whitaker, the Johannesburg Secretary during her visits, claimed that the great surge of interest in the Academy could be traced to the first of these, and Eve Borland recalls Fonteyn's visit to an R.A.D. summer school as President: 'Who will forget her response to the diamond ear-rings Capetonian teachers presented to her? She curtsied to the floor as if we were a Covent Garden audience.'

But earlier, Genée had also done a great deal for the Academy in South Africa, generously giving a silver trophy which had been awarded her in America (as 'the world's greatest dancer') as a prize for the student who gave the best artistic interpretation in the Solo Seal dances. This is still awarded, every year, to a dancer who is also sponsored to complete in the Genée awards in London.

### *Classes with Genée.*

Back in London, in March, 1923, the first stage of the Advanced Syllabus had been set out by Espinosa (including 'additional theoretical examination for





teachers over thirty years of age whose powers of *execution* may not be up to the standard required.') For those who were a little daunted at the standard required, Genée generously offered to take a special class once a week for a year for a dozen girls (for a fee of five guineas). There is little doubt that this was necessary – indeed, within six months it had been decided that the syllabus would have to be simplified.

In October 1923 there was a landmark in the Association's history: it moved into its own premises at 154, Holland Park Avenue – a house with 'a fine ballroom' ideal for examinations, into which a barre was hastily placed in time for the autumn examinations. Then, in November, came the first public matinée, at the Gaiety Theatre – which attracted a large audience not only of friends and relatives of the students who appeared, but of those anxious to see Genée herself dance in public for the first time for seven years – in what the *Dancing Times* called 'a scrupulously authentic representation of some eighteenth century dances – *terre à terre* steps perfectly executed' in which she was partnered by Phyllis Bedells *en travesti*.

The matinée was a tremendous success – 'not a seat to be had'; it was to be the first of many.

The Association from the first never hesitated to press the view that ballet classes should not be viewed simply as preparing girls (or boys, for that matter – though there were always few of those) for a professional career. As Philip Richardson put it, 'when properly given, classes form the finest form of physical culture, the best corrective of the minor bodily ailments, and one of the pleasantest steps in the direction of mental culture which a child can

have.' Examinations, however, were important: not only did they give pupils a standard at which to aim, but 'they help to scotch that abomination known as fancy dancing, which Mr Espinosa has described as "dancing of those who fancy they can but can't".'

### *The one-lesson-a-week child.*

By now the Association had instituted grade examinations for children, awarding four certificates after what were to be

the elementary examination.' Seventy years later the Academy is still foremost in pressing for ballet lessons for 'ordinary' schoolchildren – its publication *Let's Dance in School*, sent out to all Academy registered teachers in the U.K. and to thousands of primary schools, attempts to provide a link between dance teachers and primary school teachers.

The reaction to the Local Schools Examinations project was



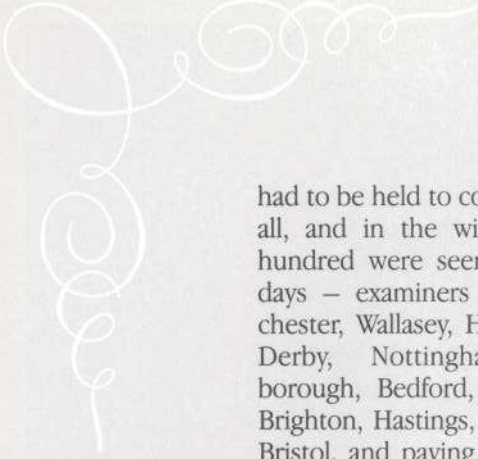
*Katleen Pearce,  
Anna Vaughan,  
Margaret Turner  
and Sissie Smith  
- students in 1926.*

known as 'the Local Schools Examinations of Dancing, affiliated to the Association of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain'. The examinations were open to any children, of any age, on payment of a small fee (from 7s. 6s – just over 35p – for grade one to one guinea for grade four). The syllabus was designed for 'the amateur, one-lesson-a-week child', and in order not to frighten off prospective applicants it was pointed out that 'even the requirements for grade four are considerably less than those for

immediate and enthusiastic: the first Children's (Amateur) Examinations were held in March and April of 1924, and 532 candidates from London and the provinces set out to show examiners the four foot positions, how they could bend their knees in first and second position, how to 'walk on their toes', and to demonstrate the Greek Walk, Mercury and Bacchante balance, and form 'athletic, sorrowful and joyous' friezes.

The press of applicants was so great that extra examinations





had to be held to cope with them all, and in the winter over six hundred were seen within nine days – examiners visiting Manchester, Wallasey, Hull, Sheffield, Derby, Nottingham, Loughborough, Bedford, Birmingham, Brighton, Hastings, Farnham and Bristol, and paying fleeting visits of an hour or so to smaller places *en route*.

In the early days, Genée often travelled with the examiners, ‘keeping them well in hand’ (Kathleen Gordon remembered) – ‘though outside the examination room, on the tedious journeys, her gaiety and spontaneity were revealed. Always there would be a “surprise”, chocolates from Saignes, Danish pastries, a series of new jokes gleaned from her husband – risqué for those days, and told with her inimitable mime and gesture’.

The following year, the Committee, passionate in its desire to press onward and upward, decided to institute a Junior Teachers’ Certificate, and flushed with the pleasure of having over 800 members and seeing 1,337 children pass its examinations during the past two years, held a special audition in order to form its own *corps de ballet*.

The young pupils entering the examination room in 1924 were no less nervous than today’s – and had some problems which have not survived: silk tights, for instance, which wrinkled at the knee at the first *plié*, and were dipped in water, put on wet and secured with a couple of pennies twisted into the material. Then there were those dread figures, the examiners. Twelve-year-old Jacqueline B’nay, from the Grandison school, walked into the forbiddingly grand house in Holland Park in 1938 to take her Elementary examination:

‘I was absolutely terrified, because during the previous weeks rumours had been going around the school that if one was unfortunate enough to have Miss Grace Cone or Mr Felix Demery as examiners one did not have a hope of passing. I can see myself now in that dressing room, in my new white ballet dress with the compulsory rosette attached to the basque, and pink stockings (opera hose) held up with pennies and tapes to stop them from wrinkling – in fact, I felt like a trussed chicken. ‘We were ushered into the studio, did our salutations, and as I looked up there was Grace Cone *and* Felix Demery. I could have died on the spot. My legs turned to jelly as I walked to the barre, and I am sure I did a dreadful exam, and I think I was in total shock for hours after. Fortunately, I did pass, and my mother asked me what I would like, and I said “caramel fudge, please,” which I got and ate the lot, and became violently ill, and have never eaten it since.’

Sixteen years later Ms B’nay travelled to Australia with her husband, and taught for thirty years in her own school in Adelaide.

Kathleen Gordon, the Association’s secretary, remembered some of the terror experienced by candidates. As she sat in her office in Holland Park Avenue, ‘during the day the window constantly opened and disembodied faces appeared like a series of Cheshire cats: waxen-faced candidates with beads of sweat on their brows: “Don’t bother to send me the result – I know it!”’

In the examination room Genée inspired respect but also

fear. Kathleen Gordon felt that she was perhaps not always perfectly in command of English, and that sometimes she could ‘freeze’ a young student who she believed had been over-familiar or impertinent, when the student thought she was simply being polite and paying a compliment. Her shyness led to a brusqueness which could inhibit not only students, but her fellow committee members

Some students remember Miss Gordon herself with a slight shiver, for she could be a stern disciplinarian if, for instance, one was sent to her to report having been discovered chewing gum in class. ‘That long walk down the hall with red faces,’ Pat Beadle recalls, ‘all those stairs up to the office, explaining why we had been sent, will never be forgotten. Nor the gentle smile and little wink from Miss Denvir, at the piano, on our return to class.’ (Nell Denvir, incidentally, was to be found at an Academy piano for over half a century, and in 1992 received the President’s Award).

### *The Solo Seal.*

1928 was a landmark year: there were over two thousand candidates for each of two children’s examinations, and the Committee decided to establish an extra ‘solo examination’ during which a candidate who had already achieved the advanced certificate of the Association would have to dance a ‘purely operatic solo arranged by herself to music of her own selection’, a character or demi-caractère dance, and an impromptu variation set by the judges. This was to become known as the Solo Seal examination. Genée also proposed the annual award of a gold medal, which her husband Frank Isitt generously donated, and which is of course still annually





*Clockwise from centre left.  
The Genée gold medal; Pat Gow is interviewed by  
Ninette de Valois, while (left to right) Miss Bury, Phyllis  
Bedells and Kathleen Gordon look on; Carole Dowsett  
performs under Miss Gordon's eye; Patricia Ashworth  
watched by the Misses Chater and Bury, with Phyllis  
Bedells and Ninette de Valois.*





awarded. Among the students who have won it are Rowena Jackson, Doreen Wells, Brenda Last, John Hart, John Gilpin, Bryan Ashbridge and David Drew. Silver and bronze medals were later also offered for competition, presented by Felix Demery and Phyllis Bedells respectively. Another award which was given for some years was the Pavlova Casket – a handsome jewel-box which Philip Richardson had bought at an auction of the great ballerina's effects and given to the Academy, which presented it annually for the best group dance choreographed and performed by members. Unfortunately, the casket was later stolen.

In 1962, it was decided to hold the Solo Seal and Gold Medal competitions in public; the first such event took place at the City Temple Hall in 1963 (when the Gold Medal went to Noriko Kobayashi), and it became a popular annual performance. The Medal competitions now command a large audience, filling Her Majesty's Theatre or Festival Hall, though those for the Seal, held separately several times a year, are small, and usually confined to members, students and sometimes a few relatives.

In contrast to this test of accomplishment is the concern the Academy has always felt for disabled children who want in some way to be a part of its work. Fonteyn brought the matter up in 1965, when she worried publicly, in the *Gazette*, about the problem of examining such children:

'One would of course like these children in particular to be able to take a particular feeling of pride in their R.A.D. certificate... But immediately the examiner would start considering whether any allowances should be made, or whether a "fail" might

cause suffering and undermine the child's confidence. The doubt would be even greater when the examiner felt bound to fail the child on dancing ability alone, apart from any other considerations. Would it be fair to impose that disappointment on the child on top of her other difficulties? The conclusion very reluctantly reached is that handicapped children cannot enter the R.A.D. examinations in the normal way. So far we have not succeeded in finding an alternative that could apply satisfactorily to all the many different cases which arise.'

The problem has remained intractable.

### *The Royal patron.*

The news that the Association was to have a royal patron came as a splendid surprise to everyone, and was the result of an approach to Buckingham Palace by Genée, who had seen a brief suggestion in a newspaper that Queen Mary

was interested in dancing, and ballet in particular. She approached Her Majesty's Private Secretary and put forward the suggestion that the Queen might care to interest herself in the Association.

Both Genée's husband and Philip Richardson were pessimistic about the result. But what none of them could know was that the Queen was a great deal more interested in the theatre than she was allowed to seem – the King did not share her delight in public entertainment, and strongly discouraged her from showing her pleasure in it. Here however was a way in which she could properly do so – and within a fortnight Her Majesty had accepted the invitation to become patron.

It was in 1930 that Édouard Espinosa suddenly resigned from the Committee. His resignation was accepted and announced with almost ostentatious tact; the bare fact was published in the *Dancing Times*, his letters of resignation were not read to the annual general meeting of the Association, and no trace of the



*The Academy's Patron, Her Majesty Queen Mary and Dame Adeline Genée.*



reason for it is to be found in the archives. Though his own account suggests that he resigned in protest at the Committee's decision that from May of 1930 candidates for examinations were to be asked no questions on theory (because 'examiners could tell from their execution if they knew their theory'), it appears that there had been a well-substantiated accusation that he was using his position as chief examiner to further his own career as a teacher.

During the advanced examinations, students had to perform one of a series of *enchâînements*, each of which would be numbered, and one of which would be arbitrarily selected. Espinosa would go to his school in the morning and give students a class at the end of which he would teach them an *enchâînement* which later in the day, as examiner, he would select for them to do as part of the examination. Naturally they all passed.

Dame Adeline decided to deal with this by attending an examination. When Espinosa asked the pupils to perform *enchâînement* four, she sat up and remarked that *she* would like to see them do *enchâînement* two. A request from her had the force of a royal command; the students embarked on the *enchâînement* (in which they had not had special coaching) and without exception failed – then complained that they hadn't learned *enchâînement* number two that morning.

Espinosa had no other option than resignation. He ceased to be Chief Examiner, and went off to found, with Louise Kay, the British Ballet Association, denying his former Association the future use of 'any of his theory, analysis or questions' in their examinations. It was a sad, sudden end

to an association which had been extremely valuable – and it must be said that many of his students were devoted to him; and some followed him to the B.B.O. His sister Judith was elected to the Committee in his place; he himself died in 1950.

The second public *matinée*, at the Gaiety in 1929, had seen the last public performance by Espinosa, and appearances by Karsavina, Anton Dolin, Phyllis Bedells (dancing Swanilda in a bodice which Genée herself had worn when dancing at the Empire, and coached in the part by her and her 80-year-old uncle Alexander Genée), Lucienne Lamballe (a much admired young dancer from the Paris Opéra), Vera Savina (in a dance arranged by Massine) and Ninette de Valois – who the previous year had been offered membership of the Association, but accepted only on condition that she should take the examinations like everyone else. She passed – and at the *matinée* one of her own early ballets was performed: *Hommage aux belle Viennoises*, to Schubert piano music.

The *Dancing Times* remarked that the most remarkable feature of the afternoon was not the splendid dancing of the principals but 'the solid technical excellence of the dozens of young dancers... Here was a tangible result of the seven or eight years' work of the Association.' And the original balletomane, Arnold Haskell, also enthusiastically admired 'the dancing of the English girls who have been trained under the principles of the Association, which is rapidly taking the place of a State organisation.' Such praise was meat and drink to the Committee, already contemplating the setting up of its first Building Fund to raise £50,000 for new, purpose-built studios and office accommodation – while



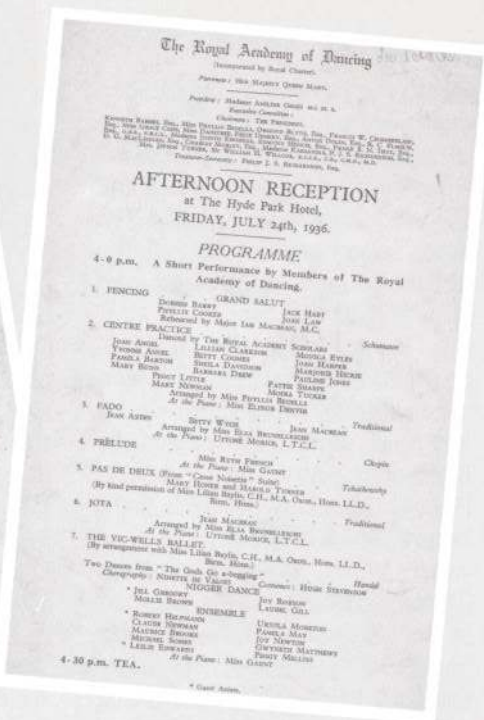
Arnold Haskell with  
Kathleen Gordon.

the ordinary members, equally delighted by progress, decided to thank the Committee members by entertaining them to dinner at Grosvenor House (tickets 12s. 6d.).

It was in 1930 that 'Special Week' began – at which there were demonstrations not only of the Association's work but of professional coaching; it was later to be re-named Assembly. The Association made a special arrangement for accommodation at the Central Club for Girls and Women in the Tottenham Court Road: rooms from 4s. 6d. a night, including bath. Expenses were to rise somewhat during the next sixty years or so.

By now there was a move to abolish the old term 'operatic dancing'. The author and ballet book seller Cyril Beaumont wrote to the *Dancing Times* to complain that the term was a misnomer: 'Possibly from the close association of ballet with opera, the technique of the classical ballet became known in this country as operatic dancing... [But] the time has come to abolish the now meaningless term "operatic" and substitute for it "classical ballet".' It was still however to be a few years before the Association of Operatic Dancing became the Royal Academy – and the very first issue of the Association's magazine, published in November 1930, was entitled *The Operatic Association Gazette*: it was, of course, to become *Dance Gazette*.





Some familiar names appear in a 1936 programme, and many of the artistes also signed the back.

That first issue contained a potted history of the Association, a report that 'in response to many enquiries and requests, the Council has decided to hold Elementary and Intermediate Examinations in certain provincial centres in order to save candidates the expense of a long journey to London', announcements of 'free classes' held by Judith Espinosa, Phyllis Bedells and Genée, and a description of a splendid stained-glass portrait of Taglioni rescued from the Empire Theatre, London, when it was demolished, and now installed in the entrance hall at 154, Holland Park Avenue. The window now stands in the entrance hall of the Academy's headquarters at Battersea.

### One thousand members.

General appreciation of the Association's work had become common in dance circles, and in 1930 the management of Covent Garden Opera House engaged some of its now over one thousand members to dance during its opera season. Genée

(who had first approached Covent Garden and suggested the alliance) was eager to make sure that such an expanding organisation should be on a proper business footing – her husband, a prominent businessman and member of Lloyds, was especially concerned about this – and suggested the formation of a Grand Council of prestigious men and women who could act as a sort of Praetorian Guard to advise an Executive Committee which would be the ruling body. Eventually, the Council consisted of almost a hundred professional people. It still exists, and with a number of extremely distinguished names: but perhaps G. B. L. Wilson (who served on it for well over a quarter of a century) was right when he questioned, in

his column in *Dancing Times*, whether many of its members had ever been of real use to the Academy: 'Never once has my counsel (or anyone else's that I know) been sought, and heaven knows the R.A.D. has been through some crises... but I suppose that really the Grand Council simply consists of real and putative friends who, so to speak, give a touch of class to the organisation. We all used to troop into the a.g.m.: after doing this for twenty-five years I discovered that I had no right to attend the a.g.m., as I was not a member of the R.A.D. So I stopped.'

A Grand Council continues to exist, though it has not the importance it had when Genée invoked the aid of many of its members to back her plan to acquire a Royal Charter. It might be said that it is no longer the case that a catalogue of names of the great and good at the head of an organisation's notepaper is essential to enable it to go forward, and consideration of the future rôle of the Council within the Academy is under consideration.

### Australia.

Meanwhile, examiners began to visit Australia. In 1931 teachers in Melbourne and Perth had asked whether examinations could not be held there, and offered to pay for a tour – though it was four years before Felix Demery made the first official visit, ahead of many others. In 1955 the first

G. B. L. Wilson with David Blair, Dame Beryl Grey and John Field.







Kathleen Danetree examines at Lismore, New South Wales, in 1938. 'We thought we were beautiful in those awful exam tutus!'

Australian Major Examiner, Nellie Potts, was appointed, working with Kathleen Danetree, who had so fallen in love with the country that she had decided to live there. The strong ties between Australia and the Academy scarcely need reciting – nor does the success of its dancers, not least in the annual *Genée* competitions, when entrants from the antipodes often sweep the board.

Martin Rubinstein, who had been dancing in Melbourne since 1938, and in the '50s was teaching for the distinguished Edouard Borovansky, had as a boy achieved the Solo Seal, became a children's examiner, and after a testing time on the Australian circuit – Riverina in the depths of winter, Gippsland and urban Queensland in the heat of summer – spent nine months in southern Africa in 1964, examining over 6,000 entrants. Four years later he became a major examiner (the first from outside the U.K.) and has visited 37 countries since then, collecting (as all examiners do) a variety of memories: examining behind locked doors during an Angolan curfew, watching segregated black girl students dancing in Capetown to the rhythm of a rod banged on the floor, giving classes in Japan and the Philippines.

Difficulties with the music for examinations wasn't always con-

finied to the simple absence of a piano – or indeed to South Africa. Isobel Anderson arrived at a hall in a more or less remote area of Australia to be greeted by a gum-chewing young pianist ('How ya doin'?' he enquired, continuing to chew). He announced that he would need help with the timing, and for a while Miss Anderson did what she could by rapping a pencil on her table while he thumped the piano loudly. Then came the Grade III tarantella.

'When I announced it, he swung around in his chair, folded his arms, and said, "I don't play this." When asked why, he replied, "It's too hard." I said, "Don't worry, I'll sing." "Great!" he said. I'm sure the child performed better with my singing than she would have with his playing, even though both examiner and student were a little puffed at the conclusion.'

The solution might have been to do without him altogether: when a Grade Two candidate in Sydney had considerable difficulties with her dance, she turned to Joyce Butler and said, irritated, 'I'm *much* better without the music.' Travelling was sometimes a trial for students: poor Nerida Bronner had to go by sea from Byron Bay to Sydney for her grades examinations, and was invariably

sea-sick both ways.

A worse nightmare for Ms Anderson must have been arriving in San Salvador a day earlier than expected, finding herself in a strange country with no knowledge of the language and no-one to meet her – her luggage piled into a taxi by a helpful taxi-driver who could not be persuaded that she did not want to go anywhere, if only because she did not know anywhere to go! In other cases, she surmounted the language barrier with relative ease: in Greece, for instance, she simply asked a teacher to write out the phonetic pronunciation of the Greek words for 'turn', 'centre', 'skirt', and so on – and heard one awed small girl whisper to another, as she left the room, '*She speaks Greek!*'

Sometimes, when not uncommon language difficulties arose, the students themselves came to the rescue: Joyce Butler remembers a pre-primary class examination in Hong Kong when there seemed to be very little discipline, and the only language any of the children spoke was Mandarin. Even the teacher failed to keep order. But eventually 'the tiniest of the children stepped forward, gave two very loud, sharp claps, and all eight ran into a line in the corner ready for the next exercise.'





If examiners had their difficulties, so did students: the 1930s were not an easy time in Australia, and Frances Thompson recalls walking into the examination hall to find that all the other girls were sporting beautiful pink satin shoes: her teacher had not asked her parents to supply them, knowing they were not well off. It made no difference, except that her card recorded 'unable to really point in shoes worn.'

Later, Ms Thompson taught the R.A.D. syllabi for over half a century, and remembers a nervous pianist playing faster and faster until no-one could keep up with her; students arriving with no knees to their new tights, having fallen down on the way to class; a young Diane Cilento presenting her with an enormous mango which proved to have been stolen from a garden next her school; her own son, who sneered at the ballet until suddenly becoming interested at sixteen, then insisting that she get up at 6 a.m. to give him lessons, and at twenty dancing with Ballet Theatre before retiring at twenty-one!

The celebrated Australian plain speaking often fascinated examiners: one, visiting a small South Australian village, was told by a farmer's daughter, 'I'd be better off on a tractor than doing ballet.' ('She was right!' comments the examiner). In another village, she was delighted to receive from her first student a single long-stemmed rose, with the words 'God bless you!' 'The charm of the gesture was a little weakened,' she said, 'when the twelfth child made the same offering.'

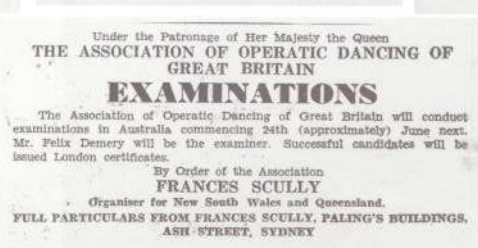
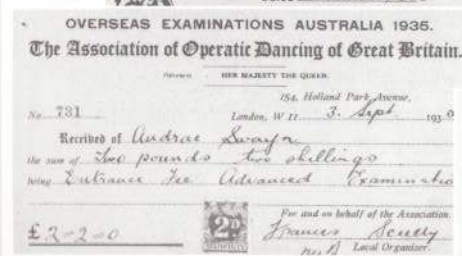
Among the memorabilia which members sent to the Academy when this brief history was being prepared were many souvenirs of the early days in Australia: how impressive the beautifully prepared certificates must have seemed when they arrived in Wagga Wagga, with Her Majesty's name at the head, and the signatures of Phyllis Bedells, Kathleen Gordon and the relevant examiner at the foot. Since the earliest days Australia – from east to west and north to

south – has remained enthusiastic in its support of the R.A.D. And anyone in doubt about the enthusiasm and dedication of Australian students might do worse than consider the record of Neil Walker of Queensland, who thirty years ago passed the Elementary examination at the age of 48, and the Advanced four years later!

### New Zealand.

Developments in New Zealand were slower: in 1932 Jean Horne, having studied with the Academy, went home to a severe economic depression which made it difficult for her to spread the word; but eventually organisers were established in Wellington, Auckland, Dunedin, Palmerston North, and even as far afield as Wanganui and Hawkes Bay.

In due course, Miss Horne heard that Felix Demery was visiting Australia; she arranged for him to be the first examiner to visit New Zealand, in 1936; and in 1940 Lorraine Norton examined five children in Christchurch – the first grade entrants in the South Island. There were considerable difficulties in keeping the Academy's work going during the war, when a Government permit was needed





in order to travel; examinations were organised on a shoe-string, and even after the war it took some time for things to get going on a large scale. Eventually, however, towards the end of the 1950s, things began to get better; and now as many as 7,000 children and 700 major students are examined every year, and New Zealand has four major examiners and fourteen grade examiners, many of whom travel world-wide.

New Zealand has held its own international summer schools in Wellington, and has also produced four Genée gold medallists – Rowena Jackson and Bryan Ashbridge, and more recently, in 1988, Lisa Cullum, of Tauranga (now principal dancer with the Deutschen Oper, Berlin), and in 1994 Marc Cassidy of Clyde (now with Australian Ballet).

### *The Production Club.*

At home, in 1932 a 'Production Club' was formed, open to all members over fourteen, to prepare and rehearse ballets with well-known choreographers. The first meeting was in a room at Gunter's, a well-known tea shop in Curzon Street, and the idea immediately took off – Frederick Ashton, Wendy Toye and Robert Helpmann were among the choreographers who gave classes and rehearsed ballets during the first few months – and they continued right up to and during the war – and later, when John Cranko was among the young choreographers whose first work was presented by the Club. It brought a number of foreign dancers to this country for the first time, including Madame Sarabhi and José Greco. Between 1949 and 1958 it held courses of study in ballet production, under Pamela May and John Cranko.

The time and energy Genée gave to the Association was



*Letters patent granting armorial bearings to the Royal Academy of Dancing.*

unstinting. She not only rigorously attended committee meetings, taught and demonstrated, but often dropped in unexpectedly at examinations she was not conducting – or even simply at class. Pat Beadle remembered her as 'most encouraging, giving us an absolute respect for the ballet, but with a nerve-racking way of asking us to take our shoes off. However sore our toes or heels might be, we never dared to put anything round them. We heard that once in a major exam Madam asked a candidate to take off her shoes and to much horror *orange peel* was found inside. We were never sure if this story was true, but it had a great effect on us!'

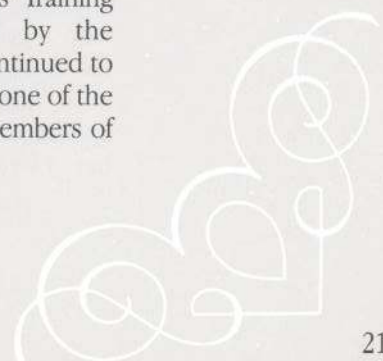
In June, 1933, there was a dinner in Genée's honour at Grosvenor House, at which she was presented with a dressing-case and an album signed by almost half The Academy's two thousand members. It was at the dinner that Sir William Llewellyn, President of the Royal Academy, who took the chair, suggested that what the Association now really needed – and deserved – was a Royal Charter; and Genée fell upon the suggestion like a lioness and worked for its

fulfilment. A first application was refused; a second, five years later, was successful, and in August 1935 the Charter was signed by King George V at the last Privy Council of his reign. Two years later the Academy's coat of arms was approved.

### *The Royal Academy.*

The Royal Academy of Dancing, as it now was, took that same year the first steps which were to be crowned almost sixty years later by the introduction of a degree course: there was a meeting between Genée, Kathleen Danetree (a member of the Council), the President of the Headmistress' Association, Miss E. R. Gwatkin, and another prominent headmistress, Miss A. K. Lewis, to discuss the integration of dance teaching and general education.

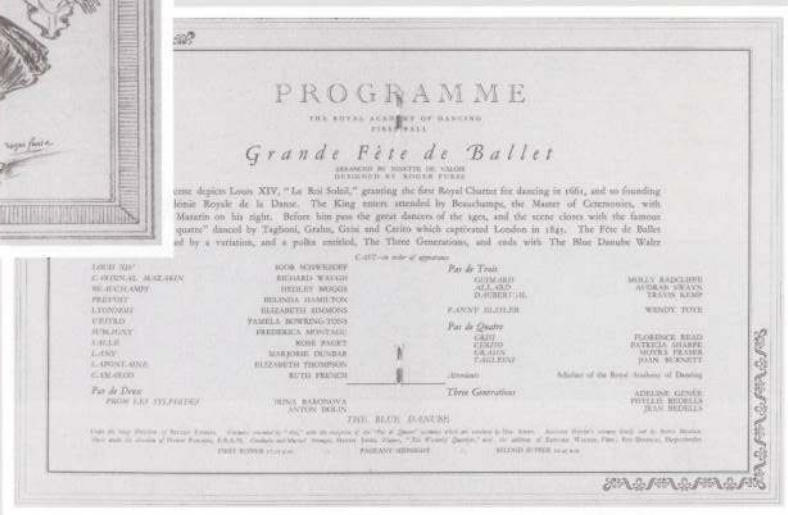
Miss Gwatkin joined the Council, and over the next few years proved of enormous help to the Academy. Though the inauguration of the syllabus she devised for the Teachers' Training Course was delayed by the outbreak of war, she continued to work for some years as one of the few genuinely useful members of the Council.







The programme of the entertainment at the Academy's 1939 ball at Grosvenor House, London.



### The last dance.

The last great social occasion before the war was a ball in aid of the building fund, which took place at Grosvenor House on June 8, 1939. Princess Marie Louise chaired the organising Committee, and Ninette de Valois devised the entertainment – a *Grand Fête de Ballet* based on the foundation by Louis XIV of the Académie Royal de Danse. The brilliant ballet designer Roger Furse conceived the setting, and there was a gorgeous extravaganza of two centuries of the history of ballet, great dancers of the past being played by (among others) Ruth French (as Camargo), Wendy Toye (Fanny Elssler) and Moyra Fraser (Lucile Grahn). Baronova and Dolin rushed from Southampton, where their ship from America had docked that very morning, to dance the *pas de deux* from *Les Sylphides*, and the evening ended with a polka in which Genée (in the dress Anna Neagle had worn in a film, as Queen Victoria) appeared with Phyllis Bedells and her 14-year-old daughter Jean.

The indefatigable Genée then opened the ball partnered by Philip Richardson – and not content, insisted that the great tenor Lauritz Melchior dance a polka with her. Eight hundred people danced until dawn.

The ball was a triumphant success, and it was immediately decided that it should become an annual event. Sadly, within four months England was at war, and the ball remains merely what must have been the most brilliant social evening in the Academy's history.

Later in 1939 Genée's husband, Frank Isitt, died. The Academy's debt to him was considerable: unofficially, he had been an early financial guide and adviser, the mainspring behind the creation of the Grand Council, and of the involvement in the Academy's work of a number of distinguished figures in business. The widow was invited to America, and in an attempt to assuage her grief decided to stay on for a while and help Bettina Byers, the R.A.D. organiser in Canada, to establish examinations there.

### Canada.

Canada's association with the R.A.D. had in fact begun several years earlier, in 1932, when Dorothy Cox (who is still teaching in London, Ontario) was the Academy's only member in that country. But it was Bettina Byers who really got things moving. She had been taken to London to study, and in 1939 Phyllis Bedells told her, in so many words, to 'go back to Canada and be the first local organiser for the R.A.D.' Two months later she opened a school in Toronto and was teaching the syllabi. It was uphill work, persuading other teachers to participate: the whole idea of holding examinations in ballet was new and unattractive – too much like hard work. Genée's help was invaluable – she gave lectures, and coached a number of pupils in the syllabus, with Ms Byers as her demonstrator.

She left delightful memories behind her. Ms Byers remembered darning her pointe shoes during a train journey, when Genée seized them from her exclaiming, 'Oh, child, do let me show you how to do it quickly!'

Genée wrote back to Kathleen Gordon in London insisting that Kathleen Danetree should come out and examine. At home, wrote miss Gordon later, 'the blitz was in full spate and invasion threatened. I remember trying to give her some idea of the difficulties involved – but somehow, in due course, Miss Danetree found herself on the way to Canada, where she conducted the first Royal Academy examinations and thence proceeded to New Zealand, Australia and later South Africa. For Genée, there were never any compromises – difficulties were simply to be overcome.' (Incidentally, the Solo



Seal was first examined in Canada in 1948, and the first Canadian examiners were appointed in 1965.)

America's association started somewhat later; even as late as 1959 there were just two teachers based in California, and they had originally come from the U.K. Doreen Scouler organised the Academy's activities in the Eastern states in the 1960s.

The attitude of young dancers in the U.S. has sometimes been less than wholly serious: Joyce Butler was examining once in Houston, Texas, and in the break was standing outside the studio when she was approached by a mother and child who explained 'We're into ballet for six weeks!' And there were the usual problems of two countries divided by a common language: 'I think the examiner has an accent problem,' explained one primary candidate, while another whispered to her friend 'She asks for your *darnce*, not your dance.'

### *The war years.*

During the war the Academy soldiered on with great stoicism. One or two examiners had been caught abroad at the outbreak, but made their way safely back to England by air and by sea. Just as the London theatres temporarily closed, so the Academy cancelled a few classes in 1939 – but soon reinstated them, and examinations were held as usual, just



Muriel  
Lehmann  
in 1968.

as, all over the country, teachers continued to work (though many of them, like Alwyn Probert, disappeared into Aircraft Factories or other wartime jobs, and were able to teach only when they could be spared from more important duties). Meanwhile, dancers over eighteen years old disappeared into the forces, and growing up quickly fourteen and fifteen-year-olds replaced them in touring companies and West End shows – fortunately, as Pat Beadle says, prepared for their ordeal by the training of Academy teachers.

At the Academy itself, Kathleen Gordon and Muriel Lehmann carried an enormous weight of organisation with virtually no-one else to help; examiners were thin on the ground, too – two of the most active being Kathleen Oliver (an admiral's daughter who carried on examining though she was in the WRNS, and appeared frequently in WRN uniform) and

Judith Espinosa.

Eventually, Genée returned to England – via Estoril, in Portugal, where she was stranded for two months for want of transport. Only her determination got her back to London: 'How in God's name did she do it?' asked a senior Air Ministry official when he heard she had got a flight home.

She was a tower of strength during that first bitterly cold winter of the war. She and Kathleen Gordon travelled many miles in dark, unlit, unheated trains often packed with troops. Miss Gordon remembered that on one journey to Bristol she 'insisted on my bringing men into our carriage from the corridor, and despite the fact that their smoking added to the distress of her breathing – she had a heavy bronchial cold – she uttered no protest, but chatted to them about their homes, and exchanged jokes and badinage.

### *Examination bowlers*

**Examiner:** Where do you look in an exercise for head movement? **Student:** (after much deliberation) Well, you always look where your face is.

**Examiner:** (unsure of pronunciation): And what is your name, dear? **Student:** Have a guess!

**Examiner:** What is a rond de jambe? **Student:** Circulation of the leg.

**Student** (after examination): Wasn't the examiner clever? – she knew it all by heart!





Royal  
Academy  
of  
Dancing

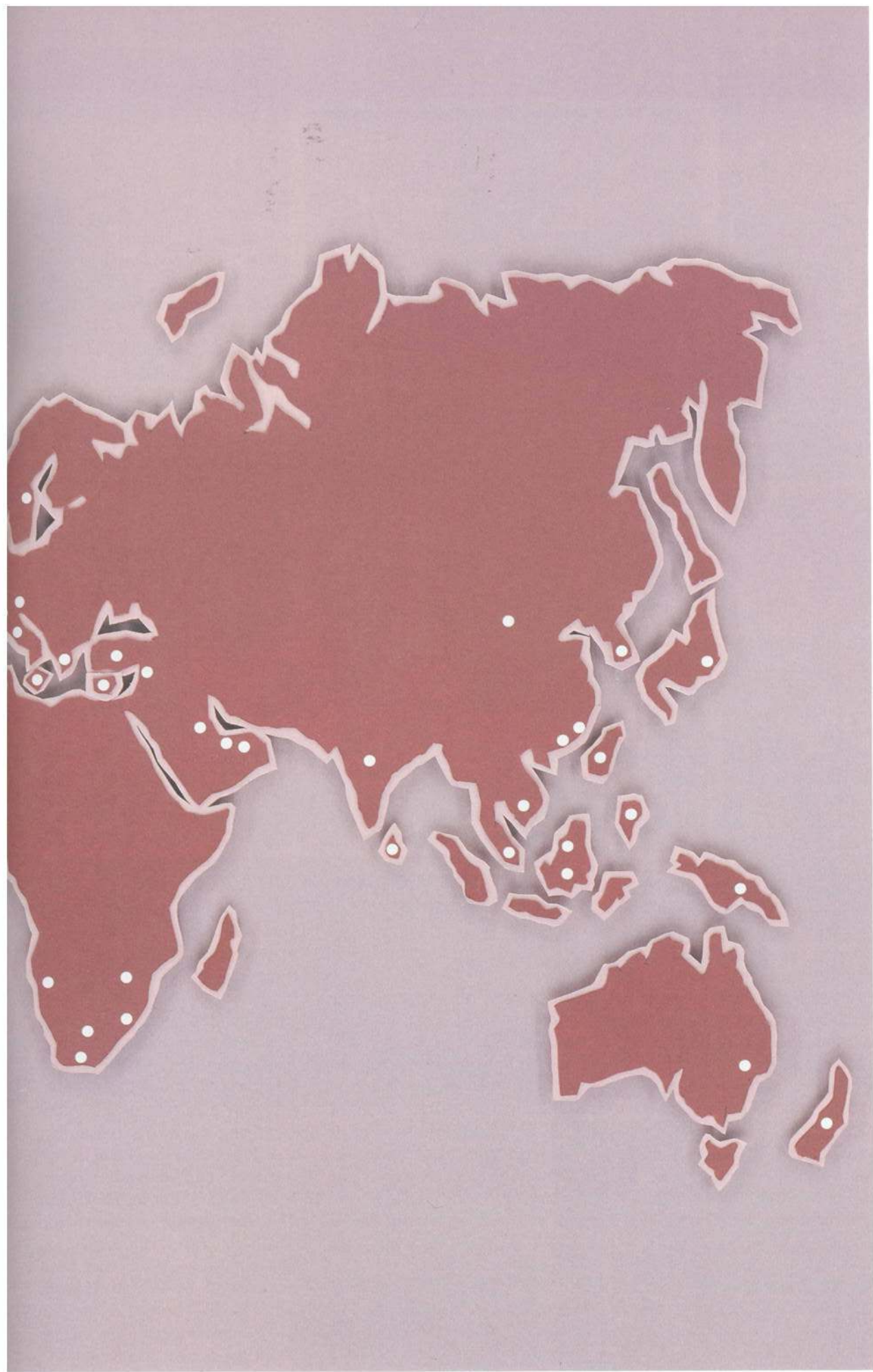
# Across the world



The Royal Academy of Dancing is represented in each of the following countries

- |                    |                  |                          |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Austria            | Greece           | Portugal                 |
| Australia          | Guatemala        | Puerto Rico              |
| Antigua            | Honduras         | Peru                     |
| Bahamas            | Hong Kong        | Qatar                    |
| Bahrain            | India            | Singapore                |
| Barbados           | Indonesia        | South Africa             |
| Belgium            | Israel           | Spain                    |
| Bermuda            | Italy            | Sri Lanka                |
| Botswana           | Jamaica          | St. Lucia                |
| Brasil             | Japan            | Swaziland                |
| Canada             | Korea            | Sweden                   |
| Chile              | Luxembourg       | Switzerland              |
| China              | Macau            | Taiwan                   |
| Costa Rica         | Malaysia         | Thailand                 |
| Cyprus             | Malta            | Trinidad and Tobago      |
| Dominican Republic | Mexico           | Tunisia                  |
| Ecuador            | Namibia          | Turkey                   |
| El Salvador        | Netherlands      | United Arab Emirates     |
| Eire               | New Zealand      | United Kingdom           |
| France             | Norway           | United States of America |
| Germany            | Papua New Guinea | Zimbabwe                 |
| Gibraltar          | Philippines      |                          |





The  
First  
**75**  
Years



### *Comforts for the Navy.*

Genée decided that since dancers had hands as well as feet, they might as well put them to use, and instituted regular fortnightly knitting parties ('for those who cannot bring their own, wool will be provided') at which members sat down to worry their way through patterns from *Weldon's Comforts for the Navy* and turn out seaboot stockings, socks, steering gloves of oiled wool, helmets, scarves and polo jumpers for the crew of an East Coast minesweeper. Members were generous with gifts of biscuits, cakes, cigarettes, Oxo and playing cards. A handsome young man who appeared at the Academy in 1941 was halfway through grade one before it was discovered that he was a member of the minesweeper's crew who happened to be on leave in London and had called at the Academy to thank the knitters personally, and to make an urgent appeal for more socks.

Rationing made things difficult: Genée declined to notice the fact and, as Miss Gordon recalled (in an obituary, years later, in the *Dancing Times*):

'She remained as impeccable as ever, and she brooked no decline in us either. Owing partly to (clothing) coupons, partly to the exigencies of life, we had long ago discarded hats and gloves, but when any of us had to accompany Madame Genée on a journey on a journey or to a meeting we begged, borrowed and delved into one another's wardrobes for these items. So strong was her influence that I well remember a now prominent member of the Executive Committee, desperate because the woman had not turned up to clean the studio, being discovered sweeping it herself, complete in hat and gloves.'

Examinations continued with surprising regularity, though Genée pointed out in the *Gazette* (in case anyone was in doubt) that the Academy could accept no responsibility for Air Raids, and reminded candidates NOT to forget their gas masks. On one occasion an examiner visited Plymouth the day after one of those air raids which flattened the entire city centre, and finding the hall in which the examinations were to have been held full of rubble, and the piano completely demolished, thought at first of cancelling the examinations – but was persuaded by a band of enthusiastic children to go ahead, accompanying them by whistling the music!

There was only a slight diminution in the number of candidates for examinations, and during the last year of the war no less than 12,390 children were examined. Practical difficulties were often surmounted with considerable ingenuity, tights and skirts for instance being swapped or hired (at 7s 6d a time) when a shortage of clothing coupons made it impossible for examination candidates to buy or make their own.

### *After the war.*

With peace, there were what seemed only a few hours of rejoicing: Kathleen Gordon and Muriel Lehmann pushed their way through the crowds, with Genée, to Buckingham Palace: 'When the Royal Family and Churchill came out onto the balcony, Muriel Lehmann succeeded in hoisting Madame up so she could see, and she yelled and waved like a schoolboy.' But then, it was back to business.

With peace, a new spirit of determination inspired the Academy's Committee: Miss Gwatkin's Teachers' Training

Course was inaugurated (with the aid of Arnold Haskell and considerable help from Lydia Sokolova) in October 1945 – a three year residential course which entitled successful candidates to use the letters L.R.A.D. (Licentiate of the R.A.D. – the point of the course) Haskell told the *Dancing Times* was 'to give the dancing teacher a knowledge of the physical reasons behind ballet technique, a wide view of dance as an art, and of ballet as a composite of the arts of dance, music, painting and drama.'

The organisation was run very like an old-fashioned girls' school: students lived in as boarders at Fairfield Lodge, with its magnificent garden, under the careful eye of Kathleen Gordon, and the administration was at The Limes, 15, Holland Park Gardens. The course was a stiff one: applicants, who had to have passed their School Certificate, had not only to be good dancers but to study a course worked out in collaboration with the University of London and the Headmistress' Association, to pass the advanced examinations before the end of the course, and to take a new combined syllabus revised by Karsavina. It was no sinecure – but all was pleasure on Diploma Day, when there was a grand garden party at the Lodge and all the girls appeared in their best dresses, with hats and gloves, to receive their diplomas.

With members of the forces beginning to return to civilian life, a series of refresher courses was organised (led by Peggy Whitely, an ex-Chief Officer in the WRNS). Then there was the revision of the Childrens' Examination syllabus. The necessity for this had been emphasised by Arnold Haskell, who towards the end of the war had toured the country talking about the R.A.D., and meanwhile





Centre: The Limes, the Academy's administrative centre until after the war.

Top: at a Fairfield Lodge fête, Dame Adeline Genée tries her hand at quoits; left, Dame Tamara Karsavina opens the proceedings, Arnold Haskell (below left) is seated at her side.

Elsewhere, life at Fairfield Lodge – with, below, a group including Nadia Nerina, Alex Grant, Fiorella Keene, Frederick Ashton, Sbeila Nelson and Donald Britton.





looking about him to discover the state of ballet teaching.

One thing in particular worried him: there was a trend towards modern dance – which was all well and good, except that he felt very strongly that some students were missing out on the benefits of a classical training. At his suggestion (supported forcefully by Genée) a Committee was formed to draw up a new syllabus. Three years later that syllabus was ready, was approved by the English and Scottish Headmistresses' Associations, and was entitled *Ballet in Education*: its aim was to encourage schools to adopt ballet as part of the general curriculum.

### *Golden years?*

The years immediately after the war can claim to have been the golden age of twentieth century British ballet: the Sadler's Wells Ballet, under Ninette de Valois, moved to the Royal Opera House when it returned to action after its wartime conversion into a dance hall, and the high standard of performance of a company with Margot Fonteyn as its acknowledged star, the evolution of the 'British style', the plethora of Ashton ballets, each seeming more beautiful than the last, placed the ballet firmly at the centre of an attention it had never previously enjoyed. The performances of the Ballet Rambert and the Festival Ballet (with Dolin as director and Markova as star) were scarcely less valued and enjoyed, especially in the provinces.

Round about this time there begin to emerge in the *Gazette* names which were to become very familiar to a new generation not only to the ballet-loving public but to everyone connected with the Academy: after the Silver Jubilee dinner in January 1946, for

*In 1954 Dame Margot Fonteyn bands Dame Adeline Genée a decorated scroll acknowledging her years of service to the Academy.*



*Pamela May,  
Coronation Award 1976.*

instance, there were performances by Pamela May and Julia Farron – both ex-students, the former to join the Executive Committee a year later, the latter, having accomplished the Solo Seal at the age of twelve, also to



be an invaluable worker for the Academy, and eventually its Artistic Director and the recipient, in 1994, of its Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Award.

Genée was now almost at the end of her quarter-century's practical work with the R.A.D. In 1950 she became Dame Adeline – the first dancer to be so honoured, though Ninette de Valois became a Dame a year later. In the same honours list Philip Richardson and Margot Fonteyn received O.B.E.s (she became Dame six years later). On October 31, 1950, Dolin dedicated an evening's performance by his newly-formed Festival Ballet to Fonteyn and the R.A.D. Queen Mary, the Princess Royal and Princess Alice sat with her in the royal box at the Stoll theatre – and in the interval, partnered by the Earl of Athlone, the Queen demonstrated for her guest a minuet which she had been taught by the great Taglioni herself.

### *New Patron – new President.*

Three years later, Queen Mary died, and later in that same Coronation year the young Queen Elizabeth II agreed to take her place as patron. And now, Genée finally retired as President. Her work for the Academy had been invaluable – equalled only in intensity and enthusiasm by that of Phyllis Bedells. She was (Kathleen Gordon recalled) 'prejudiced and intolerant, with a streak of ruthlessness that is a part of the make-up of most great men and women; but malice, meanness of soul and dishonesty of mind were unknown to her... Her feet were ever firmly planted on the ground... She had her visions and dreamed her dreams – the Academy was one of them.'

Dame Adeline presented to the Academy a silver plaque to be





Dame Marie Rambert receives the Coronation Award in 1956. With her, left to right, are Dame Adeline Genée, Tamara Karsavina and Dame Margot Fonteyn.

known as the Coronation Award, given first to Dame Ninette and subsequently to a long line of distinguished contributors to the world of ballet. In 1960 another honour was instituted: the official Fellowship of the Academy – the first being presented to Karsavina and Idzikowski.

Fonteyn, the only dancer to approach Genée in fame and admiration, now agreed to take her place as President, and a new phase in the Academy's history began.

There were several breaks with the R.A.D.s founders and early members around this time: another notable departure was that of Karsavina, who gave up her Vice-Presidency in 1955 – but left behind her a valuable legacy, not least her syllabus for the 'Teachers' Training Course and her beautiful and sensitive choreography for the Advanced and Solo Seal syllabi.

### *Whips and Carrots.*

Less beautiful, perhaps less sensitive, but no less interesting was the work which emerged from an approach made to the Academy in 1954 by the Whip and Carrot Club – an association of high jumpers who were also members of the Amateur Athletics Association. They had heard that in the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. athletes had benefited from ballet exercises, and wondered whether this approach would not benefit English athletes. There

were several meetings between A.A.A. and Academy officials, and a series of experimental ballet classes was given especially to athletes. That eminently practical teacher the late Andrew Hardie wrote a booklet of *Ballet*

found the children charming and inventive – one little Jamaican girl performed the Sailors' Hornpipe with great enthusiasm, and when asked by the examiner what was happening during the section when she was coiling the rope, replied: 'Stirring tar, miss.' All the children were charming and uninhibited – Normandelle 'Punkie' Facey, for many years local organiser in Jamaica, still remembers the little girl who 'instead of gracefully leaving the room with the others, ran to the examiner, put her elbows down on the table, and "Now how did I do?"'



*Exercises for Athletes* which the Academy published in 1955 (it was illustrated by the popular *Punch* artist Fougasse, whose pre-war illustrations for *The Highway Code* had been followed by Government propaganda posters during the war). It might well be time to re-issue this booklet, which was said at the time to have benefited in particular high jumpers, hurdlers, divers and – in a prelude to the work of John Curry? – skaters.

In 1954, examinations were held for the first time in the Caribbean, where examiners

It was in 1955 that a young ballet historian, Ivor Guest – who certainly knows more about the Romantic ballet than any other Englishman, and has haunted the archives of the Paris Opéra with such assiduity that he must be the one and only original Phantom – was invited by Dame Adeline to write her biography, a task he completed with all his usual thoroughness and elegance of language. Not unnaturally, the task interested him in the history and work of the R.A.D., and in 1965 he joined the Executive Committee just in time to be

Dame Margot Fonteyn inspects a surprising line-up of ballet students: four high-jumpers and two hurdlers.



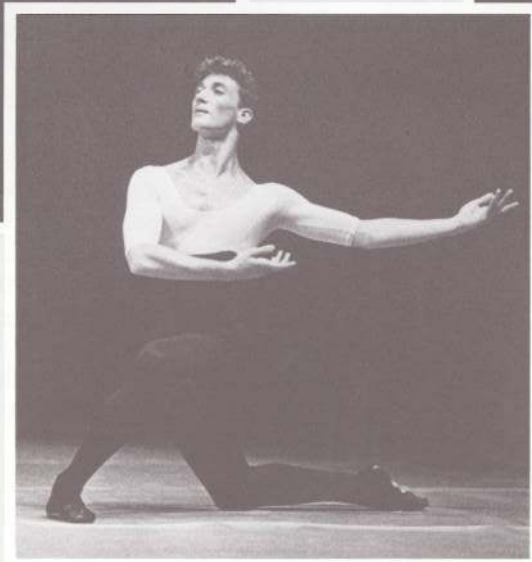
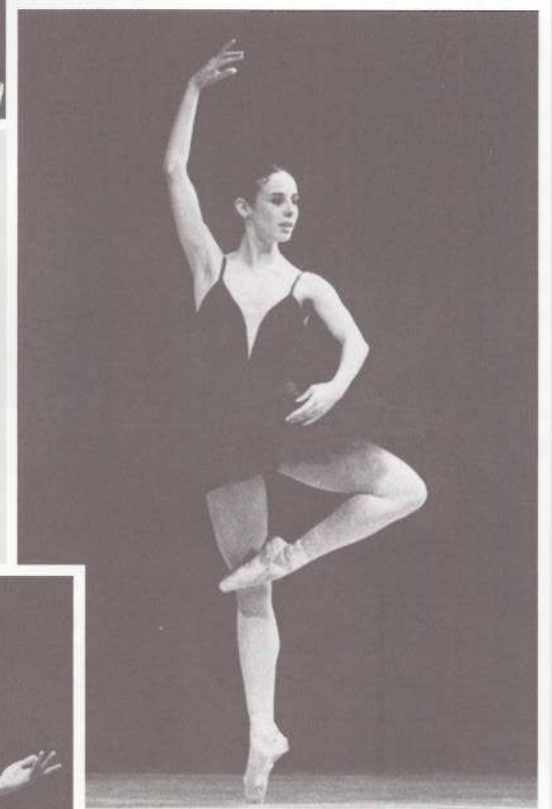
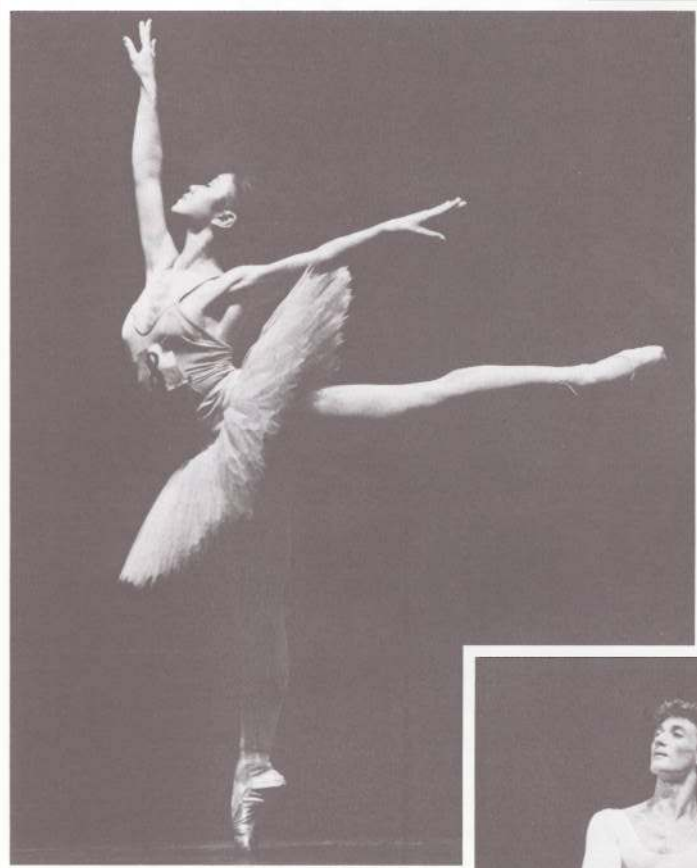


*At some Academy parties.*

*Left: Julia Farron and Phyllis Bedells.*

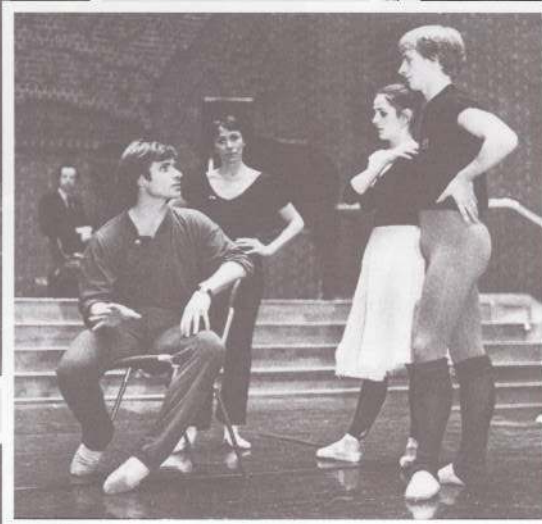
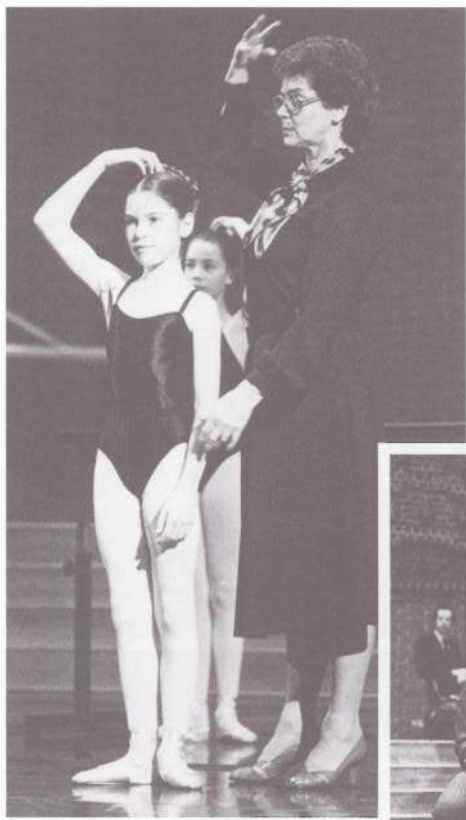
*Centre: P. J. S. Richardson and Dame Margot Fonteyn.*

*Above: Sybil Spencer and Dame Margot at the Academy's Silver Jubilee dinner (1981).*

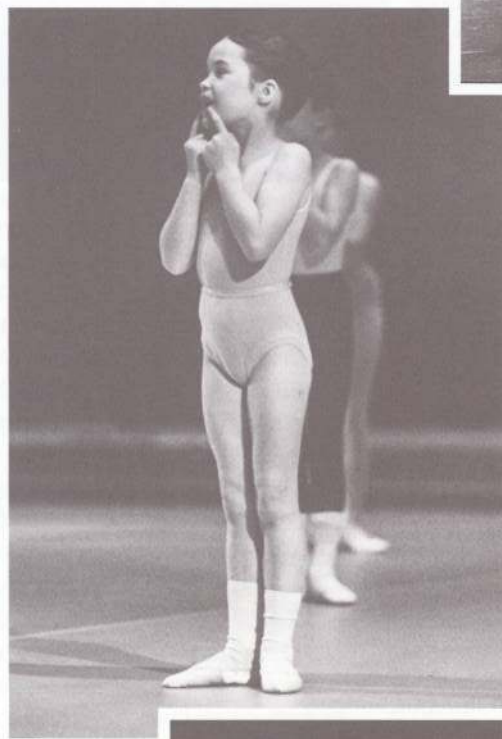


*Three gold medallists.*  
*Above: Yurie Shimamura (1984).*  
*Centre: David Cranston (1990).*  
*Right: Jane Finnie (1989).*

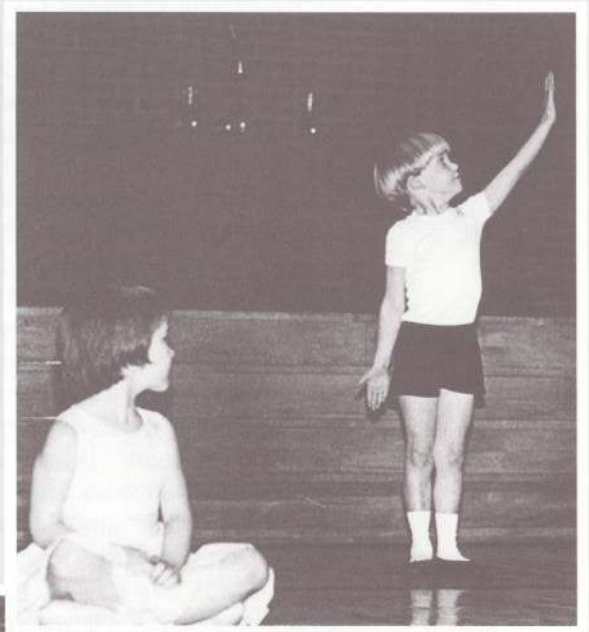




At assembly.  
 Left to right: Julia Farron teaches  
 ports de bras (1984).  
 David Wall and Alfreda Thorogood  
 coach two students in Deux Pigeons  
 (1982).  
 Pamela May receives the 1976  
 Coronation Award.



Left and right:  
 young students at  
 Assembly  
 with (below) David Wall  
 with Heulven Price and  
 (at back) pianist  
 Winifred Avery in 1986







*Clockwise from above. Dame Margot Fonteyn with young Philippine students, in 1976; she is wearing the order of the International Artists' Award, presented to her President Ferdinand Marcos.*

*Stanislas Idzikowsky takes class 1952.*

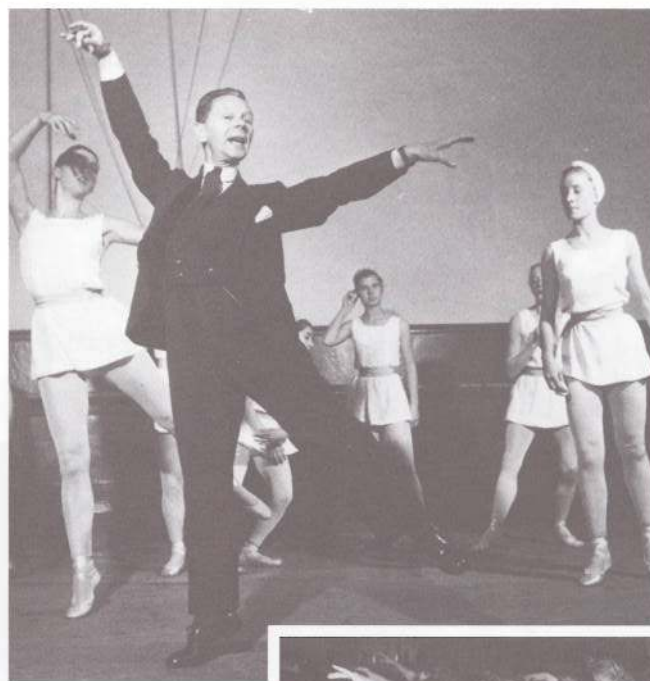
*In 1957 Raymond Liao, of Hong Kong, was the only man among the 250 students at the R.A.D. Congress.*

*Dame Margot with Joy Brown, the Academy's New York representative in the 50's.*

involved in persuading the education authorities to admit ballet as a subject for the G.C.E. at O Level.

Among other duties this involved him in writing (with Keith Lester) the history papers – and marking the students' 'project files' on subjects of their own choosing. There were (as he says in his *Adventures of a Ballet Historian*) some illuminations, as when a student writing of a ballet of Martha Graham's suggested that it was based on 'the 1929 stock market crash in which thousands of American youths were lost'!

The Academy's work continued steadily through the fifties and sixties: it is impossible to mention every development – but at home, certainly one important one was the establishment of the summer schools, the first of which was organised by Louise Browne in 1965 at Elmhurst School at Camberley. Teachers and dancers attended from America, Canada, New Zealand and the U.K.; Dame Marie Rambert, Karsavina and Fonteyn went out to speak, and there were classes and lectures by Dolin, Idzikowsky, John Gilpin, Ruth French and many others. During these years, too, the Major Syllabus was revised (by a panel chaired by Ursula Moreton) with the help of Ninette de Valois and Karsavina.



### *Worldwide expansion.*

Meanwhile, it was during the 1950s that the Academy's work abroad really began to accelerate. Those first wartime examinations in Canada and Australia were followed before 1960 by examinations in Mexico and the Caribbean, the U.S.A., Belgium, Holland, Norway, Germany, Italy, Malaya, Singapore, India, Ceylon, Rhodesia and Hong Kong. Ana del Castillo, a Mexican teacher, started a school in Coyoacán, south of Mexico City, and two of the students who worked with her on the R.A.D. syllabi – Diana Alanis and Duice María Silvera – subsequently became R.A.D. teachers. Nellie Potts was the first examiner to go out to Mexico, in 1955, and among the students she examined was Carlos Lopez, who

later became a well-known dancer and choreographer, and Director of the National Dance Company. Señora del Castillo was the local organiser for many years, and her successors, Perla Epelstein and Julieta Navarro have helped to ensure that the syllabi are taught from coast to coast, from the Guatemalan border to that with the U.S.A.

As in every country in the world, standards were not uniformly high: Joyce Barber, examining in Pueblo, sat through a whole day of grades with the candidates apparently doing their own variations on the syllabus – every single exercise was incorrect; remonstrations produced the puzzled answer. 'But that's how the course was taught.' (Incidentally, puzzled at the apparently advanced years of all the candidates, Ms Butler



eventually discovered that 'in Mexico, you are one year old when you are born!')

In Israel the first visit of an R.A.D. examiner, in 1967, coincided with the Six-Day War, and Elizabeth Glass found her schedule severely disrupted - she was even allowed to examine on the Sabbath in order to complete her schedule. An examiner in Malta - where the first R.A.D. examinations were held in 1963 while not faced with that problem, became somewhat disturbed when loud pop music almost drowned the sound of the piano, and told Lilian Attard in no uncertain terms that the music must be stopped. The studio was - and is - in a narrow Sliema street surrounded by a slum area where it was considered obligatory to turn your radio on at full volume every morning at ten, when there was a request programme. Ms Attard had to go round to every one of a large number of doors asking for the volume to be turned down. She has not recorded the comments she received.

Ms Attard had another little crisis when she went, one morning, to the airport to meet the examiner coming to conduct the children's examinations. As usual, the Academy had sent a photograph from London so she could recognise her guest. The aircraft arrived on time, but amid the crowd of passengers Ms Attard could recognise nobody in the least like the portrait. At last the arrivals lounge emptied until only Ms Attard remained, together with a single lady sitting quietly amid her luggage. She went up to her, took a sly glance at the photograph, and though there was no resemblance, asked whether, by any chance...

'Yes,' said the lady 'I am that person. Didn't the Academy send

you my photo?'

'No,' replied Ms Attard tactfully but firmly, slipping the snap craftily into her handbag.

It was Florrie Sinclair who went out to Singapore in 1955, two years after the first examinations were held there, and stayed for over a quarter of a century, organising for the Academy between 1968 and 1981. As usual, the language proved something of a problem at first - though teachers did their best: on one occasion a small child appeared with note pinned to her: 'I AM A TWIN. MY NAME IS...' A little later, another appeared with a second note pinned to her: 'I AM THE OTHER TWIN. MY NAME IS...!'

All problems were not so simply solved: a pre-primary pupil repeated again and again: '*Poh yu eng.*' After a while the examiner was forced to say, 'Yes, dear, I *know* your name now!' - but the pianist intervened, standing, bowing and saying: 'The child is telling you that she wants to pour urine.' A speedy resolution followed.

The first examinations were held in Cyprus in 1977, and the Academy's organisation there ran very smoothly, though with the usual little hiccoughs: as when the local organisers carefully arranged for the examiner to be taken to the beach for a swim before the open classes only to discover that there was nothing she would like less; or when an 80-year-old gentleman watching the open classes opened a door to find himself face to face with the examiner, having her shower. The examiner was, Jacqueline Owen remarks, 'a nice-looking one.' Another, if unexpected, triumph for the Academy abroad.

It was in 1953 that students in Malaya took their first examinations: Pauline Dibb re-

members Malaysia in the early '60s, when she did her first examination tours there - four weeks to cover Hong Kong, Singapore and Cyprus and the Federated Malay States.

'Conditions were not as easy as we know them today: it was hot and humid, with torrential thunderstorms, and air-conditioning had not yet arrived. We examined in the lovely old-style Malay houses that had no real walls or windows, but rather screens that were raised to let in the breeze. Exotic butterflies flitted around the room, birds of vivid colours flew through, and the occasional cat wandered in looking for shade - while the candidate continued her exercises quite unconcerned...

'On several occasions I became aware that there were numerous little spectators watching the proceedings, lying on the grass just outside the room: they would arrive like shadows in the morning, never made a sound, and disappeared at lunchtime, only to return when the afternoon session began. I have often wondered how many of them were sufficiently impressed to begin to take ballet lessons, later!'

By the end of the '50s, the Committee was much pre-occupied with the limitations of the Academy's premises. The war had put paid to the idea of a purpose-built home, the two Holland Park houses had long since become too small, and in any event the house in which the students for the 'Teachers' Training Course were boarded was in the last few years of its lease.

### *The South Lodge project.*

In 1967 the eye of the chairman, Sir Ashley Clark, a former British Ambassador in Rome, fell on





South Lodge, a mansion on the south side of Knightsbridge. There were inevitable discussions with the bank – which agreed to finance an expensive conversion, including the building of studios and offices and perhaps a theatre in the large grounds. An appeal was launched to raise at least £400,000. But then came, right on cue, devaluation and the beginning of the depression which ended the boom of the '60s. The Appeal Fund grew with alarming lethargy: by the end of 1968 only £5,000 had been raised.

The appeal was not greeted with enormous enthusiasm by the general public or even by members, and certainly not by those benefactors who so often support such ventures: Mr Paul Getty, then one of the richest men in the world, sent a cheque for ten pounds (which the committee thought they might frame as a memento, rather than bothering to cash it). The Arts Council declined to help. The interest on the bank loan steadily drained the coffers. The *Gazette* editor rather wearily pointed out that all would be well if every member of the Academy would only raise £73 and send it in. Fonteyn, though initially enthusiastic, in her presidential report to the 1968 annual general meeting described the purchase of South Lodge as 'folly', and Kathleen Gordon, for many years the Academy's Director, resigned after 44 years' service: it has always been said that the fact that she had strongly advised against too speedily pressing ahead with the South Lodge project was not the main reason for her resignation, but it must certainly have been a factor.

In March 1969 everyone moved to South Lodge – but in an atmosphere of growing gloom. Soon Ivor Guest was aghast when



Left: Ivor Guest, who served the Academy for almost a quarter of a century.

Below: Peter Brinson, briefly Director at the end of the 1960s.



he overheard two members of the Committee discussing the very real prospect of the Academy's bankruptcy. Peter Brinson, who had accepted an invitation to become Director General after Kathleen Gordon's resignation, realised the true extent of the Academy's financial plight and, arguing that he had not been properly informed about it, also resigned. Shortly afterwards came the resignations of the Chairman and the entire Finance Committee – they saw themselves responsible for the financial *debacle* which now faced Ivor Guest, who unwillingly accepted temporary chairmanship of the Executive Committee. He must have wondered just what he had got himself into: he had hesitated even to join the Committee, so busy was he with his own career in the law, his historical research, his writing... And now he found himself faced with the first of two not dissimilar periods of financial crisis to which he had to apply himself during the next thirty years.

The situation was saved, on this first occasion, by the sale of South Lodge for a sum which at least for the time postponed any serious prospect of bankruptcy, though the decision to sell left the Academy without a home. The Executive Committee had its eye on High House, in Hammer-smith (once the boarding house of St Paul's School). There was still no Director. There was a painful annual general meeting in January of 1970, at which Guest had to put the position frankly before a disturbed audience of members. Many of them had decided to put their feet down: permission to buy High House for £71,000 was firmly denied – the Academy should rather rent accommodation for the time, and see how things went.

The meeting had certain surrealist elements, as G. B. L. Wilson suggested in his report in *The Dancing Times* of February:

'Invitations to the meeting had been sent to people who were not really eligible to attend... Dame Margot insisted that any non-members must leave the room – and Madame Idzikovsky was led to the door. 'But she always comes!' pleaded Dame Margot – so an exception was made (but there were still invitees downstairs who were kept out). Dame Ninette de Valois got up and said, 'I think that this is the time for someone to rise and recite the Charge of the Light Brigade.' None did, so another lady rose and said very sincerely, 'No, we should have a few moments' prayer.' This rather stunned the members – suppose God were a member of the Cecchetti Society? Skilfully, Phyllis Bedells relieved the tension by saying that she was



always praying for the R.A.D., and this was not a better time than any other. Fortunately, Ivor Guest, the acting chairman, remained unflappable, and the members calmed down.'

At last the annual report and financial statement were grudgingly passed: a few hands went up, most members abstained; the meeting had gone on so long that when they left the room for the cocktail party, they found that the distinguished guests had either left, or had been drinking steadily for two hours, so that their conversation somewhat lacked coherence.

In the end, the situation was saved by a combination of extremely hard work and a few strokes of good luck – the major one being the fact that Fonteyn's influence persuaded the buyers of South Lodge to allow the Academy to remain in the building at a nominal rent for two and a half years.

Ramshackle it may have been, but the place was usable; and the unselfish devotion of Guest, Iris Truscott and others continued to carry the Academy forward. As to the economics of the organisation, in an act to be mirrored almost precisely twenty years on, it was decided that a businessman should be engaged as Administrator. Barry G. Dumont, formerly an executive with Rootes, was appointed, followed in a year or two by Philip Starr. Shortly afterwards, Guest was confirmed as permanent Chairman.

### *Summer Schools and Switzerland.*

It must not be thought that the '60s were all gloom, depression and stagnation: indeed in 1965 there was a very important development indeed – the



*Her Majesty the Queen Mother talking to the students back-stage at the 1960 R.A.D. Gala at Drury Lane, Margot Fonteyn behind her; talks with Lord Snowdon.*

holding of the first International Summer School, at which teachers from all over the world studied for three weeks. The idea had been jointly developed by Kathleen Gordon and Louise Browne – the latter directed the School for no less than eighteen years. The list of teachers and lecturers is a role-call of the country's most distinguished dancers and teachers: Lucette Aldous, Jean Bedells, David Blair, Anton Dolin, Julia Farron, Ruth French, John Gilpin, Stanislas Idzikowski, Tamara Karsavina, Alicia Markova, Jean McDonnell, Marie Rambert, Galina Samsova, Michael Somes, Peggy Van Praagh, Ninette de Valois... Later there were to be summer schools overseas, carefully tailored to the specific needs of the area in which they took place – in Toronto (1980), Mexico (1981), Melbourne (1982), San Francisco and Luxembourg (1983). In 1982

a children's summer school was introduced.

The R.A.D.'s expansion was not always entirely smooth: when a Swiss teacher's pupils were examined for the first time, and passed, a teacher in the same small town put around the notion that her rival had actually invented the R.A.D., which did not really exist except as a publicity gimmick! Nevertheless, Swiss students were soon found all over the country, and sometimes developed in somewhat unexpected ways: Conny Kissling, for instance, passed all her grades before her hobby, ski-acrobatics, took precedence, and she became a world champion at the Olympic Winter Games in 1992!

The common view of Switzerland as a place of impeccable organisation and hygiene trembled somewhat for Joyce Butler when she found herself examining in a large barn, surrounded by cows, horses and dogs (and with a pianist who, when it came to the dance, exclaimed 'I can't play this,' got up, and turned on a cassette.)



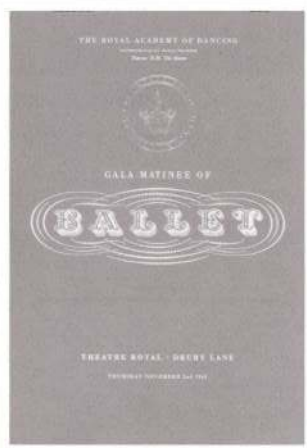
*Conny Kissling, dancer and ski-acrobat.*



## The R.A.D. galas.

The spectacular series of fund-raising gala matinées which took place between 1958 and 1969 to raise funds for the Academy were treasured by every ballet-lover. They usually took place at Drury Lane, and almost every notable dancer in the world performed at some time or another – Roland Petit, Eric Bruhn, Maria Tallchief, Jean Babilée, Roland Petit, Rosella

*The legendary partnership of Nureyev and Fonteyn began soon after Dame Margot invited the Russian to make his English première performance at the 1961 R.A.D. gala matinée. Two years later, they relaxed during a break in rehearsals for La Sylphide at another matinée.*



Hightower, Toni Lander, Attilio Labis, Marcia Haydee, Carla Fracci and many others. The first gala was at the Coliseum in 1958, attended by the Queen Mother, Princess Margaret and the eight-year-old Princess Anne. Dolin and Dame Ninette were the organisers, and among the dancers were Fonteyn and Michael Somes, Markova and John Gilpin, Norman Morrice, Lucette Aldous, Maryon Lane, Yvette Chauviré and Mona Inglesby.

In later years, Fonteyn took over the organisation, and because of her unique position the results continued to be impressive: no-one who attended these galas will forget the buzz of excitement they always generated – perhaps the most extraordinary being the sensation in 1961 when Rudolf Nureyev danced for the first time in England.

It was in 1958 that the various Regions of the R.A.D. really began to develop throughout Great Britain. In October, Kathleen Gordon went to Edinburgh, where twenty-five teaching members formed the Scottish

Region with Marjorie Middleton as first chairman; three months later Olga Cooper became chairman of the new South West Region. The Irish Region sprang into life in May, 1959, when Helena Lehmitzki called a meeting in Dublin, declared herself chairman, and selected five teachers to be members of her committee.

In 1958, the R.A.D. began to make an impression in Trinidad and Tobago – the islands at first being grouped, for examination purposes, with Mexico, but later with Jamaica and Barbados. Heather Alcazar remembers taking her examinations to a piano played by Paul Hill, from the local British Council offices, who enriched the somewhat arid musical arrangements with many baroque decorations. She was not impressed by the tunic she had to wear, made locally from paper patterns sent from London: 'a shapeless design which looked a bit like a pillow case. I was very narrow, and the first one made for me fell off, as it was too broad and just slipped off my shoulders.'

This was not Ms Alcazar's only hurdle: the day before she took her examination her brothers took her on a box-car ride: 'they had decided I was doing too much ballet and was getting sissy. Needless to say I fell out and grazed both knees.' However, she passed.

Though Trinidad is only sixty miles by forty, it has no less than a dozen trained teachers, and ex-scholars are to be found in many professional companies.

## Vicarage Crescent.

Gradually, the Academy's financial situation improved, until in 1971 Guest was able to report the first surplus for many year, and a building fund which had reached £70,000. In 1972 this became useful, for new permanent



*Then and now:  
Vicarage Crescent before work started; and the  
Patron with David Wall and students at the  
opening of the Fonteyn Centre sixteen years later.*



The Queen came to Battersea to open the new premises in November 1974. 'Short of wearing her crown,' said the *Dancing Times*, 'Her Majesty could not compete with the hats of the RAD ladies,' and so wore a simple fur hat. She watched classes and took tea with Fonteyn and various Academy representatives – including Phyllis Bedells, Ivor Guest, Dames Ninette, Marie and Alicia, Arnold Haskell, Idzikowsky (happily celebrating his eightieth birthday on that very day) and Keith Lester, now Director of the Teachers' Training Course (who, it was rumoured – but denied – addressed Her Majesty as 'ducky').



quarters were at last found for the Academy – in a former warehouse in Battersea known as Hall's Granary, which seemed ideal for conversion into a set of studios and the necessary offices. The Executive Committee decided in April to buy the place, in July the administrative staff moved in, and in September the Teachers' Training Course was installed on the top floor.

There was a year or so of considerable confusion as builders, teachers and pupils rather uneasily milled about the

building. The first part to be completed contained the studios, and work went on while the girls attended classes – making their way through, around and even up the scaffolding (it was decided that while doing so they should be dressed in boiler suits lest they should arouse the amorous propensities of the workmen).



Mr Lester died in 1993 after over a quarter of a century's work for the Academy - first as principal teacher of the Teachers' Training Course, then as its Director. He was one of its last links with the great past, having been a pupil of Astafieva, Legat and Fokine, and partnered Kyasht and Karsavina.



*Keith Lester in his office, working with Sylvia Wu in 1970, and  
chatting to Julia Farron at his 80th birthday celebration in 1984.*



## Euphoria.

The financial situation really seemed to have been saved – not a penny had had to be borrowed to pay for the work, the premises were ideal – ten dance studios, excellent office accommodation, a canteen... There was a general feeling of euphoria.

The move and the attendant confusion had not interrupted the Academy's work. Dame Margot had devised a new children's syllabus, and Keith Lester had formulated a Dance Education Syllabus for older children who had passed the early grades but did not wish to go on to the major examinations. Guest's personal enthusiasm was particularly for the Teacher's Training Course, which in 1976 became the College, with the aim (among other things) of opening up career possibilities for teachers in state schools and colleges. The Academy's College grew under its various principals – Winifred Cullis, Arnold Haskell, Lilian Charlesworth, Keith Lester, Patricia Mackenzie, Valerie Taylor and Susan Danby until it became the major tutoring body of a degree course. Another important development was the Professional Dancers' Teaching Course, designed to retrain professional dancers as teachers – Guest had originated the idea, and Valerie Taylor developed it.

By now, a twin Dance Education Syllabus had been introduced (in 1973), aimed at the non-professional dancer: Keith Lester's scheme, emphasising the qualities of the Russian school and the Romantic movement, was joined by Maria Fay's character syllabus.

## Brasil.

Meanwhile, the R.A.D. was at work in Brasil, where in 1974 Dalal Achcar started a course in



Ivor Guest with Mary Clarke, Editor of the *Dancing Times*, which has supported and encouraged the Academy since its inception.

of whom found the R.A.D. standards exhausting: Chie Abe San, a principal of the company, ruefully complained that dancing the Swan Queen was easy compared to the syllabi!

Miss Kjelgaard points out that many Japanese teachers still learn their ballet by watching performances and passing on what they see to their students – so small children are attempting *grands fouettés* while they can still scarcely skip or gallop! The legendary pressure which many Japanese parents put on their children at school seems to spill over into class, for there is very little smiling, and a real fear of doing something wrong. This does mean, however, that students have great concentration.

A determination to teach in Japanese has presented Miss Kjelgaard with problems: 'In a loud, penetrating voice full of assurance, I'd ask the students to "Take their fish with them!" - "sanaka" is *fish* and "sakana" is *back*. I always get the hand and the foot mixed up, so I cheerfully ask them to put their foot on the barre. Japanese children are very obedient: *Sensie* (teacher) is always right! A very difficult language. I once told a head waitress that her husband was delicious: *husband* is "go shijin" and *food* is "shokujin". She was a little startled.'

Miss Kjelgaard's difficulties also include being persuaded to dress up in a kimono, complete with painful *kutso* on her feet,

Rio de Janeiro with Pamela Richardson. Gillian Anthony taught there for six years, and during that time and subsequently (with Maria Luisa, Hewleen Price, Maria Noronha and Miriam Guimaraes) a strong bridgehead was established. Lady Iro Hunt, the wife of the then British Ambassador, presented the first certificates and diplomas at a party at the British Embassy, which conferred a certain cachet on the occasion. Students subsequently travelled to teach the R.A.D. syllabi in Salvador, Sao Paulo and elsewhere.

It was in 1978 that the idea was first mooted of converting a building next to the Academy's headquarters into a 400-seat theatre, with the particular intention of encouraging young choreographers – but also of providing additional studio space. At the 1979 Assembly an architect's model was on view, and some of the regions had already begun to raise money for the project.

That year, examinations were first held in Japan. Jennie Kjelgaard remembers persuading Sasaki San, of the Tokyo Ballet Company, to allow her to train some of his dancers – one or two



John Field at work in Scandinavia (1976).





Above: John Field in New Zealand in 1978, with Merle Ayres, Val Cooper and Creira See.

Left: John Field in Tel Aviv in 1977.

Right: Alan Hooper in the Philippines in 1981.

Below: Hooper at Battersea Square.



and a broad *obi* 'which flattens out my considerable bosom,' and to eat partly boiled snails 'one of which I capture as they stagger about the plate. Do I bite and swallow it, knowing that I put an end to its misery, or do I swallow with the thought of it continuing its struggle to survive? I swallow, and smile.'

### Artistic Directors.

Now that the financial affairs of the Academy seemed more settled, there was a general feeling that an Artistic Director should be appointed, to work with the General Administrator. His task would be to formulate the Academy's artistic policy, to visit the regions and overseas branches, and help to ensure that consistency should be upheld in examinations. John Field, until recently director of the ballet at La Scala, was appointed in 1975.

His appointment had consequences which were to be more



serious than was realised at the time, for within a year he and Philip Starr had fallen out, Starr

had resigned, and Field was appointed the Academy's overall Director, though he was assisted by an Administrative Director, John Saunders (who remained with the Academy until 1982, eventually as Administrator). When Field resigned three years later to take up the Artistic Direction of London Festival Ballet, Alan Hooper took his place – a young and vigorous man who, with John Saunders, travelled extensively and did a great deal to enhance the worldwide appeal and reputation of the Academy. Hooper had trained at the Royal Ballet School, and had had a brilliant career with the touring company of the Royal Ballet until, in 1971, injury forced him to stop dancing and start teaching.

Hooper was not altogether happy with the Academy he had inherited. After a world tour, he wrote in the *Dance Gazette*: 'My main impression was one of a general lack of confidence in the Academy among many of the teaching members... The standard I encountered everywhere was

### Examination howlers

After their ballet exams, I give my students a written French theory test. Grade 1 children, aged 7 to 8, always worry about whether they can spell, but I assure them that it is not a spelling test, and to write the answer as best they can and I will work it out. Several years ago, before the introduction of the new Grades syllabus, I asked 'What does pas de cheval mean? One answer was 'the step of a horse.' I counted this as correct – but the child who wrote 'Step of a cow' was definitely incorrect.

However, I gave her half a mark, as she was at least in the farmyard!

Dalvern Thom, Australia.



mixed, with the notable exception of Zimbabwe, where a small group of teachers in Bulawayo and Salisbury have done a fantastic job in even keeping the work going, let alone to such a high standard.'

### *Zimbabwe.*

The Academy had always been well represented in Zimbabwe, or Rhodesia as it was called when, in 1936, Eugénie 'Bubbles' Howarth organised the first examinations there, with Ivy Conmee, the founder of the R.A.D.'s South African organisation, as examiner. From that year on, examinations have been held every year – though there was a hiatus during the war – and the teachers who now work in Zimbabwe have ensured not only that ballet schools continue there (students travel great distances – from Masvingo, Mutare, Chiredzi – to take examinations) but that the R.A.D. syllabi are taught in many schools as an extracurricular activity.

Alan Hooper began to resolve many of the problems the Academy faced in his time – notably the improvement of the lines of communication between headquarters and teachers and to improve the services provided. During his short time as Artistic Director, he was to do much to re-establish confidence, especially abroad, and in 1982, when John Saunders resigned, he was appointed overall Director and General Secretary, with Julia Farron as Assistant Artistic Director. (It proved in the end to be a mistake to burden one man with the practical as well as artistic direction of the Academy; but at first the new régime seemed successful enough.)

It was incidentally in that year that the Executive Committee decided to buy the freehold of the headquarters in Vicarage Cres-

cent (now Battersea Square) for almost half a million pounds – £290,000 of the total being borrowed from the bank. Fonteyn appealed in *Dance Gazette* for contributions: Yorkshire Region immediately came across with a cheque for £5,000, and among many generous donations was one of a thousand pounds from Phyllis Bedells – now the single remaining living founder of the Academy.

Tragically, in 1983, while visiting a summer school in California on the Academy's behalf, Alan Hooper was accidentally killed. Ivor Guest wrote in the *Gazette* of his work for the Academy:

'How much we owe him will only become fully apparent when the projects which he initiated are implemented. He has left the Academy an enduring legacy: the new courses of study on which he lavished many hours of careful thought; the new look and new impetus he gave to the overseas branches; the extension of the education and training activities, in particular the seeking of sponsorship, the restructuring of the selection and training of the Academy's scholars in the U.K., resulting in much higher standards, greater prominence given to the teaching of male stu-

dents, the spreading of the summer school activities overseas, and the introduction of children's summer schools in London...'

A more poignant tribute was printed in the same issue: a letter from William Tucker, an ordinary Academy scholar from Bristol:

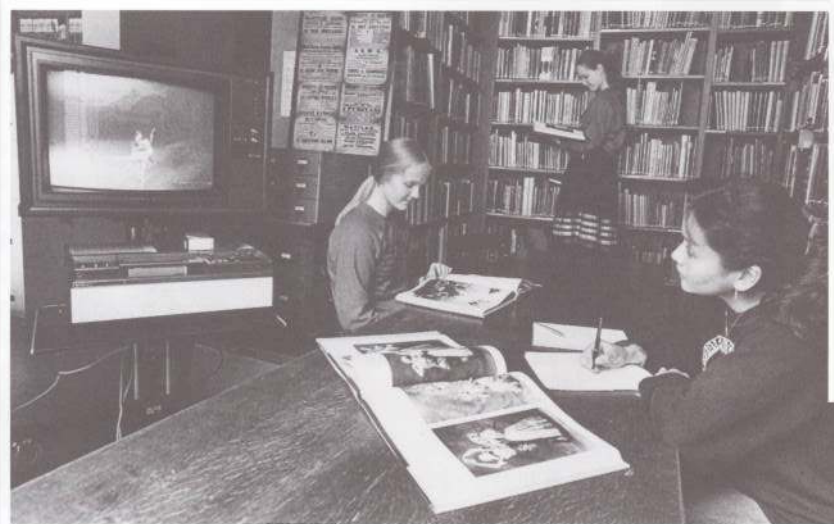
I was really upset when I heard about Mr Hooper dying, and I just wanted to write and tell you how much he meant to all the ordinary scholars, like me. He always expected us to do our absolute best for him (and I hope we did), but at the same time he always made dancing such fun. He always gave me a wink, or whispered a joke to me before I went on, which stopped me feeling nervous. He made me remember that dancing was for making people happy. I shall miss him, as I am sure all the scholars will, as a super teacher and a friend.'

Julia Farron, who had been choreographing and teaching for the Academy for almost twenty years, took Hooper's place, joined in September 1984 by David Wall, for many years a dancer with the Royal Ballet. Wall had been appointed a Principal at the age of twenty, and during the following 21 years had created many leading rôles with Ashton,



*Ivor Guest signs the minutes at the 1982 AGM, flanked by Iris Truscott and Alan Hooper.*





Tudor, Macmillan, Tetley and other major choreographers. Within two years he was appointed co-director of the R.A.D., in tandem with Priscilla Yates and Julia Farron.

The work of the Academy went on – in particular moving towards the new registration scheme which was to come into operation in 1986, aimed at the official recognition of the work of established dance teachers, first in the U.K., Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe, and later throughout the world at large. It was in 1985 that Phyllis Bedells, the sole remaining founder member of the Academy, died at the splendid age of 92, active and delightful to the end. She had received the Coronation Award in 1958, and had become a Fellow in 1971. A studio at Battersea was named for her, and the Phyllis Bedells Bursary, founded in 1979 in her honour, continues to help young dancers of exceptional promise.

### The new work.

Another enormously important ongoing project was referred to as 'the new work'. Alan Hooper had pointed out, soon after his appointment, that ballet had changed a great deal in recent years, and that 'it is time now to bring together our syllabi, uniform their content, and build

them up again through a new approach.' Three years after his death the new Pre-Elementary and Elementary Examinations Syllabus – developed over a period of five years by Julia Farron working with an experienced panel consisting of Morwenna Bowen, Pamela May, Sara Neil, Iris Truscott and Eileen Ward – was first shown to Major Examiners from all over the world, and was greeted with enormous enthusiasm. Since then, the work has gone on, each replacement of former work being welcomed despite the load it placed on teachers and examiners alike.

Financially, too, the Academy seemed to be on an even keel: considering the enormous annual turnover, a pleasant if not excessive profit was being made each year, and by the autumn of 1987 the appeal fund stood at over £200,000 – £36,000 was raised that year by the first R.A.D. gala to have been held since the great Fonteyn galas of almost twenty years previously. At the London Coliseum Peter Schaufuss and Natalia Makarova danced Ashton's Apparitions, and London Festival Ballet gave the British première performance of Maurice Béjart's Bolero.

### The Library.

In June of 1989, Julia Farron retired as Director – with heart-



### IL BALLARINO DI M. FABRITIO CAROSO DA SERMONETA.

Diviso in due Trattati;  
Nel primo de quali si dimostra la durezza de i suoi, che si danno li gli  
con gli movimenti, che sono in ogni Balli, con un solo Regolo  
si dichiara con quali orname, et in che modo debbono farsi.  
Nel secondo s'insegnano diversi fuori di Balli, de Ballati al  
all'uso d'Italia, come a quello di Francia, di Spagna.

Ornato di molte Figure.  
Et con Illustratione di Lino, & il Sottoposto della Mula  
nella mostra di questo libro.  
Come necessariamente si ha.  
ALLA SERENISSIMA BIANCA CAPPELLO DE MEDICI,  
DUCHESSA DI SASSANA  
CON PRIVILEGIO.



In Venezia, Appresso Bartolomeo Ziletti. M. D. L. XXXI.

*Haaber Da aldrig  
vil svigte vor  
ganske Mesters  
geniale Traktdi.  
ovtr.  
Kaus Beck*

7 April 1962.  
The Grand Ole King Genie Smith,  
President for the Royal Academy  
of Dancing, has been the best  
for all who the Royal Academy  
of Dancing are grateful for us.  
Milla Louisa Skov author.

### ÉTUDES CHORÉGRAPHIQUES,

DEUXIÈME

À MES ÉLÈVES ET À MES COLLÈGUES

AGUSTE BOURNONVILLE.

COPENHAGUE.

IMPRIMERIE DE WILHELM LETH,  
RUE S. NIKOLAI,  
1861.

felt farewell parties in Sydney and London – leaving David Wall and Priscilla Yates as co-Directors; that same year, the Academy's library – properly called the Philip Richardson Library, for it was founded on the books he left to the R.A.D. – was re-opened after refurbishment, partly with money given by the Pilgrim Trust. It contains over 5,000 books, Richardson's bequest complemented by others from Genée, Haskell, Phyllis Bedells, Stewart Headlam and others.

As the Academy's archivist, Clement Crisp, (the recipient of the 1992 Coronation Award) has pointed out Richardson collected books wisely at a time when few people were particularly interested in ballet, and as a result the Academy's library possesses some remarkable volumes – rarities such as Belgioso's *Le Ballet Comique de la reine*, published in 1582, a 1581 edition of *Il Ballarino* by Caroso, dedicated to Bianca Cappello, the

Top left: Students use the library at Battersea Square.

Above left: Belgioso's *Le Ballet Comique de la reine*.

Above right: *Il Ballarino* by Caroso.

Above: *Études Chorégraphiques* by Auguste Bournonville.



John Byrne and David  
Watchman in Australia  
with Bronwyn Watkins  
and Lorraine Norton.



second wife of Francesco de' Medici, on the occasion of her marriage, and a copy of Negri's *Nuove Inventioni di Balli* (1604), with 52 beautiful engravings of dancers performing court dances. There are also two copies of a rare book by the great August Bournonville – his *Études Chorégraphiques* – printed as an *aide mémoire* for his students when he was away from Copenhagen. One of the copies was given to Genée by the Danish dancer Hans Beck, whose *début* in *Napoli* was actually seen by Bournonville himself only a week before his death. So the library has a strong link with one of the greatest of all influences on the Western ballet. None of the rarest books are of course on the open shelves, but the library is accessible to students.

There are complete runs of a number of dance journals – including *The Dancing Times* and of course the *Gazette*, and of journals from nine other countries. There are programmes, brochures, memorabilia, and two collections of photographs – one left to the Academy by Genée, and the other (prints and negatives) taken over forty years by G. B. L. Wilson. The latter was delivered to the library, after G.B.'s death, in a muddled mass, almost none of the prints or negatives dated or captioned; gradually, they are being identified and catalogued.

Recently, a new reading room has been added; there are video facilities, points for lap-top word-processors, and most of the impedimenta of a modern library. Members can use it freely, but there is now a charge for others engaged in research.

The Academy has other treasures: including a number of costume designs by that most delicate and artistic of all

designers, 'Wilhelm', who among other things designed many costumes for Genée when she was at the Empire.

### *The Fonteyn Centre.*

By the beginning of 1990 work on the reconstruction of the buildings adjacent to the Academy's London headquarters had been completed. The idea of a theatre had for various reasons been dropped – not least because of parking difficulties and the building's nearness to the Thames, which had made excavation for parking space impossible.

As an architectural feature, the Fonteyn Centre (as it was called) is admirable: old bricks were used, which blended well with the surroundings; there are four dance studios equipped with Yamaha pianos, an examiners' room, a musicians' office, a physiotherapy room and two large changing rooms with showers. David Wall had been particularly eager to see the scheme completed, and had forwarded it with great tenaciousness. But...

...but the cost was high: inflation had again set in, prices had risen relentlessly during the period of planning and building, and though the final estimates were not exceeded, high interest rates were now crippling, and already at the annual general meeting of January 1990 there were signs of financial difficulties ahead. The Academy's accountants indeed went so far as to report that year that with

liabilities exceeding assets by well over a million pounds, 'the Academy may be unable to continue its charitable activities.' An Appeals Organiser was appointed to raise the money to pay for the new building. Meanwhile, in December 1990 the Queen returned to the Academy to open the Fonteyn Centre, and was greeted by the Academy's chairman, Ivor Guest, no less than six Vice-Presidents (the most recent of which was Antoinette Sibley, and the oldest Dame Ninette de Valois) and the recently-appointed Chief Executive, David Watchman.

There was some little stir in the press over Watchman's appointment, on the grounds (quite true) that he had no experience whatsoever of the ballet – a businessman with a background in advertising and publishing. He followed David Wall (for some time both Director and General Secretary) as Chief Executive – the Executive Committee having decided that it was time that there was a definite split between the artistic and financial administration of the Academy.

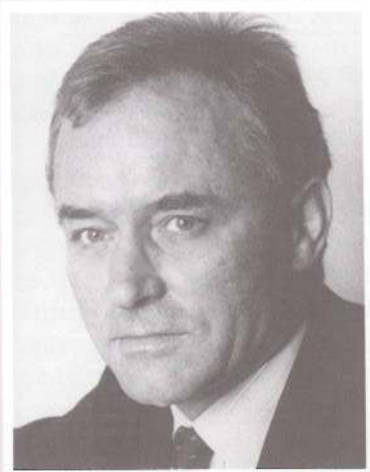
There was no doubt that someone with acute financial acumen and experience of business management was needed to remedy what had become to an extent a somewhat ramshackle organisation which had lost the essential art of keeping the confidence and trust of its members.

Doubts about the new Chief Executive were speedily dismissed, though there were some *frissons* – as when he insisted on



*Dame Margot Fonteyn with two young students at the 1986 Assembly (behind are Ivor Guest and David Wall).*

referring to the Academy's syllabi as 'the product' – a description not relished by some teachers. But he not only turned his attention with notable success to rationalising the work at headquarters, diminishing wasted effort and wasted expenditure, but has spent innumerable hours in 'planes, flying to every part of the world where the Academy is at work, talking to examiners and teachers and striking out new lines of communication which bind them much more closely to what is going on in London – essential in an age when Australia is not alone in beginning to wonder whether even artistic ties to Great Britain are worth maintaining.



*Richard Thom, Director of Finance and Administration.*

Meanwhile, Richard Thom, who had been with the Academy for some years, became Director of Finance and Administration, demonstrating not only a remarkable talent for helping Watchman to re-deploy staff and rationalise the Academy's organisation, but for making balance sheets understandable to those to whom they normally speak in an unbreakable code. This is also perhaps the place at which the author, a virtual outsider, may pay tribute to the devotion and hard work of the whole staff, of

members of the Academy's various Committees, and of the Executive Committee, who give their time and energy so freely and enthusiastically - and indeed to members in the British regions, and all over the world, who have over the years not only allowed the Academy to make use of their professional services, but have spent a great deal of time in fundraising and promoting the organisation. But then, considering the devotion required to pursue ballet itself, whether as a professional or an amateur activity, this enthusiasm is perhaps hardly surprising!

The death of Margot Fonteyn in February, 1991, was not an unexpected blow – but nonetheless severe. She had been President for 37 years – and although latterly the distance from her home in Panama together with increasing frailty had meant that she was rarely seen at Academy functions, the work she had done in earlier years had helped to see the body through the difficulties of the '60s and '70s; apart from which, she was genuinely beloved by members, who felt that her connection with the R.A.D. was an additional reason for admiring and loving her. Often a fleeting



meeting with her remained in students' memories for life: Judy Wakenshaw, staying at Fairfield Lodge while taking lessons, slid exuberantly down the bannisters and almost collided with 'one of the overseas students – very beautiful, and with a little smile on her lips: she had obviously seen what I had been up to.' 'Did you see *her*?' asked Judy's mother. It was Fonteyn.

### *The changing scene.*

Her successor seemed almost inevitable: Antoinette Sibley, already a Vice-President. Her legendary partnership with Anthony Dowell (who has



*At the 1993 Assembly Antoinette Sibley demonstrates the adage from Grade VI of the new Higher Grades Syllabus.*



### *Examination Howlers*

After examining a primary student, I said to her 'You may go, darling.' She looked at me very seriously and said, 'Did I pass?' I said, 'I can't tell you that yet. I'll let your teacher know, later, and she will tell you.' She came up to the table, resting her chin in her hands, with huge eyes staring at me, and said, 'I've got to know now, because my daddy is going to buy me a puppy today, if I pass.'

I was examining a little boy in Sydney. He was very fidgety, so I asked him would he like to go to the toilet. He replied, 'No, thank you.' Whether I put the thought in his head, or he was embarrassed at being asked such a question, I don't know, but he was suddenly standing in the middle of a pool. The pianist and I looked at each other: we thought he would never stop. I said to him, 'Don't worry, darling – I'll call your teacher.' He replied, 'I'm not worried!' – and the rains continued!

Poppy Frames was giving a class in South Africa, in her early years, when the telephone rang and a voice said 'Is that the city morgue?' Miss Frames replied, 'No, it is not – but I do have ten dead bodies on the barre.'

Elizabeth Anderson, Australia.

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Poppy Frames was examining in South Africa, and in a country town noticed that all the students did the final jetés in the obligatory hornpipe with their heads on their knees. She questioned the teacher, who replied: 'But Miss Frames, I have it in my notes that the children must double up on the jetées.'

Marietta du Preez, South Africa.

Singapore: First major examination student: 'I really enjoyed that examination!'  
Later: 'Why did he make us enjoy ourselves – and then fail us?'

Florrie Sinclair.

recently joined the Academy's Executive Committee) was seen and admired all over the world. 'Little Sibley' (as G. B. L. Wilson always used to call her) has a charm which rivals Fonteyn's own, and her work for the Academy has already in only a few years been enormous (including the virtually one-woman organisation of the 1993 gala at the Royal Opera House, which raised £125,000 for the Academy's funds). She took Fonteyn's place in May of 1991, at the same time at which the Australian John Byrne – a major examiner for the Academy since 1987 – was

appointed Artistic Director

Artistically, progress was still being made: in January 1991 the new grades syllabus was launched, covering work from pre-Primary to Grade V: and it was announced that there would be a presentation of the new Grades VI, VII and VIII in a year's time. These were indeed demonstrated, and again received with acclaim – but presented something of a problem to the Academy, for with the old Children's syllabus winding down and the new Grades scarcely ready for examination, a drop in income was certain. The new

tight-reined, leaner and fitter organisation however rode out the dip in income: during the year after the accountants' pessimistic report of 1990, the Academy actually turned a deficit of £370,000 into a surplus of £12,000 – and financially, by the end of 1993 it could confidently be said that the future was brighter than had seemed possible even a year earlier.

Ivor Guest, who had once more had to face at least a few months when the Academy seemed as dangerously near disaster as it had thirty years previously, retired from the chair



*Madame Baronova teaching at the summer school at the University of Oregon.*

in 1993; his successor was Roger Harrison, a former journalist on *The Times*, sometime Managing Director and Chief Executive of the *Observer*, and governor of Sadler's Wells theatre.

It was also in 1993 that John Byrne found that family commitments in Australia made it impossible for him to continue as Artistic Director; during his three years in London he had helped revise the structure and content of the Teachers' Examinations, the Registration system and the Major syllabi. He also created, with others, a new Intermediate Syllabus for boys which was greeted with acclaim when presented at Assembly. His successor as Artistic Director was Lynn Wallis, who came from English National Ballet, where she was Deputy Artistic Director.

Meanwhile an initiative by David Watchman had resulted in the creation in 1993 of the first degree course in the art and teaching of ballet, validated by Durham University (of which Fonteyn had been Chancellor); a committee under the chairmanship of Valerie Glauert, who had served on the Executive Committee for many years, worked to finalise plans, together with Susan Danby, Principal of the College.

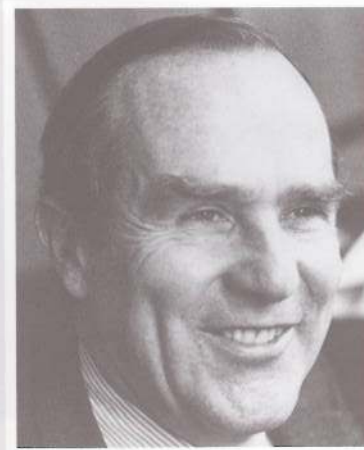
A great recent acquisition was the reappearance on the scene of Irina Baronova, who had been, with Tumanova and Riabouchinska, one of the three 'baby ballerinas' Balanchine created for the de Basil company in 1932. Accepting an invitation to become a Vice-President she has travelled the world on the Academy's behalf with enviable and apparently inexhaustible energy.

Soon, it is hoped, a new Royal Charter will be approved by the Privy Council and signed by the



Queen. The Charters are important to the Academy, for they enshrine the rules by which it is run – though there is a set of byelaws, these also have to be approved by the Privy Council and Charity Commission. The first Charter, sealed by King George V just before his death, was amended in 1948 by a Supplemental Charter to allow the institution of the Teachers' Training Course, make it possible to admit student members, and allow the Academy to elect Vice-Presidents. A second Supplementary Charter was granted in 1977; and a third will permit the Academy to continue to broaden its activities, and move towards the twenty-first century with enthusiasm and confidence.

Exciting prospects indeed lie ahead: in Asia, there have been spectacular successes. In 1994 608 students, teachers and pianists from Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan and Australia attended the first Pacific/Asian summer school in Singapore, and in Tokyo 746 students and teachers made the third Japanese summer school an occasion notable enough to encourage His Imperial Highness Prince Taka Mado Na Maya to invite David Watchman to ensure that the summer schools



*Roger Harrison  
Chairman of the  
Academy's Executive  
Committee.*

continue to be held in Japan. The Academy had already begun to establish itself in China – Watchman had been welcomed in Beijing, where he had discussed the probability of the Academy's entry into China, and in the summer of 1994 he returned to China with Lynn Wallis, and in Shanghai watched the first examinations held in that country (with Fiona Campbell as examiner).

Financially, the Academy is as secure as it has ever been: indeed more so. At the annual general meeting of 1994, David Watchman announced that 1992-3 had been the most successful year in the history of the Academy – and that success was carried forward in the following year, for during 1993-4





*Left: David Watchman and the team from the Academy at the Information Seminar in Beijing.*



*Left: Lynn Wallis with children from Shanghai with Miss Qi Feng Wang, their teacher.*

*Right: Fiona Campbell, Carolyn Parker, Tania Tang and Miss Qi Feng Wang with children from her school in Shanghai.*

*Below: Sun Ling, Chief of the Chinese Education Authority meeting members of the Academy.*



more candidates were examined and assessed than ever before (a total of 172,680, world-wide) and income was at a record level. In his annual report, Roger Harrison was able to relate expansion into China and Sweden, with registration in Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia, the near completion of the revision of the Academy's Charter, and continued progress towards the introduction of degree courses within the College.

As to the future, Lynn Wallis, the Artistic Director, continues to meet teachers and develop lines

of communication within which she can discuss their needs before setting out to make new policies which will carry the Academy's tradition of excellence into the next century. She will be presenting to members the *Dictionary of Ballet* which has

been prepared by the Canadian Rhonda Ryman, and defines terms used in the syllabi; this will be followed by an *Encyclopedia* to complement the *Dictionary*.

Is it fair to say that the Academy's founders would be amazed at the size and scope of





*Antoinette Sibley,  
David Watchman and  
Julia Farron.*



*Irina Baronova with  
Panton Corbett, a member  
of the Executive Committee.*



*Standing are Dame Beryl  
Grey and Sir Peter Wright,  
seated are Ivor Guest, Julia  
Farron, Dame Ninette de  
Valois, Antoinette Sibley and  
Irina Baronova.*

the organisation, seventy-five years on? I think not. They fervently believed in ballet as one of the great art forms, and in the importance of a tradition of excellence which could only stem from good teaching. They would be certainly be proud – but

surprised? Surely not. With devoted work from like-minded people, a conception as good as theirs could only succeed and grow. But they would certainly be grateful, not only to those who run the day-to-day affairs of the Academy, but to every man or

woman who teaches under its banner – and more, to every student who takes a first, uncertain but successful step in the most junior syllabus. They are all helping to support that tradition of excellence and carry it forward.



#### Acknowledgements.

I am tremendously grateful to R.A.D. organisers and members all over the world who have sent treasured photographs, programmes and other mementos – and often very detailed histories of the Academy in their part of the world. I hope I will be forgiven for omitting, no doubt, too much of the material which came in; but it has been in an endeavour to provide a readable and anecdotal, rather than comprehensive history of the Academy worldwide. When that comes to be written, all the contributions – including a very great number of newspaper clippings, and the records of the successes of various teachers and schools all over the world, will be invaluable – and until then will be carefully preserved in the archives.

Apart from all that information, I have gleaned much from two of Ivor Guest's books: *Adventures of a Ballet Historian* (1982) and *Adeline Genée* (1958, his biography of the great dancer), and from Phyllis Bedells' autobiography, *My Dancing Days* (1954). There are references to the R.A.D. also in Arnold Haskell's *Balletomania* (1934) and Marie Rambert's *Quicksilver* (1972). The files of the *Dancing Times* and the Academy's own *Gazette* have of course been invaluable, as have been many books on the shelves of the Academy's Library. The great majority of illustrations are from the Academy's picture archives.

I have to thank everyone at the Academy who has helped in the compilation of this short history: Denise Collet-Simpson and her assistant Mandy Payne, at the Library; and especially Julia Bennett, who carefully collated the pile of letters, cuttings and photographs which arrived from all over the world. My thanks are due too to Ivor Guest, who generously read the manuscript, and saved me from a number of blunders and errors of fact.

Derek Parker.

Derek Parker has been a member of the Grand Council of the Academy for over twenty years, and is at present a member of the Executive Committee, and chairman of the Development Committee. Among over forty books written by him and his wife are biographies of Nijinsky, Byron and John Donne, a survey of British musical comedies, and *The Natural History of the Chorus Girl*.

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