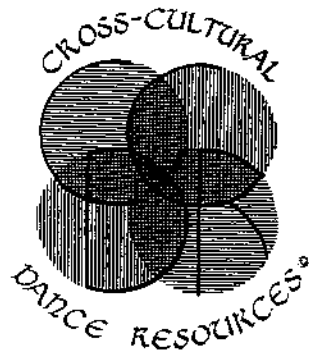


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CCDR Newsletter

Number 22

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DANCING WITH TZIJOLAJ: MAYAN CROSSROADS FROM MIAMI TO CHICHICASTENANGO, GUATEMALA

Article and Photographs by
Dr. Andrea Mantell Seidel

Tzijolaj, part Spanish conquistador, part Mayan farmer icon,¹ arrived not on his usual horseback, but by plane to Miami in the summer of 2001 proudly carried aloft in the arms of Angel, a member of Grupo Cultural Uk'Ux Pop Wuj from Chichicastenango, Guatemala.

As Director of the Intercultural Dance and Music Institute (INDAMI) at Florida International University in Miami, I had helped co-sponsor their participation in INDAMI's annual Latin American and Caribbean Summer Dance Institute, held in conjunction with the Florida Dance Festival. This indigenous folkloric group would be an anomaly in the context of the predominantly professional theatrical dance festival. Miami and the Florida Dance Festival was a world far removed from the highlands of Guatemala where Mayan dance is deeply interwoven with complex ritual observances, communal life, and humble reverence and servitude to the patron saints and the Creator God.

The fast-moving, urban festival audiences used to the supple virtuosity and complex bodily intertwinings of largely, post-modern choreography would have difficulty being drawn into the slow, repetitive rhythms and dignified but humble demeanor of the Mayan *Danza del Caballito del Tzijolaj* (Dance of the Horse of Tzijolaj) or the *Danza de Bendicion de la Semilla y Siembra de Maiz* (Dance of the Blessing of the Seed and the Sowing of the Corn).

A year and half later, arts presenter Jan Hanvik who helped arrange our international exchange and Mark de Garmo, dancer/choreographer of New York City, and I also would be emblems of transnational globalization, poorly affixed appendages out of context in a Mayan universe. Mark and I were invited to Chichicastenango as the first westerners to perform in an all-Mayan international folkloric festival in Guatemala and to observe the "Feast of Santo Tomas," the patron saint of Chichi, as the locals fondly call their hometown, held annually from December 13-21.

While I was immensely honored by this opportunity, I was acutely aware that the aesthetic of the solo modern artist contrasts sharply with the communal, sacred world of Mayan dance and ritual. As a modern dancer, I dance because it has been my choice, an expression of my individual will and passion. My tradition, that of the matriarch of modern dance, Isadora Duncan, is a mere 100 years old, born of the revolutionary fervor of an individual artist. With the burning of incense, cobal, and candles, and offerings of flowers and blessed water, the members of Grupo Cultural ask for permission to dance from the Creator. Despite five centuries of colonialism, oppression, and military occupation, contemporary Mayan life was still marked by a deep reverence for life and a sense of continuity with the ancient past deeply encoded in the songs, dances, music, and ritual. Julio Mateo Tecum, the group's leader, describes their efforts, as acts of "rescuing" and "remembering" Quiche culture, especially preserved in the memories of Mayan priests and elders.

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**Cross-Cultural Dance Resources Symposium:
APPLYING DANCE ETHNOLOGY AND
DANCE RESEARCH IN THE 21st CENTURY**
held in Flagstaff, Arizona, 6-8 June 2003

Photos by: Rose Eichenbaum

Although CCDR has sponsored many multicultural events with workshops and lecture-demonstrations in its 22-year history, this was the first national-level event focusing on dance ethnology. Participants and presenters came from a wide geographical spread in the USA, including California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Texas, Illinois, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, Hawaii, Oklahoma, and one from Israel. Among 50 registrants, at least two thirds had an academic dance ethnology back-ground; many were alumni of the University of California at Los Angeles graduate program in dance ethnology.



ALLEGRA FULLER SNYDER

The program included important and informative presentations. Allegra Fuller Snyder gave the keynote address: "Foundations, evolutions and changes in the field of Dance Ethnology." Professor Snyder, past chair of the UCLA Department of Dance (now named the Department of World Arts and Cultures), is a pioneer in developing a dance ethnology curriculum at UCLA. Elsie Dunin, professor emerita from UCLA, gave a power point presentation on the use of historical resources to uncover surprising new information about previously mistaken understandings, exemplified by the Yaqui Indian and Jesuit missionary conflation of ideas. In addition there were presentations by Elizabeth Aldrich, Director of the Dance Heritage Coalition about preservation of dance documentation; Library Specialist, Vicky Risner from the Library of Congress discussing the legacy project of modern dance greats and their holdings; Rose Eichenbaum who introduced dance photojournalism as a career; Joann Kealiinohomoku used archival data to prevent overlooking important aspects of a dancer's contributions, citing Eleanor King in her lesser known role as a dance ethnologist; Edy Greenblatt about the practical business of dance ethnology; and Pegge Vissicaro using online technology; and more.

Most presentations included audiovisual illustrations. Some

highlights were: a rare film by anthropologist Edward Spicer from the 1940s of the Yaqui Easter in Arizona, shown by Dr. Octaviana Trujillo (Chair of the Applied Indigenous Studies at Northern Arizona University); a new documentary film by Ann Vachon from Temple University, about Jose Limon (who happens to come from a Yaqui background), including a duet with Eleanor King, discussed by Kealiinohomoku as an archival feature; a premier showing of photos by Rose Eichenbaum, with interview excerpts of dance masters in the USA (including the late Gregory Hines); filmic selections as a legacy project of Martha Graham and Katherine Dunham shown by Vicky Risner from the Library of Congress; innovative internet online examples of New Mexico pueblo dancing to supplement publication texts by Deidre Sklar, and more.

There was also lively discussion and an interchange of ideas, such as those presented during the panel "Innovative applications of Dance Ethnology." Panelists included Margy McClain (Oklahoma State University, Stillwater with a special interest in marginalized knowledge for education); Miriam Phillips (a free lance teacher of Flamenco and movement consultant to computer animators in northern California a); Roo Lester (internationally known specialist in teaching of Scandinavian dances); Deborah Heifetz-Yahav (specialist in nonverbal communication with an application to Israeli-Palestinian security cooperations).

The CCDR meeting seemed to revitalize energy about the field of dance ethnology in the United States. It was suggested during the meeting that CCDR sponsor future symposia biennially in different parts of the USA, alternating years with the ICTM (International Council on Traditional Music) Study Group on Ethnochoreology.

A tangible record of this seminal Symposium in the form of a Proceedings will be made available by early 2004.



EDY GREENBLATT, ELSIE DUNIN, BREANNA ROGERS

CCDR member Rose Eichenbaum recently announced that her photographic collection of portraits and essays of America's most celebrated dance choreographers has been picked up for publication by Smithsonian Books, the publishing arm of the Smithsonian Institution. *MASTERS OF MOVEMENT, PORTRAITS OF AMERICA'S DANCE MAKERS* takes an intimate look at the art and craft of dance making on the concert and Broadway stage, film, television and music video. The book will include an Introduction by New York Times dance critic, Jennifer Dunning and an essay by legendary dance writer Clive Barnes. Look for *MASTERS OF MOVEMENT* COMING NEXT FALL-2004 For more information contact Rose Eichenbaum @ Rosesphoto@aol.com

CELEBRATING THE GERTRUDE PROKOSCH KURATH CENTENNIAL

1903-1993

EDITOR'S NOTE: the following testimonials remember and honor Kurath on the centennial of her birth.

CCDR remembers and honors Kurath every day because her books,

Southwestern research, and personal memorabilia comprise the Kurath portion of the 3 Ks' Archives at CCDR (see www.ccdr.org).

Kurath's Northeastern Indian research, is archived at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario, described below by Santee Smith.

The winter, 2001, issue of the CCDR Newsletter honored Kurath with a 6 page insert comprising papers by ethnomusicologists William P. Malm, Bruno Nettel, Judith Vander, with comments by Nadia Chilkovsky Nahumck and Joann Kealiinohomoku. Those papers were originally presented at a forum titled "The Gertrude Kurath Legacy for the 21st Century: Reawakening Sensitivity to the Dance-Music Interdependence," at the 2001 annual meetings of the Society for Ethnomusicology, held in Detroit, Michigan.

Charlotte Johnson Frisbie
Memories-meeting her first at an early Ethnomusicology annual meeting at Wesleyan, during the early 1960s when I was working on my MA and helping out as student labor. David McAllester introduced me to Gertrude at that meeting, and we started what turned into many, continuing conversations about numerous topics.

She was already established in the Southwest, a region I was itching to learn about and understand, and she had already contributed greatly to the Society for Ethnomusicology, something I also wanted to do. I remember listening carefully to her scholarly comments in various sessions, and her direct questions that required careful thought before answering.

But on the lighter side, I also remember her dancing very late at night down in the basement of a campus building where there was a canteen type shop where we grad students sometimes hung out. Professors Alan Merriam, David McAllester, and Bruno Nettel as well as Gertrude were there along with others, and memories of the party times among students and ethnomusicologists provide fun memories of that particular annual SEM meeting.

Later, I remember being fortunate enough to be invited to the Hans/Gertrude Kurath home while in Ann Arbor on other business. Again, I marveled at Gertrude's long and fruitful life, interesting travels, and was almost overwhelmed by the number of professional contributions she continued to make to both dance and music studies.

Our connections remained firm for as long as possible; given Gertrude's wide ranging interests and experiences, that was never difficult!

I personally cherish Gertrude's Southwestern work and her theoretical work on dance ethnology most highly while certainly recognizing that "what's most important" is a personal definition and assessment.

I also cherish memories of her lecture demonstrations at professional meetings and at gatherings in her own home. I saw her as a mentor in many ways, and always will. She was also a role model for me, as an active professional woman who wore many simultaneous hats, including those of wife and mother, and contributing to local community and broader professional groups.

She had seemingly unending energy that allowed her to write, publish, edit, dance, do very careful field work, choreography, be a pianist and all the rest while pursuing, with an open mind and whenever possible, research into both traditional and new musics and dances. I feel

very grateful that Gertrude was part of my own life!



Gertrude Kurath, ca. 1946
Mexican Hat Dance
Photographer Unknown

Ellen Kurath

Gertrude's Daughter

My mother was 18 when she decided to take up dancing; her parents arranged for her to have good teachers.

She enjoyed performing, the theater, and anything festive where people were doing things. If she had an idea, she did something with it.

She was sociable and enjoyed knowing people of all sorts and learning about their arts and customs.

In Providence, R.I., 1932-1946, she had a modern dance group. There was a good orchestra, and people composed music and pursued other arts. It was a very old industrial district, diversified and innovative from the first. Emphasis on letting people carry on their own ideas and

ways were principles of the settlers who founded Rhode Island and my mother was very happy there. Then in 1946 when the family was moving to Michigan, she went via Mexico. She prepared with advance arrangements and learned Spanish and Aztec. If there was going to be a fiesta, she found out about it, and she acquired costumes and wrote down the dances and later performed them as "Tula."

Attempts to start a new modern dance group in Michigan failed so she pursued other interests. Michigan, generally, had a history of innovation by native people as well as those coming from many places. They all got along in a friendly way; not as "informants."

In developing her acquaintance with native people, she went to various places and my younger brother, Ed, also sociable, went along a number of times. I only went along a couple of times, connected the battery converter and tape recorder to operate off the automobile electric system, etc., while she was getting acquainted and preparing to record, and sometimes I took photographs.

The chain of acquaintances led to remote places. Those were difficult times for the native people, and it was expected that their customs and traditions would vanish completely.



David Kenosha 1954

photo by Ellen Kurath

Of Dave Kenosha she said, "He was a great man." He lived in hard times and was very sad. Their festivals were a chance to have a good time.

Elsie Ivancich Dunin

Kurath's 1960 seminal article "Panorama of Dance Ethnology" appeared at a significant period in my University of California at Los Angeles graduate dance studies.

Although on the pathway to becoming a dance ethnologist, with personal experiences and interests, I did not have a label for the direction I was heading toward.

Having the unique opportunity of hearing Gertrude speak at UCLA, and reading additional selected articles, I was intrigued by her breadth of interests, and for me, her grasp of knowledge of European forms via her correspondence with dance scholars in an area of southeastern Europe - invisible to most of my American colleagues. She also had comprehensive knowledge about dance notation systems, such as Labanotation, and so on and so on.

I see Gertrude's legacy as the stepping stone for those of us who followed her into the field of dance ethnology.

Andrea Mantell Seidel

Before and after a recent trip to Chichicastenango, Guatemala to research and participate in an all Mayan folkloric festival, I turned to Gertrude Kurath's seminal work on the Maya with pleasure and gratitude for her insight and dedication to researching this extraordinary culture.

Two Views from Canada: Selma Odom & Santee Smith

We first shared our appreciation of Gertrude Kurath, in a Fall 2002 dance research methods seminar taught by Selma at York University in Toronto. Santee, an MA student, is a member of the Mohawk Nation, Turtle Clan, from Six Nations, Ontario. She is a choreographer, dancer, singer, and pottery designer. After training at the National Ballet School, she earned a degree in kinesiology at McMaster University, and participated in the Aboriginal Dance Project at the Banff Centre for the Arts, 1997 to 2001.

Selma Odom Encountering a Remarkable Scholar

When I moved to Ann Arbor in 1967, I met Gertrude Kurath, whose pioneering work in dance ethnology I'd heard much praised at the first CORD conference that May. Gertrude, with her bobbed straight dark hair, eccentric clothes, and stocky body, was a revered if somewhat intimidating member of the local dance community. Often at music and dance events we would speak in passing. I could hardly believe my good fortune when she asked me to take over her role as dance reviewer for the *Ann Arbor News*. Perhaps she approved of my interest in the history of Dalcroze Eurhythmics, the method of music education based on movement, which she had studied in her youth.

I was too naïve to interview her about her background at that time, which I now consider a major missed opportunity, but luckily in her *Dance Memoirs* (1983) she identified her teachers and observed that for her, Dalcroze "principles were indispensable to the recognition of dance-music relationships in tribal ceremonies."

I inherited a course called Cultural Concepts of Dance when I began teaching at the University of Michigan in 1970, and lost no time in inviting Gertrude to visit my class. She immediately got everyone up and moving as she sang in her robust voice and played turtle shell rattles from her collection of instruments. She was informal and direct as she spoke with the small group, encouraging them to ask questions.

By then the focus of her field-work was changing. "As wanderlust dwindles and costs soar, the backyard becomes alluring," she explained in her *Dance Memoirs* (41). She told of working with Roger Miller, a local teen-aged rock music composer, on the score and analysis project they jointly published in the *With Magnetic Fields Disrupted* (1972). Our department had no funds for guest

lecturers, but I reciprocated as best I could by reviewing *Dance and Song Rituals of Six Nations Reserve, Ontario* (1968), for the *Michigan Academician* (1972).

When I was about to move from Ann Arbor to Toronto in 1972, she invited me over, and we had a long conversation in her garden. She gave me copies of several of her articles, told me about art I should look for in certain Toronto buildings, reflecting on her many trips to Ontario. It was a loving send-off.

Although I rarely saw her after that, I tried to sustain the connection with Gertrude through reading her books and articles, grateful for the memories of our interaction. I was thrilled one Sunday morning in March, 1992 to visit a festival at San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico with my cousin Anita Ellen Patton Romero, who has lived nearby for most of her life. I could hardly wait to go home and reinforce my experience of this dance and music by looking up Gertrude's descriptions in *Music and Dance of the Tewa Pueblos* (1969).

My sense of the vastness of Gertrude's research and writing has grown as I've taught, and I enjoy the chance to tell students about her wide ranging, original work.

My link to Gertrude took on new meaning when Santee Smith appeared at York last year and shared the exciting research she is doing toward her full-length production, *Kaha:wi* (She Carries), a "celebration of contemporary Iroquoian song and dance." When I watched her perform excerpts in Toronto a few weeks ago, I was fascinated by her strong full-bodied movements and intense musicality. Santee in her long black dress reminded me in an uncanny way of how Gertrude looked in photos of her early modern dances!

As I write, Santee is rehearsing for a choreographic showcase and CD launch of this work-in-progress,

which is headed for the Canada Dance Festival in Ottawa in 2004. Her website has a photo and more details (www.santeesmithdance.com) I look forward to teaching the Dance Mosaic course at York this coming term with Santee leading the studio sessions.

Santee Smith Gertrude Kurath and the Iroquois Community

The scholarly work of Gertrude Kurath captures elements of Iroquoian song and dance. Her photographs and meticulous writing offer a glimpse into the ceremonial lives of the Longhouse people in the 1950s and 60s. It was her intent to create accurate accounts and documented notations that truly represented the culture. While studying Iroquoian song and dance rituals, she gathered research through personal observation and interaction with the people at several of the Iroquoian reserves. Her writing style with the use of first person narration and her photographs place her within the community and witness to the ceremonies.

When I located her research collection in the archives at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario, I realized the treasure I had unearthed. Donated by Gertrude's daughter Ellen, the collection consists of photographs, field notes, and musical notations as well as Gertrude's personal dance memorabilia.

Specifically, it was her photographs of the people of the Six Nations community that held my attention. Woodland Cultural Centre staff informed me that people often request to view the collection in order to see their departed family members in her photos. The work of Gertrude Kurath has indelibly merged Iroquoian song and dance in the developing path of dance ethnology. She herself has become a part of Iroquoian history.

As a Mohawk contemporary and traditional dancer/singer, I was in-

trigued by her dance and research. I was interested in knowing what motivated her to create such extensive catalogues and descriptions of the Iroquoian style of ceremonial song and dance. Later, I discovered that not only had she studied Iroquoian culture but she had spent a large amount of time within other indigenous communities documenting song and dance through precise notation.

It is my belief that she was fascinated by form. In *Dance and Song Rituals of Six Nations Reserve, Ontario* (1968), she pairs music and dance notation, illustrating how song and dance unfold in unison and within the social setting and context. It is interesting to note that she does not go into the details of the spiritual or sacred meaning of the ceremonies she observed and participated in on the reserves.

In the end, I can only assume that like the Iroquoian people Gertrude Kurath celebrated all of Life through song and dance while realizing that music and dance are inseparable extensions of cultural identity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ON BACK PAGE

CORD HONORS TWO CCDR MEMBERS

CORD (Congress on Research in Dance) presented Outstanding Publication awards for 2003 to Judy Van Zile for her book *PERSPECTIVES ON KOREAN DANCE* and Anthony Shay for his book *CHOREOGRAPHIC POLITICS: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation and Power*.

"Korean dance is one of the great dance traditions of the world... until this work by Van Zile there has been nothing so comprehensive, accurate, detailed and delightful on Korean dance in the English language."

Anthony Shay's book is a first in examining six state-sponsored folk dance ensembles in terms of their politics as well as their social and cultural contexts: Croatia, USSR, Turkey, Greece, Mexico, and Egypt.

continued from page 1

The twelve members of the group were a dazzling sight arriving at the Miami International Airport, the women dressed in elaborate hand woven, shin-length blue *huipiles*; the men resplendent in their woven headdresses and short black wool breeches with long shirts tied with embroidered red and purple sashes. While Angel, a jeweler by trade, carried Tz'ijolaj, a small, ornamented figure of a man on horseback who is the guardian and protector of the pathways, straight-backed women carried large ceramic ceremonial bowls for the performance, their backs laden with woven back-packs. Other men carried bulging, ragtag suitcases fastened with rope and two large marimbas fashioned out of wood and gourds.

At the North Miami Beach Band Shell, an outdoor facility where the group's performance was held, the melodic sounds of the marimbas, the traditional instrument of Guatemala and the pito, a small drum, resonated through the moist, thick summer air. A lone woman entered the center space solemnly carrying the ceremonial pot filled with burning copal and gestured in a simple walking pattern to each of the four cardinal directions, lowering it first towards the earth, then up to the sky in homage to the natural world and the Creator.



foto el grupo

Blessing Ceremony Before Performance in Miami

The blessing ceremony, which begins all performances and festivities, was followed by a series of staged folkloric dances adapted from traditional ceremonies and festivities.



Dance of the Deer, a Folkloric Dance
Based on Ancient Hunting Dance

The dancers transformed into magnificent conquistadors dressed in rich silk brocade coats, reenacting the Spanish conquest of the Quiche, and later, in the most clearly indigenous dance recorded in the earliest manuscripts, the dancers reenacted a staged excerpt of the "Voladones or " Palo Volador," the flying pole ritual performed in the central plaza (Kurath, 160). In the staged excerpt, nimble monkeys playfully descended from the world tree or *axis mundi* at the dawn of the creation of the Mayan world.

A year and half later, Mark and I would perform at the Teatro Municipale, a once elegant hall in the center of town that like most buildings in Chichi was poorly maintained and deteriorated.

As Mark and I warmed up, I was acutely aware of the stark, "foreign" differences in our aesthetics — the relative immodesty and simplicity of my Isadora Duncan Grecian-style tunics with bare legs fully revealed, my dyed blond gringa hair and fair skin, a trained, taut, but aging western dancer's body, and classical western music accompaniment.

This time, we are the anomaly amongst the all-Mayan audience and participants. Our aesthetic contrasted sharply with the elaborate Mayan costumes, ornaments, and paraphernalia covering most of their body and their deep sense of cultural continuity and communality.



Shamanic Ceremony to Bless Andrea and Mark on their Trip

I closed my part of the performance with Isadora's "Rosepetals" dance. In this dance, the Mayan and western world seemed to connect for a moment in the cascades of rose petals that I gradually sprinkled down over my body onto the stage and offered as a gift of gratitude to the audience.



Andrea with Natalia Mejia (and son),
Director of a Women's Dance Group

Julio and Mark had purchased a bag of petals for me at Chichi's famous, bustling marketplace, the same rose petals offered at the mountain shrine of Pascal Abaj (sacrifice stone), in the numerous houses of the patron saints maintained by the *confradias* (civil-religious orders), and in the Iglesia de Santo Tomas, the main church in the town plaza.

Leaving on the minivan for the three-hour ride back to Guatemala City, fate would have it that I would be afforded one last glimpse of Tzizolaj, carried in the arms of a *confradias* member in a procession.

I nostalgically gazed at Tzizolaj, grateful for this last moment, when, suspended between an ancient and modern world, I was reminded to surrender to the eternal order of nature, to not force the world to conform to my independent authority but rather to flow with its dancing rhythms.

I was painfully aware throughout my trip of my inability to grasp all but surface impressions of a complex contemporary Mayan world. I am neither a scholar of Mayan studies nor fluent in the native Quiche language or even Spanish, the dominant language of Guatemala.

And yet, in the impenetrable silence of a thousand years of history unrevealed, and in the to me unintelligible sounds of the Quiche language, there is an ineffable understanding that comes through the heart, when souls touch in their common humanity, in the rhythmic patterns of the dancing body, in the fervent and mutual desire to exchange the gifts of one's art and culture.

NOTE

1. The icon of Tzizolaj syncretizes St. James with an indigenous supernatural.

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News about the author, Andrea Mantell Seidel - PRESS RELEASE: Isadora Duncan Dance Ensemble Receives Prestigious Invitation to International Dance Festival in Russia

Miami, Florida - The Miami-based Isadora Duncan Dance Ensemble, will travel to St. Petersburg, Russia, to teach, lecture and perform September 22-23, at the Goethe-Institut's International Dance Festival. Artistic Director Dr. Andrea Mantell Seidel, is the only American artist invited to attend and she brings with her four dancers, one of which is her eleven-year-old daughter, Marina.

The occasion is a celebration of the 300th birthday of St. Petersburg, the former imperial capital of Russia, and Isadora Duncan's premiere at St. Petersburg's Maryinsky Theater in 1905.

The company trip is sponsored by CEC International Partners (a New York-based organization that supports international exchange between American artists and central and eastern Europe).

Isadora Duncan's journey to Russia began with her premiere at St. Petersburg's Maryinsky Theater in 1905. It was a historical event that forever changed the Russian Imperial ballet tradition. Several prominent Russian artists, including the dramaturge Stanislavsky and choreographer Michel Fokine, were enthralled and inspired by Isadora's expressive and enchanting movements. Prior to Isadora's travel to Russia, rigid, ballet movements pervaded dance choreography and technique. Her idea was to make the body more free and natural and to feel her feet on the earth. Inspired by the classical Greek arts, folk dances, social dances, nature and natural forces, Duncan combined free and natural costumes and movements with aspects of the new American athleticism which included skipping, running, jumping and leaping.

Share their Russian journey in the December CCDR Newsletter



Marina Seidel and Friend 2001

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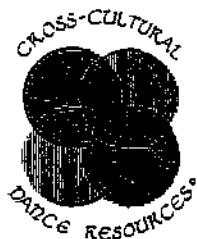
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