

**ISADORA DUNCAN: HER LIFE, WORK AND
CONTRIBUTION TO WESTERN THEATRE DANCE**

by

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ABSTRACT

Isadora Duncan (b.1877 d.1927) is acknowledged as one of the main founders of the modern dance theatre genre yet her choreography per se is both unresearched and generally dismissed. On the basis of a working hypothesis, that Duncan had a consistent set of values which underpinned her work and were manifest in her choreography, Duncan's life and work is examined and her particular innovations identified.

A specifically devised methodology is employed which, in its successive stages, compensates for the lack of extant Duncan dances and allows the discussion of her work to be undertaken. Firstly, a comprehensive collection of written, visual and aural materials is collated. Secondly, a chronology and two choreochronicles are presented. These first two stages provide the documentary basis for the study, generate the descriptive source materials from which it is possible to gain access to Duncan's choreography and promote the discussion of the contexts of her life and the influences upon her work. Thirdly, a choreographic analysis is carried out on Duncan's oeuvre. Fourthly, the results of the analysis are studied in conjunction with Duncan's own writings.

Duncan is found to have made several important innovations. Her reverence of the body and all "natural" phenomena, her confident relocation of the body "centre" along with her willing acceptance and exploitation of gravitational forces are seen to be fundamental factors in her work. Her allegiance to a classical Greek-derived set and costume, preference for the music of the Romantic classical composers as accompaniment, commitment to an eclectic range of subject matter (with particular emphasis on socially relevant themes) and her pursuit of a harmonious, lyrical style are identified and discussed as crucial elements in Duncan's overall vision of dance as expression.

Finally, Duncan's contribution to the founding and development of modern dance as an alternative theatre dance genre to ballet is characterised and her overall contribution to the evolution of Western theatre dance stated.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade or so of the nineteenth century Western theatre dance existed as a very different phenomenon from its present day counterpart. A century ago, instead of the current richness and diversity of numerous interacting genres and styles, the theatre dance of Europe and North America consisted almost entirely of ballet. This genre had lost the creative impetus of the romantic ballet movement and was increasingly displaying signs of sterility. Indeed, as the sole art form of dance in the West, ballet was still a decade away from the Diaghilev-led inspiration and injection of new ideas and half a century away from the dance innovations and influences that films and musicals would usher in.

There were a few exceptions to the decline in ballet, notably in Russia where it flourished in isolation under Tzarist patronage, but generally it was accorded low status in relation to other art forms. At this time ballet was the province of a few dancers who usually performed alone (although occasionally with a corps de ballet) and appeared mainly in music halls or vaudeville. Ballet was presented to the public either in the form of spectacular shows based on popular themes, as in the productions of the Alhambra and Empire Theatres in London, or as individual acts in the music hall, where displays of technical virtuosity and presentation of a nostalgic prettiness prevailed.

It was into this somewhat moribund theatre dance scene that the American born choreographer and dancer, Isadora Duncan (b.1887-d.1927) exploded. She came with an avowed and all-embracing mission to reform and to develop a new and radical theatre dance genre.

In the history of dance, as well as in the wider context of the history of art, the name of Isadora Duncan now holds a secure place. Indeed, as Flanner (1927) noted soon after Duncan's death, throughout

her life she was referred to, in queen-like fashion, by her first name only. Such a practice reflected both the status and the notoriety accorded her during her life and the use of this appellation has not diminished with time.

Yet although Duncan's place in the annals of dance history is undisputed it conceals a paradox. While she is acknowledged as one of the founders, if not the founder, of modern dance at the same time her work per se is generally dismissed. Duncan is credited with providing a radical and totally new starting point within theatre dance yet simultaneously her choreography is typified as being naive, simplistic and improvised. Furthermore, Duncan's life style, always newsworthy has since her death become the major focus of attention and this has deflected interest away from her choreographic achievements. Much of the literature about Duncan emanates from the United States where her contribution to dance is characterised as being almost entirely inspirational. Nevertheless, it is the case that Duncan developed her seminal work in dance in Europe, where she lived for almost her entire career, and here there is evidence to suggest that her legacy to dance might be more than the bequest of a new point of view, important though that is.

Thus over the years there has been an accretion of myths about Duncan's life at the expense of the appreciation of both the innovativeness of her compositions and the impact of her performances, while the European viewpoint, potentially so illuminating, has not been articulated.

The initial impetus for the present research originated in a previous study in which the work of some of the British early modern dancers was examined alongside that of Duncan (Layson 1970). Many of the British pioneers, such as Madge Atkinson (b.1885-d.1970) Ruby Ginner (b.1886-d.1977) and Margaret Morris (b.1891-d.1980), were particularly active during the second, third and fourth decades of the

twentieth century but most of their choreography is no longer extant. Therefore, in the earlier study, their work was overviewed by means of their own writings, contemporary accounts and visual sources. The results indicated that even though each of the British early modern dancers developed a distinctive dance style, and some also produced detailed conceptual and theoretical frameworks to underpin their choreography and teaching, much of their work had features in common.

These features stemmed from the rejection of the then prevailing theatre dance form of ballet and its music hall manifestations in favour of a freer dance. This freer dance characteristically exploited the spectrum of everyday movement, was devoid of an obvious technique, was performed in loose, light clothing and barefeet and was held to be capable of a wide expressive range. Such features, which are typical of the general early modern dance style, are also evident in Duncan's choreography. Consequently, it was postulated that the British early modern dancers drew upon a common source and that this was to be found in the work of Isadora Duncan. The proposal that Duncan might be regarded as the initiator of British modern dance, albeit unwittingly, seemed tenable on grounds of genre, location and time.

It was this postulate, unsupported at the time by a body of facts or detailed evidence, that became the base-line from which the present study developed. At the outset however, it was immediately apparent that in itself the proposal concerning the origins of British early modern dance begged certain other and far more wide-ranging questions. The crucial ones concerned the nature of Duncan's influence. Did the influence derive directly from the practical example of her choreography and performance and/or via her own writings in which she forcefully declared the principles upon which she claimed her dance was based? Indeed did Duncan have a systematic theory of dance or a

dance ideology, the influence of which might be detected in the subsequent proliferation of modern dance forms which characterised this period in mainland Europe and the USA as well as in the UK? Or was her influence, as is frequently stated in relation to the origins of modern dance as a Western theatre genre, just simply one of sheer inspiration without the handing on of any theoretical principles or even basic tenets?

Since little serious work has been undertaken in the UK, Europe or the USA in response to these questions it was evident that of necessity the central focus of the present study should be to determine whether Duncan could be said to have worked within a theoretical framework and, if so, to state its nature explicitly. The fact that Duncan's choreography and writings seem at first sight to exhibit certain recurring features prompted the formulation of a working hypothesis that Duncan did indeed have at least a set of basic assumptions, rules and procedures that governed her work. If the hypothesis could be supported by a close examination of Duncan's choreographic and written works then it was anticipated that it would be possible to determine whether her rules and procedures could be judged to constitute a consistent set of values and ideas about dance. If Duncan's notions about dance could be fully articulated and presented comprehensively then the way would be clear to state her particular contribution to modern dance and her general contribution to the development of Western theatre dance.

To arrive at such a statement would not only be of value per se but would also make salient the links between the early form of modern dance, as initiated by Duncan, and its present day manifestations. The current styles of modern and post modern dance (associated with the USA) and contemporary and new dance (located in the UK) are of themselves multi-variant and not vested in any one choreographer, performer or company. Nevertheless, to be able to locate the roots of

some of the present complexities of modern dance in the work of an early innovator such as Duncan is to make a contribution to the study of dance, particularly in terms of dance history scholarship, which it currently lacks.

At this juncture it is necessary to state in unequivocal terms that the focus of the present study is not a general theory of dance nor even a more specific theory of modern dance. The orientation is towards the possibility of a particular dance artist having a set of theories which can be seen to underpin her work. However, what might seem in other art forms to be a relatively straightforward procedure of elucidating an artist's theories by central reference to her/his works of art, is confounded in the study of dance by its ephemerality. The original choreographic works of Duncan are neither extant nor notated. Furthermore, the few seconds of film footage which exist of Duncan dancing are of questionable authenticity. Therefore, the twin methodological problems for the present study were to ascertain whether Duncan had consistent principles and guiding rules in her work and, in the absence of extant Duncan dances, to devise acceptable methods for so doing.

In the literature on Duncan many innovations in dance are attributed to her. Her confident relocation of the bodily source of movement, her choice of hitherto untapped subject matter for dances, her bold baring of the body and her controversial use of classical music are but some of the pioneering choreographic devices with which she is credited. Nevertheless, few authors base their comments and discussions on scholarly study and there is a common assumption that Duncan's innovations were disparate and haphazard. Duncan also wrote about her ideas, her beliefs and their relation to her dances and, for a dancer, these provide an almost unprecedented amount of theoretical material. However, the assumptions of others and the written claims

of Duncan herself do not alone provide sufficient evidence from which an examination of the possible theoretical basis of her work could take place. As with any other artist the focus of attention in the search for theoretical structures must be directed towards that artist's works.

In the absence of extant works a four stage methodology for the study was devised. Firstly, a comprehensive collection of eye-witness accounts, reviews and criticisms of Duncan's dances was assembled and this was supplemented by a variety of visual and aural materials. Secondly, this material was used to provide factual background to the study in the form of a chronology and two choreochronicles and also to describe the contexts in which Duncan worked and the influences upon her. Thirdly, the material was used to carry out a choreographic analysis of Duncan's works based on a modified version of the Adshead et al (1982) model. Fourthly the results of the choreographic analysis were studied in conjunction with Duncan's own writings.

Thus the prime concern of this study is to present a detailed examination and discussion of the life and work of Isadora Duncan and to determine her particular contribution to Western theatre dance. In so doing it also attempts to redress the balance of interest between the prevailing, popular concern with "Isadora", the flamboyant yet tragic woman whose life eventually disintegrated around her, and the neglected but essential scholarly study of Duncan, the creative artist who initiated a revolution in dance which even now reverberates around the world.

PART 1**SOURCE MATERIALS**

Introduction to Part 1

Chapter 1 Written sources on Duncan- a categorisation,
 overview and discussion

Chapter 2 Visual and aural sources on Duncan
 - a categorisation, overview and
 discussion

Summary of Part 1

INTRODUCTION TO PART 1

In a study which focusses upon Duncan as an early twentieth century choreographer and dancer it might be expected that her actual dances and current performances of them would constitute a major source. However, dances are ephemeral. The traditional method of preservation is one of 'handing on' a dance through successive performances. More recently, this less than exact practice has been supplemented by the notation of choreography and the filming or videotaping of performances.

Although Duncan choreographed many dances, some especially for her pupils, she did not hand on to them the great mass of her own works. Furthermore, she lived at a time which pre-dated the recognition of the importance of recording dance in either written or visual forms for preservation and study. Thus the bulk of Duncan's choreography was lost when she died. In the absence of such prime sources other materials associated with Duncan's work, be they written, visual or aural, assume a particular importance.

However, it is only with the present emergence of dance studies as a discipline that documentation of dance source materials has begun in any systematic manner. Hitherto, just a few important collections of dance materials (such as that of the New York Public Library) and dance archives (such as that of Derra de Moroda) have been collated, annotated and published. Recent significant initiatives in the documentation of dance materials include the establishing of a dance data base at the National Resource Centre for Dance at the University of Surrey and, in the USA, there are plans to set up an international dance bibliography.

While such innovative projects are of crucial importance it is planned that they will deal only with current publications in the immediate future. Thus there is still no comprehensive documentation

of the vast quantity of dance sources generated prior to these ventures. The major resource research tool remains the New York Public Library Dictionary Catalogue and Bibliographic Guides to Dance and these, by definition, are limited to that library's dance collection.

Given the lack of extant Duncan dances and the relative paucity of documentation of dance materials the first stage of the research for this study necessitated the identification and location of all available and relevant sources. In Part 1 the source materials are categorised, discussed and evaluated in relation to their use in the present study. Chapter 1 is concerned with the considerable quantity of written sources and Chapter 2 with visual and aural sources, such as photographs, artists' sketches and music recordings.

CHAPTER 1**WRITTEN SOURCES ON DUNCAN- A CATEGORISATION,
OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION**

- 1.1 Introduction**
- 1.2 Categorisation, overview and discussion of written sources**
- 1.3 Summary**

1.1 Introduction

In the present study the written sources are important since they provide the bulk of the material upon which the description and analysis of Duncan's life and work is based. Duncan's own writings, especially her essays of a more theoretical nature, merit particular attention and are used in the later stages of this work as the basis for the examination of the values underlying her choreography.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify substantial and significant written texts relevant to the study of Duncan. Firstly, the primary and secondary sources are differentiated and the material categorised. Secondly, the written sources are overviewed and discussed in relation to their use in the present work.

1.2 Categorisation, overview and discussion of written sources

The categorisation of the written material is set out in Table 1 (see following page). Within the basic division of primary and secondary source material sub-categories according to type are given. For ease of reference the sub-categories are consistent across the primary/secondary divide except in the case of Duncan's own writings and the contemporary autobiographies which do not have secondary counterparts.

Table 1: Categorisation of written sources

<u>1.21</u>	<u>PRIMARY</u>
1.211	Isadora Duncan's writings Autobiography Articles and essays Interviews and speeches; journals and notes; letters
1.212	Contemporary biographies of Duncan
1.213	Contemporary autobiographies Friends Dancers Artists Others
1.214	Contemporary dance literature Criticisms of Duncan's choreography and performance Dance texts
<u>1.22</u>	<u>SECONDARY</u>
1.221	Biographies Duncan biographies Other biographies
1.222	Dance literature Criticisms of the reconstructed Duncan dances Criticisms of choreographers' works inspired by Duncan Analyses of particular aspects of Duncan's work Dance history texts with reference to Duncan American British Others

The overview functions by providing a preliminary "laying out" of the Duncan written source material and by facilitating discussion of the items in each category. The discussion focusses upon the general relevance and value of the material to the research area.

1.21 PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIAL

1.211 Isadora Duncan's writings

A considerable quantity of Duncan's writings exist. During her lifetime these evoked interest but were generally thought to be of far less importance than her dance. After her death, however, and the almost total loss of her choreographed works, Duncan's writings came to be accepted as powerful personal statements about her dance. In the present study such statements, written as they are in

proselytising and, occasionally, poetic terms, are held to contain some of the vital elements from the which the rationale underlying her choreography and performances might be constructed.

Duncan's writings can be divided into three sub-categories, that is, her autobiography; her articles and essays; and her interviews, speeches, journals, notes and letters.

DUNCAN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Isadora Duncan's autobiography 'My Life', which covers the period from her birth in 1877 up to 1921, was published posthumously in 1927¹ soon after her accidental death in September of that year. It was subsequently translated into several languages (NYPL 1974 p.2008²) and immediately provoked controversy not only because its contents were regarded as sensational³ but also because of the debate concerning its authenticity. The so-called sensational aspects of 'My Life' are discussed at length elsewhere (for example, Loving 1931) and are, in any case, marginal to the interests of the present study. However, it is relevant to note that Duncan herself considered her autobiography to be just an honest, personal statement.

I want to put in everything, I want to write a book like Whitman's 'Leaves of Grass' - only franker. A book that will be explosive and awaken the whole world.

Duncan quoted by Loving (1931 p.58)

The authenticity of Duncan's autobiography is discussed and disputed by many of her close friends and associates, such as Desti (1929), Duncan and Macdougall (1929), Duncan, Irma (1966)⁴ and Geddes (1978), although their debate is mainly conducted in terms of claims and counter-claims and there is little substantiation. However, a few authors such as Macdougall (1960), Seroff (1971) and Steegmuller (1974) adopt a more scholarly approach to the problem of authenticity and also introduce the question of reliability.

In his text Seroff details the points at which he considers Duncan's autobiography is misleading or factually incorrect. He claims that some chapters were rewritten by her publishers and that three chapters were published out of chronological sequence, although he does not identify these.⁵ He also cites evidence to show that many of the dates given in the autobiography are incorrect, that Duncan transposed some of the events of her 1905 and 1908 visits to Russia and of three accounts given of Duncan's and Craig's⁶ first meeting (that is, by Duncan 1927a, Craig, E.G., 1957 and Craig, E.A., 1968) it is E.A. Craig's which, surprisingly, is the more authentic. Finally, Seroff refers to extensive editing of Duncan's script by Mercedes de Acosta, a friend of Duncan, and quotes passages from it to support his view that de Acosta's style is quite different from that of Duncan.

Steegmuller (1974) also indicates inaccuracies in Duncan's autobiography this time by reference to Craig's copy of 'My Life' in which Craig made corrections and copious notes. Steegmuller, like Seroff, suggests reasons why Duncan related the infamous 'Bloody Sunday' massacre in St. Petersburg in 1905 in an altered context in her autobiography. In addition he shows that many of the supposedly inaccurate dates given by Duncan are in fact correct since in reading Duncan's account it is sometimes necessary to make adjustments between the "old style" Julian calendar in use in Russia at that time and the "new style" Gregorian calendar in use in the West.⁷

It is yet to be clearly established when Duncan wrote her autobiography. Duncan and Macdougall (1929) reprint a "memoirs" manuscript which they claim Duncan wrote between November 1923 and early 1924 while in Russia.⁸ Cheney (in Duncan 1928), Loving (1931) and Irma Duncan (1966) give various dates between 1925 and 1927 during which they state that Duncan was writing her autobiography. Kaye (1929) and Loving (1931) refer to Duncan as still writing her memoirs after her last concert in Paris in July 1927. The "publishers note"

to 'My Life' states that the manuscript was completed a few months before her death in September 1927.

These dates are of some significance. Firstly, because they provide clues about the proposed sequel to 'My Life', as yet an unresearched topic.⁹ Secondly, and more importantly for the present study, they cover a particularly eventful period of Duncan's life which included an attempted suicide, financial ruin and a triumphant return to performing. It might reasonably be expected that the writing of an autobiography, even if it was concerned with earlier events, would be affected by such current experiences.

It is, therefore, evident that Duncan's autobiography can be regarded as central primary source material only if care is taken to sift and cross-check facts and due attention is given to the context in which 'My Life' was written and published. However, one salient point emerges from the literature on the authenticity of Duncan's autobiography which is of particular significance in relation to the methodological procedures adopted in the present study. This is that the doubts expressed concerning authorship are to do with facts, events and episodes in Duncan's life. There seems to be a general, though unvoiced, acknowledgement that the many passages on dance in the book must have been written by Duncan perhaps because, unlike the other topics referred to, no one else could have written them. The loose historical framework adopted by Duncan in 'My Life' indicates that she was probably less interested in chronicling events than in using them as a means to introduce her views on dance and her related political and social beliefs.

Thus Duncan's autobiography stands as a valuable and unique primary source. Used with discrimination it contributes to the assembling of the context of her work. Used in conjunction with Duncan's articles and essays it indicates the different kinds of ideas

that were implicit in her choreography and performances.

DUNCAN'S ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

Duncan's many articles and essays have not previously been catalogued in detail although, by using Magriel's bibliography (1947) and the NYPL listings (1975, 1976-84) in conjunction with Duncan (1928, 1981) and the general literature on Duncan, it is possible to arrive at a substantial bibliography.

Of the articles and essays published during Duncan's lifetime the earliest appears to be 'The Dance of the Future'. Cohen (1974) dates this publication as c1902 and Beaumont (1966) and von Boehn (1925) as 1903.¹⁰ Subsequently and throughout her career Duncan wrote frequently about dance and related topics. Her articles were often published locally or nationally to coincide with her tours to various capital cities and countries and her essays appeared regularly in American and European journals devoted to the arts. Roslavleva (1975) quotes from two of Duncan's Russian articles published in 1913 and 1921 but many of the non-English texts have yet to be translated (for example, see Steegmuller 1974).

In 1925 Duncan tried to interest American and French publishers in some of her unpublished articles and manuscripts but lack of success in this enterprise probably spurred her to write a more marketable autobiography (Duncan and Macdougall 1929). However, soon after her death many of her articles were compiled by Dallies et. al., (Duncan 1927b) and Cheney (Duncan 1928).¹¹ The contents of these volumes overlap and the latter collection includes some articles previously published, such as 'The Dance of the Future', but in the main it consists of hitherto unpublished material written between 1898 and 1927. Cheney arranges Duncan's writings under twenty-three headings which range from single essays, articles and public letters, to collections of public letters, transcribed interviews, publicity

material and extracts from press files.

The inconsistent date references in Duncan's autobiography have given rise to questions of authenticity and reliability. However, in the case of her articles and essays the different dates accorded to material that is virtually identical or similar in content do not raise corresponding doubts but reflect the fact that Duncan often used or reworked the same written passages over a number of years.¹²

Because the essays and articles span Duncan's career and each one tends to focus on a single aspect of her dance these publications collectively constitute another unique primary source. Their value is that they identify clearly the many ideas and issues from which Duncan formulated her dance premises.

DUNCAN'S INTERVIEWS AND SPEECHES, JOURNALS AND NOTES, LETTERS

This sub-division of Duncan's writings encompasses her spoken words, subsequently printed, and her private jottings which were not intended for publication. Duncan's interviews for the press and her speeches to the public invariably centred upon the promotion or defence of her dance. Many reports of her interviews exist but only a few verbatim accounts of her speeches are extant (for example, see Duncan and Macdougall 1929). A recent collection of extracts from Duncan's essays, speeches, interviews, letters and statements to the press has been edited by Rosemont (Duncan 1981). Unfortunately the lack of full referencing in this text considerably diminishes its value in furthering research on this aspect of Duncan's polemics.

In her autobiography Duncan refers to "copy books" which she used for making notes about events and dance ideas. One such journal contains the brief notes later published under the title 'The Parthenon' (Duncan 1928) and also "the rules for our lives to be spent on Kopenos" (Duncan 1927a p.127). The latter is a reference to the Duncan family's ill-fated attempt to build a house and live as a

community on a hilltop level with the Acropolis. Irma Duncan (1966) quotes passages from a 1903 Duncan copy book which are almost identical to some of the paragraphs in the essay 'The Dance of the Future'.

Duncan was a prolific writer of letters and sender of telegrams and some of these to friends and pupils are quoted in their biographies of her (see, for example, Duncan and Macdougall 1929). Part of the Duncan-Stanislavsky correspondence is held in the Stanislavsky Archives at the Moscow Art Theatre and extracts are quoted by Schneider (1968) and Seroff (1971). Duncan's collection of letters from her lovers was prized by publishers but she was dissuaded from making them public by friends and instead her attention was diverted to publishing her own writings (Loving 1931, Stokes 1928). However, Gordon Craig kept all the letters, notes and telegrams that he received from Duncan. In 1962 he sold most of them to the NYPL for the Dance Collection. Known as the Craig-Duncan Collection, it contains approximately 400 items (Ostrom 1972) of which over two hundred are letters from Duncan to Craig. Steegmuller (1974 p.vi) notes that according to Craig's daughter, Ellen, Craig burned about ten letters he thought "too personal" to sell. A further un-numbered collection of Duncan's letters to Craig is held by Craig's son, Edward, and is referred to in his biography of his father (Craig, E.A., 1968).

These letters give insights into the Duncan-Craig relationship but more importantly, since Duncan wrote many of them whilst touring, they reveal her thoughts about her performances, her audiences' reactions and the critics' comments. Duncan's letters to Craig, unlike the rest of her writings, have been the subject of very detailed research and Steegmuller's (1974) edited publication of them is generally held in high regard.

Of all the Duncan primary written source material Duncan's own writings must hold a place of central importance. Duncan's autobiography, completed towards the end of her life, contains many definitive statements about her dance. This is complemented by her articles, essays and other written material which, when studied chronologically and individually, yield a developmental view of her ideas and beliefs about dance and its place in society. Martin considers that Duncan

has left scattered through her brief writings a fully rounded theory of dance which is generally not suspected.

Martin (1942 p.4)

Nevertheless, if such a 'theory' exists it has not yet been made explicit by subsequent authors and, therefore, the importance of Duncan's writings to the present study is underlined.

1.212 Contemporary biographies of Duncan

Probably because Duncan died prematurely at the age of fifty no biographies of her were written during her lifetime. However, there are seven Duncan biographies which, since they were written by people who knew her, rank as primary source material. These fall neatly into two groups. The Duncan biographies in the first group were all published during the 1928-32 period and are characteristically immediate in style, the events of Duncan's life being recounted with freshness and vigour. The biographies in the second group, although also written by Duncan's friends and associates, were all published from 1960 onwards.¹³ These texts make reference to other published material and use hindsight together with a sense of historical perspective to place Duncan's life and works in context.

The earliest Duncan biography is that of Stokes, S., (1928¹⁴) a journalist who did not meet Duncan until late 1926. Nevertheless, he claims that his biography is indeed "an intimate portrait" (its sub-

title) since while he was with Duncan she was writing her autobiography and actively recalling episodes of her life.

In 1929 two Duncan biographies were published, one by Mary Desti, a close friend of Duncan, and the other by Irma Duncan and Allan Ross Macdougall, the former a pupil¹⁵ and the latter a one-time secretary of Duncan. Desti's biography (1929) begins in 1901 when she first knew Duncan and her account concentrates upon the periods and events of Duncan's life with which she was personally involved. The Duncan and Macdougall (1929) biography is concerned only with the last six years of Duncan's life beginning exactly at the point at which 'My Life' ended and is aptly titled 'Isadora Duncan's Russian Days and Her Last Years in France'. Irma Duncan accompanied Duncan to Russia in 1921 to open the Moscow school and by the time Duncan died had become its head. Unlike Desti, Irma Duncan was intimately involved with Duncan's life as a performer and teacher and this is reflected in her contributions to the biography, some of these being detailed descriptions of Duncan dancing and choreographing. Macdougall, a Scot and a poet, was originally a secretary to Paris Singer¹⁶ who sent him to act as Duncan's secretary during the period 1916-17. After this association Macdougall became a close friend of Duncan and his contributions to the biography consist mainly of the day to day events of Duncan's life after her return to France from Russia in 1924. The Duncan and Macdougall biography makes extensive use of Duncan's letters, manuscripts and scripts for speeches which the authors possessed at the time of writing.

The last of the early biographies is that by Maurice Dumesnil (1932) who was Duncan's musical director for her South American tour of 1916. It is this episode that provides the focus of the book and Dumesnil claims that the material is based on the numerous detailed letters that he wrote while in South America. Duncan (1927a) devotes only a few pages to this tour and, since little information is

available from other sources, Dumesnil's work covers an otherwise relatively unrecorded period of Duncan's life.

The first of the Duncan biographies to be written with the benefit of hindsight was published thirty-three years after her death. Macdougall (1960) had collaborated with Irma Duncan in an earlier Duncan biography and he re-used some of this material. However, the later biography spans the whole of Duncan's life and includes new information particularly about her childhood. The first Russian to chronicle Duncan's time in Russia was Schneider (1968) who acted as the Moscow school secretary and business manager for its tours. This biography describes the development of the Duncan Moscow school and the various Russian provincial tours undertaken by Duncan and her pupils.¹⁷

Seroff's (1971) biography is unusual since it expands a chapter of his much earlier autobiography¹⁸ and, therefore, combines elements of both the first and second groups of Duncan biographies. Although Seroff only knew Duncan during the last two years of her life he was Duncan's pianist and this enables him to discuss Duncan's dance and to attempt to explain some of her working principles.

Collectively the contemporary Duncan biographies provide the wider context to Duncan's own writings. As primary source material the individual accounts vary considerably in reliability and criticisms of them range from "waftiness and hysteria" (Heppenstall 1936 on Stokes, S., 1928) and "monstrous distortions" (Schneider 1968 on Desti 1929) to "a touching book of remembrance" (Craig 1929 repub. in Rood 1978 on Duncan and Macdougall 1929).¹⁹ Nevertheless, when used with appropriate caution these accounts, which contain eye-witness descriptions of Duncan choreographing and performing, reports of conversations with Duncan about her dance and other witting testimony of many kinds, add a unique dimension to the examination of

Duncan's work.

1.213 Contemporary autobiographies

Duncan enjoyed a good rapport with fellow artists and her extensive tours brought her into close contact with many eminent people. Thus she features in several autobiographies written during the first quarter of the twentieth century as well as in those written up to the late 1960s. Excluding autobiographies making only a passing reference to Duncan these texts can be sub-divided into four groups each of which sheds a particular light on Duncan and her work.

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF CLOSE FRIENDS

The four autobiographers in this group had relationships of different kinds with Duncan which are reflected in their comments about her. Craig's 1904 to 1914 and 1957 autobiographical writings, together with his largely unpublished 'Book Topsy', are concerned with Duncan's ideas on dance and her artistic presentation of it (Craig, E.A., 1968). This theme is continued throughout all the Craig references to Duncan and is particularly evident in one of his last autobiographical and semi-biographical accounts in a BBC radio talk (Craig, E.G., 1952).²⁰ Kennet (1949) and de Acosta (1960) were friends of Duncan and were with her at points in her career when she was formulating or reformulating her ideas on dance. Their recollections of these occasions are incorporated in their respective texts. Irma Duncan (1966) worked with Duncan for over twenty years and this is manifest in her autobiography which is informative about Duncan as a choreographer and dancer.

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF OTHER DANCERS

Most dancers of the period saw Duncan dance and their autobiographies contain descriptions of Duncan's choreography and performances written from either the standpoint of Russian and

European classical ballet or that of the newly emerging modern dance form. Loie Fuller²¹ (1913) devotes a chapter of her autobiography to Duncan. This deals with the period 1900-02 when she claims to have been instrumental in launching Duncan's career in the theatre.

Schwehoff (1935) saw Duncan dance in 1922 when she was about forty-five and he describes his acute disappointment and embarrassment on seeing her perform two of her most celebrated dances, the 'Marche Slave'²² and 'L'Internationale'. In contrast Ruth St. Denis (1939) saw various Duncan performances between 1906 and 1917 and the descriptions of these in her autobiography are generous and positive. Two Russian ballerinas, Karsavina and Kschessinska, saw Duncan perform in Russia. In their memoirs, published in 1948 and 1960 respectively, they describe their response to the new dance and discuss Duncan's 'theories' and her influence on the Russian ballet and Fokine.

The manner and the degree to which Fokine, as one of the major choreographers of the period, was influenced by Duncan is often debated. Nonetheless, in his autobiography Fokine (1961) describes seeing Duncan's first Russian performances in St. Petersburg in December 1904 and clearly states his admiration for her work and his intense interest in her ideas.²³ Massine did not see any Duncan performances although he met her and they waltzed together at a party. In his autobiography he recalls that this experience was sufficient for him to appreciate both her "extraordinary freedom of expression" and the degree to which her dance had "inspired Fokine" (Massine 1968 pp. 56-7).

Another dancer to be influenced by Duncan was Marie Rambert who first saw her dance in Warsaw in 1904. Rambert (1972) describes the impact of Duncan's performances, her own "pro-Isadora phase" and the way in which Duncan inspired her subsequent career. In her autobiography Margaret Morris (1969) acknowledges that her dance style and the theories on which it is based are Duncan-influenced; in this

case by both Isadora and her brother Raymond.

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF OTHER ARTISTS

The autobiographies of the two photographers most closely associated with Duncan, Genthe and Steichen, were published in 1937 and 1963 respectively. Each contains descriptions of Duncan's work and, used in conjunction with their photographs of Duncan, are of value in gaining an understanding of certain characteristics of her dance, such as her particular way of massing the body in space.

Benois, the Russian painter and designer who was at one time Artistic Director of Diaghilev's company, first saw Duncan dance in St. Petersburg in December 1904. In his autobiography Benois (1941) describes Duncan performing and discusses her "principles" and their impact on Fokine. Stanislavsky (1924) first attended a Duncan performance in 1905 and was also interested in Duncan's "principles" particularly in relation to the theatre and his own ideas. Of the musicians who knew Duncan well and wrote about her, Dumesnil's and Seroff's texts are mentioned in 1.212 above. Seroff's association with Duncan was towards the end of her life but Martin Shaw acted as Duncan's pianist and conductor during 1906-7 when she was making her early extended tours of Europe and selecting music for her new dances. Thus Shaw's references to Duncan's choice and use of music are of considerable relevance to a discussion of her work (Shaw, M. 1929).

OTHER AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Another of Duncan's secretaries, Kinel (1937), recalls the emotional impact and effect on her of Duncan's performances in 1922. Hurok, the impresario, managed Duncan's 1922 U.S.A. tour and also those of her pupils. In his autobiography and subsequent semi-autobiographical accounts Hurok (1947, 1953, 1955) describes the Duncan performances that he witnessed and adds comments on her

scenery, curtain speeches and the moral and political outcry that her work engendered. Lunacharsky (1967), the Minister for Education during Duncan's period in Moscow, discusses her theories of dance in relation to education.²⁴

It has been noted in Section 1.211 that autobiographies, as primary source materials, present particular problems for the researcher. The points already made in relation to the reliability of Duncan's autobiography apply in part to the autobiographies of those who knew Duncan and included her in their reminiscences. Nonetheless, if such autobiographical writings are valued less for the factual information they impart and more for their views of Duncan's works, their descriptions of her performances and their accounts of conversations with her about her ideas on dances, then their relevance to the present study is clear.

1.214 Contemporary dance literature

The contemporary dance literature may be conveniently divided into the criticisms of Duncan's choreography and performances and the general dance texts.

CONTEMPORARY CRITICISMS OF DUNCAN'S CHOREOGRAPHY AND PERFORMANCES

Most reviewers of Duncan's performances, with the notable exception of the Russian ballet critics and the French writers on dance, were not specialist dance critics. Some were music critics and others were general critics of the arts and thus the criticism of Duncan's work is written from different artistic standpoints.

Georgievich (pseudonym of Shebuyev 1904), Pleshcheev (1913) and Svetlov (pseudonym of Ivchenko 1912, 1913, 1927, 1931-2) saw several of Duncan's Russian performances and a few such criticisms have been translated (for example, in Steegmuller 1974, Roslavleva 1975, McVay 1980). They and their colleagues wrote at length on Duncan's style

and not only described her performances in detail but also discussed her work and concepts of movement within the general context of dance and in relation to Russian ballet.

The French dance writers and aestheticians, Divoire (1919, 1924) Faure (in Lafitte 1910 and in Macdougall 1946), Lavedan (in Phillips Vierke 1911) and Levinson²⁵ (1918, 1929) also describe Duncan's performances at length. Interestingly their accounts are less concerned with the details of performances than their Russian counterparts and instead they tend towards poetic imagery, rhetoric and impressionistic statements.

Much of the German criticism of Duncan's work remains untranslated although the writings of Brandenburg (1921, 2nd edition 1931), Von Boehn (1925) and Stefan (1925?) indicate the seriousness with which Duncan's dance and her ideas were regarded in Germany. Loewenthal's (1980) research into Duncan's early Dutch tours has revealed a considerable body of hitherto unknown critical writings that are particularly useful in plotting the development of her choreography and performances.

Duncan's performances in London attracted much publicity and were the subject of many articles in the serious and popular press as well as in journals and magazines.²⁶ However, Beaumont, one of the leading British writers on dance at the time when Duncan had her 1921 London season, was more interested in ballet than the newer dance forms and does not appear to have written criticisms of her work.²⁷ Nevertheless, two eminent music critics, Fuller-Maitland (1900a, b, 1908) and Newman (1921), seem to have been particularly captivated by Duncan's pioneering dance and wrote in detail about her various London performances as did the art critics Grein (1908, 1921) and Fussell (1921). John Galsworthy saw one of Duncan's performances in London in 1908 in which the children from her Grunewald School also danced and he described this later in 1910 in his essay 'Delight' (reprinted

1922).

In the USA Duncan's pre-1900 performances gained little attention although 'The Director', a specialist dance publication, covered her recitals in private homes (Gilbert 1898). However, by the time Duncan returned to the States in 1908 she was already a person of controversy both as a dancer and as an outspoken critic of prevailing social mores. Consequently most of the American journalists were more interested in her after-performance speeches and the general furore she created than in her dance and its subject matter. Exceptions to this were Etscher (1911), who attempted an analysis of Duncan's work, and the critic Van Vechten who wrote lengthy reviews of Duncan's performances covering her tours of 1909, 1911 and 1917 (reprinted in Magriel 1947 and Van Vechten 1974). Van Vechten's criticisms are of interest since, as well as writing about individual dances, he also takes retrospective views by referring back to previous tours and performances and noting his gradually increasing appreciation of Duncan's work. The reviews of Duncan's performances and those of her pupils by H.T.Parker, the eminent critic of the Boston Evening Transcript, are particularly illuminating. Parker's reviews span Duncan's visits to Boston from 1908 to 1922 and of her pupils from 1920 to 1929. He writes at length with detailed descriptions and his central focus throughout is the dance and its performance (Parker 1982).

Craig's biographical and autobiographical writings on Duncan have been mentioned but these do not constitute the sum total of his references to her. He lived a further thirty-nine years after her death and he continued to write about her dance as well as their artistic and personal relationships. A comprehensive collection of Craig's writings on Duncan and her dance, much of it originally published in his own journal, 'The Mask', and some in 'Dance Index'

between 1908 and 1943, is in Rood (1978).²⁸

CONTEMPORARY DANCE TEXTS

During Duncan's lifetime many books, articles and essays on dance were published. Some of these were concerned with particular dance genres, such as ballet, and did not refer to the many emerging dance forms, but others sought to describe or explain the new dance and these provide valuable contextual primary source material within which the impact of Duncan's work can be gauged.

Of the general dance histories published during this period two can be usefully cited here since each attempts to place the then current dance developments within a wider historical framework. Urlin (1911), in a mainly descriptive account of "modern dancing", outlines Duncan's style of dance and that of her contemporaries and refers to Duncan's use of music and her 'theories'. Urlin's text has a European orientation while that of the Kinneys' (1914) is American but, like Urlin, their section on Duncan is comprehensive in its discussion of her ideals and includes reference to her influence on the Russian ballet.

Other authors at this time focussed solely on the current dance scene. Fritch (1912), in a comprehensive survey of 'Modern Dancing and Dancers' has sections on many types of dance and Duncan is included under the title 'The Revival of Classical Dancing'. The Caffins' (1912) discussion of Duncan's work is the most wide-ranging of the texts mentioned in this section so far. It is the first to move from description to a discussion of the controversies that Duncan's dance engendered, such as the one arising from her use of classical music. In addition the Caffins refer to the development of Duncan's dance between her first and second tours of the USA. For example, they contrast the "abstract impersonal quality" and "charm" of her earlier work with the later "dramatic, savage, earthy" overtones and attempt

to account for it (Caffin, C. and C. 1912 p.61).

The terms used to describe the emerging dance forms of the first quarter of the twentieth century were many and varied. The title "natural dance" was one that achieved popularity and Elder (1918) gives a very detailed account of Duncan's work which she regards as both typifying "natural dancing" and being founded on "scientific" principles.

The dance texts referred to up to this point are similar in that they can be classified as giving more or less detailed accounts of the dance of Duncan's time and her position within it. However, another type of book, written by a protagonist of a particular style of dance or movement, needs mention here. Collectively such publications reflect the many parallel dance and movement forms which existed during Duncan's lifetime and also claimed to be modern and radical. Two examples will suffice at this juncture, and these are books by Rath and Watts both published in 1914. Rath, an American, writes on "aesthetic dancing" which he sees as related to Duncan's "interpretative dancing" but more closely connected with the physical education of girls and women than with the theatre. Watts, an Englishwoman, attempts to devise a system of exercises and poses which are based, as the title of book indicates, on 'The Renaissance of the Greek Ideal', one of Duncan's own acknowledged starting points.

In addition to the more substantial texts many short articles and essays on various aspects of dance were published in the early part of the twentieth century. A considerable proportion of these refer to or focus upon Duncan's work and of these Caffin (1909), O'Sheel (1920, 1927), Pavlova (1926 repub. in Caspary 1976), Merz (in Stefan 1925?) and Bolitho (1929) form a representative sample.

The contemporary dance literature, although variable in quality, provides a context to Duncan's work. Much of it is descriptive and is of value in amassing information about Duncan's dances. A few texts, however, are analytical and this allows some of the notions underlying Duncan's work to be identified.

1.22 SECONDARY SOURCE MATERIAL

1.221 Biographies

The biographical works which are secondary sources can be readily divided into two groups, that is, the Duncan biographies and others. From such a distinction the information derived from sources which focus solely upon Duncan can be set within the wider contextual material gained from the biographies of her immediate associates.

DUNCAN BIOGRAPHIES

Terry's (1963) biography of Duncan is the earliest to be written from the viewpoint of a dance historian. He devotes the first part of his account to a résumé of Duncan's life, the second to an examination of her dance and the third to a discussion of Duncan's influence on the development of dance. As such Terry provides a useful model for the present study. Craig's biographical work on Duncan has been referred to as a primary source which focusses both on their personal relationship and on Duncan's artistry and these two themes are also central to Steegmuller's work (1974). The content of Steegmuller's book is the NYPL's Craig-Duncan Collection of letters and documents and it is therefore in essence a joint biography of the two artists, their involvement with each other and their descriptions and discussions of their respective art forms. There is a similar primary/secondary source link between Schneider's (1968) and Roslavleva's (1975) biographical accounts since both focus on Duncan's Moscow School.²⁹ As a former pupil and dancer, Roslavleva describes in detail the nature and content of the dance teaching at the school

and its subsequent post-Duncan development into the early 1950s.

Three recent biographical accounts of Duncan maintain the growing trend to investigate a particular facet of Duncan's life or work instead of attempting a comprehensive survey. Rather (1976) uses hitherto unpublished material to describe Duncan's childhood in California and her return visit and performances there in 1917. Hertelendy's (1977) detailed though unreferenced account of Duncan's childhood refers to newly-discovered documentation which establishes Duncan's date of birth. Macdonald's (1977) series of six articles on Duncan highlights the particular influence of her early London experiences on her subsequent career, a previously unresearched area.

To date no further biographies of Duncan have been published although Steegmuller (1974) refers to Blair's "work in progress" (in press 1985) and Macdonald's (1977) articles are from a forthcoming publication on Duncan.

OTHER BIOGRAPHIES

Some of Duncan's close friends, fellow artists and acquaintances were themselves the subjects of biographies and these texts provide material for establishing Duncan's different relationships with various people and their possible influences upon her.

Edward A. Craig's (1968) biography of his father, Gordon Craig, is of interest in that he uses primary source material previously unpublished to describe the Craig-Duncan meeting and their ensuing relationship. Serge Esenin, the Russian poet whom Duncan married in 1922, is the subject of McVay's first biography (1976) and Duncan and Esenin are the joint subjects of his second (1980). These two texts are of vital importance because much of McVay's source material is Russian and his translations have made available a wealth of literature previously untapped in Duncan studies.

Craig's and Esenin's relationships with Duncan both as lovers

and fellow artists were of a particular intensity but other artists responded to Duncan in a different way. This is illustrated in, for example, the biographies of Vaslav Nijinsky and Serge Diaghilev. According to Bourman (1937) he and Nijinsky saw Duncan dance when they were both pupils in the Imperial Russian Ballet school in St. Petersburg but they were unable to understand her work which to them appeared to lack technique. Romola Nijinsky (1933) claims that both Nijinsky and Diaghilev always equated Duncan with that which was amateurish.³⁰ The later and more detailed Nijinsky biography by Buckle (1971) refers to Duncan and Nijinsky meetings in 1909 and 1916³¹ and Buckle restates Nijinsky's antipathy towards Duncan's style of dance.

Several Diaghilev biographies have been written, one of the earliest being by Haskell and Nouvel (1935). In this text Duncan's influence on the Russian Ballet is discussed, particularly Diaghilev's perception of the developments in Fokine's work after he had seen her early Russian performances. This point is pursued by Lifar (1940) who reprints a letter by Diaghilev which was originally published in Propert's (1931) history of the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev writes of his conviction that Duncan "was the very foundation of all his Fokine's creative ability" (Lifar 1940 pp. 97-98). Two recent Diaghilev texts, those of Macdonald (1975) and Buckle (1979), continue the discussion about the degree to which Diaghilev considered Fokine assimilated some of Duncan's choreographic ideas.

The secondary source biographies complement the primary ones in that they provide a wider, more considered and occasionally a more controversial context to Duncan's work. The Terry (1963) and Steegmuller (1974)³² Duncan biographies are examples of texts written with tempered hindsight and scholarship, while those of McVay (1976 and 1980) offer new facts and alternative interpretations of events.

1.222 Dance literature

The secondary source dance literature with substantial Duncan content does not fall readily into distinct categories since many of the sources are eclectic in topic and move easily, for example, from dance history to dance criticism. Nevertheless, it is convenient to consider these secondary sources in broad categories in order that their particular relevance to the present study can be articulated.

CRITICISMS OF THE RECONSTRUCTED DUNCAN DANCES

The criticisms of Duncan's choreography and performance written during her lifetime are primary source material and are discussed under 1.214. Here the focus is on the criticisms and reviews of Duncan's choreography as manifest in the various performances of her works by first, second and third generation Duncan dancers. The actual performances of the reconstructed Duncan dances constitute secondary visual source material and are discussed in Chapter 2 but these performances also generate much written material in the form of criticisms, reviews and programme notes. It is these latter sources which are considered at this juncture.

After Duncan's death a few of her former pupils continued to dance the Duncan repertoire and some of these performances were reviewed but Draegin (1977) indicates that by the 1940s and 1950s such performances were rare. However, Denby saw Maria-Theresa, one of Duncan's six foremost pupils, dance some of the Chopin pieces in 1942 and in his resulting critical essay (written in 1942 published 1949 and repub. 1968) he uses this performance to refer back to Duncan's choreography as a whole. Denby describes the gestures, dynamics, flow and formal structure which he considered characterised Duncan's choreography.

The renewed interest in Duncan, which began in the 1960s and has

gradually developed since then, is particularly evident in the USA where the majority of performances of the reconstructed Duncan dances have taken place. Thus most of the recent criticisms and reviews are written by American critics, little having been produced by their British counterparts. The dancers who have specialised in reconstructing and performing the Duncan dances during the 1970s are identified and their work discussed as secondary visual source material in Chapter 2. Here it is pertinent to cite some of the critics who have written about the reconstructed Duncan dances and to overview their work as a unique category of secondary source material.

Nuchtern (1973), in a brief review of a programme of Duncan dances performed by Danna Ticotin, refers to the choreography as being "mostly authentic" and notes the different stresses in the upper and lower body which she attributes to Duncan's theory of the origin of movement. Tobias (1977 p.13) examines the "authentic-looking re-animations of Duncan's choreography and dancing style" by Annabelle Gamson and discusses the problems of reconstructing dances which are simple and technically undemanding by current standards yet in style provide a formidable challenge for the performer. Gamson's performances are also the focus of critical essays by Anderson. In one of these he regards Duncan's dances as valid choreography "not simply effusive outbursts of lucky improvisation" (Anderson 1977 p203). Review articles by Dunning (1977) and Daniels (1977-78) also discuss Duncan's choreography, as reconstructed by Gamson, together with the demands that the dances make upon the performer. Draegin (1977) chronicles the various developments in reconstructing Duncan dances and includes reference to the principal exponents, Annabelle Gamson and Hortense Kooluris, together with the activities of the Isadora Duncan Centenary Dance company. Dorris' (1978) brief review of later Gamson programmes is sympathetic but Vaughan (1978 p.35) finds that some of the revivals of the Isadora Duncan Centenary Dance

company "add little to Duncan's stature as a choreographer", a conclusion supported by Simpson (1980). In contrast Pikula's report of this company's performance is positive in that she considers the performers

succeeded in communicating a sense not only of Duncan's emotional commitment to dance but of the clear lyricism in the structure of her group works.

Pikula (1979 p.148)

The Isadora Duncan/Maria-Theresa Heritage group is another recently formed company pledged to present Duncan's works. Its performances are reviewed by Merry (1979) who also discusses a recent Gamson performance in which she finds the Duncan dances "emotionally overcharged" (Merry 1980 p.46). A recent innovation in the work of artists who perform the reconstructed Duncan dances is the presentation of new works choreographed in the Duncan style (Carroll 1981).

CRITICISMS OF CHOREOGRAPHERS' WORKS INSPIRED BY DUNCAN

The reconstructed Duncan dances and their derivatives are distinct from but clearly related to the small number of choreographers' works which have been inspired by an aspect of Duncan's life and work. The writings of critics such as Jowitt (1977), Croce (1977) and Draegin (1977) are of value since the focus is on their perception of Duncan's style and quality as evinced in these dances. Thus Jowitt refers to Limon's³³ evocation of Duncan's art and Croce to Ashton's³⁴ dances which "are not reconstructions but evocations of a personality and a style" (Croce 1977 p.242). Both Croce and Draegin add a further dimension to the discussion by reference to the performance of Seymour in Ashton's work and Croce compares Seymour's role as an interpreter with that of Gamson in her reconstructed dances.

The most recent choreographer to be inspired by Duncan is

MacMillan. His highly controversial 'Isadora' generated a wealth of critical reviews³⁵ following its première in London on 30th April 1981 and subsequent performances in New York. This written material has a particular relevance to the present study since the reviews, which are mainly adverse,³⁶ concentrate on what is held to be MacMillan's total misunderstanding of Duncan's ideas and beliefs about dance, his lack of knowledge of the reconstructed Duncan choreography and his preference for highlighting the more sensational aspects of her life.

ANALYSES OF PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF DUNCAN'S WORK

The texts grouped under this heading are eclectic and vary considerably in the degree of analysis undertaken but their common feature is the focus on a selected aspect of Duncan's work. This allows a more thorough-going discussion to develop than in the general texts or reviews considered so far.

One of the earliest attempts to tease out some of Duncan's central ideas on dance is that of Taylor (1934) a theme continued by Martin (1942) who writes at length on Duncan and "basic dance". By reference to Duncan's writings and her practice Martin (1942 p.5) proposes a "universal theory" of dance derived from Duncan's "highly personalised art". He discusses such issues as the "central source" of movement, the problem of transforming movement into dance, the notion of "key" movements from which the subsequent choreography is developed and the place of technique. However, the seminal monograph on Duncan technique is by Irma Duncan (1937) although the text encompasses more than a description of technique since reference is made to Duncan's principles of movement and dance and to a methodology for teaching her work. The only other former senior Duncan pupil to write on her work is Maria-Theresa (1959). She has been actively concerned with the reconstruction of Duncan's dances and this is reflected in her short article which focusses upon the style and quality of Duncan's work.

Maria-Theresa's article provides an interesting point of comparison with the critics' views of the definitive features of Duncan's style as manifest in the Duncan-inspired works of modern choreographers.

Another area of interest shown by authors of specialised texts on Duncan is that of her relationships with fellow artists and her use of other art forms, particularly music. In her autobiography Duncan acknowledges the profound influence of Walt Whitman on her work and Johnson (1949) examines this influence and draws parallels between the work of the two artists. Both McCausland (1937) and Macdougall (1946) point to the fact that Duncan inspired a generation of visual artists and discuss the particular ways in which her dance provided such a rich source of images and themes. Duncan's use of music provoked much adverse comment as well as acclaim, an aspect discussed by Hastings (1941) and Pruett (1978). However, Langer believes that "paradoxically" both critics and supporters of Duncan's use of music for dance were right since

Isadora did not understand the music musically but
for her purposes she understood it perfectly
Langer (1953 pp.170-1)

Duncan's influence on the subsequent development of dance, especially modern dance, is often claimed to be seen in the work of women dancers who were her contemporaries or followed her. This theme is explored by Marsh (1931) and Holm (1966), who write on the similarities and differences between Duncan and Wigman, by Terry (1960), who considers the Delsartean influence common to Duncan and St. Denis and by Sorell (1966b) who compares the innovative ideas of Duncan and Graham and contrasts their realisation of them. More recent authors, such as Fiococella (1972-3) and Weil (1975), underline the early "feminism" in both Duncan's dance and her life style.

Another aspect of Duncan's work which has promoted interest is that of her theories of dance in education although the literature in

this field is minimal. Beiswanger (1936 repub. 1970) and Chilkovsky-Nahumck (1975) develop particular points in relation to dance in physical education and dance education respectively in the USA and Layson (1970a,b) outlines the influence of Duncan's work on the development of early modern dance styles in education in the UK.

DANCE HISTORY TEXTS WITH REFERENCE TO DUNCAN

These have been selected on the basis of their importance as dance history texts or their relevance to the study of Duncan and they range from those covering many historical periods to those spanning only a decade or so. A chronological framework is used since within this the changing emphases dance historians have placed on Duncan's work can be seen. The texts are sub-divided according to publication in the USA, the UK and elsewhere.

American dance history texts with reference to Duncan

One of the first American writers to describe the development of the "free dance", its basic tenets and Duncan's place within it is Selden (1930, 1935). These texts are of considerable interest because of their early date and the insights they give into the then current debate on the nature and characteristics of the new dance form and its perceived function. At this time even the term "modern dance" was not in current use and Selden (1930 pp.145-163) lists and defines twenty-two different new dance styles from "absolute dance" to "unaccompanied dance". In her second book, however, which is subtitled 'Essays on the Aesthetic of Contemporary Dance' and dedicated to Duncan, Selden (1935) writes almost exclusively in terms of contemporary and modern dance.

Another early modern dance protagonist and prolific writer is Martin (1933 repub. 1965, 1936 repub. 1968, 1946, 1939 repub. 1965). Martin's description and analysis is detailed and he places Duncan

within the general development of dance and relates her work to that of her contemporaries. Stewart and Armitage (1935 repub. 1970) widen the context of modern dance by discussing the connections between the American and German modern dance movements but Duncan's role in the development of modern dance is accorded far less significance than that proposed by Martin. However, Lilian Moore, in a history text devoted to dancers rather than dancing claims that Laban and Wigman both

worked out their individual dance systems based on Isadora's theory of the gravitational principle of attraction and repulsion, tension and relaxation.

Moore, L. (1938 repub. 1969 p.269)

Moore concludes her section on Duncan by stating "her emancipation of the dance marks an epoch in its history" (p.280).

Kirstein's historical writings³⁷ provide an interesting parallel to the works discussed so far since his interest is ballet and he admits to being "an enemy of the 'modern' or 'concert' dance" (Kirstein 1937 repub. 1967 p.90). In his early books Kirstein acknowledges Duncan's individual style and her efforts to reform dance but it is not until his later works that she is placed within a wider historical context and her influences on choreography, costume and music discussed.

Terry's biographical study of Duncan has already been mentioned and in his general historical texts³⁸ the crucial role of Duncan as an innovator is stressed. In a book on the development of theatrical dance in America, Palmer, W., (1945), perhaps surprisingly, devotes considerable space to Duncan and her theories, an emphasis to be expected and found in Armitage (1947) and Lloyd (1949) both of whom write at length on modern dance. Sorell is a dance historian able to encompass developments in both classical ballet and modern dance. In 1951 he edited a book containing essays by dance critics and dancers

in which many of the contributors, such as Doris Humphrey and Pauline Kroner, as well as Sorell himself, acknowledge the pioneering work of Duncan. Sorell's later historical texts (1966a, 1967, 1971, 1981) continue the charting of developments in dance, particularly in relation to the wider issue of the evolution of art, and again Duncan is accorded a significant role.

Of the specialised history texts Marks' (1957) account is of dance in American education while in Maynard's two publications (1959, 1965) the focus is on ballet and modern dance respectively. However, both authors acknowledge Duncan's influence in these fields though in terms of ideas rather than in extant dance forms. One of de Mille's later books takes a historical perspective within which Duncan is clearly identified as a great dance revolutionary.

Before Isadora, dancing was not considered important or dignified, except by people who practised it; after her, it came to be. This was her contribution.

de Mille (1963 p.135)

Rochlein (1964) continues the trend of identifying and describing the historical links within American "contemporary" dance, in which he includes "modern ballet", and notes its origins in the work of Duncan. Kraus (1969) and Brown and Sommer (1969) return to Marks' (1957) theme of education and, although they acknowledge that Duncan did not formulate any lasting dance "systems", they regard her influence on the subsequent development of dance in education in both the USA and Europe as significant.

McDonagh (1970) uses the term "historic" modern dance to describe the pre-1930s period in which modern dance first developed and in a later publication (1976) devises "extended choreographic families" to indicate the influences upon and relationships between various modern dancers. In these diagrams Duncan is included as an "independent", that is, as having no clear traceable links between her and succeeding

generations of modern dancers. A more recent general dance history text by Anderson (1974 p.89) summarises Duncan's work and associates it with "the greatest disjunction in the history of dance". Ellfeldt's (1976) historical overview of dance from the earliest times in terms of magic and art acknowledges Duncan as a pioneer as does Mazo (1977) in a book devoted to "the makers of modern dance in America".

Within the last few years American dance history texts of a more scholarly nature than hitherto have been published, for example, Ruyter (1979), Banes (1980) and Brown (1980). Typical of these is Kendall's (1979) book on two generations of American female dancers. She considers Duncan's work in detail and instead of the brief description typical of most dance histories gives an in-depth analytical study of Duncan's dance ideas and beliefs placed within the first quarter of the twentieth century.

British dance history texts with reference to Duncan

There are far fewer texts written by British dance historians than by their American counterparts but it is surprising that most of the former devote little space to Duncan since so much of her work was developed in Europe.

One of Beaumont's (1933) sparse references to Duncan concerns her influence on Fokine, which he considered "limited", and Haskell (1934) takes a similar line, making the point in later publications (1938a,b, 1947) that Duncan was hampered by lack of technique and an over-reliance on music. Perugini's (1935) text, which encompasses both dance and ballet, includes passing references to Duncan whom he characterises as an innovator whose work was quickly superseded. In a highly idiosyncratic book Heppenstall (1936) elects to discuss Duncan's work within a "sexual idiom" rather than in the usual "modern dance developments" or "influences on classical ballet" contexts.³⁹

In so doing he describes her dance as "part of her primarily sexual phantasy" (Heppenstall 1936 p.102) and regards her as the "female counterpart" of D.H. Lawrence. Leeper (1944) follows Beaumont and Haskell in focussing on the development of ballet and this results in only one reference to Duncan which, surprisingly, is on her reform of costume.

However, two other authors of the 1940s, Coton (1946) and Lynham (1947), devote considerable space to Duncan. This enables them to consider her work and its repercussions within the dance world in greater detail than most British writers although they each arrive at slightly different conclusions about Duncan. Coton, writing on the "new ballet", refers to the significance of Duncan's work to Fokine and considers that she was "partly the instigator" of both the American and German modern dance movements. He concludes:

she showed that theatrical dancing could be produced without reference to the training system of the established method of Ballet.

Coton (1946 p.77)

Lynham also refers to the Duncan-Fokine link but considers that

her dancing lacked ... a sound technical foundation which inevitably limited her range of expression.

Lynham (1947 p.167)

In Hall's two publications (1950, 1953) much of the standard material on Duncan is reiterated but some new points are made such as Duncan's influence on de Valois' choreography. In an historical account of the Ballet Rambert, Clarke (1962) outlines Duncan's influence on the very beginning of Rambert's career though, as Lawson (1964 repub. 1973) points out, Duncan's brother, Raymond, had a more lasting influence on both Rambert and Morris than did Duncan herself.

One of the most recent British publications with a historical orientation is that of Fonteyn (1980). Perhaps because it is compiled

by a dancer more space is devoted to Duncan, both in terms of discussion and visual material, than in many previous British texts. Fonteyn attempts to discuss, albeit briefly, Duncan's principles of dance, her sense of theatre, her influence on the development of dance, her ideas on education and her feminism.

Other dance history texts with reference to Duncan

Few of the dance histories published outside the USA and the UK are written in English or translated and important works are, therefore, generally unavailable.⁴⁰ The notable exception is Sachs' 'World History of the Dance' originally published in Germany in 1933 and four years later translated and published in the USA. To Koegler (1982 p.360) this is "still considered the standard work of its kind" but it includes just one short reference, albeit sympathetic, to Duncan.⁴¹

Other German dance history texts which refer to Duncan are those of Terpis (1946) and Koegler (1974). In his monograph Koegler argues that Duncan's influence on the subsequent development of German modern dance was negligible. Nevertheless, the Austrian modern dancer Gertrud Bodenwieser (n.d.), who was associated with the German modern dance movement, considers Duncan a seminal influence.

The secondary source dance literature constitutes a wealth of material of different standards and, consequently, is of varying relevance to the present study. The critical reviews of the reconstructed Duncan dances are of significance since they constitute a unique modern counterpart to the contemporary descriptions of Duncan's dances and her performances. The analytical texts are few in number but they offer valuable insights into specific aspects of Duncan's work. In contrast many of the dance history texts are problematic and difficult to use in other than a contextual manner. It is in this latter body of writing that many of the myths and

factual inaccuracies about Duncan abound.

1.3 Summary

It is evident that the written source materials pertinent to the study of Duncan constitute a highly disparate body of literature. The almost total absence of scholarly writings in the form of research theses, learned articles and monographs is not compensated for by the great volume of other literature although the latter does offer a rich and complex area upon which research may be based. The written source materials range from the crucial primary source writings of Duncan and her immediate contemporaries to secondary source material of the most derivative kind. The categorisation of this material is an attempt to give the literature a structured form and this also implies a hierarchy of importance in relation to the present study.

The written sources are used in Parts II, III and IV in three distinct ways. Firstly, they provide general background information about Duncan and her work. Secondly, the critical reviews and descriptions of Duncan's dances and performances have been used to construct two choreochronicles and to provide the grounds for the examination of her choreography. Thirdly, Duncan's own writings are used, alongside the evidence of her choreographic subject matter and treatment, as the basis for making statements about her dance ideas and values and her contribution to the development of Western theatre dance.

CHAPTER 1 NOTES

- 1 Identified throughout this text as Duncan 1927a.
- 2 Here and elsewhere the initials and date NYPL 1974 refer to the Dictionary Catalogue of the Dance Collection published by the New York Public Library in 1974. The initials and dates NYPL 1975 through to 1984 refer to the annual supplements to the Dictionary Catalogue known as Bibliographic Guides to Dance.
- 3 Geddes (1978 p.70) claims that the English version had to be expurgated but "not so the French".
- 4 Throughout this text references to and publications by Irma Duncan include her first name in order to distinguish her from Isadora Duncan whose surname only is given. Irma Duncan's joint publication with Macdougall is referred to as Duncan and Macdougall (1929).
- 5 Since Duncan did not keep to a strict chronological order in writing her autobiography it is not easy to substantiate or refute Seroff on this point. However, Duncan's Ch. 17, which describes her visit to Russia, recounts events that occurred after the setting up of her school, Ch. 18, and her meeting with Craig, Ch. 19.
- 6 Here and subsequently references to Craig are to Edward Gordon Craig the British theatre designer and father of Duncan's first child. References to publications by Craig are given as Craig, E.G., to distinguish them from the publication by his son Craig, E.A.
- 7 In the present study all Duncan's early Russian dates have been converted where necessary to the Gregorian calendar in the interests of maintaining a consistent chronology. In the few instances where it is not possible to determine whether a date has already been converted it is given in this text in its original form.
- 8 This manuscript was held by the Moscow school until at least 1928 and so, although similar in phrasing to the published text, was not used in the writing of the final draft.
- 9 'My Life' concludes with Duncan's departure to Moscow in 1921. Desti (1929), Duncan, Irma, (1966) and Schneider (1968) give details of Duncan manuscripts which relate to her time in Russia and were intended to form part of her second autobiography.
- 10 This slight difference of opinion may stem from an ambiguity in Duncan (1928) in which the article is reprinted. The date is given as 1902 or 1903 (p.63) but in the editor's notes (p.145) it is stated that Duncan first used the material in a Berlin lecture in 1903 and it was published later that year.
- 11 Possibly because this book also includes somewhat lengthy forewords by different authors it is erroneously referred to by some as a collection of memorial essays written about Duncan (for example, Magriel 1947) while others (for example, Maynard 1965) describe it as a posthumous publication consisting solely of Duncan's writings.
- 12 There is, nevertheless, at least one case in which the authenticity of a Duncan article is in doubt. Steegmuller (1974 p.135) considers that Duncan's 1906 article on Craig, although signed by her, is "obviously put together by Craig himself".

- 13 The gap of twenty-eight years between the last of the earlier and the first of the later biographies is significant. It reflects Duncan's life-long newsworthiness culminating in her bizarre death and then the revival of interest as her work and contribution to dance became appreciated.
- 14 Republished in 1968 to coincide with the release of the Karel Reisz film on Duncan.
- 15 Irma Duncan was one of Duncan's first pupils, six of whom were later termed the "Isadorables".
- 16 The father of Duncan's second child and the 'Lohengrin' of her autobiography.
- 17 The accounts of Duncan's Moscow period polarise into those stressing the hardships of the post-revolution decade (such as Desti 1929 and Duncan and Macdougall 1929) and those intent on supporting the prevailing political system (such as Schneider 1968). A more objective account of educational establishments in Russia at this time is given by Fitzpatrick (1970) where a less extreme picture emerges.
- 18 Written under the pseudonym Werner (1932).
- 19 For further accounts and reviews of the Duncan biographies see Palmer, W., (1945), Seroff (1971), Bailey (1972), King, B., (1975), McVay (1976) and Mazo (1977).
- 20 Steegmuller (1974) and Rood (1978) print slightly different versions from Craig, E.G., (1952) and from each other.
- 21 Fuller's career as a dancer paralleled that of Duncan in both time and genre. Her influence on Duncan is discussed in Ch. 4.
- 22 Of the various spellings in the literature this is the most common.
- 23 It is on the erroneous grounds that Fokine did not see Duncan dance until she first visited St. Petersburg in 1907 that Beaumont (1935) dismisses the possibility of a Duncan influence on Fokine.
- 24 Roslavleva (1975) refers to other Lunacharsky texts on Duncan.
- 25 A Russian emigré and formerly a dance critic in St. Petersburg.
- 26 For example, the 15th July 1908 issue of the Tatler carried three separate articles on Duncan.
- 27 Even so, Beaumont's (1928) review of Duncan's autobiography includes many positive statements about her work and artistry.
- 28 Rood notes that Craig used some sixty-six pseudonyms in his writings. His reasons for so doing were numerous but it enabled him to promote Duncan's work, criticise those who attempted to copy her and deplore the lack of acknowledgement of Duncan as the originator of a new dance form, with a degree of anonymity.
- 29 Roslavleva's text is in effect a "biography" of the Duncan school and its pupils. It is subsumed here under the secondary source Duncan biographies in order to avoid unnecessary sub-categorisation.
- 30 Romola Nijinsky (1933 p.82) states "it went so far, in their unshakeable opinion, that whenever they saw something bad, poor in execution or taste in dancing, whereas they had formerly dismissed it by saying 'C'est du Munich' they now said 'C'est du Duncan'". This version of Diaghilev's opinion is completely at odds with other accounts as well as Diaghilev's own statements (for example in Propert 1931).

- 31 In his Nijinsky biography, Buckle (1971 pp.109, 311, 362) claims that at one of these meetings Duncan suggested to Nijinsky that she should have a child by him. This apocryphal tale was also told in relation to Duncan and George Bernard Shaw (Dumesnil 1932) as well as other famous people of the time. It is surprising that an author of Buckle's standing should repeat such a statement without attempting substantiation.
- 32 Steegmuller's work is the only Duncan biography to receive near universal acclaim (see for example, Buckle 1975, Stokes, S., 1975, King, B., 1975 and Mazo 1977).
- 33 'Dances for Isadora; five evocations of Isadora Duncan', 1972
- 34 'Five Brahms Waltzes in the manner of Isadora Duncan', 1975-6.
- 35 'Isadora' assumed a particular importance because it took a year to choreograph and rehearse, has the first full length score to be commissioned by the Royal Ballet since 1958 and was premièred as part of the Royal Ballet's fiftieth anniversary season.
- 36 See, for example, Bland (1981a,b), Clarke (1981a,b), Crisp and MacMillan (1981), Croce (1982) Dougill (1981), Dromgoole (1981), Goodwin (1981), Jordan (1981), Percival (1981a,b), Shaw, C. (1981), Wardle (1981). For an account of the creation of MacMillan's 'Isadora', see Thorpe (1981). For MacMillan's response to his critics see MacMillan (1985).
- 37 For example 1937 repub. 1967, 1959 repub. 1967, 1971.
- 38 For example 1942, 1956 revised edition 1971.
- 39 This publication is not strictly a dance history text but Heppenstall's chapter on Duncan places her within an art perspective.
- 40 For example, according to Magriel (1936 repub. 1966) Sechan (1930) in his 'La danse grecque antique' devotes a chapter to Duncan.
- 41 Maracci (1966) claims that this one reference is significant since Sachs does not mention any other dancer. This is not so but Duncan is the only twentieth century dancer to be identified in the text.

CHAPTER 2**VISUAL AND AURAL SOURCES ON DUNCAN-
A CATEGORISATION, OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Categorisation, overview and discussion of visual and aural sources
- 2.3 Summary

2.1 Introduction

The visual and aural evidence of the construction of Duncan's dances and performances of them has been used in the present study to complement the written information. However, while the written material is considerable in quantity and is used extensively the visual and aural sources are more limited and used to a much lesser degree. The reasons for this restricted use of visual and aural sources stem largely from their relative inaccessibility and also from the problems involved in their interpretation and use. Visual materials, such as original drawings and photographs, are held mainly in private rather than public collections and even when available they are less amenable than the written word to various reproductive techniques such as photocopying. Other visual materials, such as the reconstructed Duncan dances, are usually performed as special events in the USA and rarely recorded in notation, on film or video-tape. They are, therefore, almost totally inaccessible to a researcher in the UK. The same holds true of modern choreographers' works inspired by Duncan in that their frequency of performance is subject to dance companies' repertoire policies. The various films which deal with aspects of Duncan's life and work and the recently notated scores of the reconstructed dances also give rise to certain problems, particularly in determining the usefulness of the former and the validity of the latter.

Even when visual material is accessible it presents difficulties

if it is to be fully exploited for dance research purposes. Special techniques are required, for example, in the dating of photographs and films while the interpretation of specific visual art works necessitates specialist knowledge not only of the particular medium of water-colour, paint or bronze but also of individual artists and their total art works. Such applied research has yet to be undertaken although its potential, particularly in the study of dance history, is clear.

In contrast to the visual materials, aural sources other than recordings of music, such as recorded interviews and reminiscences, are invariably held in public institutions or have to be generated by the researcher. However, collecting sound recordings for the purposes of dance history is in its infancy in the UK compared with the USA and for this reason relatively few aural sources have been used in the present work.

2.2 Categorisation, overview and discussion of visual and aural sources

The visual and aural materials discussed in this chapter differ in many respects from the written sources considered in Chapter 1. One obvious distinction is the non-verbal nature of visual sources such as dances, drawings, films and photographs. Another is that these artefacts, unlike written sources, were not necessarily intended to be used as description, record or evidence. Indeed, even the basic clear distinction between primary and secondary sources does not hold in relation to all visual and aural material since some items are primary, in the sense that they are contemporary, as well as secondary, in the sense that they are derived or are commentary upon and interpretation of events and situations.

Nevertheless, the division into primary and secondary source material is a useful device for the preliminary classification of the

visual and aural sources if, as in this case, primary sources are taken to be those which directly involved Duncan, such as "on the spot" sketches and recorded reminiscences, and secondary sources are those which did not involve her presence, such as the reconstructed Duncan dances and films about her.

A categorisation of visual and aural sources based on this slightly amended primary/secondary source distinction is set out in Table II. The categories reflect the order of importance of the respective material in the present study rather than a theoretical hierarchy of visual and aural sources as they might relate to the study of dance generally.

Table II Categorisation of visual and aural sources

<u>2.21</u> <u>PRIMARY</u>	
Visual sources	
2.211	Photographs of Duncan
2.212	Sketches, drawings, paintings, etc. of Duncan from life
2.213	Films of Duncan
Aural sources	
2.214	Lectures, music recordings
<u>2.22</u> <u>SECONDARY</u>	
2.221	Reconstructed Duncan dances
2.222	Notated scores of reconstructed Duncan dances and technique exercises
2.223	Films/videos on Duncan's work and about her life
2.224	Choreographers' works inspired by Duncan
2.225	Sketches, drawings, paintings, etc. inspired by Duncan

In the overview and discussion the intention is to characterise each category, to identify typical examples and to note any problems of interpretation. The manner in which each type of visual and aural source is used in the main part of the text is described and justified. Where appropriate, suggestions for further and more

detailed work are made.

2.21 PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS

2.211 Photographs of Duncan

Photographs of Duncan fall readily into two distinct categories, that is, photographs of her in dance contexts and in non-dance contexts.

The term "dance context" is apt since it would be inaccurate to refer to the dance photographs of Duncan as photographs of her dancing. These photographs range from the held static dance pose lit by the photographer to produce a studio portrait to the less controlled, more spontaneous "action" shot taken out of doors to avoid lighting problems. The photographers whose work provides typical examples of these are both American. Arnold Genthe (1869-1942) produced numerous studio portraits of Duncan in New York and Edward Steichen (1879-1973) took a series of Duncan action photographs in Greece.

Genthe's photographs of Duncan and her pupils were taken mainly during 1915-17 when she was in mid-career.¹ Most of these photographs show Duncan in attitudes and held positions although there is at least one outdoor Genthe photograph.² In his autobiography Genthe (1937 p.198) writes of "taking pictures while she [Duncan] was in motion" but Rather claims that

Genthe had trouble persuading her to assume dance poses for ... the still camera. She distrusted purely pictorial permanency.

Rather (1976 p.100)

Nevertheless, in a review of Genthe's 1921 publication Craig enthused about the photographs and thought them "remarkable" and "a tribute to her genius" (Craig 1929 reprinted in Rood 1978 p.243).

In contrast to the work of Genthe the Steichen photographs of Duncan and her pupils capture the dancers in apparent action.

Steichen's "famous series of photographs" when Duncan "danced before the Parthenon" in Greece all date from the same year, 1920 (Wilson 1978 pp.595, 597). Duncan and Macdougall (1929 p.355) regard them as "among the most lovely of the art works by which future generations will learn something of America's greatest dancer".

Most of the extant Duncan dance photographs are by Genthe and Steichen. These are the photographs which Macdougall (1946 p.81) considers "unsurpassed" and they provide the base-line for studying the work of other photographers of Duncan. The NYPL (1974, 1976-84) cites at least nine photographers and studios which produced Duncan material and this list is considerably expanded if photographers who worked with Duncan's pupils, rather than Duncan herself, are included. Nevertheless, many of the Duncan photographs are published without acknowledgement of the photographer as in Roslavleva (1975), a relatively small publication which, for its size, abounds in Duncan dance photographs.

The problems arising in the interpretation of the Duncan dance photographs stem from the stage of development of photography in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The inability to obtain fast exposure times meant that it was difficult to photograph a moving body³ and consequently most pictures were of held poses, although some appear to be more in the nature of a pause occurring within a dance performance. This then presents a difficulty since it is not always possible to determine whether a dance photograph shows a gesture "typical" of a dance but not necessarily occurring in that dance, or of a "key" position or held stance which is central to the dance or a pause in a dance which may not be of significance but which it is possible to photograph, and so on.

Even so, the value of the dance photographs of Duncan and of her pupils (a value which is increased by the paucity of film and notated

material available) is that they capture particular moments associated with Duncan's choreography. In addition, when used in conjunction with the written descriptions of Duncan's dances, they provide vital clues to the ideas and values implicit in her work.

Thus reference to early Duncan photographs by Schloss, who took a series of sepia photographs of her in New York in 1898 and 1899, show the dancer in balletic and Delsartean poses.⁴ This impression is heightened by Duncan's "costume" apparently made from her mother's lace curtains (NYPL 1975) and her wearing of ballet slippers (see, for example, Martin 1942). These photographs, however, were taken not in childhood but when Duncan was in her early twenties and had already embarked upon her professional career. Consequently they provide an interesting pointer to the development of her style of dance and costume when they are compared with the Steichen Parthenon series taken twenty years later. In these (see, for example, Bardsley 1977) the dance positions are free, open, the costume Greek-derived, the feet bare and above all there is a sense of "nature" and the "natural"⁵ with the wind billowing costumes and blowing through the dancer's hair in an obvious open-air context.

Selected dance photographs can also give an impression of Duncan's quality of dance movement. The dramatic gesture and stance from 'La Marseillaise', photographed by Genthe in 1916 and reproduced in much of the Duncan literature (see, for example, Magriel 1947), is described by Steegmuller (1974 p.348) as an "impassioned" pose "perhaps her best known portrait".

The value of photographs of Duncan in non-dance contexts may, at first sight, appear marginal to a study mainly concerned with her dance. Nevertheless, in the present instance the need to examine the development of Duncan's work throughout her career has necessitated the compilation of a Duncan chronology and the construction of two choreochronicles (Chapter 3 and Appendices A and B). In this respect

the Duncan "snapshots", assuming that for the most part they are neither faked nor inaccurate in regard to accompanying details,⁶ offer valuable corroborative evidence in establishing time and place in relation to people and events.

However, it must be emphasised that the use of such material has by no means been fully exploited in this text. To use photographic evidence to establish and verify a historical framework relevant to the study of Duncan would necessitate access to the original negatives and prints (and many of these are in private hands such as the Craig Archives or Author's Collection referred to in Craig, E.A., 1968 or are in the NYPL Dance Collection) as well as the facility of bringing such material together for side by side comparison and detailed analysis.

Finally it is of relevance to note that in the consideration of "snapshots" it is often only of incidental interest to know who took each photograph although in some instances it is as important as the subject of the snapshot. However, when photographs of Duncan in dance contexts are examined it is crucial to establish the identity of each photographer since the move is made from the amateur to the professional, from the "of the moment" to the deliberate, planned and expertly executed photograph. Thus the "style" of the photographer is an important element in the interpretation of such photographs.

The potential use of photographic visual materials in research on Duncan is largely untapped. In the present study they are used throughout the text to supplement the written sources where appropriate, but it is acknowledged that much further work is needed if the photographic visual material on Duncan is to be utilised as a fully-fledged research tool.⁷

2.212 Sketches, drawings, paintings, etc. of Duncan from life

The artefacts grouped together here probably form the largest category of visual source material on Duncan. The NYPL (1974, 1976-84) cites various originals and copies⁸ but few systematic listings of other public or private collections exist apart from the references to Craig's and Bourdelle's works in Fletcher and Rood (1967) and the Musée Bourdelle (1966) respectively. However, an article by Macdougall (1946) in which he discusses Duncan as influenced by and, in turn, inspiring different artists, is of value in this respect since it refers to and includes copies of a considerable amount of further visual source material. In all, twenty-one artists who produced work on Duncan are identified by Macdougall. His list, which is by no means exhaustive as reference to the main body of Duncan literature reveals, serves to show the eclectic nature of this visual material which includes many types of sketches such as pen and ink, crayon and gouache. Furthermore, the Macdougall references reflect the extensive tours undertaken by Duncan since they include work by American, French, German, Russian and Spanish artists.

While it is possible to cite Genthe and Steichen as typifying those who photographed Duncan, it is less profitable to attempt to identify artists in this manner since their work covers several different media and no one artist can be said to be representative.⁹ However, a brief consideration of some of the artists who were inspired by Duncan dancing is of value since it provides a context for the discussion of the ways in which their works have been used in the present study.

The earliest known drawings of Duncan date from 1898 and are by the American artist Aspell. These closely resemble the Schloss photographs of the same period in that Duncan is depicted wearing ballet slippers. It was not until Duncan performed in Paris in the early 1900s that her work began to attract the attention of many

artists and the numerous sketches which so typify her dance and her costume were produced.

Emile-Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929) first met Duncan in 1903 and later, in 1909, saw her dance at the Paris Gaieté Lyrique where he produced an "untold number of sketches of her in the darkness of the theatre" (Macdougall 1946 p.76).¹⁰ He continued to draw at many subsequent Duncan performances and his work appears in several publications including Divoire's (1919) book of poems dedicated to Duncan. Palmer, W., (1945 p.157) describes these illustrations as "excellent reproductions of superb pen and ink drawings". However, Bourdelle's most widely known works of Duncan are his marble bas reliefs for the Paris Théâtre des Champs Elysées which were "inspired by Isadora at her most Dionysian" (Buckle 1971 p.285) and completed in 1913. These bas reliefs (photographs of which are reproduced in Terry 1963 and Macdougall 1946) appear to have been a form which Bourdelle found appropriate for the Duncan images that he wished to portray. Certain of his drawings of Isadora Duncan have "a heaviness, a thickness suggesting sculpture" (Terry 1963 p.115). This point of view echoes that of Bourdelle himself who wrote in a letter that Duncan

animated an ineffable frieze wherein divine frescoes slowly become realities ... [and] it seemed to me in my mind, as I watched Madame Isadora Duncan sitting or reclining that with each of her pauses she was offering me an antique marble throbbing with eternity.

quoted by Terry (1963 pp.115-6).

A further extract from this letter, written in September 1912, recalls Duncan dancing in 1909

each leap, each attitude of the great artiste remains in lightning flashes in my memory

quoted by Macdougall (1946 p.76)

It is perhaps significant that a Bourdelle drawing was, according

to Stokes, S., (1928 repub. 1968 p.112) "one of Isadora's favourite pictures of herself" and more recently Siegel (1979 p.9) referring to Duncan as "monumental", gives Bourdelle as one of the "sculptors of heroic figures [who] captured her".

José Clara (1878-1959), a Catalan and contemporary of Bourdelle, also produced a series of sketches of Duncan which begin with her first public performance in Paris in 1902-3 and continue throughout her career to his sketch of her two days after her death. Clara's own publications (for example, 1928) and one to which he contributed (Duncan 1927b) consist mainly of gouaches and pen drawings which "reveal the variety of attitudes and expression of line and emotion of Isadora Duncan" (Beaumont 1966 p.96). Clara's line drawings of Duncan are typically of her dancing rather than in repose and his sketch of her scattering petals (in Clara 1928) captures an image which Ashton remembered and used in his 'Five Brahms waltzes' (see 2.224).

Jules Grandjouan first saw Duncan dance in Paris in 1909 and his pastels and gouaches of her were published a few years later. An exhibition of Grandjouan's Duncan drawings was held in California in 1956-7 (Rather 1976) and over three hundred of his Duncan sketches are in the NYPL Dance Collection.¹¹

Jean-Paul Lafitte also saw the 1909 Duncan performances in Paris and he published at least five sets of drawings of her during 1909 and 1910 (Beaumont 1968). The 1910 publication is particularly interesting since Lafitte divides his plates¹² into different types of Duncan dances, for example, 'Les Danses Religieuses'. 'Les Valses', 'Les Bacchantes', and 'Le Retour des Guerriers'. However, Macdougall (1946 p.70) states that Lafitte did not attempt a Duncan likeness but "sought to catch the swift movement of the limbs, the essential line of the gesture, the fall of the drapery about the body".

Another artist who belonged to the Paris group, Andre Dunoyer de Segonzac, was similarly inspired by Duncan performances in Paris and those between March and June in 1909 seem to have provided him with most of his material. Dunoyer de Segonzac's line drawings were published in albums in 1910 and 1913 (the latter including some of Duncan's pupils) and to Terry (1963 p.115) they constitute "vivid reports of a Dionysian creature racing across an ancient vase". Macdougall (1947 p.701) goes further adding to his comment on the "delicate yet precise line" of Dunoyer de Segonzac's work "to my mind Duncan in particular, done by any modern".

Abraham Walkowitz (1880-1965) was inspired by Duncan's 1909 performances in New York. His 1945 publication contains drawings of "the mature Isadora" (Rather 1976 p.55), probably a reference to his sixteen actions sketches of her in 1920, as well as those dating from the 1909 performances. An idiosyncratic feature of the Walkowitz drawings is that they bear captions, for example, "Isadora Duncan prone to upright" and to Terry these

superb action sketches ... made of Isadora Duncan constitute one of the most valuable records of the movement genius of that great woman.

Terry (1956 revised edition 1971 pp.245-6)

This view of Walkowitz's work is supported by Rather (1976 p.79) who notes "Isadora Duncan endorsed them as 'my biography in lines without words'" and the dance critic Van Vechten wrote to the artist

Dear Walkowitz: I have examined your book of drawings of Isadora with great excitement. Again and again I found myself involuntarily exclaiming with the very phrases I formerly applied to the great dancer herself! It seems to me that you have successfully devoted a life time in an attempt to present to posterity the essence of Isadora Duncan. You have actually recreated her movement much more truly than a moving picture camera would have done. You give the precise feeling of her rhythm, the precision and intensity of her line, her flowing grace, and the massive proportions which served her to design nobility. You see her outside clearly because you understand what is within and work from the

inside out. I think then that in this book of drawings of Isadora Duncan you have come as near as any artist could to completely analysing and describing and reviewing the work of another artist in another medium

in Walkowitz (1945 republished in Van
Vechten 1974 pp.28-9)

Individually, each artist is of interest in the particular medium in which he chose to depict Duncan. Examples of these are the early Kaulbach Munich drawings of 1902; the Carrière oil paintings; the sketches of Denis (whose mural at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées was, as with Bourdelle's bas reliefs, inspired by Duncan) and the Duncan programme designs by the American Van Deering Perrine used in New York and on Russian tours. The latter contrast totally in style with Cocteau's programme for the joint Cocteau-Duncan recital in 1926. However, at this juncture, it is considered unnecessary to pursue this particular line of discussion further since the description of the work of just some of the artists associated with Duncan is sufficient to indicate the nature of this category of visual sources.

All the comments quoted concerning the work of the few artists selected for discussion have been complimentary and this bias has been deliberately pursued in order to underline the value that many of the Duncan authors place upon such visual material. Nevertheless, much of this same work attracts adverse criticism, often in respect of some deemed deficiency, by the same group of authors. Such criticism can usefully lead into a discussion concerning the problems involved in using this particular kind of Duncan visual source material. Three examples suffice at this stage. After seeing the Walkowitz (1945) publication Macdougall commented

Walkowitz crowded together a vast collection of these sketches in an oversize pamphlet, which despite the laudable intentions of the artist, cannot be said to stand up alongside the European publications.

Whatever the merits of the drawings—and some of Walkowitz's first drawings were done with obvious fire and technical surety—the lack of typographical taste with which they are set forth in this pamphlet takes away much of their value.

Macdougall (1946 p.81)

In these extracts Macdougall seems to be basing his judgement on criteria of comparison with other artists and presentation. A second example can be taken from Kirstein (1946) who writes that

the line drawings of Dunoyer de Segonzac have more meaning for us than the archaistic decoration of Bourdelle,

Macdougall (1946 p.60)

a criticism apparently founded on the artist's choice of style. Thirdly, Macdougall, in commenting on Rodin's line drawings, speaks of the

rapid, calligraphic sketches, retouched with a thin, water colour wash. They are interesting ... but they lack the precision of the younger Bourdelle's innumerable sketches of the dancer, or even those done by a sculptor of lesser fame, José Clara.

Macdougall (1946 pp.66-7)

Again here Macdougall is making a judgement based on comparison between artists' work as well as requiring accuracy.

Thus the main problem which arises in the use of this particular type of visual source material is less to do with artistic merit (although this is not an entirely irrelevant concern) and is more to do with ways in which such work can be used to gain knowledge and understanding of Duncan's dance. Any interpretation of a Duncan sketch would have to take account of prevailing artistic conventions¹³ as well as the artist's own purposes and style. A life-size portrait of Duncan by Herbert Stowitts (a "painter dancer" according to Ruth St. Denis in Terry 1960 p.29) serves to illustrate the point concerning the purposes of each artist. The painting (reproduced in Terry 1960) is from a sketch of Duncan done in France in 1927 and is

in a stylised, flat form quite unlike other drawings of her made at this time. Duncan is shown as sylph-like, somewhat idealised and the portrait could not be regarded as an accurate record of Duncan at the age of about fifty if the many contemporary written accounts of her over-weight condition at this time are to be given credence. A similar point can be made in relation to style in the work of Eugène Carrière (1849-1906) who first met and painted Duncan in about 1900-1 when she was at the beginning of her career and he was already a well-established artist with a considerable reputation. According to Macdougall (1946 p.63) Carrière "painted her portrait in his monochromatic, vaporous style, a wholly different Isadora and completely divorced from the dancing figure portrayed so many times by other artists".

If apparent authenticity is taken to be a criterion then the work of artists who sketched and drew Duncan while she was actually dancing might be seen to have particular merit. In this category would be included the work of Craig, who produced numerous sketches of Duncan performing (some of these were subsequently used in wood-cut designs) and Grandjouan and Clara who, according to Beaumont (1966 p.150) "knew exactly what they had seen Isadora do and lost no time in recording it on paper". Irma Duncan, too, places particular value on the works of those artists who drew Duncan from life.

Grandjouan's sketches of Isadora were all made from life and give a true impression of her movements - which is not the case with those artists who depicted her from memory, in some cases even after her death.

Duncan, Irma (1966 p.122)

However, such a stance immediately devalues, for example, the "pen drawing from memory" of Duncan in New York c1916 by Robert Henri (reproduced in Macdougall 1946).

In addition, it could be argued that a consideration of Duncan visual material which consists of artists' works ought to include, at

least, reference to those artists who, although they had opportunity to sketch and draw Duncan, apparently did not do so. This point is made by Geddes.

Nearly every noted artist in France sketched, painted or sculptured Isadora. (An exception was Picasso. Strange that Isadora's Greek interpretations, her form and her dance, did not stir him in his Greek period. He was interested in the dance, but it was the ballet he sketched. He worked with Diaghilev.)

Geddes (1978 p.70)

Perhaps at first sight it does seem surprising that Picasso did not sketch Duncan but Geddes' reference to his work with Diaghilev can hardly explain why this was the case since Bakst and Dunoyer de Segonzac produced drawings of both Duncan and the Ballet Russe. Bakst was, of course, involved creatively in the Diaghilev productions, as was Picasso, and this may provide a clue to Picasso's preference for the Russian ballet since the artists whose work was inspired by Duncan did not (with the exception of Craig) have any creative part to play in her dance performances. Other artists who knew Duncan but did not produce directly related work were Duchamp, who met Duncan in America in 1917, and Tchetchew. The latter, according to Kirstein (1946 p.60), saw Duncan perform in Berlin "and his verbal description is one of the most vivid imaginable, but he made no drawings". In letters to his son, J.B. Yeats (the painter and father of W.B. Yeats) describes Duncan performances in New York in 1908 (Steegmuller 1974). He was enthusiastic about Duncan's dance as was Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, a popular English painter at the turn of the century, but neither artist sketched or painted Duncan.

The fact that artists as different as Alma-Tadema, Duchamp and Picasso did not draw Duncan provides some insight into the work of those who did, since it seems to be a matter of genre and individual style and whether or not this was in sympathy with Duncan's dance that

is the decisive factor. Indeed it is precisely on this latter point that McCausland bases her discussion of the empathy of artists to the "supreme self expression" of Duncan's dance.

An artist of the early twentieth century could paint or draw an equivalent of Isadora's personal and romantic movement, (when he could by no means easily capture a precise and reasoned form of motion) because he was, for all practical purposes, expressing an emotion about Isadora's emotion

McCausland (1937 p.93)

McCausland (1937 p.93) goes on to cite the "violent action" of the Bourdelle drawings and the "romantic aspects" of Walkowitz' work as evidence for this assertion.

Thus it could be proposed that the artistic style of Alma-Tadema was "too early" and those of Duchamp and Picasso "too late" in relation to Duncan's dance style for them to use her dance in their work, while the large number of artists who did respond in artistic terms to Duncan's dance did so because their style was congruent with hers.

In using artists' work in the study of dance it is essential that the characteristics of each artist's style are identified and taken in to consideration. In the present work the sketches, drawings and paintings of Duncan from life have been studied in detail and, when possible, compared.¹⁴ This material has then been used in two basic ways. Firstly, in order to gain an added visual dimension to the collected descriptions of Duncan dancing by corroborating her actual movements, body shapes, lines, curves as well as the details of her costume. Secondly, it provides a cross reference in the process of making statements about her dance and the values underlying it.

2.213 Films of Duncan

Whether any films were made of Duncan during her lifetime is a matter about which there is an ongoing debate and some conflicting

evidence. Certainly, Duncan's dislike of films is well documented. Irma Duncan recalls that Duncan saw her first "movie" in 1917 and when she was later offered a contract to appear in a dance film refused because of the "jumpy pictures" and stated "I would rather not be remembered by posterity like that" (Duncan, Irma 1966 p.160). Seroff (1971 p.46) describes Duncan's rejection of a film contract from Cecil B. de Mille and William Bradley, her literary agent, in which Duncan was invited to act and dance as well as "playing herself" in a film version of her memoirs.

However, although Duncan's attitude to films is clear the question of whether films of her exist is clouded by the fact that in much of the literature on Duncan little attempt is made to distinguish between films of Duncan in which she danced and those in which she did not.

Some of Duncan's contemporaries refer in their biographies to a film taken of her on a car journey en route from Paris to Nice in August 1927, the month before her death. Desti (1929) accompanied Duncan on this journey and her account of the filming is detailed and corroborated by Werner (1932), Duncan and Macdougall (1929) and Macdougall (1946). However, Desti implies that the film, taken by a Russian independent film producer, was unfinished but Irma Duncan (1966) refers to it being shown at the beginning of the Duncan memorial concert held in Moscow in 1928. Schneider (1968) also mentions this concert and the film but describes the latter as showing Duncan's body being taken from Nice to Paris a few days after her death in September 1927. There appears to be no supporting evidence for Schneider's description and no further references to either version being shown after the Moscow 1928 memorial concert.

Many of the later writers on Duncan (for example, O'Sheel in Macdougall 1946, Terry 1963, Martin 1966, Rather 1976, Croce 1978,

Siegel 1979) accept that no films of Duncan dancing exist and generally regret the fact maintaining that, however poor the quality of early twentieth century film, the existence of even minimal footage of Duncan performing would be invaluable. Nonetheless, the American dance film cataloguers persist in references to Duncan films. Amberg (1945 p.62) states "there exist films of Mary Wigman and Isadora Duncan of which no trace can be found" and Mueller (1974, 1979) and Parker and Siegel (1978) give details of a film which may include Duncan dancing. Despite his earlier statements to the contrary, Terry (1979) believes that this film, dated 1903 by Mueller, is of Duncan dancing.

In Europe another film of Duncan dancing is cited and was used as such in the 1980 Fonteyn BBC TV 'The Magic of Dance' series. This film is listed as Duncan dancing in a "wooded glade, surrounded by [a] small audience applauding her" (personal communication) and has a running time of just 21 seconds.¹⁵ By replaying the sequence on video tape it is possible to gain an impression of the dance but the distance of the camera from the dancer precludes any detailed study.

A further point of interest in relation to the authenticity of the two films which are claimed to be of Duncan dancing is that of date. The American holding is dated as 1903 and, according to Mueller (1974) the film was made from a paper print collection. However, the prints would have to be earlier than this since Duncan left America in 1899 and did not return until 1908. The British holding locates the film in France and give the date as the 24th September 1927, this being just ten days after Duncan's death.

Although of necessity only minimal use of film has been made in the present study the research potential of this area is apparent.

2.214 Lectures, music recordings

Reference is made in Chapter 1 to Craig's (1952) BBC Radio talk on Duncan which has been used in transcription. Other aural sources, such as Stokes, S., (1975) in a radio review of Steegmuller (1974) and Lytton (1978) in a lecture demonstration on Duncan's works, have been used in their original form. In addition, sound recordings of most of the music Duncan selected for her dances have been listened to for purposes of studying aspects such as tempo and dynamics and determining the approximate duration of particular dances.

2.22 SECONDARY SOURCE MATERIAL

2.221 Reconstructed Duncan dances

This category of visual source material encompasses those dances from the Duncan repertoire that are performed or are capable of being performed today. The term "reconstructed" is currently used in dance terminology to denote dances long out of repertoire which, in the absence of notated scores and original performers, are brought back to performance standard by various research techniques. The reconstructed Duncan dances are considered here as a visual source for Duncan's choreography and the performance of her dances. The written materials that such performances generate are discussed in Chapter 1.

It is entirely due to Duncan's six foremost pupils that some of Duncan's choreography exists in reconstructed forms although their access to the Duncan repertoire was limited. They knew the works she had choreographed especially for them to perform alone as well as the group dances that were part of the composite¹⁶ or longer works. However, they rarely danced Duncan's own solos¹⁷ and consequently the reconstructed dances constitute a minor proportion of Duncan's total choreographic output.

The only one of Duncan's six foremost pupils to be actively engaged in the recent reconstruction of Duncan's dances is Maria-

Theresa. Merry (1979 p.106) reviews the November 1978 New York performance of The Isadora Duncan/Maria-Theresa Heritage Group and its presentation of "three full-length Duncan works which have not been staged for more than twenty-five years". Apparently the "company considers itself closer to the source than any other Duncan revival group" (Merry 1966 p.106) and, therefore, claims that its performances have a particular authenticity. An interesting feature of this production was that a male dancer, Clive Thompson, took Duncan's solo part in the reconstruction of 'Marche Slave'.

Nadia Chilkovsky-Nahumck, a second generation American Duncan dancer, has employed various techniques to reconstruct Duncan dances. As well as the more obvious scrutiny of the Duncan literature she has used photographs and artists sketches and amplified her results by "grapho-analysis" (i.e. a study of Duncan's handwriting). The resulting six Duncan dances were further analysed by means of notation and critically examined by Anna Duncan¹⁸ (Chilkovsky-Nahumck 1975).

Four other second generation American Duncan dancers who were originally taught by Irma and/or Anna Duncan and later performed with them have subsequently been active in reconstructing Duncan's choreography for performance purposes. Mignon Garland's 'San Francisco Duncan Dancers' presented fifteen dances in a concert to mark Duncan's centenary on 27th May 1977 (Draegin 1977). Hortense Kooluris is termed by Chilkovsky-Nahumck (1975 p.6) "America's most active performer in the Duncan style" and Draegin (1977) includes a photograph of Kooluris dancing Duncan's famous Blue Danube waltz. Both Gemze de Lappe and Julia Levien performed in Irma Duncan's company in the early 1930s and, according to Draegin (1977), resumed their teaching of Duncan classes in the mid 1960s.

Kooluris, de Lappe and Levien were key members of the Committee for the Isadora Duncan Centenary Dance Company. The company's programme consisted of demonstrations of classroom technique and a

selection of Duncan's dances using music by Chopin, Gluck, Schubert, Scriabin and Strauss. In these Kooluris, de Lappe and Levien took the solo parts supported by third generation Duncan dancers. In his review of the company's January 1978 performances Vaughan (1978) found Duncan's choreography monotonous but singled out Levien and de Lappe as the only dancers able to catch the essence of a Duncan performance.

A British second generation Duncan dancer of particular relevance to the present study is Madeleine Lytton who studied with Lisa Duncan¹⁹ and has been responsible for presenting reconstructed Duncan dances in England. On the 24th November 1977 the London Contemporary Dance Theatre performed three Duncan dances using music by Gluck and Schubert which were specially staged by Lytton. Later, on the 31st May 1978, Lytton gave a lecture demonstration to celebrate the Duncan centenary²⁰ at The Place, London, in which she reconstructed six Duncan dances using music by Beethoven, Chopin and Gluck.

The third generation of American Duncan dancers has recently come into prominence. Lori Belilove, a pupil of Hortense Kooluris and a member of the Isadora Duncan Centenary Dance Company, is an active teacher of Duncan technique and repertoire and, according to Draegin (1977 p.70), "is one who has extended the boundaries of the Duncan idiom" in that she has choreographed in the Duncan style for performance by male dancers.

The most prolific of the third generation American Duncan dancers is undoubtedly Annabelle Gamson, a pupil of Julia Levien. Prolific is an apt term because Gamson has not only performed Duncan dances regularly since April 1974 but she also has a wider range of reconstructed Duncan dances in her repertoire than her contemporaries. Gamson's frequent performances have generated much written material (for example, Anderson 1979, Dorris 1978, Draegin 1977, Dunning 1977, Tobias 1976) and her collaborative research with Levien in order to

reconstruct Duncan dances has earned her the title "choreographic archeologist" from Anderson (1977 p.203).²¹

While it is evident that most of the work in reconstructing Duncan dances is carried out in the USA there is an indication of a renewed interest in Duncan's choreography in Europe. Levien²² and Lytton have recently performed and/or lectured on Duncan's work in Austria, England and France.²³ In addition regular classes in Duncan technique and choreography have been held in London and Manchester.²⁴

Thus the reconstructed Duncan dances in their actual performance and in the subsequent discussion and debate that they promote, provide a unique and particular type of visual source material. This has been used in the present study to further the description and examination of Duncan's choreography and its underlying structures.²⁵

2.222 Notated scores of reconstructed Duncan dances and technique exercises

Since there is no evidence to show that any of Duncan's dances were notated during her lifetime the value of notated scores based on the reconstructed Duncan dances is greater for current study purposes than would otherwise be the case. Nonetheless, although there is some indication that such work is developing in the USA, as yet only a few notated scores of Duncan's choreography are published (Dance Notation Bureau 1985). The Chilkovsky-Nahumck (1975) notation of Duncan phrases (reviewed by Cook 1976) has been used in the present study to a limited degree as corroboration. This category of visual source material is, therefore, merely identified here and its potential for future study noted.

2.223 Films/videos on Duncan's work and about her life

The films of Isadora Duncan constitute primary visual source material but the films and videos which focus on her dances and technique or are biographical are secondary source material (in the

sense used in this chapter) since none of these feature Duncan herself. The items in this category can be divided into material on Duncan and her work²⁶ and films about Duncan's life.

The earliest film in the first sub-category is of Anna Duncan performing some Duncan dances in a five minute sequence filmed in a dance studio in th 1920s (NYPL 1974). A similar short film of Maria-Theresa was made in 1924 (NYPL 1978).²⁷ An even shorter film clip is from a 1932 Fox Movietone News sequence which shows Irma Duncan and her American group of Isadora Duncan Dancers dancing "at an outdoor fete for the benefit of unemployed architects and draftsmen" (NYPL 1976 Vol. 1, p.314). Amberg (1945) lists an undated 26 minute film of a Sima Borisanova, a dancer trained at Duncan's Moscow school. The title of the film suggests that Duncan dances and technique are both included and from other sources it is possible to date the film in the early 1930s. According to Parker and Siegel (1978) Borisanova also featured in a 1959 film in which she demonstrated Duncan technique.

Hortense Kooluris was filmed in 1961 dancing some of Duncan's shorter pieces and later, c1966, she collaborated with Chilkovsky-Nahumck in a film project planned as part of "a comprehensive curriculum in dance for secondary schools" (NYPL 1974 p.2015). A 1976 video of eleven reconstructed Duncan dances performed by Maria-Theresa and Kooluris has a running time of fifty minutes (NYPL 1977). Stern (1979) refers to a film on Duncan dances and technique shown in 1979 and the Dance Notation Bureau's 1985 catalogue lists an eight minute film/video of Annabelle Gamson performing reconstructed Duncan dances from which notated scores have been derived.

Two full length commercial films have been made about Isadora Duncan and both, interestingly, are British. The value of such narrative to research is problematic since fact and fiction are often intermingled in the making of feature films. However, each of these

films was based on extensive research into some aspects of Duncan's life (Bellairs 1979, personal communication and Pisk 1979, 1980, personal communication) and reference to them is justified on the grounds of achieving a comprehensive overview of the Duncan visual sources as well as for the insights into Duncan's work that such films can engender.

In 1966 the BBC produced a television film entitled 'Isadora Duncan' which starred Vivian Pickles and was directed by Ken Russell.²⁸ Although some minor inaccuracies were identified (for example, by McVay 1976) the film was well received by critics in the UK and Europe (for example, Koegler 1977) but in the USA it met with adverse comment (for example, Seroff 1971, Rather 1976). A note of authenticity was achieved by Russell in his use of children with experience of Revived Greek Dance, a dance form that was developed by Ruby Ginner, an English dancer and a contemporary of Duncan.

In the late 1960s Universal International released its film 'Isadora' with Vanessa Redgrave in the title role under the direction of Karel Reisz. The film was, according to Joel (1961 p.52), "closely but erratically" based on Macdougall's (1960) biography of Duncan and the American title 'The loves of Isadora' unwittingly echoed an earlier article on Duncan by Gold (1929).

'Isadora', which is described and reviewed at length by Hering (1969), was both acclaimed and adversely criticised on various grounds (see Rather 1976, Draegin 1977) but for the purposes of the present study it is the choreography by Litz Pisk²⁹ and the dancing of Vanessa Redgrave that is of some interest. Pisk (1979, personal communication) did not attempt to reconstruct any of Duncan's dances but sought "to remain faithful to the spirit of Isadora's great works" (Draegin 1977 p.69). Redgrave's performance, however, was castigated for "lacking intensity while dancing" (Draegin 1977 p.69) and Sir Frederick Ashton's highly critical comments on Redgrave are quoted by

Joel (1969). Nevertheless, it is of significance to note that this film immediately preceded the current period in which performances of reconstructed Duncan dances are given regularly. In this respect the claim made by many writers (for example Draegin 1977) that it was responsible for the revival of interest in Duncan in the late 1960s is probably justified.

Schneider (1968) briefly mentions another film entitled 'Isadora Duncan' which was produced in Italy in 1958 with a scenario based on Desti (1929). This appears to be the only reference to such a film in the literature on Duncan and to date it has not been traced.

The two Duncan feature films do not in themselves constitute a viable visual source for the purposes of the present study but they provide further background material to Duncan's life and work and have been utilised as such. Collectively the films and videos offer potential for further research on Duncan's work.

2.224 Choreographers' works inspired by Duncan

The dances in this category are those in which the choreographer has been inspired or influenced by Duncan. These dances are obviously of a different order from Duncan's own dances and reconstructions of them and their value to the present study is in the indications they give of the essence of Duncan's style and quality as perceived by each individual choreographer. In one respect these dances are close in kind to the work of the artists discussed in category 2.212 for they are also works of art in their own right and have Duncan as a common point of origin.

It is, of course, difficult to identify direct inspiration in works of art with any degree of certainty. Thus although Siegel regards McBride's solo in Balanchine's 'Pavane pour une Enfante Defunte' as "Duncan-esque" (Siegel 1977 p.79) finds that two of James

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Waring's dances suggest and evoke Duncan; and Hawkins' 'Greek dreams with flute' has an "Isadora Duncan style" (Siegel 1977 p.228), this is not to make any statement of fact. Similarly, the Trockadero Gloxinia Ballet's satirical performances in 1977 of Duncan's revolutionary dances 'La Marseillaise' and 'L'Internationale' cannot stand as a subject of study in this respect.³⁰

The five choreographers who have stated that their work is Duncan inspired are Ashton, Béjart, Limon, MacMillan and Moore. Sir Frederick Ashton (in Draegin 1977) claims that his choreography generally bears the influence of Duncan, a point substantiated by Vaughan (1977). This is in itself interesting since Ashton first saw Duncan dance in London in 1921 when she was forty-four and probably past her peak. However, Ashton's specific Duncan inspired work is that resulting from his memory of Duncan dancing a Brahms waltz and scattering rose petals. Ashton's dance, originally choreographed for the Hamburg Ballet Festival in 1975 and performed by Lynn Seymour, was variously called 'Brahms waltzes' and 'Homage to Isadora' and in 1976 was augmented to include more waltzes and retitled 'Five Brahms waltzes in the manner of Isadora Duncan'³¹ (Brinson and Crisp 1980). This work, which has been performed on several occasions by Seymour, has had extensive television coverage both in the UK and the USA and has received much critical acclaim. Most of the critics, (for example, Draegin 1977, Percival 1975), praise not only the way in which Ashton's choreography, though balletic in style, seems to capture the Duncan style but also the manner in which Seymour evokes Duncan as a performer. Reference is made in Chapter 1 to Croce's (1977) comparison of Seymour dancing Ashton's choreography with Gamson dancing Duncan's choreography and the analogy is furthered by Ashton's choice of the same music as that used by Duncan. Some critics regard Seymour's performances of the Ashton waltzes as giving greater insight into Duncan and her work than in the reconstructed dances though

Mueller (1981) suspects that this is a performance variable. This debate is likely to continue with renewed vigour since Lucy Burge of Ballet Rambert took Ashton's 'Five Brahms waltzes in the manner of Isadora Duncan' into her repertoire in 1983.

Maurice Béjart's 'Isadora', choreographed in 1976, was also created for a particular dancer, in this case Maya Plisetskaya, a Bolshoi prima ballerina. However, unlike Ashton, Béjart is concerned not so much to evoke Duncan but rather to comment upon her dance within the context of her life. Instead of using what have become accepted as the typical Duncan movements of stepping, running and skipping he inserts "pop culture trademarks commonly associated with Isadora" (Draegin 1977 p.70) so that there is reference to her death and her children as well as to some of her best known dances such as 'La Marseillaise' and the 'Maidens of Chalcis' from Gluck's 'Iphigenia'.

José Limon's 'Dances for Isadora: Five evocations of Isadora Duncan' was first performed on 16th December 1971, and is one of his later works. Whereas Béjart selects six of the composers Duncan used Limon, like Ashton, uses one, Chopin. In Jowitt's view (1977 p.93) "the solos ... beautifully evoke the art of Isadora Duncan" and reflect the different moods of the Duncan dances with titles such as 'Primavera' and 'La Patrie'.

The Béjart work does not appear to have been recorded but a performance of Limon's 'Dances for Isadora' was filmed in 1972 and is held in the NYPL Dance Collection (1975). However, it is Ashton's choreography recorded on video that is the more accessible for study purposes in the UK.

Sir Kenneth MacMillan's 'Isadora', a full length three act ballet premiered in 1981, is noted in Chapter 1 for the considerable amount of written material it has generated. Several casts have performed

the work both in London and New York but the consensus of opinion among the critics is that the work is flawed (for example, Anderson 1981).

Geoff Moore, the British choreographer, based 'The influences of moons and tides' on the Duncan-Craig love letters (Steegmuller 1974) and the Craig, E.G., 1911 and 1957 publications. This work was toured extensively in the UK during 1978 but is no longer in the repertoire and only written records of it remain.

The dances of the choreographers inspired by Duncan would not by themselves constitute an authentic visual source but, when studied in relation to the reconstructed Duncan dances and the other visual material, together with the written material that they generate, can facilitate an understanding of her work.

2.225 Sketches, drawings, paintings, etc. inspired by Duncan

Works in this category have been found to be of minimal use in the present study. Their links with Duncan appear tenuous and this confirms their status as low level secondary sources. It is sufficient therefore to cite just two examples, that is, the Benson sculptured study for a bronze figure of Duncan in 'La Marseillaise' for which Irma Duncan posed in 1940 (NYPL 1974) and the Merrifield 1970 'Isadora' sketches, which resemble Haufstaengle's 1903 paintings of Duncan.

2.3 Summary

The Duncan primary and secondary visual and aural source materials provide a valuable and unique basis for the study of Duncan both in themselves and, more particularly, when used in conjunction with the written source materials. The identification, categorisation and brief description of such material is a necessary prerequisite to its use for research purposes. In addition it is also imperative to

acknowledge and discuss the problems of interpretation that arise. In the present study reference to the visual and aural source materials is made throughout the text although this procedure has been adopted in the knowledge that further and more detailed research on the type and use of visual and aural materials in the study of dance generally needs to be undertaken.

CHAPTER 2 NOTES

- 1 Genthe includes ten photographs of 'The Duncan School', two of Duncan and eight of her pupils, as well as plates of other contemporary dancers (1916 repub. 1920). His later publication is entirely devoted to Duncan (Genthe 1921 repub. 1929).
- 2 This is of three Duncan pupils dancing by the sea at Long Beach New York c1915 (in Terry 1960).
- 3 Irma Duncan (1958b p.54) includes a non-credited photograph of Duncan in Munich in 1903 which she captions "A rare action photograph".
- 4 The possible influence of the Delsarte system of expression on Duncan is considered in Ch. 4.
- 5 These crucial concepts in Duncan's work are discussed in Ch.6.
- 6 Although there appears to be no evidence which indicates that any photographs of Duncan have been deliberately faked there is at least one instance in which a photograph on a programme cover for a Duncan recital in Odessa on 2nd February 1913 is captioned 'Isadora Duncan' but is "obviously of someone else" (Anon. 1957 p.7).
- 7 This is also the case with other dancers whose work was too early to be recorded adequately on film but of whom extensive collections of photographs exist. An example of a preliminary study of a dancer by reference to photographs is that of Moore, M., whose 'Notes on Pavlova photographs' (1947 reprinted in Magriel 1977) attempt to gain insights into aspects of Pavlova's work through a study of extant photographs.
- 8 In the present work originals have been studied whenever possible.
- 9 It is of interest to note that whereas most of Duncan's photographers are American the majority of her artists are European, mainly French.
- 10 Macdougall erroneously refers to these performances as taking place at the Théâtre du Châtelet.
- 11 Examples of these can be seen in most of the American texts, such as Terry (1960), although Brandenburg (1931) includes two of Grandjouan's less well known drawings of pupils of the Elizabeth Duncan school.
- 12 The number of plates given by various authors differs, i.e.36, according to Magriel (1947), 37, Palmer, W., (1945), 38, Macdougall (1946). Reference to an original copy shows the correct number to be 38 although the last two plates are both numbered 37.
- 13 This point is well made by Lawler (1964) in her discussion of the use of visual source material as an aid to reconstructing ancient Greek dance, a period remote from Duncan's time but one which had profound influence upon her (see Ch. 4).
- 14 This preliminary study has revealed a vast potential for further research. In particular the large number of Duncan sketches by Clara and Walkowitz would enable the reconstruction of some of her dance phrases by using computer graphics techniques.
- 15 Held by Visnews Film Library, London.
- 16 These consisted of several thematically related but independent dances and are discussed in Ch. 5.

- 17 Duncan was loath to hand on her own dances to her senior pupils. She taught Irma Duncan some of the Chopin waltzes and mazurkas and the Schubert waltzes and ecossaises, which she described as the "dances of my youth", only when she felt unable to perform them herself (Schneider 1968 p.159).
- 18 One of the 'Isadorables'
- 19 Another of the 'Isadorables'.
- 20 The discrepancies in the dates on which the various Duncan centenary tributes took place reflect the confusion, only recently dispelled, concerning Duncan's year of birth.
- 21 Gamson also includes some Wigman dances in her repertoire which she has studied by means of film and notated scores.
- 22 Levien's reconstructed Duncan dances were presented in London in 1969 and were enthusiastically received (see Buckle 1969 and Percival 1969).
- 23 The University of Paris, Sorbonne, held an eleven-day dance colloquium in May 1983. One day was devoted to Duncan's work and included performances of the reconstructed dances.
- 24 See advertisements in the national dance journals, such as in *Dance and Dancers* June 1979 p.11.
- 25 This is not to ignore the criticism that the reconstructions of Duncan's dances generally do her a disservice (for example Banes 1978).
- 26 Although only a few of these films and videos have been available for use in the present study, brief references to the individual items are made at this juncture in order to represent a complete overview of visual sources and also because the material has generated some written comment which is referred to in this text.
- 27 Genthe (1937 p.177) recalls taking "motion pictures" of Duncan's older pupils. It remains to be established whether these are they.
- 28 Both artists received awards for this film.
- 29 A pupil of Duncan's sister Elizabeth.
- 30 In addition there are at least three plays which have been based on Duncan. One by Wanshel includes some incidental dances (Philp 1977) the others by Mersky and Sherman do not (Swisher 1974 and personal experience). None have been studied for the purposes of the present work.
- 31 Macdonald (1983) refers to a short work by Fokine, performed on the 26 Jan 1908 in St Petersburg, entitled "Dances in the manner of Isadora Duncan". It has not been established whether Ashton was aware of Fokine's title when selecting his own.

SUMMARY OF PART I

Although the documentation of Duncan sources in Part 1 is incomplete, in that some obscure American texts have been identified but not retrieved and many Russian sources remain untranslated, it is, nevertheless, the most comprehensive of its kind to date.

The categorisation of the written, visual and aural source materials on Duncan provides an essential base-line for the study of her life, work and contribution to modern dance. While such categories are not necessarily definitive they enable similar materials to be grouped together and their salient features to be described. The overview of items is similarly of value since it allows reference to sources to be made in the subsequent parts of the text without the need to interpolate further description.

The discussion of the written, visual and aural Duncan materials raises questions to do with their status, authenticity and value. Many problems remain in the use of some Duncan materials and it is, therefore, important that such difficulties should be acknowledged. This is not only to guard against the unqualified use of disparate sources but also to point to those areas which require further and more specialised research.

Collectively, the source materials on Duncan are vital since it is only through careful and discriminating use that the lack of extant Duncan dances can, to a limited degree, be compensated for. In fact the importance of these sources can hardly be over-estimated. They provide crucial evidence of the construction and the detail of Duncan's dances and how these were interpreted and understood both in her own time and subsequently. From the source materials it is possible to gauge the importance of Duncan's choreography and performances in the artistic context of the first quarter of the twentieth century. Furthermore, such resource materials provide clues

to the ways in which as a women, a choreographer and dancer she came to influence the development of Western theatre dance in so significant a manner.

PART 11

ISADORA DUNCAN: HER LIFE

Introduction to Part 11

Chapter 3 Outline chronology of Duncan's life and
career as a choreographer and dancer

Chapter 4 The cultural contexts of Duncan's life and
work and the people who influenced her

Chapter 5 Duncan's dances and performances

Summary of Part 11

INTRODUCTION TO PART 11

It is perhaps inevitable that in the performing arts the life and the work of an artist are often compounded. This is particularly the case with Isadora Duncan since she was both the creator and the main performer of her dances. Many of the contemporary accounts of her performances and the events in her life move easily between the theatre and her day-to-day living. This reflects the fact that wherever she went she was the object of intense interest. From quite early on in her career the public affront she caused, the scandal she engendered and the notoreity she gained were seen to embrace both her work and her life. This was reinforced by the mistaken view, prevalent in Duncan's time and subsequently, that her choreographic subject matter was closely derived from her own life. In turn the artistic statements in Duncan's work came to be accepted as powerful personal statements based on her life experiences and mirroring her life-values.

For most artists the passage of time allows their work to be reassessed and disentangled from the life that was led. In Duncan's case, however, the absence of extant dances and notated scores precludes the immediate reassessment of her choreography. Similarly, without film and video-recording of her performance it is impossible to judge her worth as an interpreter of her own dances retrospectively except through critical literature.

Devoid of the benefit of such hindsight and the re-evaluation it allows, many sweeping generalisations are made about Duncan. The numerous half-truths and myths that have resulted cloud the study of her life and work. Without exception these myths centre upon her so-called "sensational" life and her work which was deemed "outrageous".

In Chapter 1 the authors of the secondary written sources are identified as the main creators and the reiterators of many of the

Duncan myths. In this respect the short essay on Duncan by Dos Passos (1946) provides a typical myth-promoting view of her. In a laconic style he encapsulates her life as a series of episodes of crisis and triumph quickly overturned by tragedy. Duncan's notion of "Art" (he uses the device of the initial capital letter to emphasise a word, as did Duncan) he equates with her life style. Dos Passos (1946 p.180) observes "Art was whatever Isadora did". His account is racy, arresting and amusing in pointing to perceived paradoxes but it is also inaccurate. In addition the view of Duncan's life and work proffered ignores her pioneering contribution to a new dance genre and it minimises her choreographic and performing abilities. As a result Dos Passos is able to make literary capital out of what Duncan was and did at the expense of conflating her life and work and perpetuating myths.

In Part 11 the study focusses on Duncan's public and, to a lesser degree, private life and an account of her life and career as a dancer and choreographer is given. This account is as accurate as the limitations of the present research allow but even so it is the most reliable of its kind to date. The specific intention is to set the record straight, to refute those myths which can be shown to have no basis and to identify the origins of others. Above all is the need to establish the facts of Duncan's life and career so that the study of her work can be carried out free from the distorting legends and mythology that authors such as Dos Passos promote.

In Chapter 3 an outline chronology of Duncan's life is presented in which the emphasis is on her public rather than her private life except where the latter influences the former. In Chapter 4 the cultural contexts in which Duncan lived and the individuals who influenced her are considered as prerequisites for an assessment of her values in life and her ideas about dance. In Chapter 5 factual information about Duncan's dances and performances is overviewed on

the basis of two choreo-chronicles compiled for the present study. Here, too, this consideration constitutes a preliminary stage in the examination of Duncan's work since it allows the overall characteristics of her choreographic output, accompaniment, repertoire and programmes to be delineated. These crucial aspects of her work have not hitherto been the subject of any systematic study.

CHAPTER 3

**OUTLINE CHRONOLOGY OF DUNCAN'S LIFE AND
CAREER AS A CHOREOGRAPHER AND DANCER**

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|--|
| 3.1 | Introduction | |
| 3.2 | May 1877 - mid 1897 | Childhood and early career. |
| 3.3 | Mid 1897 - July 1900 | First and second visits to London. |
| 3.4 | July 1900 - December 1904 | Career launched. First school opened.
Visit to St. Petersburg |
| 3.5 | January 1905 - March 1913 | Career established and consolidated.
Return to USA. Birth of children. |
| 3.6 | April 1913 - July 1921 | Death of children. 1914-18 war.
Return to California. South American
tour. London season. Invitation
from Russian Government. |
| 3.7 | July 1921 - September 1927 | Moscow school established. Final USA
tour. Extensive tours of Russia.
Career decline. Death. |
| 3.8 | Summary | |

3.1 Introduction

Duncan has variously been described as "a woman of genius" (Divoire 1924 p.13) and, in her seeking of sensationalism, "a kinswoman of the late T.P. Barnum" (Grein 1921 p.552). Her career has been seen as a "conscious revolt against empty prettiness" (Selden 1935 p.112) and her "example seemed to institute universal suffrage through dance" (Levinson 1929 p.148). Many writers regard her life and career as inextricably linked, as cross-influencing or mirroring each other although a few contrast her worldly way of life with the apparently simple, neo-classical style of her dance.

In the absence of a definitive Duncan biography such characterisations are suspect. They feed upon the well-known, newsworthy events and focus only on the climaxes and the calamities of Duncan's life while the mass of details, the full life lived, the totality of the works choreographed and the performances given, are ignored.

For the purposes of the present study the facts about Duncan's life and career were established and a detailed chronology was compiled from primary sources, with occasional additions from reliable

secondary sources.¹ The resulting chronology, which for some periods of Duncan's career includes day by day events and for others is less detailed, was then summarised. In the outline presented here many of the particulars of Duncan's personal life have been omitted except when these have bearing upon her professional life. There are several readily identifiable periods in Duncan's life and these provide the framework for the outline chronology.

3.2 May 1877 - mid 1897: Childhood and early career

Isadora Duncan was born on the 26th May 1877 in San Francisco and christened Dora Angela. She was the youngest of four children, her brothers Augustin and Raymond and her sister Elizabeth all played important parts in the subsequent development of her career. Three biographical accounts of Duncan's birth and early childhood, Macdougall (1960), Rather (1976) and Hertelendy (1977), are based on primary source material and corroborate to a considerable degree Duncan's own autobiographical account of her early years. Duncan claimed that at the age of six she was teaching dance with her sister and Rather (1976) produces local evidence to show that in 1884 this was so. Hertelendy (1977 p.49) also refers to Duncan teaching social dance in the form of schottisches and waltzes in 1888 together with "her own inventions". In 1889 the whole Duncan family toured as a theatrical unit visiting various Californian towns and both Rather (1976) and Hertelendy (1977) note that in the 1892-3 Oakland City directory Duncan was listed as 'A. Dora Duncan, dancing teacher'. However, by 1894 she was listed in the San Francisco directory as 'Isadora Duncan' and some time during this year failed to impress a touring manager in a solo audition in which she danced to one of Mendelssohn's 'Songs Without Words' (Hertelendy 1977).²

In June 1895 Duncan and her mother journeyed east and Duncan had a three-week engagement at the Masonic Roof Garden in Chicago billed

as 'The Californian Fawn'. She was then offered a contract by Augustin Daly, the theatre company manager, to appear in a minor role in his production of 'Miss Pygmalion' which opened in New York in November of that year (Macdougall 1960). Early in 1896 Duncan joined Daly's Shakespeare repertory company and was successively cast as one of the fairies in 'Midsummer Night's Dream', a tea-house attendant in Daly's production of 'The Geisha', had a small part in 'Much Ado About Nothing' and by March 1897 was one of three gypsies in Daly's version of Scott's 'Guy Mannering' entitled 'Meg Merrilees'. The dates given for these few years of Duncan's life vary not only between her biographers but also in comparison with contemporary accounts such as Daly (1917).

3.3 Mid 1897 - July 1900: First and second visits to London

In the summer of 1897 Duncan went to London, an event "never fully documented" (Terry 1963 p.21), and one which Duncan herself does not mention in her autobiography.

References to Duncan's first visit to London are few, probably reflecting both the brevity of her stay and the fact that she did not receive public acclaim. Although most biographers debate the purpose of Duncan's visit, Macdonald (1977a) shows that Duncan was still a Daly company member at this time and danced in a masque as part of 'As You Like It' given at Stratford-upon-Avon on the 26th August. The company subsequently toured the provinces and performed in London but although Duncan's name appears on the cast list it is not yet established whether she remained with the company (Macdonald 1977a). During this first London visit there were two developments later to be of significance in Duncan's career. Firstly, it appears that Duncan took some lessons in classical ballet from the Austrian dancer Katti Lanner who was at this time ballet mistress of the Empire Theatre. This fact is recorded by most of the Duncan biographers and confirmed

by Augustin Duncan (Lloyd 1949) although Macdonald (1977a), whose recent researches into this period of Duncan's life are to be respected, writes of Duncan being auditioned rather than taught by Lanner and not accepted.³ Secondly, Duncan gave a few solo dance recitals at the London houses of some of the best known society hostesses of the time (Hertelendy 1977 and Macdonald 1977a).

Duncan had returned to New York by December 1897 and continued, as she had done in London, to establish herself as a soloist. She gave numerous recitals at many of the well-known New York family houses in the spring and summer of 1898 (Macdougall 1960, Terry 1963, Rather 1976). Gilbert (1898) prints an outline of a Duncan lecture on the "Philosophy of Dance" which was given as an integral part of these recitals. This, together with extracts from other journals (Terry 1963), anticipates a later Duncan characteristic, that is, her readiness to speak about her dances in order to make the theoretical aspects of her work public. Duncan also took ballet classes, this time with Marie Bonfanti, a former La Scala prima ballerina.

On the 24th March 1898 Duncan performed with Ethelbert Nevin, the composer, at the Carnegie Lyceum, New York. Nevin was then well-known for his compositions 'Mighty Lak a Rose', 'The Rosary' and 'Narcissus'. Duncan danced to 'Narcissus' and used two other pieces from his work 'Water Scenes', 'Ophelia' and 'Water Nymphs' (Macdougall 1960). In September 1898 Duncan presented a totally different dance programme in which she posed and danced to readings from the 'Rubáiyát' of Omar Khayyam, an event which provoked some mild criticism (Gilbert 1898). This was repeated on 14th March 1899 and Macdougall (1960 p.44) quotes extracts from local reviews of this performance which was regarded variously as a scandal and as a success "with much recrimination and acrimony on both sides". It was Duncan's costumes, not her dance, that offended a large part of the audience in that her

arms were uncovered and her bare legs were revealed through slits in her full-length gown. Interestingly, one of the Schloss photographs taken of Duncan at this time in her lace curtain costume is captioned "dancing the Rubáiyát" (in Hering 1951). To modern eyes Duncan's body seems almost completely swathed.

During this period the Duncan family lived at the Windsor Hotel in New York where Isadora and Elizabeth taught dance in one of the rooms of their suite. When the hotel was burned down the Duncans took part in two performances in aid of the victims of the fire and in the second of these performances, on the 18th April, 1899 Duncan danced a complete programme entitled "The Happier Age of Gold" (Rather 1976). According to a contemporary account quoted by Macdougall (1960), Duncan was accompanied by her mother playing the piano and her brother Raymond reading extracts from translations of Greek literature.

In May 1899 Duncan left New York for London, this time with her family. During the autumn and winter of that year she resumed giving solo dance recitals in the homes of many of the rich London hostesses and also in the studios of several well-known artists such as Holman Hunt, G.F. Watts and Burne Jones (Macdougall 1960). In late February 1900 Duncan danced in two of F.H. Benson's Shakespeare productions (Macdonald 1977a) and later presented her 'Happier Age of Gold' programme at a special matinee in the old St. George's Hall (Perugini 1912). Duncan and her brother Raymond also made repeated visits to the British Museum where, as Duncan recalls in her autobiography (1927a), they devoted many hours to studying the ancient Greek artefacts.

However, the notable feature of this London visit was Duncan's meeting with Charles Hallé, the son of the founder of the Hallé orchestra, who arranged 'Three evenings with Isadora Duncan' under Royal patronage at his New Gallery in Regent Street.⁴ These performances are considered by Macdonald (1977a p.52) to have been the

turning point in Duncan's career since for the first time she experienced close working relationships with artists who "could appreciate her vague cultural aspirations".

The first concert, given on the 16th March 1900 and entitled 'Dance idylls', consisted mainly of dances to readings from Greek literature, together with 'La Primavera', to Mendelssohn's 'Spring Song', and Nevin's 'Water Nymph' dances. It was introduced, appropriately, by the classical scholar Andrew Lang. The concert was very favourably received by Fuller-Maitland, music critic of The Times, who suggested that

it would be an improvement if she would dance not to poems ... but to good music and especially ... the waltzes of Chopin.

Fuller Maitland (1929 p.202)

The next two months are largely unchronicled in the biographical accounts of Duncan but there is evidence to show that she had several further engagements. On the 17 May Duncan took part in a charity entertainment at Sunninghill, under Royal patronage, where she danced on the lawns as the final item in the programme (Anon 1900). As well as appearing in charity events she also continued to perform in artists' studios. Macdonald (1977a) cites one of these as being for Holman Hunt on 26 May. Duncan also worked at length on the preparation of two new programmes for her next appearances at the New Gallery. These were in response to the help and advice she was receiving from various artists and critics and they marked another significant development in her career. On the 4th July Duncan danced to an all music programme, mainly by Chopin, and on the 6th July she interpreted Italian paintings to the accompaniment of period music selected and played by the Dolmetsch family. The "music" programme was introduced by Sir Hubert Parry and the "art" programme by Sir William Richmond.

Despite the acclaim the New Gallery performances received in artistic circles no London theatrical engagements were forthcoming and Duncan left for Paris. However, Macdonald considers that during this second London visit Duncan learned all the essentials upon which she would subsequently base her career.

She now knew her way as an artist, both the negative and positive aspects. She knew that "the stage" in the conventional sense, was not for her; no plays, no musicals, no taking part in other people's creations. Sheer movement was to be her element, and it could be fettered no more than by good music and the thoughts this could provoke in her She had learned to hold an audience on her own.

Macdonald (1977a p.64)

3.4 July 1900 - December 1904: Career launched. First school opened. Visit to St. Petersburg

Duncan left London in July 1900 and arrived in Paris during the Exposition Universelle to join her brother Raymond. Macdonald (1977a) suggests that he had left London following the adverse criticisms of his readings from the classics at Duncan's first New Gallery performance and his sister's subsequent decision to dance with music instead of poetry. It was at this time that Raymond Duncan, termed the "most Greek-minded of the Duncans" by Seroff (1971 p.56), adopted his characteristic sandals and long flowing attire and begin to develop his philosophy of the arts based on that of the ancient Greeks.⁵ In Paris, as in London, Duncan and her brother visited the museums, particularly the Louvre, with its collection of Greek vases.

However, with the arrival of Charles Hallé, Duncan's attention was diverted to the theatre and the great exhibition. In London Hallé had taken Duncan to see Henry Irving, Ellen Terry and Eleanora Duse⁶, now he took her to see Mounet-Sully in the Comédie Française version of Oedipus Rex at the Trocadéro theatre (Terry 1960). Duncan and Hallé also visited the Rodin pavilion at the exhibition, saw performances by Sada Yacco, the Japanese actress and mime, and the electric light

productions of Loie Fuller. All of these artists made a considerable impact on Duncan.

Towards the end of 1900 and throughout 1901 Duncan gave performances in Parisian private homes and studios. Magriel (1947) includes a photograph of Duncan at this time in her 'La Primavera' costume, one of the dances in her first New Gallery performance programme, and Macdonald (1977b) refers to Duncan's 'Chopin' and 'Botticelli' programmes, the second and third New Gallery programmes, being "admired" by her Paris audiences. Irma Duncan (1958b p.55) includes a review of one of these 1901 performances by Levinson in which he discusses Duncan's dances and "her pure style as a mime".

As well as dancing in the homes of some of the wealthy Parisian patrons of the arts, such as the Prince and Princess de Polignac, Duncan also began to give subscription performances in her own studio. Irma Duncan quotes from a handbill written by Duncan, dated 12th December 1901, announcing such a performance.

Miss Duncan will dance to The sound of Harp and flute in her Studio next Thursday Evening and if you feel that seeing this small person dancing against the waves of an overpowering destiny is of ten francs benefit to you - why Come along!

Duncan, Irma (1958a p.231)

In addition to her intermittent solo recitals Duncan, according to Terry (1963), pursued a busy teaching schedule and was also beginning to write articles on dance. It seems that Duncan's life in Paris took on a similar pattern to that in London until, at the end of 1901, she accepted an invitation to tour with Loie Fuller and her company.

The exact circumstances of the invitation and the tour itself, as with many episodes in Duncan's life, have yet to be established. Duncan's (1927a) and Fuller's (1913) accounts differ in many respects but it is generally accepted that Duncan toured with Loie Fuller to

Berlin, Leipzig and Munich arriving in Vienna in February. It was in Vienna that a Duncan performance was seen by Alexander Gross, the Hungarian impresario, who offered her a contract for thirty solo performances in Budapest. The legendary success of Duncan's theatre debut in April 1902 and her first love affair, with the Hungarian actor Oscar Beregi the 'Romeo' of her memoirs, are all documented although the detail is lacking, but the recent proposal that her illness after this episode might have been a miscarriage remains speculative. Nevertheless, this experience caused Duncan to reaffirm her service to her art and, under Gross' management, she began touring again eventually performing in Munich in November 1902. Her Munich success was the beginning of the rapturous reception which always followed her performances in Germany and with these triumphs behind her Duncan returned to Paris in March. In 1903 she hired the Sarah Bernhardt theatre in Paris from 30th May to the 13th June for ten matinée performances but was not an unqualified success. By reference to a contemporary account Macdonald (1977b) suggests that this was because Raymond Duncan re-assumed responsibility for the accompaniment to Duncan's dance and the Dolmetschs, engaged for the 'Dance idylls' programme, "parted on strained terms" from the Duncans (Mabel Dolmetsch quoted by Macdonald 1977b p.44).

It was after the disappointing Paris performances that Duncan danced at a celebratory "picnic" given for Rodin by his friends, students and admirers, met many of the young French artists who were later to sketch and paint her and was introduced by Rodin to Kathleen Bruce, an English sculptress studying with him.⁷

The Duncan family then left Paris for Athens and the subsequent buying of the Kopanos site for their house to be built is described in detail by Duncan (1927a).⁸ It is possible that this visit, as suggested by Seroff (1971), was instrumental in helping Duncan to acknowledge the futility of attempting to revive Greek dance.

Nevertheless, while in Athens Duncan formed a Greek chorus of boys which, early in 1904, she took on tour to Vienna, Munich and Berlin with a programme based on a danced version of Aeschylus' 'The Suppliants'. This venture proved unsuccessful and in March and April she resumed her solo performances in German cities with the well tried programmes from her London New Gallery days, eventually performing again in Paris in May.

However, in 1904 four events occurred which gave Duncan's development as an artist new impetus and also widened her career and outlook on dance. Firstly, she danced at the Bayreuth Festival, secondly, she opened her first school at Grunewald, Berlin, thirdly, she met Gordon Craig and fourthly, she received an invitation to dance in Russia.

Siegfried Wagner had seen Duncan dance in Munich during her 1902-3 tour and immediately suggested that she might take part in a Bayreuth performance. According to Macdougall (1960), Duncan received an official invitation from Cosima Wagner in August 1903 to dance as the first Grace in the 'Bacchanale' of *Tannhauser* in the 1904 Bayreuth production. Although it appears that Duncan's performances alongside two ballerinas were regarded by some as incongruous, her stay at Bayreuth brought her into contact with many artists and eminent people such as Ernst Haeckel, the philosopher and biologist, and Heinrich Thode, the author. It also enabled her to study Wagner's operas.

After the Bayreuth season Duncan announced the opening of her first school in the Berlin suburb of Grunewald which was to be under the general supervision of her sister Elizabeth. Its purpose was "for the regeneration of the art of the dance" (Steegmuller 1974 p.7). It is evident that Duncan established this school as soon as she was financially able to do so. The large villa that she bought and converted to house forty young children as boarders enabled her to put

her educational theories into practice, a need that was constant throughout her life but one which was often thwarted.

Duncan's meeting with Gordon Craig in Berlin in mid-December 1904 and their subsequent love-affair is meticulously documented by Steegmuller (1974). Craig and Duncan shared very similar ideas on dance and movement and the result of their interaction was evident in Duncan's choreography and presentation and also in Craig's designs and writings (see, for example, Rood 1978).

The last and perhaps most important event in 1904 (important at least in the historical development of dance) was Duncan's visit to Russia. She was invited to dance in St. Petersburg by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The first performance on the 26th December (Western calendar) was almost immediately sold out and a second performance was arranged on the 29th December (Steegmuller 1974). Duncan's visit was an outstanding success. Her dance was praised in the most enthusiastic terms by the critics, most of whom were ballet critics, and she was immediately invited to meet Pavlova, Kschessinska, Diaghilev, Bakst and Benois. It was during this and subsequent visits to Russia that Duncan saw ballet in its full context and began to formulate her criticisms of it. The origins of the much debated Duncan influence on Fokine also date from this time.

3.5 January 1905 to March 1913: Career established and consolidated. Return to USA. Birth of children.

By the beginning of 1905 Duncan, then twenty-seven years of age, had already had successful debuts in the large theatres of most European cities (although not yet in either London or Paris) and she now embarked on a period of almost constant touring. One reason for this was the need to finance the running of her school. In January 1905 she, along with Craig, selected pupils for the school, one of the first being Irma Duncan. Since pupils were chosen on their dance potential and not parents' capacity to pay fees, the upkeep of this

and subsequent Duncan schools forced her to accept contracts which involved many consecutive performances and much travel between engagements.

The schedules undertaken by Duncan during the 1905 to mid-1906 period typify her commitment to the school. In January 1905 Duncan danced in Berlin, Cologne, Dresden, Leipzig and Hamburg and by the 2nd February had arrived in St. Petersburg for her second visit. She gave four performances in Moscow, returned to Berlin in mid-February and by the end of the month was touring several German cities. In March and April she danced in Brussels and Amsterdam and finally returned to her school after five months non-stop touring (Duncan, Irma, 1966).

On the 20th July Duncan gave a benefit performance in Berlin in aid of the Grunewald school and, in order to demonstrate the value of its work to the general public, the children of the school also took part. At the beginning of August Duncan resumed dancing and undertook an extensive four month tour of Holland performing in minor as well as major cities and also appearing successively in Leipzig, Dresden, and Berlin. An indication of her schedule can be gained from one of her letters written to Craig at this time in which she refers to "dancing every night" and losing fourteen pounds in weight (Steegmuller 1974 p.118). In December 1905 Duncan became pregnant by Craig and

now proceeded to dance as often as she could during the months permitted. The list of her engagements from January through May 1906, formidable for any dancer is astonishing for a dancer with child. Berlin, Stettin, Leipzig, Halle, Magdeburg, Weimar, Erfurt, Görlitz, Lübeck, Hanover, Munich, the Dutch cities, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Göteborg, among others - with multiple engagements in some (nine in Stockholm alone) and return engagements in others. The last performance seems to have been on May 18th in Göteborg.

Steegmuller (1974 p.121)

In June 1906 Duncan took a small seaside villa in Noordwijk near Leyden, Holland, where she wrote her essay 'A Child Dancing'. Her baby, Deirdre, was born in September. This period is well documented

by Steegmuller (1974) and described by Kennet (1949) who was with Duncan for much of the time. By December Duncan was dancing again and she toured Europe almost continuously throughout 1907 despite being ill. Although it was normally difficult to get engagements during the summer season Duncan was able to perform by accepting bookings for many of the German health resorts. In Mannheim, for example, she danced before 20,000 people at an open-air festival. During October, November, and December, Duncan toured extensively in Germany and Holland, performing with her pupils in some of the Dutch cities.

In December 1907 Duncan went to St. Petersburg with twelve of her Grunewald pupils and they danced in Moscow in January 1908.⁹ It was during this tour that she first met Stanislavsky (Steegmuller 1974). Duncan's engagements, now often with her pupils, took her to many Russian and eastern European cities but by mid-summer she returned to Paris to prepare for her London debut. Duncan's July season at the Duke of York's theatre, London, was an undoubted success and she was engaged for an extra week. This was despite the presence of Maud Allan who danced in a similar style. Allan had already become well-established in London and was currently performing at the Palace Theatre. The London critics took the opportunity to compare the two dancers and generally Duncan was thought to be the better artist.

Charles Frohman, who managed Duncan's London performances, booked her for an American tour on a six month contract and Duncan returned to the USA in August 1908 opening at the Criterion Theatre, New York. However, these performances were not well received and Duncan abandoned the planned tour after a few weeks and returned to New York. There she met Walter Damrosch the conductor and, with the New York Symphony Orchestra, performed at the Metropolitan Opera House. It was this series of concerts that established Duncan in America as not only a great dancer but also one who could use good, well-played music and

produce work of artistic merit. Duncan returned to Paris in December 1908 and in February and March of the following year had

under the aegis of the French actor-director Lugne-Poe
... a series of immensely successful matinées
Steegmuller (1974 p.304)

at the Gaieté Lyrique theatre. It was after one of these performances that Duncan met Paris Singer, the millionaire, a meeting that was soon to lead to another interruption in her career.

At this time Duncan could be considered to have reached an artistic peak. She had appeared in all the major cities of Europe and Russia as well as New York and had achieved outstanding success with an entirely new dance style. Her solo programmes, which together with encores sometimes continued for over three hours, were based on a repertoire that included dances using the music of Beethoven, Chopin, Gluck, Tchaikovsky and Wagner and only the best orchestras were engaged to accompany her.

Nevertheless, as an international artist Duncan was committed to touring and in April and May 1909 she returned to St. Petersburg where she renewed acquaintance with Stanislavsky. From mid-May to the end of June Duncan had another successful Paris season dancing with the Colonne Orchestra at the Gaieté Lyrique.¹⁰

Although most of Duncan's considerable earnings were still being used to maintain the Grunewald school the constant touring meant that her sister Elizabeth gradually assumed full control of the school. Elizabeth Duncan's ideas on dance education differed in some fundamental respects from those of Duncan. When Elizabeth began to negotiate the transfer of the Grunewald school to Darmstadt, where it was to be established under her name, Isadora Duncan tried to set up a new school and in June 1909 wrote to all the Grunewald children's parents asking them to keep their children with her in Paris (Duncan, Irma, 1966). This apparent rivalry between the two in their education

ventures was particularly difficult for Duncan since she needed Elizabeth to run the school during her prolonged tours but she became increasingly distrustful of her sister's methods and results.

Duncan spent the summer of 1909 with Singer and together they returned to the USA in November for another series of concerts with Damrosch at the Metropolitan Opera House (Pischl 1948). However, the highly successful tour was cut short since Duncan was now obviously pregnant, this time by Singer, and she returned to France. Her second child, Patrick, was born in May 1910, and with Singer's financial support she did not need to resume dancing immediately. Indeed, apart from dancing for her guests at her Paris garden fête in July, Duncan had only one public season in 1910 which was a short six matinée series at the Théâtre du Châtelet in December (Phillips-Vierke 1911).

Duncan's first engagement abroad after the birth of her second child was from 15th February to 25th March 1911 when she danced with Damrosch and his orchestra at Carnegie Hall, New York. It was at one of these performances that Damrosch announced Duncan's intention to dance to the 'Prelude' and 'Liebestod' from 'Tristan and Isolde' and suggested that if this was offensive to anyone in the audience then they should leave beforehand (Van Vechten 1911 repub. 1974). Duncan does not appear to have undertaken any major tours during the rest of 1911 nor in 1912 although she did have a second series of matinées at the Châtelet in December 1911 (Le Rieur 1912).¹¹ Macdonald (1977e) refers to Duncan giving three performances in May 1912 in London with her brother Augustin when she "interpreted" some of Walt Whitman's poetry but much of her time was spent in Paris where Singer had engaged the architect Lois Sue to build a theatre for her.

In January 1913 Duncan began another Russian tour although according to Seroff (1971) she now insisted on shorter and more intensive tours so that she would not be parted from her children for

long periods. Brandenburg (1921) also refers to Duncan dancing in Berlin in early 1913 and sharing the programme with her former Grunewald pupils now at Elizabeth Duncan's school.¹² On her return to Paris Duncan had a successful spring season with Mounet-Sully at the Trocadéro theatre in performances of her work using Gluck's 'Orpheus'. She then began rehearsals of her 'Iphigenia' also based on Gluck's music, for a season at the Châtelet.¹³ In both these works Duncan's choreography included numerous group dances for her former pupils. Duncan was beginning to perform regularly again, although selectively. Her continued success and Singer's support meant that, for the first time in her career, she was free from financial worries.

3.6 April 1913 - July 1921: Death of children. 1914-1918 war. Return to California. South American tour. London season. Invitation from Russian Government.

The death of Duncan's children in April 1913, when the car in which they were being driven rolled into the Seine, is well documented as is Duncan's grief and her subsequent journeys through Europe in an attempt to find solace. During this period she spent a month with Duse at Viareggio and also conceived a child by a young Italian sculptor. At the end of the year, when Duncan was in Rome, Singer telegraphed that he had bought the large Bellevue hotel to convert into a school for her and she returned to Paris.

The Bellevue school opened in January 1914 with a nucleus of experienced pupils from Elizabeth Duncan's school at Darmstadt and "fifty new aspirants" (Duncan 1927a p.299). In addition, two of the older pupils, Irma and Anna, went with Augustin Duncan to Russia in April to recruit more pupils.¹⁴ By June 1914 the Bellevue children were giving public performances and the school appeared to be well established but the declaration of war meant its immediate evacuation to the USA.¹⁵ Duncan remained in Paris for a while (her third child, born at the outbreak of war, lived only a few hours) and then joined

her "school" in New York. Towards the end of the year Duncan and her pupils gave several joint performances. For Duncan these were not only her first appearances since the death of her children but also the beginning of a new phase in her choreography which now had "religious" and maternal elements typified by her dance using Schubert's 'Ave Maria' (Duncan, Irma, 1966).

Although Duncan's intention was to re-establish her school in New York financial support from Otto Kahn at the Century Theatre during the spring of 1915 allowed her to work experimentally with her pupils and brother Augustin. Duncan presented several productions in which drama, music and dance were combined in an attempt to realise some of her ideas of the nature of the ancient Greek theatre (Duncan, Irma, 1966). However, this experimental period, which involved everyone living at the theatre, was terminated by an eviction order from the New York Fire Department. Because Duncan was unable to secure further financial backing for her work she decided to return to Europe with her pupils and to set up the school in a neutral country.

Duncan's arrival in Italy coincided with that country's entry into the war and so she established a temporary school first in Lausanne, then in Geneva, and returned to Paris where she hoped to be able to raise the necessary financial support. It appears that Duncan remained in Paris for the rest of 1915 and into 1916 although the period is largely undocumented. During this time she choreographed several new works which, at the beginning of April, she gave in the first of a series of war charity performances at the Trocadéro theatre and then repeated in Switzerland. Her dances using Cesar Franck's 'Redemption', Tchaikovsky's 'Sixth Symphony' and 'La Marseillaise' all reflected various aspects of the war and became standard works in her repertoire.

In May 1916 Duncan left Paris for New York en route for South America where she had a six month contract to fulfill. This tour,

during which Duncan was ill-received in Argentina but acknowledged as an outstanding success in Uruguay and Brazil (Dumesnil 1932), was eventually cut short and, at the end of September, Duncan returned to New York. There Duncan met Singer again and it was he who enabled the six senior pupils of her school to join her in the USA.¹⁶ He also financed a war charity concert at the Metropolitan Opera House in November where Duncan performed her by now famous dances based on war themes.

Singer then sent Duncan on a long vacation to Havana and Palm Beach accompanied by his secretary, Allan Ross Macdougall. Duncan returned to New York early in 1917 and gave a series of performances at the Metropolitan Opera House in April. It was during one of these performances that news came of the Russian Revolution and Duncan responded by dancing 'La Marseillaise' and 'Marche Slave' with "a terrible fierce joy" (Duncan 1927a p.334). She claimed later that her revolutionary fervour had alarmed Singer and led in part to the end of their relationship. She did not dance again in public until late November and December when she had several engagements in San Francisco. It was twenty-two years since Duncan had left her birthplace and she was now forty years old and had lost her youthful figure. Nevertheless her "Greek" dances to Gluck and her newer "maternal" and "war inspired" works were acclaimed by the local press (Rather 1976). It was one of these performances that Terry (1963) believes was seen by Ted Shawn and probably Ruth St. Denis (Terry 1960).

In February 1918 Duncan arrived in London. Her fare from New York and, according to Macdonald (1977e), her accommodation too, were provided by Gordon Selfridge the store owner who had given Duncan credit to purchase material for costumes as early as 1895. Unable to progress with her work in a war-time London Duncan moved to Paris and

later Cap Ferrat where she composed and rehearsed new programmes with the pianist Walter Rummel for a tour of provincial French towns.

In November after Armistice Day Duncan returned to Paris. The next few months of Duncan's life are totally ignored by her biographers but it appears that she did not perform again until the 24th July 1919. On this occasion she and Rummel gave a joint Chopin concert in an endeavour to finance the re-building of Bellevue which had been used as a hospital during the war and was now in a state of disrepair (Seroff 1971). This single concert was, according to Macdougall (1960), followed by a three-week tour of Switzerland and Duncan then spent a month on holiday in Italy and North Africa.¹⁷ Duncan returned to Paris at the end of 1919 and in the spring of 1920 gave another series of concerts with Rummel in aid of Bellevue. It became evident that the capital needed for the restoration could not be raised and the building was eventually sold to the French Government. During this period Craig and Duncan met for the last time (Steegmuller 1974). In the summer of 1920 Duncan gave several performances at the Champs Elysées theatre; one of her programmes was the 'Polish Trilogy', using music by Chopin, which she had composed in 1918.

Towards the end of June 1920 all but one of Duncan's six former pupils left the USA to join her in Paris.¹⁸ Duncan wanted them to work with her on new joint programmes and in August Duncan and her dancers, accompanied by Steichen, went to Athens at the invitation of the Greek Government. The two-month stay was intended both as a working and performing period and as a time during which plans for the founding of Duncan's school in Athens could be discussed. However, the political unrest precluded any such development and Duncan and her dancers returned to Paris at the end of October. There on the 27th November they presented the first complete performance of 'Parsifal' at the Trocadéro and continued their season to the end of 1920 with

Wagner and Gluck programmes.

There were further performances of the Wagner programme at the Trocadéro in January 1921, but most of the literature on Duncan focusses upon Duncan's six solo matinée performances with Rummel at the Prince of Wales Theatre, London, in April of that year. This season, which was generally well received, consisted of Duncan's Chopin programmes and her standard works using music by Bach, Brahms, Liszt, Schubert and Wagner. Among Duncan's audiences were Ashton and Krasin, the latter the head of the Soviet Trade Commission in London.

Duncan then performed in Brussels and returned to Paris where, at the end of May, she announced the Krasin-initiated invitation from the Russian Government to go to Moscow to establish a school. Duncan immediately set out on a series of "farewell performances" in Belgium and returned to London for two concerts at the Queens Hall on the 18th and 25th June.¹⁹ In these performances she was accompanied by the London Symphony Orchestra and three of her former pupils danced with her. However, on the 13th July 1921, when Duncan sailed from England to found her school in Russia only one of her dancers, Irma Duncan, went with her.

3.7 July 1921–September 1927: Moscow school established. Final USA tour. Extensive tours of Russia. Career decline. Death.

Duncan lived and worked in Russia from July 1921 to May 1922 and from August 1923 to September 1924. Both periods are well documented although the various biographies and autobiographies differ in their interpretation of events.

When Duncan arrived in Moscow it was her first visit since the revolution and the prevailing economic, political and social conditions did not seem to provide a climate conducive to establishing a school. Nevertheless, support from Anatole Lunacharsky, the Soviet Minister of Education, meant that within a month she had been given a

suitable building and by mid-October had admitted her first pupils. On the 7th November, the fourth anniversary of the revolution, Duncan performed at the Bolshoi Theatre with the Bolshoi orchestra in her programme of war and revolution inspired dances. In the final dance, 'L'Internationale', Duncan was joined by her new pupils. This performance was enthusiastically received and the audience, led by Lenin, demanded encores (Roslavleva 1975). Further concerts followed and on the 3rd December the school was officially opened with an intake of about fifty children selected from the many auditioned.

Towards the end of 1921 Duncan met Esenin, the Russian poet and member of the Imagist group, and they married in May of the following year. While it seems clear that Esenin did not influence Duncan in artistic matters as had Craig, seventeen years previously, nonetheless their relationship did have important implications for her work. The most immediate was the seeming sacrifice of certain of Duncan's feminist ideals in the act of marrying, although McVay (1972) quotes a newspaper interview given by her in 1923 in which she claimed that the marriage was a device to acquire a passport for Esenin.²⁰ Esenin needed the passport to accompany Duncan on a short European tour and holiday which was to precede an extensive USA tour. In the event when they arrived in Berlin in May 1922 it was Duncan who found it difficult to get visas to enable her to perform in various European cities. She was now regarded as a 'Bolshevik' and on arrival in New York in October was detained temporarily on Ellis Island. Although Duncan's first performances in the Carnegie Hall were successful, when she embarked upon her tour she was judged less on artistic criteria and more on her curtain speeches. In the latter she extolled communism and defended Esenin's erratic behaviour which had become newsworthy.²¹ Along with the 'Bolshevik' label Duncan was also attacked on moral grounds by administrators, politicians and the clergy. Duncan's performances were regarded as political as were her

statements to her audiences and to the press, her costumes were considered obscene and her life-style with Esenin was seen as undermining American ideals and moral values.

The publicity surrounding Duncan and Esenin ensured capacity audiences but many city authorities cancelled her bookings and with the projected tour now untenable Duncan returned to New York, gave two final performances, and left the USA early in 1923.²² On arrival in Paris Duncan faced both financial problems and the need to look after Esenin whose health had deteriorated with chronic alcoholism. In an effort to redress her financial debts and to re-establish her artistic reputation Duncan arranged more concerts. Even so her performances in May, June and July at the Trocadéro were unsuccessful and she took Esenin back to Russia in August 1923.

It has been suggested that Duncan married Esenin and embarked on her 1922/23 USA tour in order to show him Europe and America and to gain a wider audience for his work. However, another reason which stems from Duncan's commitment to her Moscow school may have been an influencing factor. The school was initially established and financed by the state but, under the New Economic Policy, support was withdrawn and the Moscow school had to become self-financing. Duncan and Macdougall (1929) give this decision as occurring in late 1921 while Roslavleva (1975) dates it a year later,²³ but these authors agree that Duncan had to respond to a very different financial situation from the one she had been led to expect. Roslavleva (1975) claims that the school financed itself by admitting "fee-paying" pupils who were not given the full dance education but Duncan and Macdougall (1929) state that Duncan either had to close the school or resume her extensive touring programmes. Irma Duncan (1966) cites the USA tour as being Duncan's first effort to finance the Moscow school.

Whatever the reasons underlying Duncan's decision to accept the

1922/3 American contract on her return to Russia with Esenin it was clear that, at least for the time being, her career as an international artist was in jeopardy. Nevertheless, Duncan could still perform in Russia and after a short holiday she set out on a prolonged tour of numerous Caucasian cities and by the end of 1923 had appeared several times in Moscow occasionally accompanied by her pupils in group dances. The death of Lenin in January 1924 delayed the start of Duncan's next tour but by February she had embarked upon a tightly scheduled itinerary of the Ukraine. Even in her most successful Paris seasons Duncan never danced for eighteen consecutive performances to capacity audiences as she did in Kiev (Duncan and Macdougall 1929). During March and April Duncan performed in Leningrad and Moscow and in the summer began a tour of the smaller Ukrainian towns, this time with a group of dancers from the school. The intention was to give lecture dance programmes with the children illustrating certain of Duncan's dance principles but this proved unpopular. Another programme, in which Duncan danced the first half alone and the children joined her in the second, proved very costly (for in addition to the upkeep of the school a full orchestra was employed) and so Duncan sent the children back to Moscow and undertook an extended tour of the Volga region with just a pianist to accompany her. This journey, which included performances in Tashkent, Samarkand, Ekaterinburg and Perm, was not a financial success and Duncan returned to Moscow in April 1924 where she resumed teaching and choreographing.²⁴

Duncan soon decided to perform in Europe again and in September gave four "farewell" performances in Moscow which included some of her newly choreographed works both for herself and the Moscow school children. The last of these performances was seen by the wife of the Soviet President who was so impressed by the children's dance that a "command" performance was quickly arranged for the next evening at the

Bolshoi Theatre to be attended by all the leading Soviet politicians. Duncan was optimistic that this resurgence of interest would result in some kind of financial assistance and so she left Russia for Berlin willing to return immediately if the Government acted.

Duncan's few performances in Berlin in October 1924 were as enthusiastically greeted as ever by her audiences but the critics were no longer impressed. Furthermore, the tour managers were dishonest and Duncan did not share the profits. She was now virtually penniless, was not offered any additional contracts, and it took her three months to obtain a visa to return to Paris. It is apparent that Duncan did not perform at all in 1925. She spent much of her time at her studio in Nice and made frequent visits to Paris in an attempt to re-establish her school there²⁵ and to solve problems arising from the compulsory sale of some of her property. It was also during this period that she and various friends tried to find a publisher willing to produce an edited version of her essays on dance or to finance her while she wrote her autobiography. This state of affairs continued into 1926 and it was not until the spring of that year that she resumed performing. The 'Good Friday' performances in her Nice studio were well received. However, neither these nor the more experimental performances she gave later in September were financially successful.²⁶ The remainder of 1926 and the early part of 1927 was spent in Nice and Paris where she continued to write her autobiography and efforts were made on her behalf to buy back her Neuilly residence and to re-open her school in Paris.

On the 8th July 1927 Duncan danced at the Mogador theatre, Paris, in a performance arranged and sponsored by friends and fellow artists. In the first part of the programme Duncan included her Cesar Franck's 'Redemption', Schubert's 'Ave Maria' and the second movement of Schubert's 'Eighth Symphony'. After the interval she performed her

Wagnerian dances, the 'Bacchanale' from Tannhauser, Siegfried's 'Funeral March' and the 'Love-death of Isolde'.²⁷ This was her last performance. She was killed in Nice on the 14th September 1927, aged fifty, when her trailing scarf caught in the wheel of the car in which she was travelling.

3.8 Summary

From the outline chronology it is evident why so many myths and half-truths abound in accounts of Duncan. Such a life can indeed be likened to a Greek tragedy. Duncan's tempestuous love affairs, some with men already well-known to the public and, therefore, the very stuff of scandal, together with the bizarre deaths of her children, all contribute towards a ready sensationalism.

Alongside this her career as choreographer and dancer seems at first sight less extraordinary. While the vicissitudes of Duncan's personal life gave her work impetus or resulted in a loss of creativity, her career can be regarded as following a more normal pattern of early beginnings, launch and increasing achievement, consolidation and decline.

The pre-1900 period was obviously one of searching for an artistic growthpoint. This was found in her successful New Gallery, London performances and, from her triumphant move into the full theatre context in 1902, Duncan's career rapidly achieved international status. The death of her children in 1913 and 1914 and the territorial extent of the 1914-18 war were each major setbacks; the one in personal terms and the other in the virtual cessation of existing performance opportunities. From 1918 to 1921 Duncan resumed performing but the aftermath of the war, her increasing age and the thwarting of plans to re-establish her school, meant that she was no longer a rising artistic phenomenon. Duncan's move to Russia can be seen as yet another attempt to start again, this time with the real

hope of handing her work on via a government-backed school. Her marriage to Esenin, however, and the subsequent disastrous American tour effectively ended Duncan's international career. The familiar financial problems with her school returned and from 1923 onwards Duncan's professional life declined.

Such an artistic profile is by no means unique yet what gave Duncan's career its particular potency was her pioneering role. Alone as a choreographer and alone as a dancer she was instrumental in establishing a new theatre dance genre and it is this which makes her career so remarkable.

It has been noted earlier that such a combination of revolutionary artist and sensational life-style readily gives rise to the myth-making and the partial truths. Stokes, S., (1928 repub.1968) observed that if Isadora Duncan had not lived Hollywood would have invented her. In the event even the feature films made of her could not encompass a life and career with such an overabundance of triumphs and tragedies.

Nevertheless, Duncan's life and career as a choreographer and dancer did not develop without reference to the times and the circumstances in which she lived. In order to distinguish further the truths from the legends and to understand what she achieved and why, it is necessary to examine the environments in which she lived and to identify the people who influenced her work.

CHAPTER 3 NOTES

- 1 Magriel's (1947) chronology of Duncan is too short and lacking in detail for the present purposes as is Ostrom's (1972) register. Pruet's (1977) chronology is detailed but concerned only with Duncan's performances and not related events.
- 2 The title of the dance is unknown but Duncan used this music for at least two subsequent dances, 'Sonnet to the Beautiful' and 'Spring Song' (see Choreochronicle A).
- 3 Guest (1962) also gives the failed audition version but he dates the incident as 1902-3, a time that does not tally with any other account.
- 4 Ostrom (1972) states that Duncan danced "before Queen Victoria" but Macdonald's (1977a) note that two members of the organising committee were related to the Royal family is probably more accurate.
- 5 See Duncan, Raymond (1914, 1919).
- 6 Both Terry and Duse later became friends of Duncan, the former as the mother of Gordon Craig, the latter as a fellow artist to whom Duncan turned after the death of her children.
- 7 Kathleen Bruce's first husband was Captain Robert Scott, her second, Lord Kennet. Bruce became a close friend of Duncan and was with her during some of the important events of her life (Kennet 1949).
- 8 Currently, there are plans to rebuild the house and to open it as an arts centre (Marika 1981).
- 9 In Russia the 'Isadorables' were known as the 'Dunclings' (Schneider 1968).
- 10 It was during this period that Diaghilev's Ballet Russe opened at the Châtelet theatre and Duncan was one of the women invited by Astruc to sit in the front row of the dress circle in his "blond-brunette" arrangement (Buckle 1971, Macdonald 1977e).
- 11 Irma Duncan (1958b) quotes from a Duncan theatre programme which she dates as 22nd April 1912 Rome. There are no other references to Duncan dancing in Italy but it seems likely that she would have appeared there at some time during her career.
- 12 Known as 'The Elizabeth Duncan School: Institute for Physical and Scientific Education'.
- 13 It is unclear in the programmes for these performances whether Duncan used all sections of the operas or made selections. The dances were interspersed with singing and readings.
- 14 From a description of this visit (Duncan, Irma, 1966) it seems likely that the Russian programme which Seroff (1971) attributes to Duncan at this time refers not to a performance by her but by her pupils.
- 15 A recently published photograph of 19 Bellevue pupils in the USA in 1914 (Bardsley 1979) negates the generally held assumption that only Duncan's senior pupils were evacuated.
- 16 Duncan adopted them in her name at this time.
- 17 Terry's (1963 p.64) assertion that Duncan's visit to North Africa was professional is erroneous and probably based on a misinterpretation of Macdougall's account.
- 18 The six, known as the 'Isadora Duncan Dancers' and managed by Hurok, had had several successful tours of the USA during 1917-1920.
- 19 Macdonald (1977f p.73) refers to this as a "single recital" but newspaper reports cite both dates.
- 20 See also McVay (1976, 1980).

- 21 McVay (1972, 1976, 1980) discusses at length Esenin's apparent alcoholism and supposed epilepsy.
- 22 Duncan's 1922/3 visit to the USA is well-documented by McVay (1982) with copious references from local newspapers.
- 23 If Roslavleva's date is correct then this could not have been an influencing factor in Duncan's acceptance of the USA tour contract. Schneider (1968) puts this policy change date as late as the 11th November 1925.
- 24 References by Lifar (1940) and Buckle (1979) to Duncan and Esenin meeting Diaghilev in Venice at this time are erroneous and must refer to August 1922.
- 25 The French Communist Party wanted to support her work (Kaye 1929).
- 26 One of these, on 14th September, was with Jean Cocteau.
- 27 The exact performance details are unclear since Duncan added other dances to those listed on the programme.

CHAPTER 4

THE CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF DUNCAN'S LIFE AND WORK
AND THE PEOPLE WHO INFLUENCED HER

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Cultural contexts
- 4.3 Influences
- 4.4 Summary

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the contexts which can be shown to have had relevance to Duncan's life and work are characterised briefly. In addition, since particular influences can be seen to have affected the development of certain aspects of her work, these are also identified and outlined. For the purposes of this chapter a "context" is taken to be a general or prevailing cultural ethos, for example of a social or artistic nature, that existed during Duncan's life time while an "influence" is located in the people with whom Duncan came into contact during formative periods of her career. The contexts and influences considered here all constitute potential areas for further research. Their inclusion at this stage is to present, albeit briefly, the significant factors in the development of Duncan's ideas about dance.

Sorell (1966b p.30) sees Duncan in retrospect as "the utter negation of her time" and similarly Johnston considers that

there was little about her dancing that related ... either to the iconoclastic activity in the other arts of her peers, or to the immediate and more distant past of theatrical dance.

Johnston (1976 p.150)

Notwithstanding this it is tenable that no artist can develop work entirely devoid of context and influence since even a negative attitude to prevailing situations implies an acknowledgement of them. Indeed in the case of Duncan there is much to suggest, as for example

in her own writings, that she was particularly alive to contemporary developments in the arts as well as to current mores and beliefs; hence her outspokenness on artistic, moral and political matters.

4.2 Cultural contexts

Of the seven contexts discussed, the first five are those to which Duncan responded positively in the development of her work while the latter two provided her with models that she could actively oppose.

4.21 CALIFORNIAN ORIGINS

Duncan spent the first eighteen years or so of her life in California and this experience was instrumental in the formulation of two fundamental attitudes that endured throughout her career, that is, a conviction of the essential pioneering spirit of America and a reverence for nature as the source of art (Duncan 1927a 1928).

In her autobiography and elsewhere Duncan recorded with pride her family links with the West Coast pioneers and in particular she saw her vision of an emerging, virile American democracy epitomised in the poems of Walt Whitman. Duncan often quoted Whitman in her writings and considered herself his "spiritual daughter" (Duncan 1927a p.31).¹ Johnson (1949) discusses their joint "infatuation" with America and it is evident that Whitman provided Duncan with a basic credo from which she developed a dance parallel, as instanced by her essay 'I see America dancing' (Duncan 1928).²

Paradoxically although Duncan regarded Whitman as the voice of the new America she did not use his poems as a direct inspiration for her dance. Reference is made in Chapter 3 to Duncan's London performances in 1912 in which she "posed" to readings of Whitman's poetry by her brother Augustin, but these performances were untypical of Duncan's work and were intended to help her brother's career rather than further her own.³ Similarly Duncan did not adopt all Whitman's

maxims. Craig, E.G., (1957 p.262) refers to Duncan ignoring the advice of her "much-loved poet Whitman" in her many attempts to found her school of dance.⁴ Nevertheless, Duncan's Whitman-inspired vision of America dancing was an enduring one.

The other California derived belief that underlined Duncan's work throughout her life was that nature could and should provide the mainsprings of art. This notion was one to which Whitman also subscribed and it is interesting to note that both artists retained early childhood memories of the sea. For Duncan it was the Pacific coast and the forests and landscapes of the Californian Sierra Nevada that held her imagination and remained a source both for her dance and her ideas of harmony in movement. Duncan's writings abound with reference to the movement of the sea particularly the undulating motion of the wave. This she regarded as the fundamental movement in nature recognisable in many different forms. During a visit to the Adriatic resort of Abazia in 1902 Duncan was inspired by the movements of a palm tree in a slight breeze to create her "light fluttering" dance quality (Duncan 1927a p.109). She saw this as yet another manifestation of the wave motion which she always referred back to its Californian origins. To de Mille (1982 pt1 p.15) "in California the earth and sky clash and space is dynamic" and she suggests that Duncan's choreography was a response to such elemental forces. Similarly Kendall (1979 p.60) considers that Duncan inherited "the unique California way of seeing Nature".

4.22 HELLENIC ETHOS

The link between Duncan's work and ancient Greece is made throughout the literature on Duncan although the manner of the connection is variously described. Cortissoz (1909) is one of the few early writers to make the point (which Duncan also argued increasingly throughout her career) that her dance was inspired by ancient Greece

rather than an attempt to revive ancient Greek dance. In 1920 Duncan wrote "To revive the antique dances would be a task as impossible as it would be useless" (reprinted in Duncan 1928 pp.139-40). Nevertheless, much of the literature on Duncan persists in furthering the myth that Duncan considered her choreography "a revival of the Greek dance of antiquity" (Koegler 1982 p.133). At this juncture, however, the intention is not to debate the nature of the ancient Greek affinity as manifest in Duncan's work but to characterise the classical Hellenic ethos that existed in various forms and places during Duncan's lifetime and provided her with a context within which she developed her ideas.

Rather (1976 p.7) suggests that the Mediterranean-like climate of coastal California prompted the adoption of "the Greek impulse" by local philanthropists, the newly-rich and the artistically inclined. It was in this community, which built replicas of Greek theatres⁵ and considered its ambience to be that of ancient Greece, that Duncan grew up.⁶ The Californian pre-occupation with Greek ideals was not unique, however, for Flanner claims that Duncan's initial acceptance as a dancer in America was due to

the overpowering sentiment for Hellenic culture, even in the unschooled United States.

Flanner (1927 p.154)

When Duncan arrived in Europe she had more tangible access to the ancient Greek ideal. In London at the turn of the century she met the remaining members of the Pre-Raphaelite movement (notably Holman Hunt) and, more importantly, the 'English Philhellenes' who supported and promoted her work (Macdougall, 1946). It was no less a person than Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, a respected painter of ancient Greek and Roman scenes, who initiated her studies of ancient Greek artefacts in the British Museum.⁷ By 1903, with the financial success of her first

theatre performances, she was able to visit Greece and in her autobiography Duncan tells of the impact of this experience on the development of her dance. Duncan revisited Greece many times during her career. It is noted in Chapter 3 that Duncan once formed a chorus of Greek boys to accompany her in the ill-received danced version of Aeschylus' 'The Suppliants', but it was only for a short period in the Century Theatre, New York, that she experimented with the totality of Greek theatre (Macdougall 1960).

Generally it was in Duncan's notions of dance, rather than in her specific choreographic structures, that the Hellenic basis was evident and the way in which this source was used became more and more refined as Duncan developed her ideas. Thus Sorell (1966b p.31) considers that Duncan's "enthusiasm" for the Greeks was but a "detour" which enabled her "to find her way back to natural body expression". Tobias (1977 p.13) suggests that Duncan turned to Greek art and nature as "less corrupted sources" than the theatrical dance of her time. Brandenburg (1921, 2nd edition 1931) however, sees Duncan's Hellenism in a different light since he suggests that it encapsulated her ideas on women's rights, the freedom of the body and the nobleness of dance. Laban (1950a) also suggests that Duncan adopted the Greek "label" because it allowed her freedom in her dance and Ruyter (1979 p.37) concludes that Duncan believed "classical antiquity represented the ultimate in artistic achievement".

Duncan's essays and notes contain copious references to ancient Greece. These are linked to her own dance in discussion of topics such as form, harmony and natural movement (Duncan 1928). It seems evident that the Hellenic context provided her with one of the main ideals upon which to base her work and that this remained constant throughout her life.⁸

4.23 ROMANTICISM

Choreographers are rarely identified by writers on dance as belonging to general art movements such as "classicism" or "romanticism". Indeed in dance literature the terms "classic" and "romantic" have specific meanings, particularly in relation to ballet, that often have little regard to common usage.⁹ It is therefore of interest to find that many authors point to the romantic roots of Duncan's work in different ways. Duncan is seen as developing her work within the romantic or, more exactly, modern romantic context that prevailed in the early part of the twentieth century among the French painters and poets with whom she associated (Martin 1939 repub. 1965). Johnson (1948) even goes so far as to claim that Duncan belatedly and almost alone achieved the romantic revolution in dance.

However, to characterise Duncan as a "neo-romantic", as does Sorell (1971) might at first sight seem paradoxical since the Hellenic ethos of Duncan's work could legitimately be said to place her within the antithesis of romanticism, that of classicism. In fact Monahan (1976) does regard Duncan as initiating the anti-romantic dance movement of this century but, in making this distinction, he is referring to the romantic age in the development of ballet.

In the sense that romanticism can be held to embody notions of the artist's personal expression, (for example, see Palmer, W., 1945) and the artist as a disciple of beauty and nature (for example, see Kinney and Kinney 1914) then she can be placed within such a context. Furthermore romanticism, in this characterisation, is clearly related to Duncan's Californian derived beliefs. Similarly the disregard of traditions of order and form and the promotion of feeling, content and free expression also locate Duncan's work within a romantic idiom. In her particular art Duncan opposed a classical ballet tradition by means of the older classical tradition of ancient Greece with its adherence to what she considered to be a natural order and form. Thus

her Hellenic context is linked with that of romanticism and it is on this basis that Sorell (1971) identifies Duncan's work as rebelling against the "romantic classicism" of ballet and being within a neo-romantic context. Ruyter (1979 p.51) takes the notion of Duncan's romanticism further by distinguishing between her early "post-romanticism" and her "revolutionary romanticism of the 1920s".

4.24 EDUCATIONAL THEORIES

Duncan's beliefs on the education of children do not appear to have been formulated to any great extent before she left the USA. However, when she began to travel throughout Europe it is possible that the educational theories of Pestalozzi and Froebel (in evidence in the kindergartens of several countries) gave her a context within which she could begin to develop related ideas of dance in education (Barzell 1944).

Duncan (1927a) was familiar with Rousseau's writings and particularly impressed by his 'Emile'. She claimed that in her teaching, where children gained knowledge through music and dance, she was carrying out and developing Rousseau's ideas.¹⁰ In her schools Duncan endeavoured to combine the notion of freedom of self-expression through movement with the development of self control. This was, she insisted, the only way that children could "drop all materiality and move with a beauty so pure that they attain the highest expression of human living" (Duncan 1928 p.119).

Whereas Duncan's notions about the centrality of dance in life and as a performing art were considered revolutionary during her life time her ideas on education were not regarded as equally remarkable. Perhaps this is because she worked very much within guidelines formulated by leading past and contemporary educationists. An instance of this is given by Schneider (1968 p.78), the "secretary" of Duncan's Moscow school, who described the school curriculum as

oscillating between "the Dalton plan" and "the group method". There was a general acceptance in enlightened educational circles that children, especially young children, learned best by doing. Duncan worked within this framework and for her purposes developed the "learning by doing" to "learning by moving" and, eventually, to "learning by dancing".

4.25 PHILOSOPHICAL TRENDS AND THEORIES

In relation to the contexts described above it could be argued that since Duncan was born into and lived in them she had little or no choice concerning their nature and could only determine the degree to which she used them in the development of her ideas. However, the philosophical context was one which Duncan actively sought and pursued throughout her career. It is evident that she read much philosophy and deliberately made contact with some of the most respected thinkers of her time.¹¹ In her writings Duncan refers frequently to "philosophers" although it is important to note that she uses this term to include artists such as Beethoven and Blake.¹² Macdougall (1960 p.27) quotes and refutes Armitage's dismissive note that Duncan "carried along with her a jackdaw nest of half-read partially understood books" by claiming that she was well-read and instancing the Nietzsche volume that was always on her bedside table. Duncan (1928 p.108) wrote that Nietzsche's "'Birth of Tragedy' and 'Spirit of Music' are my Bible" and it was the German writer Karl Federn¹³ who helped her to translate and read 'Thus spake Zarathustra' during her 1902 visit to Germany (Macdougall 1960). In her autobiography Duncan (1927a p.111) refers to her study of German and the reading of "Schopenhauer and Kant in the original". At one time she believed that Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason' would provide her with the "inspiration for those movements of pure beauty which I sought" (Duncan 1927a p.141). Seroff (1971) also comments upon Duncan's

collection of German literature and her frequent annotations in the margins of her books. Nevertheless Duncan's taste in literature was not confined to German philosophical texts for Irma Duncan (1966) recalls that Duncan always travelled with a small selection of books that included Euripedes' plays, Sappho's poems and a D'Annunzio work inscribed to her.

Duncan (1927a) recounts that she first read Ernst Haeckel, the German biologist and philosopher, in the British Museum and because of her interest in his philosophy of monism wrote to him. A correspondence developed and Haeckel visited her at Bayreuth during the 1904 season. Duncan incorporated some of the Haeckelian philosophy into her own developing dance ideas and in a letter, written to Haeckel after the birth of her son Patrick in 1910, she stated confidently "this boy will be a monist" (Macdougall 1960 p.132).

4.26 SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Duncan's work and life-style gained immediate acceptance in the artistic circles in which she moved. However, the general social and political attitudes prevalent at the turn of the century, meant that Duncan was often regarded with hostility. As Johnston (1976 p.149) notes "in a Christian world dance ... [is] always suspect as an agent of corruption". Indeed, because of her commitment to revolutionise dance and, through the new dance forms, to change radically the life-patterns of mankind Duncan became a prime target in this respect.

One example of negative social attitudes, that of Duncan's audiences to her dance costumes, is cited in Chapter 3 but the 1899 New York attitudes to her so-called "nudity" were evident elsewhere. Duncan notes in her autobiography (1927a) that her English wealthy society audiences at the turn of the century were too polite to comment upon her costume but one of the reasons that forced the

closure of the Grunewald school in 1908 was the "Kaiserin's puritanical views" on the dress of the schoolchildren (Duncan, Irma, 1966 p.78). The school "uniform" that Duncan developed was an adaptation of the short Greek tunic and the resulting bare arms and legs provoked much hostility from the German authorities.

It was, therefore, against a background of what Duncan regarded as a repressive, morally dishonest, tradition-bound society that she began to develop her radical views on the rights and status of women. This also led her to espouse communism since she considered that a political system which was based on a capitalist, materialistic ethic would inevitably repress the working classes generally and women in particular in order to achieve its own selfish ends.¹⁴

By all accounts (for example, Werner, 1932) Duncan's particular brand of communism was naive and based less on an articulated theory and ideology than on an instinctive wish to support the poor against the rich. An example of the simplicity of her thinking in this respect occurred during her first few weeks in post-revolutionary Russia in 1921 when she was invited to an evening gathering of Communist party officials. Duncan arrived in her red dance tunic to find a recital of French songs in progress with

the comrades, solemn, contented and well-dressed ... just like any group of well-to-do middle class people in any part of the civilised world.

Duncan and Macdougall (1929 pp. 57-8)

Duncan was so incensed by what she regarded as typical bourgeois behaviour that she left immediately. The incident embarrassed the authorities and Lunacharsky, in an article entitled 'Our Guest' written soon afterwards, explained

at present Duncan is going through a phase of rather militant communism that sometimes, involuntarily, makes us smile.

quoted in Duncan and Macdougall (1929 p.61)

It is pertinent in the present consideration to note that Duncan's curtain speeches and press interviews usually began with a brief explanation of her dance and her beliefs about the centrality of dance to life. Since Duncan considered her dance to be a potential instrument of socio-political change this invariably, or as Duncan would have it, inevitably, moved on to statements of a wider social and political nature. It is also significant to note that the "war" dances and the communist-inspired dances choreographed by Duncan in her middle and late career were probably the first by any dancer to deal with such issues. The impact of these dances on audiences can be fully appreciated when it is realised that hitherto dance content had been almost entirely concerned with the telling of traditional stories and myths. Social and political comment through dance was a radical and startling innovation.

Duncan's commitment to social and political reform was such that it was not confined to her dance but pervaded her life. It was her adherence to communist ideals which prompted her to go to Moscow to set up a school in 1921. When she returned to the USA a year later this commitment earned her the label "Bolshevik" and her tour was ruined by the political and social wrath that she provoked. Even towards the end of life, when her hopes of total financial support from the Soviet Government for her Moscow school were unrealised and she returned to France, she joined demonstrations and attended meetings on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti¹⁵ (Seroff 1971) and remained politically active as well as continuing to press for social reform.

4.27 DANCE IN THE THEATRE

Apart from the dance of the music halls the only theatrical dance form which existed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was ballet. This, as with the prevailing socio-political context, provided Duncan with another point

of departure. During the formative stages of her career Duncan did take some lessons in ballet but by 1902/3, in the essay 'The Dance of the Future', Duncan had already begun to formulate ideas on the development of "the new school of dance". She was able to contrast this sharply with ballet which she saw as

vainly striving against the natural laws of gravitation or the natural will of the individual, and working in discord in its form and movement with the form and movement of nature.

Duncan (1928 p.55)

Duncan's objection to ballet as a legitimate art form was based on her abhorrence of both its choreographic principles and its effect on dancers' bodies.

Under the skirts ... are dancing deformed muscles. Look still further - under the muscles are deformed bones. A deformed skeleton is dancing before you. The deformation through incorrect dress and incorrect movement is the result of the training necessary to the ballet.

The ballet condemns itself by enforcing the deformation of the beautiful women's body. No historical, no choreographic reasons can prevail against that!

Duncan (1928 p.56)

Duncan's first visit to St. Petersburg in 1904 brought her into close contact with the Imperial Ballet with all its tradition and Tsarist patronage. During this visit Duncan was warmly welcomed by the ballet fraternity whereas, as she noted in her autobiography, she "had been used to receiving only coldness and enmity from the ballet in Bayreuth" (1927a p.163) and this experience caused her to modify her views. She still considered herself "an enemy to the ballet" although now she acknowledged the performing skills of Kschessinska and Pavlova and was impressed by the latter's discipline and commitment. However, a visit to the Imperial Ballet School¹⁶ to see various classes only served to convince Duncan that the ballet was a "false and preposterous art, in fact, outside the pale of all art" (Duncan 1927a p.164).

It is axiomatic that any new art form must relate, however negatively, to the old that it departs from or replaces and it is in this sense that ballet functioned as a context against which Duncan was able to formulate a vision of the new dance. It must be acknowledged that the ballet as known by Duncan at the turn of the century was at a low ebb in its development and had yet to experience the revitalisation of the Diaghilev era. Nevertheless, it was perhaps the very nature of the impoverished state of ballet that was one of the factors which spurred Duncan to revolutionise the dance.

The omission of a context termed "dance in society" could be challenged since Duncan held very strong views on the prevailing social dances of her time. She considered dances such as the Foxtrot, Charleston and Blackbottom "indecent" and "essentially sterile and futile" (Duncan 1928 p.125). To replace these Duncan actively promoted her own notions of a free dance form for all as proposed in her essay 'I See America Dancing' (Duncan 1928). However, this aspect is peripheral to the present examination of her work in the theatre although her polemic writings on the subject relate to the overall development and structure of her ideas on dance.

4.3 Influences

A preliminary perusal of the literature on Duncan might suggest that since she met and knew many people eminent in various fields, particularly the arts, she would inevitably have been influenced by them. However, a more detailed examination of this literature in conjunction with Duncan's writings on dance suggests that if she was influenced at all by her contemporaries this was only in particular cases and then to limited degrees.

A general example of this can be seen in Duncan's second and third New Gallery performances in London in 1900 and her subsequent

career. On the advice of several well-known British artists Duncan took music and painting respectively as the inspiration for the two performances. However, as Duncan gradually developed her repertoire it was the dances composed with music that almost entirely dominated her programmes. Even the most famous of her art inspired dances, that based on Botticelli's 'La Primavera', seems to have disappeared from her repertoire soon after 1908 (see Appendix A).

Therefore at this particular juncture it is relevant to consider briefly those people who might legitimately be considered to have exerted some lasting influence upon Duncan and thus helped to "shape" her ideas on dance. Ruyter's (1979) text is particularly illuminating in this respect.

4.31 CHILDHOOD INFLUENCES: MARY DORA GRAY DUNCAN AND FRANCOIS DELSARTE

Kendall's point (1979 p.11) that the dance innovators of the USA were all women and "it was usually the mothers of these dancers who formed them" is particularly apt in relation to Duncan. Mary Dora Gray Duncan taught her children dance, music and poetry and encouraged them to read widely.

It was almost a European education she gave her youngest daughter, almost a courtesan's training, but with an American crusading edge.

Kendall (1979 p.11)

The early influences of Mrs. Duncan on her youngest daughter are traced in detail by Ruyter (1979). Kendall (1979 p.58) considers that at home Duncan was "indoctrinated into dress reform and Delsarte and defiant feminism".¹⁷ The Delsartean authority Shawn also claims that Mrs. Duncan had studied Delsarte and that her daughter would have been familiar with Delsarte's teachings (Shawn 1954 2nd edition 1963). Whether or not Duncan did receive any systematic Delsarte teaching other than that from her mother has yet to be established although

most of the evidence would seem to suggest that Duncan was very familiar with the Delsarte philosophy of movement as expression.¹⁸ Thus Barzel (1944) refers to Duncan using the poem 'I shot an arrow into the air', which appeared in one of the Delsarte manuals, in her early teaching in San Francisco; Craig (in Rood 1978) claims that Duncan had a Delsarte book in her possession and Macdougall (1960) quotes from an interview given by Duncan to a New York dance magazine in which she acknowledged Delsarte's work and its value to dance. Shawn (1954 2nd edition 1963) dates this publication as March 1898.

Neither Delsarte nor his immediate pupils applied his theories to dance, indeed during Delsarte's lifetime and the last quarter of the nineteenth century the prevailing social and theatrical dance forms would not have been obvious candidates for a Delsartean influence.

Delsarte was primarily concerned with the study of gesture and its expressive content and this led him to devise a complex system of "laws" and "orders" of movement which were metaphysically based. Delsarte's work in the USA was developed mainly by Steele Mackaye and Genevieve Stebbins who respectively, formulated "harmonic gymnastics" (Shawn 1954 2nd edition 1963) and "aesthetic gymnastics" (Stebbins 1885 6th edition 1902 republished 1977).¹⁹

It is likely, therefore, that Duncan would have assimilated from the Delsarte method²⁰ and its variants a number of "poses", deemed to be expressive of certain states of feeling, and a range of gestures that were designed to accompany prose and verse reading. Whether Duncan actually incorporated any of these movements into her dances is not known although Kendall (1979) considers this likely. However, where Delsarte's influence can be identified clearly is in one of Duncan's central notions that all movement is expressive and dance is particularly so. It is on this premise that Duncan developed much of her work. In addition Ruyter (1979 p.38) proposes a Stebbins-Delsarte influence on Duncan in her prizing of classical Greek art and her

linking of the "physical and spiritual".

4.32 EARLY THEATRICAL INFLUENCE: LOIE FULLER

Loie Fuller (1862-1928), who transformed the "skirt dances" of the music halls into movement and light spectacles, is often shown in the dance geneologies as both preceding Duncan and influencing her (for example, Kraus 1969). Kermode (1962) demonstrates that Fuller's career was well established by the time Duncan arrived in Europe. There is little doubt, too, that Fuller was instrumental in Duncan's move from private salon performances to dancing in public theatres (for example, Fuller 1913, Macdonald 1977b) although Duncan herself does not acknowledge such help. However, the exact nature of any Fuller influence on Duncan is less easy to determine.²¹ Fuller was not a dancer, in the sense of focussing on the body and its movement for intrinsic purposes. She was concerned with the play of coloured lights upon multi-coloured diaphanous and voluminous material which she wore and manipulated by means of long sticks. She added to these effects by using mirrors and exploiting the newly available possibilities of electric lighting.

De Morinni (1942) states that Fuller antedated Duncan in three distinct ways. Firstly, Fuller used classical music as accompaniment to her work, secondly, she subscribed to the "theory of spontaneous bodily movement to express emotion" and thirdly she trained young dancers "to demonstrate her personal theories" (de Morinni 1942 p.51). However, it is debatable how far Fuller's antedating justifiably constitutes an influence. During Duncan's association with Fuller between 1900 and 1902 it is likely that as a young dancer, eager to develop her own career, she might well have assimilated some of Fuller's ideas. Nevertheless, de Morinni's first point concerning the use of music is not borne out in practice. Whereas Fuller chose Beethoven, Chopin, Gluck and Schubert as accompaniment, as the aural

complement to the visual, Duncan used, and had used prior to meeting Fuller, much the same music but for wider purposes. Duncan needed music in order to gain personal inspiration and to start her "motor power" (Duncan 1927a p.75), a prerequisite for both her choreographing and performing.

De Morinni's second aspect of Fuller's work, that of bodily movement expressing emotion, is obviously also a central premise of Duncan's. However, it is possible to distinguish between Fuller's use of the almost hidden body to initiate and control the movement of fabrics which, under changing lights, were seen to depict a range of emotions and Duncan's virtual stripping of the body in order for its expressive potential to be realised. De Morinni's third point concerning Fuller's antedating of Duncan is in relation to teaching and here, too, it is evident that a difference in kind can be established. Fuller had a small company of young dancers and her teaching was directed solely towards their stage performances with her. On the other hand Duncan's various schools, founded on her beliefs in education through dance, were mainly for quite young children and, although the older pupils did perform in public for various reasons, Duncan was adamant that she was not educating her pupils for a dance career (Macdougall 1960).

If de Morinni's three points on which Fuller antedated Duncan are seen not as a direct influence, because clearly this is untenable, but as a general climate within which Fuller worked, then Duncan might well have taken some of these notions as starting points. In her autobiography, Duncan (1927a p.95) expresses her wonder and admiration for Fuller's genius, her "sorcery of light, colour, flowing form", and it is likely that it was Fuller's total theatricality rather than specific aspects of it that impressed and influenced Duncan. While Duncan was working and touring with Fuller her own dance was still

rooted in its salon performance context and, therefore, what Duncan probably gained from Fuller was a notion of the theatrical potential of her dance and some knowledge of the use of light in presenting dance.

Thus the influence of Fuller on Duncan can best be seen in terms of Duncan's development as a dancer within the theatre. There is no evidence to suggest that Fuller influenced Duncan's choreography but it seems tenable that since Fuller's association with Duncan was at an early crucial stage during which Duncan needed to master certain theatrical skills of presentation then some of these were probably gained from Fuller.²²

4.33 MUSIC INFLUENCE: RICHARD WAGNER

Duncan's Bayreuth season in 1904 and the subsequent development of Wagnerian works in her repertoire is noted in Chapter 3 but the influence of Wagner's music and theories on Duncan was one that endured throughout her life.

According to Duncan (1927a) Cosima Wagner initially had reservations concerning Duncan's interpretations of the 'Bacchanal dance' in 'Tannhauser' but, having consulted some of Wagner's unpublished descriptions of the way in which he envisaged the performance, she became convinced that Duncan's choreography was appropriate. This claim of an intuitive sympathy with Wagner's works is not completely endorsed in the ensuing reviews of the critics although Macdougall (1960) quotes from a contemporary report in which Duncan's performance is praised and the Duncan interpretation seen as the future style for Bayreuth.

Whether or not Duncan influenced subsequent Bayreuth performances her Bayreuth experience had a profound and lasting effect upon her. During the long rehearsals Duncan was involved in many discussions on Wagnerian theories and "was in constant state of intoxication from

[the] music" (Duncan 1927a p.145). Two authors cite this experience as responsible for Duncan's shift from a Greek to a German allegiance. Mazo (1977) suggests that, following the disastrous 1904 tour with 'The Suppliants', Duncan abandoned her Greek notions, eagerly embraced the German philosophers and regarded the Wagnerian romanticism and mysticism as the epitome of an ideal to which she herself subscribed. Heppenstall (1936 p.99), considers that Duncan "shifted her allegiance with no great effort" since for her the "Hellenic Aphrodite" and "Wagner's sonorously lavish Teuton Venus" were "cognate persons of Love Incarnate in Woman's Form".

The Wagnerian influence on Duncan can be assessed in part by the number of works in her repertoire which were based on his music. In addition to at least two distinct Wagner programmes Duncan also incorporated shorter dances using Wagner compositions into her performances of works by several composers. However, the Wagnerian influence went beyond the use of his music for Duncan considered that his philosophy of the relatedness of the arts was also hers.

He was the first to conceive of the dance as born of music. This is my conception of the dance also, and for it I strive in the work of my school. For in the depths of every musical theme of Wagner, dances will be found: monumental sculpture, movement which only demands release and life.

Duncan (1928 p.105)

This quotation is from a short essay on Wagner published in a French journal in 1921 in the form of a letter. Its beginning is forthright since Duncan terms "petty" the ban on Wagner performances in some countries during the 1914-18 war. She goes on to praise him as "the glorious far-seeing prophet, liberator of the art of the future" (Duncan 1928 p.105). In her autobiography written several years later Duncan returns to the Wagnerian theme. She cites Wagner as one of "the three great precursors of the Dance in our century"²³ and considers that he created dance in "sculptural form" (Duncan 1927a

p.341).

The Wagnerian influence on Duncan can be summarised as that of a fellow artist whose works inspired some of her greatest dances and whose ideas were so similar to her own that Duncan felt her pioneering in dance echoed that of Wagner in music. Wagner provided Duncan with an endorsement of her artistic ideals and, whether or not the initial Wagnerian influence occurred at a time when the original Greek inspiration was fading, it remained with her throughout the rest of her life.

4.34 THEATRICAL PRESENTATION: GORDON CRAIG

The intensive period of the Craig-Duncan relationship lasted from late 1904 to early 1907 and thereafter, although the two artists met only occasionally, they corresponded intermittently until the mid 1920s (Steegmuller 1974). Edward Craig (1968), in his biography of his father, recounts the general ways in which Craig and Duncan inspired each other. He believes that each released creative energy in the other but the process exhausted them.

Craig and Duncan had much in common. Duncan had long admired Ellen Terry, Craig's mother, both revered Walt Whitman, although for different reasons (Steegmuller 1974), and both sought a return to "nature" and the "natural" (Rood 1978). Their joint passion for the theatre and their discussions on the subject are revealed in their correspondence and recounted in their autobiographies. Duncan's particular use of scenery and costume is discussed in detail in Chapter 7 but here it is pertinent to consider the degree to which Craig may have influenced her choice in these matters.

In all her theatre performances Duncan used a simple draping of blue or blue-grey curtains and Macdonald (1977c) notes that Craig and Duncan argued "indefinitely" about which of them devised this set. Duncan (1927a) claims that on first seeing her dance Craig accused her

of stealing his decor but she insisted that she had used such curtains since childhood. Steegmuller (1974 p.24) includes a sketch drawn by Craig of the Berlin concert-hall platform on which he first saw Duncan perform together with notes on the "nice dark grey curtains" which were hung between wooden Greek columns "about five and a half feet high". In a letter written to Duncan in 1908, Craig accused her of "a direct case of piracy" (Steegmuller 1974 p.303) but in a note written a year later he refers to her March 1909 performances in Paris:

it was here that she first used the great blue curtains some twenty or twenty-five feet high which followed my designs as may be seen in my 'The Art of the Theatre' ... and which I had made in 1901-2-3.

quoted by Duncan, Irma, (1966 p.79)

The issue, therefore, seems to turn not on the curtains themselves but on their height, Craig insisting as late as 1952 that Duncan originally used small curtains "not much taller than she was herself" (in Rood 1978 p.248) and that the long curtains were his idea, while Duncan maintained that she had always used the simple curtain set, but not being specific about height.

The matter might conveniently rest there but it is interesting to note further conflicting evidence. On several occasions Craig denied that he had ever designed sets for Duncan (as in Steegmuller 1974) although Shaw, M., (1929 p.58) writes of Craig "doing decors for Isadora". In his magazine 'The Mask', published in August 1908 soon after Duncan's successful London performances, Craig wrote under a pseudonym

the scene used by Miss Isadora Duncan, which everyone has taken for the work of Mr. Gordon Craig is not by him, but is rather a poor imitation of his work. We would have thought Miss Duncan the last person in the world to have been satisfied with an imitation.

reprinted in Rood (1978 p.219)

In the light of such recrimination it is relevant to recall

Steegmuller's (1974) point that on several occasions during his long life Craig amended his early diaries and notebooks. The Craig notes of the 1904 Berlin performance referred to above have one such alteration, the original height given for the curtains has been obliterated and "5 1/2 feet" written underneath. It is not known when this amendment was made although, according to Steegmuller (1974), the sketch was drawn in Craig's copy of Duncan's autobiography published after her death in 1927.

Whether or to what degree Craig influenced Duncan in her choice of set remains unresolved but Craig (writing anonymously in 'The Mask' in October 1911 republished in Rood 1978) claims that Duncan also imitated him in her abolition of footlights. However, this possible example of a Craig influence is not repeated elsewhere in the Duncan literature. In addition Kendall (1979 p.169) attributes to Craig the "long, trailing one-piece robes" worn by Duncan's chorus in Schubert's 'Ave Maria' and 'Slow March'. This latter claim is similarly problematic since Kendall refers to Duncan's 1917 concert in Los Angeles and it appears from other sources (for example, NYPL 1974) that the 'Ave Maria' was first performed in 1914, many years after Craig and Duncan had separated.

It is, therefore, difficult to itemise and instance particular ways in which Craig influenced Duncan although most authors who focus upon the Craig-Duncan relationship, such as Craig, E.A., (1968), Steegmuller (1974) and Macdonald (1977c) clearly accept that Craig both inspired and influenced Duncan. Duncan met and lived with Craig at a crucial point in her career. By late 1904 Duncan had established herself in central Europe as an outstanding innovative artist who, through sheer powers of performance, had gained acceptance for a new theatre dance genre. She had developed her ideas of dance virtually unaided and she found that her notions of dance as performance fitted almost exactly into Craig's total concept of

theatre. To use Rood's (1978 p.xiii) words "in Craig, Duncan found the theoretic basis for her dancing". Craig thus provided Duncan with a personal affirmation of her work, both in content and presentation, and the inspiration to pursue her ideas further.

The exclusion of Constantin Stanislavsky from the section on influences could be criticised on the grounds that authors such as Rene²⁴ (1963) and Roslavleva (1965) have linked Duncan's and Stanislavsky's work. From Duncan's accounts of her meetings and discussions with Stanislavsky, together with Stanislavsky's own autobiographical writings (1927a and 1924 respectively), it is evident that the two artists held each other's work in high esteem. Other sources (for example, Seroff 1971, Steegmuller 1974) note that Duncan and Stanislavsky found that their innovative ideas in their different art forms in essence had common roots. Nevertheless, it is contended here that their creative rapport and a discovery of shared artistic ideals did not cause a discernible change of direction in Duncan's work nor a re-emphasis in any particular element of it. It is for this reason that Stanislavsky, along with other artists, is not included in the section dealing with identifiable influences on Duncan.

4.4 Summary

The contexts and influences characterised in this chapter are neither totally exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. In addition, the consideration of them here is pursued only at a level sufficient for the background to Duncan's work to be articulated. Nevertheless such a clarification provides a basis from which a further refutation of some of the myths can be made. Duncan's childhood and adolescence may well have been unorthodox but in it the origins of many of the values she held in her adult life and most of her revolutionary ideas about

dance can be traced.

Her lifestyle in which, among many freedoms, she claimed the right to bear children without marrying, to dress in unrestrictive clothes, to become a communist and to champion the plight of the underprivileged was readily regarded as unconventional, and easily became caricatured as "immoral". Yet, given Duncan's background, her chosen way of life is understandable and, from Duncan's point of view, was a logical outcome of fundamental beliefs firmly held. Indeed, Duncan considered the society that castigated her was itself immoral. This is clear from her condemnation of the social dance crazes of the 1920s (see Duncan 1928) and her public accusations in response to censorship during her 1922/3 American tour.

Parallel to this, Duncan's pioneering work in dance can be seen to be rooted in an interacting set of contexts and influences. Her achievements in dance are neither less remarkable nor less significant when her background is examined, but a knowledge of her formative experiences does enable much of her work to be understood. For example, her allegiance to the dance of ancient Greece is seen as a genuine attempt to discover the fundamentals of dance rather than merely being anachronistic, a frequently made criticism. Similarly, Duncan's reform of dance costume can be recognised as a response to deeply held convictions about the body and "natural" movement instead of just an intuitive reaction against the ornate ballet costumes of her day.

Duncan, therefore, must be studied as a woman and as an artist whose life and career developed in the context of a particular culture, place and time and in relation to the people with whom she associated. Such a statement is, in some senses, obvious and trite, yet in the examination of Duncan's work it is necessary to consider

her within such parameters in order to penetrate beyond the myths and half-truths so commonly associated with her.

CHAPTER 4 NOTES

- 1 Duncan always travelled with a copy of Whitman's collected works 'Leaves of Grass' (Steegmuller 1974) It was to this that she referred in her autobiography (see Ch. 1).
- 2 Duncan was not the only American dancer of her time to admire Whitman; Ted Shawn (1926 p.64) wrote "it is my constant and sincere prayer that my own consciousness be expanded to the point that I may be a Whitman of the dance".
- 3 Macdonald (1977e p.47) notes that both Duncan and her brother "rather unsuitably" wore Greek robes for these performances. This is less incongruous when the totality of the contexts in which the Duncans worked is understood.
- 4 Craig quotes the Whitman line "I charge you that you found no school after me" (Craig, E.G. 1957 p.262).
- 5 Rather (1976) tells of Duncan's disappointment when, on her return to San Francisco in late 1917, she was refused permission to dance at the University of California's Greek Theatre where the St. Denis and Shawn Company, which included Martha Graham at that time, had already performed.
- 6 Bolitho (1929 p.192) notes that the whole Duncan family embraced the Greek ideal although "it never occurred to them to learn Greek".
- 7 In a 1903 statement Duncan refers to "the studies of the ancient Greek vases which permitted me to reconstruct the movements of the antique dance", probably an indication of her original intent (quoted by Macdougall 1960 p.54).
- 8 Two authors claim that Duncan changed her allegiance from the Greeks to the German philosophers during her Bayreuth season in 1904 (see Section 4.33). The rest of the literature on Duncan as well as Duncan's own post-1904 writings does not support this assertion which, even if it were the case, would suggest at the most only a temporary abandonment of her Hellenic ideals.
- 9 In ballet the basic training of the 'danse d'école', which evolved from its beginnings at the turn of the 18th century into a detailed and codified system, is known as the classical ballet technique. In this instance "classical" is used without reference to ancient Greece or Rome (see Vaganova 1953). In contrast what is termed "the romantic period" in ballet is related to the romantic movement in the arts generally although it began later than in the other arts and was spent by the mid 19th century. In its specific characteristics romantic ballet did not reflect all the innovations associated with the romantic movement but its points of departure from existing traditions were very similar (see Guest 1966).
- 10 Ruyter (1979 p.43) draws attention to Duncan's selectivity in regard to Rousseau's theories since she chose to ignore "his prescription for the education of the girl-child" (p.43).
- 11 This is not to suggest that Duncan had any great insights of a philosophical nature or that her writings were distinguished in this respect. However, such an interest is uncommon amongst dancers.
- 12 Macdougall (1946 p.62) describes Duncan's copy of Gilchrist's 'Life of Blake' in which Duncan and Craig had made "copious marginal notes" on both the text and the illustrations.
- 13 Duncan's 'Dance of the future' was published in Germany (c1903) as 'Der Tanz der Zukunft' in a Federn translation.

- 14 In a curtain speech after a matinée performance at the Prince of Wales Theatre London, Duncan "expressed great sympathy with the 'poor miners' who were involved in strike action at the time (Anon 16th April 1921 Daily Herald). Later that year in a press interview, prior to her departure for Russia, she related "the story of how she refused to dance for a Christmas charity dinner for the poor children from the East side of New York, she said, in a gentle voice, 'I hate charity! Rich men work women blind in sweatshops and then endow eye hospitals'" (Anon 25th June 1921 Daily Herald).
- 15 Sacco and Vanzetti, radical agitators, were executed in 1927 for murder although it was suspected at the time that the verdict was influenced by their political opinions.
- 16 Bourman (1937) recalls Duncan visiting the Imperial Ballet School at St. Petersburg (where he and Nijinsky were both pupils) and dancing for the assembled school. It is not clear whether this visit was in 1904 or on Duncan's return visit the following year.
- 17 François Delsarte (1811-1871), a Frenchman, formulated laws and principles on the "art of expression". In the USA his work was expanded from its application to elocution to include physical culture and the promotion of an aesthetic life style.
- 18 Macdougall (1960) claims that on arrival in Paris Duncan wanted to meet Delsarte unaware that he had died some thirty years earlier.
- 19 Kendall (1979) indicates that Duncan's New York salon performances in 1899 were instigated by Genevieve Stebbins.
- 20 See Ruyter (1979) for an account of "American Delsartism".
- 21 One source claims that Duncan was a pupil of Fuller's and proposes certain similarities and differences in their dance styles (Anon November 1927 Dancing Times).
- 22 It is interesting to note that at least one writer, i.e. Van Vechten (1957 repub. 1974) claims that in the latter part of her career it was Fuller who was influenced by Duncan's choreography.
- 23 The other two were Beethoven and Nietzsche.
- 24 Rene subsequently wrote under the name Roslavleva.

CHAPTER 5

DUNCAN'S DANCES AND PERFORMANCES

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Choreographic output
- 5.3 Choice of accompaniment
- 5.4 Repertoire
- 5.5 Programmes
- 5.6 Summary

5.1 Introduction

The secondary written materials, especially the general texts, are instanced in Chapter 1 as the source from which many of the legends associated with Duncan are propagated. The dance texts are also not without their myths and inaccuracies about Duncan. This is particularly the case in discussion of her dances and performances. She is popularly described as being an improviser (rather than a choreographer) with a limited repertoire performed in expressive rapport with the music of certain classical composers.

Her performances (though carefully prepared for) were improvisatory, relying on her personal magnetism and emotional response to music.

Clarke and Vaughan (1977 p.128)

In this chapter the focus is on those overall aspects of Duncan's work as a choreographer and dancer which are generally misunderstood, ignored or even unknown. Each of four overall aspects selected relates to a particularly important part of Duncan's work. Her choreographic output and her choice of accompaniment are crucial in the consideration of Duncan as a choreographer and her repertoire and programmes are significant in relation to Duncan as a dancer.

At this juncture no attempt is made to carry the descriptions of the four aspects into making over-arching judgements about Duncan's work. Similarly this is not the place to suggest any principles by which she might have developed these aspects of her work. The

selected aspects are described here as a prerequisite for the detailed analysis and discussion undertaken in Parts II and III.

The material used in this chapter is derived from factual evidence collected and collated and much of it is presented in ChoreoChronicles A and B. ChoreoChronicle A (see Appendix A) lists the dances that Duncan choreographed and performed and ChoreoChronicle B (see Appendix B) lists her choreography for her pupils' public performance. Each choreoChronicle consists of the titles of dances in alphabetical order, the accompaniment used (if any) and the year in which the work was choreographed or, more usually, premièred. In addition subsequent performances are indicated.¹ The latter is an innovation in the normal pattern of choreoChronicles and its value to the study is that it enables the discussion of Duncan's choreographic output to be extended through time to include such aspects as the frequency of performance of her dances and their duration in her repertoire.

5.2 Choreographic output

The description begins with an initial consideration of Duncan's total number of works and moves to a brief characterisation of her single and composite dances and her solo and group choreography. ChoreoChronicle A provides the basis for the discussion of the yearly incidence of new works by Duncan and ChoreoChronicle B is used for a consideration of Duncan's choreography for her pupils' public performance. In the final sub-division the reconstructed dances are typified and their place within Duncan's total choreographic output noted.

5.21 TOTAL NUMBER OF WORKS CHOREOGRAPHED

In art forms other than dance the systematic chronicling of the work of an artist can normally be taken for granted and listings of oeuvres provide the base line for subsequent study and analysis. In dance the presentation of choreochronicles is a comparatively recent phenomenon and largely confined to choreographers of the mid-twentieth century onwards.²

In Duncan's case two choreochronicles have been published though neither is comprehensive. McDonagh (1977) and Pruett (1978) each list about 80 dances, which have been culled mainly from American sources, in their Duncan choreochronicles.³ The total number of dances given in Choreochronicles A and B is 214. Of these 160 are Duncan's choreography for her public performance and 54 for public performance by her pupils. Because of the incomplete nature of some of the evidence used the total must be regarded as interim but even so it is considerably in excess of any given elsewhere in the literature on Duncan.

The paucity of choreochronicles for early twentieth century choreographers makes it difficult to draw meaningful parallels in quantitative terms between Duncan's choreographic output and that of other choreographers. Nevertheless, it is of interest to view the number of Duncan's dance compositions in relation to two choreographers contemporary with her and working in the same modern idiom. McDonagh (1977 p.74) credits Ruth St. Denis with 144 choreographed works, spread over a longer period of time than that of Duncan, and Martha Graham with "over 150 dances".⁴ However, since neither St. Denis nor Graham choreographed for young pupils or choreographed as many extended and full length works as Duncan it is not profitable to pursue the matter of quantity further other than to note that in making these comparisons Duncan's choreographic output appears at the least to be considerable, particularly when her shorter

creative span is taken into account.

5.22 SINGLE AND COMPOSITE WORKS

Most of Duncan's dances were composed as single, distinct entities although they were sometimes performed as a suite, a device used particularly for the presentation of works such as the Chopin etudes. Other compositions were full-length works which consisted of a number of separate but related pieces and these are best regarded as composite in nature. The composite works, all of which used Gluck or Wagner opera scores as accompaniment, were often choreographed over a number of years with Duncan adding to the original parts and interspersing contrasting new pieces so that eventually a full length dance evolved.

One example of a Duncan composite work is her 'Iphigenia' using Gluck's opera scores.⁵ She first danced to a few excerpts in 1904 and then quickly choreographed sufficient material to make this an extended work by the end of 1905. For her London season in July 1908 Duncan presented 'Iphigenia' as a full length work in twenty-one parts of which the first, the overture, was performed by the orchestra alone. Another example of a composite work is Duncan's 'Orpheus' but this, unlike 'Iphigenia', was choreographed over a comparatively long span of time. In her 1900 salon performances Duncan used three short extracts from Gluck's opera score but it was not until 1911 that 'Orpheus' was performed in large theatres as a full length work occupying the whole of the programme. By this time it consisted of twenty-three dances (NYPL 1974).⁶

Duncan's single and composite works in themselves present interesting areas for further examination and together they offer potential grounds for a comparative study. For example, an examination of a single dance would reveal the features of Duncan's choreography at the particular time it was created while, in contrast,

a study of one of the composite dances would indicate developments in Duncan's work over the period of composition it encapsulated.

5.23 SOLO AND GROUP WORKS

Duncan did not have the opportunity to choreograph for or to perform with a dance company.⁷ Therefore, it is not surprising that with only two exceptions all the dances listed in Choreochronicle A were originally conceived of as solos. One of the exceptions, 'L'Internationale' choreographed in 1921, was composed as a group dance to perform with her Russian pupils. Even so Duncan took the solo parts and eventually performed it outside Russia in the solo version. The other dance which, from its inception, was designed for a group used movements from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. This was not performed during Duncan's lifetime and was premièred in 1933 by Irma Duncan and her group (Duncan, Irma, 1966).

Some of Duncan's dances remained as solos in her repertoire for over twenty years but others were soon augmented with small and larger group dances for up to twelve dancers so that her pupils could perform with her. Even with the addition of group dances, however, these works were dominated by Duncan's solos. Irma Duncan, in recalling the 'Parsifal' performances, comments

Isadora tolerated no solo dancing by her disciples in our joint appearances.⁸

Duncan, Irma, (1966 p.203)

This is corroborated by an account of the 18th June 1921 London performance of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, the 'Pathétique', in which it is clear that although the section in five-four time in the second movement was danced as a trio by Irma, Lisa and Theresa Duncan they did not have any solo parts.⁹ They also danced the scherzo with Duncan but she performed the other movements of the symphony alone.

Thus the works listed in Choreochronicle A all reflect Duncan's

conception of herself as a solo performer with her pupils, on the occasions when they appeared with her, always providing the chorus or dancing small group interludes between her main solos.

Duncan's choreography for her pupils' public performances in which she did not dance exhibit other features and these are discussed in Section 5.25.

5.24 YEARLY INCIDENCE OF NEW WORKS

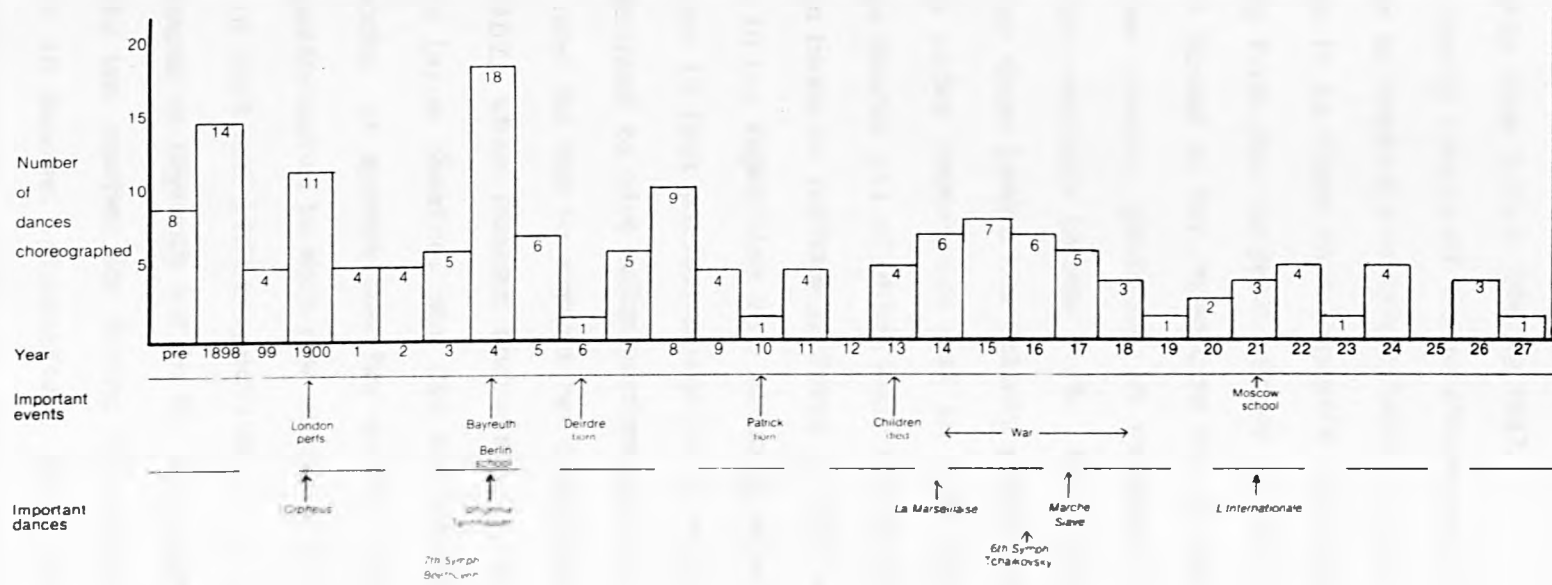
There are many factors which could be adduced as influencing Duncan's choreographic output. Certainly the financing of her schools and the need to produce new programmes for successive tours were important but these were not the sole motivating force. An examination of her yearly production of new compositions reveals some interesting facts and indicates some patterns in her choreographic output.

The earliest dates of dances given in Choreochronicle A are generally first performance dates since in only a few cases is the period in which the work was choreographed known.¹⁰ It is, of course, an accepted feature of the performing arts that the day on which a work is premièred is taken to be its date of origin and dance is no exception to this. However, if it can be assumed that the first performance dates of works in Choreochronicle A¹¹ followed immediately or very soon after the choreography has been completed¹² then it is possible to gain some indication of Duncan's creative periods and the degree to which she maintained her choreographic output during her lifetime.

The yearly incidence of works Duncan choreographed has been abstracted from Choreochronicle A and is presented in Table III (see following page). From this it is evident that she choreographed at least one new work every year except in 1912 when she spent much of

Table III

Isadora Duncan (b 1877 d 1927) Number of dances choreographed yearly



her time with Paris Singer, and in 1925, when she was pre-occupied with pressing financial matters. This would seem to be a strong indication that she retained her creative powers throughout her career and choreographed consistently from before 1898 to 1927.

Furthermore, if the yearly totals of works choreographed are examined, and this implies an emphasis on quantitative rather than qualitative concerns, then it is clear that Duncan's choreographic output varied considerably from year to year. Prior to 1898 Duncan appears to have had about 8 dances in her repertoire but in that year she added at least 14 new pieces, probably in response to her relatively successful salon recitals in New York. Her arrival in Europe and, particularly, her three London New Gallery performances in 1900 necessitated a much wider repertoire and in this year she choreographed 11 or so new dances all of which were fairly short in length. By the time Duncan began to perform in Paris in 1901 she had a total of about 40 works in her repertoire and, although some of the early compositions were not in fact performed again, it would seem that as long as Duncan continued to give salon performances or single recitals there was little need for her to augment her programmes.

Nevertheless in 1902, when Duncan successfully made the transition from salon to large theatre, she did not immediately respond by creating new works. It appears that her current repertoire sufficed for her initial performances in each new venue with only the 4 and 5 additions made in 1902 and 1903 respectively. It was not until 1904, when Duncan danced at Bayreuth and in St. Petersburg, that a high point of creativity was reached for during this twelve-month period she choreographed 18 dances. Thereafter, Duncan's yearly choreographic output declined steadily until her death although there were three further periods of relative creative intensity: firstly during 1907-9 between the birth of her children, when she choreographed 18 dances, secondly in 1914-17, when she composed 24

works, including some of her "war" inspired dances, and lastly following her arrival in Moscow in 1921 to found her school when she choreographed 4 dances in 1922. After her return to France towards the end of 1924 Duncan did not create any new works for over a year but in 1926, the year before her death, she choreographed 3 dances.

This brief overview of Duncan's choreographic output raises several points, some of which are expanded in later stages of the present study. For example, in Table III, ^{the} yearly incidence of Duncan's new works is shown alongside major events in her life. This is for ease of cross-reference to her chronology and does not imply an exact relationship between her life experience and her choreographic acts since this would be to simplify a complex area that involves some fundamental conceptual problems in the field of aesthetics. The life/art relationship is returned to in Chapter 9 section 9.2.

Other topics which arise from the overview are marginal to the present study but are noted here as possible areas for further work. For example, it is possible to project a causal connection between Duncan as a choreographer and Duncan as a dancer. Since Duncan choreographed mainly for her own performance her creative impetus might have been either curtailed by the decline in her physical powers as a performer or she may have been stimulated to explore new areas. Nevertheless, the contradictory evidence concerning Duncan's last performance in July 1927 would seem to indicate that the relationship would not be an easy one to explicate.¹³ A further conjecture that could be based on the evidence presented in Table III is whether Duncan still had choreographic potential when she died in 1927 or, as is claimed in much of the literature, her creative powers were already almost at an end by this time.

The year by year listing of Duncan's work yields a base line which establishes certain facts about her choreographic output in

terms of yearly quantities. This is, of course, only a preliminary concern particularly since the focus is solely on quantitative matters. However, discussions of the artistic worth and merit of her choreography, the subject of the later stages of the present study, must necessarily be rooted in such factual evidence.

5.25 DUNCAN'S CHOREOGRAPHY FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCE BY HER PUPILS

The 54 dances listed in Choreochronicle B can be divided into three types albeit with a slight degree of overlap. The first consists of short dances which Duncan choreographed especially for her pupils and which normally they alone performed. An example of this type is the 'Entre acte' using Schubert's 'Rosamunde'. Dances of the second type are those she choreographed for her pupils to dance as part of her longer compositions either as interludes or, more usually, as a chorus in front of which she could perform her solos.¹⁴ An example of this is the composite 'Orpheus' work. The third and smallest category consists of Duncan's own solos which were subsequently performed with or without her permission during her lifetime and with varying degrees of faithfulness to the original composition. The 'Marche Militaire' using Schubert's score is an example of such a dance.

Duncan (1928) stated that she founded her schools as educational institutions and did not train her pupils to become professional dancers. She claimed, however, that pressing financial needs forced her to accept theatre engagements for her schools and to arrange benefit performances at which her pupils could show their work.¹⁵ Some of the dances presented on these occasions, such as the sung and danced folk tunes, appear to have been normal school work which Duncan adapted to meet the requirements of performance on stage.

Other short pieces that Duncan choreographed for her pupils were for occasions when they danced just one or two items in her

programmes. The 'Werber Waltz', composed in 1907, and the group of seven revolutionary dances and songs of Russia, composed in 1924, are examples of especially choreographed dances. These compositions also rank among the first and last dances respectively that Duncan choreographed for her pupils to perform on stage.

Although financial circumstances may have caused Duncan to choreograph for her pupils' public performance it seems tenable to suggest that as a choreographer she needed to make statements which required a more substantial presence than a single dancer. If this is so then the dances she choreographed for her pupils to perform as augmented sections in her composite dances constitute a particularly interesting feature of her choreographic output. For example, in the early group versions of 'Orpheus' Duncan choreographed short dance interludes for her pupils to join her on stage. However, as Duncan's pupils, particularly the six 'Isadorables', gained in experience so Duncan choreographed more complex and demanding dances for them. Duncan first choreographed to parts of 'Parsifal' in 1908 but it was not until November 1920 that she premièred the full length version which was performed with her six senior pupils. Similarly, Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' was in Duncan's repertoire by 1916 although the first performance of all four movements, in which she was joined by her pupils, was not until 1921.

It is likely that Duncan's 'Parsifal' and the 'Pathétique' were the most developed of all the works that she choreographed for her pupils since soon after these performances Duncan established her school in Moscow and only one of her senior pupils accompanied her. Thereafter Duncan's compositions for her new, much younger Russian pupils reverted in type to the earlier works she had choreographed during the 1905-14 period for her Grunewald and Bellevue pupils.

Duncan's compositions for her pupils provide potential areas of study both in comparison with the choreography for her own performance

and also in the manner of their interpretation. In this respect reviews of the performances of Duncan's senior pupils from 1917 and the later tours of the Moscow school from the mid-twenties onwards, when it became a performance group and toured extensively in Russia and China as well as the USA, would be likely to yield interesting information (for example, see Roslavleva 1975).

5.26 RECONSTRUCTED DANCES

With the exception of Duncan's 'Ave Maria', parts of 'Iphigenia', her compositions to Schubert's Eighth Symphony and Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, most of the dances popularly associated with Duncan, such as Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, 'La Marseillaise', 'Redemption', Marche Slave and her powerful Wagner works, have not survived in reconstructed forms.¹⁶ It is significant that on the whole Duncan's shorter and more lyrical dances have endured, perhaps a reflection that these were most readily learned by her pupils and more easily handed on. Duncan's longer often more dramatically significant and sustained compositions, which she performed with such intensity and commitment, are not extant.¹⁷

Of Duncan's compositions for her pupils it is pertinent to note that only about 10-15 were performed regularly in the decade following her death and of these just a few of the Schubert waltzes and some of the group dances from the 'Pathétique', 'Iphigenia' and 'Orpheus' have been reconstructed. Whether the latter is an indication of the choreographic merit of these particular dances, a reflection of the specific interests of the present generation of Duncan dancers or merely the haphazard result of what was and was not remembered is a matter for conjecture and, possibly, further study.

There are other features of Duncan's choreographic output that could be identified from the evidence presented in the choreo-chronicles. The choice of titles for her dances is one such area.

However, the purpose of this section is to point to features of Duncan's choreographic output that can be described in purely factual terms. A focus on titles and related aspects would inevitably lead to a consideration of content and types of dances and this would be to anticipate the later stages of discussion without laying down the necessary factual evidence.

5.3 Choice of accompaniment

It is appropriate here to point to some of the general characteristics of Duncan's choice of accompaniment as shown in *Choreochronicles A* and *B* although this important aspect of her work is returned to in greater depth in Parts III and IV.

The term "accompaniment" is used throughout dance literature to label the sound that attends, that goes with, the dance. However, for Duncan the sound accompaniment was often the starting point for the dance composition functioning originally to inspire and thereafter to support or exist alongside the dance and to re-inspire her in performance.

It is evident from the *choreochronicles* that Duncan always used some form of accompaniment in the dances that she choreographed for her pupils but she occasionally dispensed with it for her own dances. There are three or four¹⁸ short dances which are known to have been performed by Duncan in silence and these must be distinguished from those dances where the accompaniment is as yet still unknown. 'Death and the Maiden'¹⁹ may date from Duncan's pre-European performances of 1898 and was certainly in her repertoire during the 1902-5 period. 'Pan and Echo' was choreographed in 1899 and remained in Duncan's repertoire until 1908 and the 'Burden of Life', according to Schneider (1968 p.80), was performed as late as 1921.

The reasons why Duncan elected to choreograph without an accompaniment are not clear. Terry's (1963) suggestion that this was

early experimental work by Duncan is not borne out by the dates. Similarly the proposal made by Martin (1936 repub. 1968 p.136) that Duncan's "dance studies without music" were but a preliminary and interim stage in her choreographic process is refuted by the fact that these dances were performed as finished pieces and 'Death and the Maiden' became a popular encore. It is, however, evident that Duncan tried several different musical accompaniments to 'Pan and Echo' and found them unsatisfactory (Macdonald 1977b). Thus whether her dances in silence were choreographed as such by default or by design is a matter for future study although the fact that, predictably, they do not exist in reconstructed forms and are few in number, would make such work difficult.

Apart from the small group of dances performed in silence Duncan's works were choreographed to accompaniment of either words or music. Duncan used words, in the form of poetry, as inspiration and accompaniment in the dances she choreographed for her own public performance from the very beginning of her career. By the time Duncan gave her first New Gallery performance in London in March 1900 she had composed dances to readings of the works of at least nine different poets including Homer, Longfellow, Milton, Omar Khayyam, Ovid and Swinburne. While Duncan was preparing her second and third New Gallery programmes she danced at a charity performance where

Mr Acton Bond read a description of the dances as Miss Duncan performed them.

Anon (1900)

The "description" is not given but since the Acton-Bonds were promoters of "Euchorics", defined as

the alliance of ordered movement with poetry, the response of dancing to its melody, pace and imagination

Acton-Bond and March (1927 p.1)

it is reasonable to assume that Duncan was using poetry as accompaniment for at least some of her dances in this short programme. However, the juxtaposing of dance and poetry was not generally well received in London and these compositions were subsequently dropped from her repertoire.

Nevertheless, although Macdonald (1977a) makes the point that from this stage on in her career Duncan concentrated on choreographing with music it is apparent that she did not lose her interest in possible dance relationships with poetry. Reference is made in Chapter 3 to her danced and sung version of Aeschylus' 'The Suppliants' and in her 1915 production of 'Oedipus' she incorporated "lyric choruses" written by the American poet Percy Mackaye (Macdougall 1960 p.152). Duncan's abiding interest in dance and poetry is underlined by her collaboration in 1926 with the French artist Jean Cocteau. In their joint recital Cocteau read several of his poems and, according to Duncan and Macdougall (1929), Duncan danced to at least one of them, 'Orphée'.

However, the literature on Duncan contains few references to her use of poetry as accompaniment to her choreography and none of these dances are in the reconstructed repertoire. Nevertheless, these works, though constituting a relatively minor portion of her choreographic output, are, alongside her unaccompanied dances, of importance if a comprehensive view of her work is to be gained.

There are no references to Duncan's pupils dancing with poetry as an integral part of the choreography but they often danced to folk tunes which they themselves sang, a feature with considerable theatrical impact when performed in the Russian concerts of the 1921-24 period.

From the listings given in *ChoreoChronicles A and B* it is evident that Duncan's preferred choice of accompaniment was music.²⁰ She choreographed to the music of about 50 different composers during the

period from 1898 to 1921 but thereafter her new choreography was to music by composers she had used previously. Of the 50 or so composers listed more than half only appear once. These include Degeyler and Rouget de Lisle who, respectively, composed the music on which Duncan based two of her most famous dances 'L'Internationale' and 'La Marseillaise'. Those composers whose works Duncan used more than once can be divided into two groups, the first consisting of composers listed five times or less in the choreochronicles and the second consisting of composers mentioned more than five times. The first group includes Bach and Mendelssohn, whose music Duncan used in her mid and early career respectively. The second group consists of nine composers, that is, Beethoven, Chopin, Gluck, Liszt, Nevin, Schubert, Scriabin, Tchaikovsky and Wagner. Of these Beethoven, Wagner and particularly Chopin and Schubert appear, on grounds of frequency at least, to be the composers whose music was most favoured by Duncan.

If the works of the composers that Duncan used extensively are seen against the time-scale of her career then some interesting points emerge. Firstly, in relation to Nevin it is clear that although Duncan used much of his music in her early compositions she did not create any new works with his music as accompaniment after 1899 and by 1909 all such dances had been discarded from her repertoire.²¹ Secondly, Duncan first began to use Beethoven's and Gluck's music during the start of her European career in 1900-4 and retained these works in her repertoire up to her Russian period.²² Thirdly, Duncan's choreography using Tchaikovsky's music and her performances of these dances span her mid-career from 1909 to 1923. Fourthly, Duncan did not select Liszt's music for her choreography until 1918 and she continued to create new works using his music from then on; her current composition at the time of her death was based on Liszt's Dante Symphony. Fifthly, the last time Duncan selected the work of a

composer she had not used before was in 1921 when she first choreographed to Scriabin and she then used several of his pieces during the next few years. However, her "Scriabin period" was limited and coincided exactly with her residence in Russia from 1921-4.

Duncan used more than 40 different Chopin pieces in her choreography and this establishes Chopin as the composer she selected most frequently. Duncan first used his music in 1900 (although an earlier date is possible, and she retained most of Chopin works in her repertoire until 1923 and possibly 1927.²³ Schubert ranks second to Chopin in the frequency with which Duncan chose his music. Duncan used short Schubert pieces for her dances very early in her career and, as well as selecting many of his other compositions, danced to his 'Ave Maria' and Eighth Symphony, both choreographed in 1914, in her last concert. The fact that Schubert's compositions provided Duncan with inspiration and accompaniment for her dances for almost 30 years identifies him as the only composer whose work she used from the beginning to the end of her career.²⁴ The importance of Duncan's introduction to Wagner's music at Bayreuth in 1904 is significant since from this date Duncan gradually added Wagner-based dances to her programmes and eventually used excerpts from six of his operas as well as a few of his other works. Although Duncan's use of Wagner's music does not compare in numerical terms with the Chopin works it is important to make the distinction between Chopin's shorter, lighter pieces and Wagner's longer more dramatic and intense works. In this respect Duncan may have used as much of Wagner's music in overall time as she did of Chopin and it is well established that it provided her with the inspiration for some of her most impressive dances (Duncan 1928).

There are other, though less important, features of the choreochronicles concerning Duncan's choice of music that could be highlighted. For example, a preliminary comparison between the

ChoreoChronicles A and B reveals that whereas Duncan used the music of Humperdinck, Lanner and Merz in her choreography for her pupils she did not work with any of their compositions when choreographing for her own performance. In contrast the choice late in her career of composers such as Liszt and Scriabin was only for her own choreography and performance and not for her pupils' dances.

Similarly, there are several areas for further study of Duncan's use of music that are suggested by the choreoChronicles. One such area would be to relate the dates on which Duncan first heard a particular piece of music to the time when she used it in her choreography. For example, it is known that Duncan first heard Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony at a concert in 1906 and she choreographed to the last three movements ten years later, but it has yet to be established in what ways she had access to the work for choreographic purposes.²⁵

5.4 Repertoire

Two features of Duncan's repertoire, the frequency of performance of dances and their duration in her repertoire, are described in this section. Both descriptions are based on ChoreoChronicle A.

5.41 FREQUENCY OF PERFORMANCE

The frequency with which dances are performed usually reflects their popularity, artistic merit or both of these. In Duncan's case, however, touring restrictions and her responsibilities as a teacher and mother also influenced the frequency with which she performed dances in her repertoire and some aspects of this are well-illustrated in relation to those dances in which she used Wagner's music. On at least one occasion she had copyright problems and during the 1914-18 war and post-war period some theatre managers banned performances of Wagner's works on chauvinistic grounds. Other restrictions were self-

imposed since Duncan insisted that she would only perform dances from her Wagner repertoire if a full orchestra was engaged. This was a comparatively straightforward matter when she had a season in one theatre and box-office receipts were good. On tour, however, with only a few performances at each venue, the difficulties of rehearsing different orchestras and the unknown factor of audience reactions made it virtually impossible for her to give her Wagner programmes. Perhaps this accounts for Duncan's choice of Liszt piano transcriptions of Wagner's work in the latter part of her career, since there is evidence that she performed some of her Wagner dances more frequently then than hitherto.

Generally, Duncan's full-length and extended dances were performed most often during her seasons at large theatres when an orchestra of sufficient size and ability was available. The shorter, more adaptable dances featured prominently in Duncan's touring programmes, especially when she was giving just one performance at each venue, and this reflects the simpler logistics of touring with a pianist rather than using a local orchestra. Indeed, some of Duncan's short dances, particularly those to various Brahms, Chopin and Schubert waltzes, were so popular with her audiences that she often added a waltz selection as an encore after giving a full-length work.

From *Choreochronicle A* it appears that some of Duncan's dances, such as those using Chopin polonaises, were performed irregularly with gaps of several years sometimes occurring between one presentation and the next. Other dances, such as Duncan's 'Iphigenia', were performed many times each year during the period they remained in her repertoire. Apart from the restrictions noted, it is not easy to extrapolate from the literature why such variations in the frequency of performances of Duncan's works exist. Popularity and Duncan's perception of different audiences' expectations would be obvious influencing factors.

Since the most frequently performed dances generated more critics' reviews and descriptions than those performed less frequently the discussion in Parts III and IV is orientated towards them.

5.42 DURATION OF DANCES IN DUNCAN'S REPERTOIRE

Duncan's allegiance to various composers has been noted and this dictated to a certain extent the length of time that dances using their music remained in her repertoire. Nevertheless, the decisive factor was the reaction of audiences to her dances.

Most of the works that Duncan choreographed for her second and third New Gallery London performances were sufficiently successful to form the mainstay of her programmes for the next seven or eight years. A few, such as 'La Bella Simonetta' and 'Orpheus Returning from the Shades', were either immediately or very quickly dropped from the repertoire. The reasons for this are unknown but perhaps 'La Bella Simonetta' was too similar to the popular 'La Primavera' and not as appealing to be successful.²⁶ Possibly, too, Duncan's continental audiences would not have been sufficiently acquainted with the Orpheus painting for her 'interpretation' of it to be understood.

Some of the original New Gallery compositions were so acclaimed by both critics and audiences that, together with others choreographed in the early 1900s, they became regular features of Duncan's touring programmes. These were the Chopin mazurkas, choreographed in 1900 and last recorded as being performed in 1923, the Chopin preludes, 1900-1922, the Chopin waltzes, 1900-23 and the Brahms waltzes, 1902-24.²⁷ The common features of these very successful works are their comparative brevity and, in general, their near abstract, light quality. However, it was not only this type of dance that prevailed in Duncan's repertoire. 'Tannhäuser' and 'Beethoven's Seventh Symphony' were both much longer works of contrasting moods with considerable dramatic intensity and they remained in Duncan's

repertoire for 23 and 19 years respectively.

Duncan's ageing is referred to in Section 5.24 as possibly affecting the scope of her choreography and here it is seen as determining the length of time certain dances remained in her repertoire. While age would not seem to be of significance or even relevance to a choreographer it is obviously of considerable import to a dancer. There is some evidence to show that as Duncan matured as a choreographer so her ability as a dancer declined with age although this is disputed.²⁸ Duncan referred to her Schubert 'Ecoisaises' as the "dances of my youth" (in Schneider 1968 p.159) and in 1923 performed them reluctantly because she felt that she could no longer capture the young, exuberant quality which characterised them. Other dances, such as her 'Ave Maria', were successful possibly because she performed them when she was older. Duncan's 'Ave Maria' was choreographed in 1914 just over a year after her first two children had died and within a month of the death of her third child. It was considered in many accounts to have been enhanced in performance simply because Duncan in her late thirties no longer had the figure of a young girl and actually was a bereaved mother. This is, of course, to beg questions concerning the nature of performance and the part that life experiences might play in the interpretative act.²⁹ Nevertheless it is significant that 'Ave Maria' remained in Duncan's repertoire as one of her most successful dances and was performed in her last programme while the equally successfully 'Primavera' of the early part of her career had disappeared from her repertoire by 1909.

5.5 Programmes

It is profitable to identify Duncan's main types of dance programmes and this can be achieved by reference to Choreochronicle A, critics' reviews and the few extant programmes available. Duncan's dance programmes are indicators of the amount of time she spent on

stage in her performances and, more importantly, evidence of the various formats in which she presented her dances.

Many critics, including Lavedan (quoted by Phillips Vierke 1911) who saw Duncan dance in Paris in 1902/3 and 1910/11, comment upon Duncan's ability to sustain a two-hour long programme with only a short interval.³⁰ In addition, having danced her programme Duncan invariably responded to enthusiastic audiences by giving numerous encores. Le Rieur (1912 p.116) writes of "half a dozen" after a Paris concert and Phillips Vierke (1911) and Dumesnil (1932) cite occasions in London and Rio de Janeiro respectively when Duncan gave more than a dozen encores. Dumesnil (1932) also describes Duncan's first War Charity performance in Paris in April 1916 at which he conducted the orchestra for Duncan's three hour programme and then accompanied her on the piano for a further hour of encore pieces. One of the most popular of Duncan's encore pieces was the 'Blue Danube' waltz although Margherita Duncan (in Duncan 1928) gives 'Death and the Maiden' as the favourite of the Paris gallery. The 'Blue Danube' was choreographed in 1902 but only stayed in Duncan's repertoire until 1911, perhaps a reflection of her eventual distaste for this much-called-for dance. In letters to Craig Duncan wrote

I refused the Donau after Iphigenia the other night although the audience roared for it

6th November 1905 The Hague (Duncan's underlining)
quoted in Steegmuller (1974 p.115)

I feel so dissatisfied with my work and that infernal Blue Danube.

December 1906. Warsaw
quoted in Steegmuller (1974 p.171)

When Duncan was joined by her pupils in a performance the programmes were usually slightly longer than two hours (Anon 11th July 1908 The Academy). On the early occasions when her pupils appeared in public they danced at the end of Duncan's programmes although

sometimes, as at the Duke of York's Theatre in London in July 1908, they also had their own matinée performances. Later, Duncan's pupils became an integral part of the programme when they performed with her in dances such as Gluck's 'Orpheus' and Wagner's 'Parsifal'.

Duncan did not always dance every item in her programmes. Some pieces were played by the orchestra or pianist alone and these functioned as musical interludes which maintained the atmosphere and mood of that part of the programme while Duncan rested and occasionally changed costume. When Duncan performed her symphonies the undanced movement(s) played by the orchestra were usually indicated in the programme but this was not always the case with other dances. An example is Siegfried's 'Funeral March' from Wagner's 'The Ring'. This dance was in Duncan's repertoire but on occasions the music seems to have been used as an orchestral interlude in the Wagnerian section of her performances although the programmes do not always make the distinction clear.³¹

Reference has been made to Duncan's extended and full-length dances particularly the composite works using Gluck's 'Iphigenia' and 'Orpheus' and Wagner's 'Parsifal'. Duncan also give other programmes devoted to the works of one composer, such as Chopin, or two composers, such as Liszt and Scriabin, where the dances were unrelated other than by composer. Some dances, notably the symphonies, often constituted one half of the programme in which case the rest of the performance consisted of numerous shorter pieces using the music of other composers.

In addition to her composer-based programmes Duncan also presented her dances under a particular theme. Her early salon performances were often given the programme title of 'The Happier Age of Gold', a reference to the ancient Greek poems that at this time featured predominantly in her work. For her New Gallery London

performances in 1900 Duncan used the caption 'Dance Idylls' and this title, occasionally interchanged with 'Botticelli Evening', appeared on many of her early European tour programmes even though the contents of the programmes varied. Other thematic programmes were the popular 'Waltz Programme' and 'Evening of Revolutionary Dances!' The former included selections from her considerable repertoire of waltzes to the music of Brahms, Chopin, Liszt, Schmitt,³² Schubert and Strauss. The latter programme, given in Russia in 1924, had two sections, one devoted to dances based on revolutionary songs of Western European countries, such as 'La Marseillaise', and the other to songs and dances of the Russian revolution which included 'L'Internationale', at that time the official song of the Communist party.

In her seasons at one theatre and during the tours where she stayed in a city for more than a few days Duncan usually performed three or four different programmes. At least one programme was either a full-length work or devoted to dances to different works by one or two composers while the other programmes included further selections from her current repertoire. For her 1908 London season Duncan presented a different programme on each of the five evenings of her first week's performances and in the following two weeks gave repeats and variations of these five programmes (Fuller-Maitland 1908 and programmes for 6th-30th July 1908).

In a contract made in October 1905 with Craig, who had undertaken to act as her business manager, Duncan agreed to give not less than 12 performances a month, to have 4 programmes in her repertoire and to include a new programme by January 1906 (Steegmuller, 1974). In a letter dated 5th November 1905, written when she was performing almost every evening on a tour of Dutch cities, Duncan referred to her work on the new programme "I do it early morning" (Steegmuller 1974 p.113). However, it is not evident from contemporary sources exactly which programme this was.

Two further points are relevant in this consideration of the content of Duncan's programmes and their relation to her repertoire. The first is concerned with the variability of her programmes, the second with their flexibility.

From the choreochronicle it is evident that Duncan retained most of the full-length works in her repertoire from their inception throughout her career and it seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that both she and her public wanted this. Nevertheless, several contemporary accounts indicate that of all her programmes those consisting of full-length works were the ones that received the most adverse criticism. Plescheev (1913 p.8), an otherwise sympathetic critic of Duncan's choreography and performances, considered that the programme for the 8th January 1913 performance at St. Petersburg "suffered because she devoted so much time to Gluck's 'Orpheus'", the inference being that a solo dancer could neither encompass the whole range of expressive possibilities in the opera nor sustain the audience's interest.

In contrast Duncan's "mixed" programmes, in which she danced many short, often light pieces using the music of several different composers, obviously had a very popular appeal as indicated by the numerous contemporary press reports of Duncan's Dutch tours during the 1905-7 period (see Loewenthal 1980).

However, the very varied performance demands of some of the mixed programmes presented problems for Duncan as a soloist. Margherita Duncan, Duncan's sister-in-law, describes a Carnegie Hall New York concert in 1922 in which Duncan's dances using Schubert's Eight Symphony in B minor (the Unfinished) and his Ave Maria formed the first part of the programme. The emotional drain on Duncan was

evident and in the interval she wept. According to Margherita Duncan, Duncan said

now I have finished. I have said all I have to say tonight. But because the manager insists on variety, I must go on and do the Seventh Symphony, and I have no heart for it. I should stop now.

Duncan, Margherita, (1928 p.22)

In the second half of the programme Duncan performed her dance using Beethoven's Seventh Symphony in A major and Margherita Duncan commented:

she was right. The rest of the programme was only an indication of what she used to do, it was a violation of her artistic conscience to reproduce an outgrown conception.

Duncan, Margherita, (1928 p.22)

This dance was the first in which Duncan used a symphony as accompaniment and was premièred in 1903/4.³³ In relation to Margherita Duncan's comments it is interesting to note that there are no further references to Duncan presenting the dance again after her 1922 New York performance.

The diverse nature of some of Duncan's programmes occasionally caused her problems in capturing changing moods and expression in performance although the range of her repertoire enabled her to select programmes suited to particular theatres, audiences and touring conditions to a remarkable degree. For example, the flexibility of her composite dances, which could be performed in separate parts or in their entirety, together with her other dances of varying lengths and moods, meant that she was able to put together programmes which needed very little overall rehearsal time and allowed individual items to be interchanged with ease.³⁴ Early examples of such programmes, 'The Happier Age of Gold', 'Botticelli Evening' and 'Dance Idylls' have already been mentioned. These were developed from Duncan's original salon performances when her repertoire was limited and she continued

to add to and substitute new dances in these programmes up to about 1908. Thereafter, she rarely performed her earlier dances and discarded these particular programmes presumably because by this time she had a sufficiently wide theatre rather than salon repertoire from which she would offer full length works, one or two composer programmes and a variety of other types of programmes.

Throughout her career Duncan choreographed and created new programmes. Sometimes a new dance was inserted in an already existing programme and on at least one occasion Duncan presented a new programme consisting of a re-arrangement of dances choreographed earlier.³⁵ This was her 'Polish Trilogy' composed in 1918, sub-titled 'Tragic Poland', 'Heroic Poland' and 'Happy Poland' (H.F. 1921), and based on her earlier compositions to Chopin's 'Funeral march' and polonaises in A major and C minor.

In the months immediately preceding her death Duncan was working on a new programme which included choreography using Liszt's 'Dante Symphony'.

5.6 Summary

Popular beliefs about what exactly Duncan did and achieved in her career can be seen to be at variance with the facts established in this Chapter and Choreochronicles A and B. The new evidence produced in the present study refutes entirely the notion of Duncan as an inspired improviser and shows her to be a choreographer (in the full sense of the term) who created a substantial number of works throughout her lifetime. The characterisation of her dance as a totally intuitive harmonious response to classical music is also seen to be a distortion of the truth.

All these aspects need further examination and discussion and this is carried out in the ensuing chapters. Nevertheless, it is important to note that only when the facts are established about

Duncan's choreographic output, her choice of accompaniment, her repertoire and programmes, as in this chapter, is it possible to proceed to a viable analysis of her dances.

CHAPTER 5 NOTES

- 1 For ease of reference and simplicity of format one or more performances in a year are indicated by an asterisk. Actual performance dates are recorded in extended choreochronicles in the possession of the author.
- 2 This reflects the difficulty of citing choreographers' works retrospectively if, as is often the case, dances are not extant and recourse has to be made to written, visual and aural sources.
- 3 Exact numbers are difficult to cite because of the authors' inconsistencies in classifying single and composite works.
- 4 It is assumed that McDonagh's statistics for St. Denis and Graham are more accurate than those for Duncan. This would be consistent with the fact that St. Denis worked in the USA for the greater part of her career and lived long enough to ensure that records of her choreography were kept. Graham's choreochronicle is well-known and documented (for example Cohen in Livet 1978) and she is still creating new works.
- 5 Duncan used music from Gluck's 'Iphigenia in Aulis' and 'Iphigenia in Tauris' but, since many of the written sources, including programmes, refer just to 'Iphigenia', this is listed as such in both choreochronicles.
- 6 If all the separate elements of just these two composite works are added to the total numbers of dances listed in the choreochronicles this would bring Duncan's total choreographic output to 257.
- 7 At the outset of her career Duncan danced in F.H. Benson productions, events which Macdougall (1960 p.93) ignores when he writes of her Bayreuth performance "the first and last time Isadora ever danced as part of any group except one which she herself had trained in her own style". His second point, though, is correct.
- 8 This reference to 'joint appearances' and Duncan's refusal to allow her pupils to dance any solos in the programme is of interest. Prior to their 1920 performance Duncan's six senior pupils, billed as the 'Isadora Duncan Dancers', had made several USA coast-to-coast tours as an independent group during the latter part of the war and the immediate post war period. On these tours their programmes consisted almost entirely of Duncan-choreographed works with the addition of their own compositions. They performed some of Duncan's solos, such as the Chopin 'Minute' waltz, and danced the Duncan solo parts in the group dances, as in the Chopin 'Funeral March'.
- 9 Anon (19 June 1921 The Observer.)
- 10 In a letter to Craig written in early January 1907 Duncan refers to the fact that she had just

composed a little minuet of Bach - very simple,
 nothing special but I think the movement goes well
 in Steegmuller (1974 p.184 Duncan's underlinings).

Duncan was giving performances in Warsaw at this time so the letter is an indication that she was able to choreograph while on tour. Unfortunately, no further references to a Bach minuet have yet been found.

- 11 No performance dates are known for 12 dances in Choreochronicle A.

- 12 Certainly Duncan's dance using Schubert's 'Moment Musical' (which she referred to as 'Pim's dance' because of a very brief love affair that had just ended) was performed in December 1907 in Russia immediately after it was choreographed (Duncan 1927a p.212).
- 13 "She danced more marvellously than she had ever danced in her life before" (de Acosta 1960 p.188). "She was too old, and too stout to dance" (Kaye 1929 pt.4 p.39). "At that matinée I achieved it [fermata] for the first time" (Duncan describing her own performance in Seroff 1971 p.425).
- 14 Joint Duncan and pupils' dances are indicated in Choreochronicle B by the letter D.
- 15 Duncan's initial ambivalence about her pupils dancing in public is reflected in the response of the critics who at first reviewed their work in quite a different vein from that of Duncan (for example, see Galsworthy 1910).
- 16 The Marche Slave was revived for the Duncan centenary period but is not in the general reconstructed Duncan repertoire (Merry 1979).
- 17 While this could have been prevented by the use of one of the many movement/dance notation systems in existence at the time, it is, nevertheless, a historical feature of dance as a performing art that the permanence of the work has not been vested in the choreographer by means of the notated score and copyright but rather in the dancer.
- 18 Divoire (in Macdougall 1960) refers to seeing Duncan dance in silence as an unnamed encore in 1909. This is not included in Choreochronicle A.
- 19 There is no evidence to link this with Schubert's work of the same title.
- 20 For a detailed account of Duncan's "musical selections" see Pruett (1978).
- 21 It is pertinent here to reiterate that Duncan worked with Nevin prior to arriving in Europe in 1899.
- 22 This evidence refutes Dromgoole's (1980) statement that "Isadora thought Ethelbert Nevin better than Beethoven!" (p.).
- 23 At least two accounts (Desti 1929 and Hastings 1941) suggest that Duncan performed her Chopin dances in her last concert in Paris on the 8th July 1927. This is not supported by other primary source material.
- 24 Pruett (1978) gives this accolade to Chopin because she includes Duncan's early childhood experiences of her mother playing Chopin piano pieces.
- 25 Reference is made in the literature to her wind-up gramophone and records but Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony is not mentioned in this respect.
- 26 Pruett (1978) suggests that since Arnold Dolmetsch's quartet of three viols and voice accompanied this dance Duncan would have found it difficult to repeat it elsewhere. However, the Dolmetschs accompanied four other dances with various instrumental groupings at this concert including 'La Primavera' which Duncan did retain in her repertoire.
- 27 These 22 and 23 year periods provide evidence to refute the oft-made assertion that Duncan improvised all her dances since it is highly unlikely that dances could be improvised throughout such long periods of time.

- 28 A detailed examination of the relationship between the choreography and the performance of a dance where the choreographer is also the performer and is dancing at an age when most dancers would have retired, because of a decline in some physical abilities, need not be confined to Duncan's case. Both Graham and Cunningham could be cited as later examples although it is relevant to note that all three choreographer/dancers are within the same modern dance genre.
- 29 A point already touched upon and pursued further in Chs 8 and 9.
- 30 By timing modern recordings of the music Duncan used in particular programmes it is possible to corroborate the performance times given by critics. Although an exact parallel cannot be drawn between the tempo of a work performed at the beginning of the century and the same work played in the 1980s there is no evidence to suggest that Duncan danced to other than the normal tempi of these works. Nevertheless, even given some variation in tempi it is clear that some of Duncan's programmes took about two hours to perform.
- 31 In Choreochronicle A works marked O? indicates doubts concerning their status as either dances or interlude pieces.
- 32 It is assumed that this is Florent Schmitt although the references are not specific.
- 33 At that time Duncan's use of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony was considered to be "the most ambitious and certainly the most controversial of all her conceptions to date" Loewenthal (1980 p.248).
- 34 Such flexibility of programming is today usually associated with the most avant-garde of the post-modern dance choreographers.
- 35 The re-use of previously choreographed material, currently termed 're-cycling', is another feature of the work of the avant-garde post-moderns.

SUMMARY OF PART 11

When the facts about who Duncan was and what she did are assembled and compared with the popular mythology associated with her some interesting and, possibly, surprising results emerge.

Many of the sweeping statements made about Duncan's life, for example, the constant financial crises, are clearly valid. Nevertheless, the causes cited (in this case her generosity and total inability to manage her financial affairs) often present only a partial picture. Duncan's oscillations between wealth and poverty, a point she dwelt upon in her autobiography, were at least partly due to her career-long financial commitments to her schools and this is usually glossed over.

Other characterisations, for example, her so-called promiscuity, can be seen to be based on some evidence. However, since they are judgemental in nature and stem from prevailing social attitudes they take little or no account of Duncan's individualistic and sincerely held beliefs. Thus a ready label such as "promiscuous" is often used rather than the opportunity taken to explore the reasons why Duncan chose such a life-style.

Nevertheless, although both Duncan's private and public life can be regarded as remarkable and, almost inevitably, myth generating, it is her artistic achievements which are of paramount importance. Here, the popular beliefs and inaccuracies which abound can be shown to minimise rather than exaggerate the pioneering nature of her work. The notion of Duncan as an inspired improviser of dance is not only inaccurate but also very far from the truth. The evidence assembled in Part 11 and in Appendices A and B demonstrates clearly that Duncan choreographed a significant number of works and that these remained constant in performance throughout time. Furthermore, on the basis of their innovative features is clear that these works are worthy of

further study.

Similarly, the glib characterisations of Duncan simply as a bare foot reformer of dance costume is to ignore the complex ideas and beliefs which underline her innovations in this area and to fail to regard them within the totality of the new dance genre she pioneered.

The evidence gathered and used in Part II enables those aspects of Duncan's private and public life which are relevant to her work to be discussed free from the distortions of myths. In addition, the identification of crucial contexts and influences provides the background within which her work may be understood. Finally, the presentation of new factual information concerning her dances and her performances makes possible a viable examination of her choreography. In Part III the focus narrows to a detailed analysis of her work particularly in the sense of it being radical and innovative.

PART 111**ISADORA DUNCAN: HER WORK**

Introduction to Part 111

Chapter 6 The glorification of the body: the movement basis of Duncan's dances

Chapter 7 The pursuit of harmony: the structures that typify Duncan's choreography

Chapter 8 The radical message: Duncan's subject matter and meanings

Summary of Part 111

INTRODUCTION TO PART III

In the contemporary accounts of Duncan's choreographic work and in the writings which followed her death ambivalent attitudes of the most extreme kinds abound. Her choreography was regarded by many as outrageous or as a bizarre momentary phenomenon. By others it was seen to be avant-garde and to have made an irreversible impact upon the development of dance. Before engaging in this discussion the prior question is what was it about Duncan's work that provoked such heated debate in her life-time and such contradictory opinions subsequently.

In order to begin to answer this and other related questions it is necessary to examine her dances both collectively and individually in a manner and to a degree not hitherto undertaken by scholars interested in Duncan. It is proposed that a profitable starting point for such a detailed exploration is not, as might be supposed, simply the structures of Duncan's choreography but the values underlying her work. When these fundamental beliefs have been identified and their relatedness determined, then it is possible to see how they inspired her choreographic work and are manifest in her dance. This leads to an examination of Duncan's choreographic structures and resulting dance style and from these concerns the final move can be made to consider the subject matter and meanings of Duncan's dances and their overall significance.

Such discussions ultimately lead to the crucial question of the evaluation of Duncan's contribution to the development of dance and this is the focus of Part IV. However, the more immediate concern in Part III is simply to consider what Duncan did, how she did it and why. As indicated above the selected starting point is with the latter concern, the "why", and since the writings in which Duncan articulated her ideas and beliefs are now more accessible than her works, this also makes methodological sense. Therefore, the first

chapter of Part III, Chapter 6, focusses upon the basic movement values that can be seen to underpin and to have motivated Duncan's choreography. In Chapter 7 the ways in which Duncan transformed these values into choreographic structures of immense complexity yet of overall apparent simplicity is examined. Finally, in Chapter 8 the meanings conveyed in her dances are discussed both in regard to general categories and four exemplar dances.

Thus in Part III Duncan's work is considered not in the all too common fashion of sweeping generalisations made on the basis of scant evidence but by detailed reference to her writings and to her actual dances. Duncan's writings about the mainsprings of her choreography are widely available, although not hitherto collated, yet, as noted earlier, this is not the case with her works. In Part II extensive use is made of the chronology and choreochronicles compiled for the purposes of this study in order to remedy the lack of documentation of Duncan's choreography. In Part III this detailed procedure is continued since the basis for the examination of Duncan's work is the systematic choreographic analysis undertaken as a prerequisite for the writing of Chapters 6,7 and 8. This enables the discussion to be developed logically as well as providing the substantive basis for the making of statements about Duncan's work.

CHAPTER 6

**THE GLORIFICATION OF THE BODY:
THE MOVEMENT BASIS OF DUNCAN'S DANCES**

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Attitudes to the body
- 6.3 Principles of movement
- 6.4 Movement guidelines
- 6.5 Summary

6.1 Introduction

Isadora Duncan was firstly a choreographer and a dancer, secondly she wrote about her dance and only thirdly can she be considered a dance "theorist" in the sense of developing a coherent and comprehensive account of her dance style. Thus her main means of discovery, of finding new ways to explore her art form, was through her dance and she cannot in any sense be equated with dance theorists such as Weaver, Noverre and Blasis. Nevertheless, her not inconsiderable writings contain much material that is theoretical in orientation and show her ability to deal with abstractions and conceptual concerns in the realm of dance. Duncan had a vision of dance and held strong beliefs in its revolutionary potential and this meant that she had to be articulate about her ideas and theories in order to promulgate and defend them.

Even so, in pioneering a new dance form Duncan faced considerable difficulties which militated against her being able to lay down a coherent set of theories. Firstly, one of the points of departure for her dance was the status quo and thus many of her early writings are mainly criticisms of classical ballet, with her own dance being referred to obliquely. Secondly, Duncan was not only grappling with new ideas but also with the related need to find and to establish new terminology in order to characterise and to explain her work.

Therefore, although Duncan's own writings cannot be said to

contain a well-defined set of theories in which the basis of her choreography is set out in unambiguous terms it is the case that in her autobiography and essays there is more than sufficient material from which to extract central tenets. When these are seen in relation to her choreography, it is possible to make definitive statements about the main ideas embodied in her work.

Any fully consistent and well articulated theory of dance must be grounded in a theory of movement since generically dance may be subsumed under movement and regarded as a movement activity. In Duncan's case the movement basis of her theorisings about dance is particularly important because in addition to its centrality in the development of her dance it was also the mainspring for many of her dance-related views such those on as feminism and education. Thus in this chapter attention is paid to Duncan's attitudes to the human body and to how such attitudes shaped her notions of movement and, ultimately, dance.

6.2 Attitudes to the body

In the general literature on Duncan there are frequent passing references to Duncan's views on the human body in relation to movement, dance, education and dress. In the more specific literature which focusses on theoretical aspects of her work, for example, Martin (1942), such opinions are also mentioned. Nevertheless, Duncan's attitudes to the body are not widely regarded by these authors as being of central importance either in her work or to an understanding of it. However, it is proposed here that Duncan's ideas about dance are rooted in her attitudes to and beliefs about the human body and, furthermore, when these central notions are recognised and examined, they provide a key to the theoretical bases of her work.¹ This claim can be supported by reference both to Duncan's own writings, as here, and to her works, as in the following two chapters.

Of course most of the movement and dance theorists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries based their work on a knowledge of the human body and its movement potential and in this respect Duncan follows tradition. But whereas Weaver's theories were derived from anatomical knowledge, as were Blasis' principles of technique and Noverre's theory of an expressive dance aesthetic, Duncan was the first to emphasise the inherent beauty of the naked human body and the necessity for dance to reveal and celebrate this.

An initial clue to the centrality of the naked human body in Duncan's theoretical writings lies in her frequent references to the nude in sculpture which she saw as "the noblest in art". She claimed that "the dance and sculpture are the two arts most closely united" because both use the human body as material and from it "find the secret of perfect proportion of line and curve" (Duncan 1928 pp.58, 72, 68). When the central importance of Duncan's notion of the unclothed body and its inevitable beauty is recognised, as in her statement

man's first conception of beauty is gained from the form and symmetry of the human body,

Duncan (1928 p.58)

it is possible to see how Duncan expounded the idea. It appears that this process was not a linear development of cause and effect nor of logical outcomes but rather a synthesising of her attitudes to the body with her beliefs and ideas derived from the various contexts in which she lived and the people who influenced her.

It was to ancient Greece that Duncan first turned to find examples of the beautiful body in statues and figurines and this, together with her Californian naturalism, led her to place the human

body on a par with all nature and what she regarded as its implicit beauty.

Beauty in all its natural manifestations is her [Duncan's] religion. Waves and clouds and running water, the nude body and its natural movements are the tokens by which it is revealed to her. Its high priests, by her creed, were the Greeks of old.

Kinney and Kinney (1914 revised edition 1936 p.241)

It is evident, too, that early childhood experiences of dress reform led Duncan to revel in loose unrestricted clothing and it became her strongly held belief that the body could only realise its beauty when free. "Unhampered bodies and 'natural' rhythms were synonymous to Isadora" (Kendall 1979 p.60).

Thus from a cluster of notions about the body stemming from art, ancient Greece and dress reform, Duncan came to regard the naked body as natural and beautiful. It is upon this crucial notion that Duncan's ideas about dance and education, her feminism, and all her other pioneering ideas rest. The former is the main concern here but even so it is worth quoting from Duncan's writings on feminist ideals since it demonstrates clearly the way in which her ideas are inter-related and mutually supportive. Duncan wrote and lectured on women's rights and always made the link with "dance as an art of liberation" (Duncan 1927a p.186).² She postulated that if the female body was allowed freedom to move and to dance in a natural manner this would inevitably lead to a stronger, more capable sex and women would be able to assume their rightful place in society. As early as 1902-3 she stated

it is not only a question of true art, it is a question of race, of the development of the female sex to beauty and health, of the return to the original strength and natural movements of woman's body. It is a question of the development of perfect mothers and the birth of healthy and beautiful children. The dancing school of the future is to develop and to show the ideal form of woman.

reprinted in Duncan (1928 p.61)

Duncan's need to free the body in order for it to move naturally is seen in two aspects of her dances, namely, her bare feet and her costume. While baring the feet and wearing brief unrestrictive clothing was regarded by some as immodest and by others as revolutionary to Duncan the point lay not in the act but in the movement potential that it made available. Thus her feet could grip the floor and give her dance an earthiness and a natural form of locomotion while the body was free to bend, arch and curl.

With the free body as the starting point Duncan was able to choreograph dances based on the manipulation of what she believed to be natural movements. Her use of everyday actions, such as walking and running, is one of the most frequently mentioned features of her choreography in contemporary reviews. This component is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Duncan's attitudes to the body present an interesting philosophical problem since in some respects she could be regarded as a dualist.³ Indeed some of her writings would appear at first sight to support the notion of duality in an explicit manner,

the body becomes transparent and is a medium for the mind and spirit.

Duncan (1927a, p.165)

When describing her search for

that dance which might be the divine expression of the human spirit through the medium of the body's movement

Duncan (1927a, p.75)

she goes on to state

I ... sought the source of the spiritual expression to flow into the channels of the body, filling it with vibrating light.

Duncan (1927a, p.75).

Nevertheless, Duncan's admiration for Haeckel and her enthusiasm

for his views suggests that she regarded herself as a monist (see Chapter 4 Section 4.25) and certainly these quotations could also be interpreted as having monist overtones. However, whether Duncan could be termed a dualist or a monist is not pursued further here.⁴ Indeed this issued is unlikely to be resolved on the evidence of her writings alone since these are testimonies of an artistic rather than a philosophical nature. For the purposes of the present study it is sufficient to argue that on the strong grounds of the prevalence of references to the body and the reverence with which she regarded it, it is reasonable to propose that Duncan's attitudes to the body provided the cornerstone for all her ideas about dance. As Kendall (1979 p.66) points out, Duncan regarded her body "as the centre of the universe" (or perhaps more correctly the centre of her universe). "Her unabashed love for the human body" (Banes 1980 p.3) with its overtones of "atavism" (Anon 11th July 1908 The Academy), coupled with an indomitable pioneering spirit gave Duncan a vital innovatory starting point from which she could develop and establish a new dance genre.

6.3 Principles of movement

Having established the centrality of Duncan's attitudes to the body it is of equal importance that the movement basis of her dance theories is made explicit. Duncan does not label her movement notions and ideas in any consistent manner but, in her substantial writings in the area, two fundamental movement concepts are paramount. These are termed principles of movement here since they govern Duncan's theoretical writings and, as discussed later in the chapter, are manifest in her choreography. Duncan's first principle may be stated as "all movement originates from the centre of the body" and the second as "the body and its movements are subject to gravity".

In her autobiography Duncan describes her attempts to find "the

central spring of all movement" and she states that having located it in the solar plexus "it was from this discovery that was born the theory on which I founded my school" (Duncan 1927a p.75).⁵

I know only one dance and it is this movement: drawing back your hands to the solar plexus, whereupon an inner force opens up your arms and raises them.

Duncan in Divoire (1924 p.84)

Other movement and dance theorists have based their work on notions of a body centre⁶ but the importance to Duncan of the solar plexus was not just as the physical location of a centre but also as the source of what she termed "spiritual expression" (Duncan 1927a p. 75).

In giving the solar plexus metaphysical overtones and locating it between the breasts Duncan obviously uses the term in a non-technical, that is, non-anatomical sense. This poses problems of location for some of the authors who discuss this aspect of her work. A contemporary of Duncan, Selden (1930 p.69), is vague on the matter and offers the phrase "upper centre of force" as a synonym for the solar plexus. Kendall, (1979 p.66) a modern writer on Duncan, locates the solar plexus "in the lower ribs above the stomach". She bases this both on knowledge gained from seeing performances of the reconstructed Duncan dances and the supposition that since

the solar plexus was the area most maligned by corsets and most championed by dress reformers

Kendall (1979 p.66)

it would be an area of the body already of great significance to Duncan. A slightly different explanation is offered by Cohen (1965 p.7) who sees Duncan's identification of the solar plexus as the centre for movement as "a completely natural choice" arrived at "instinctively, unerringly" (p.7). However, both Banes and Irma Duncan agree on the importance of Duncan's discovery. Banes notes

that for Duncan

the source of human movement and emotion lay in the solar plexus, a principle that dictated the use of the whole body in dance

Banes (1980 p.2)

while Irma Duncan (1966 p.25) claims that Duncan's "entire technique" was based on this principle.

One immediate consequence of placing the centre and initiation of movement in the upper half of the body is that it gives Duncan's choreography a characteristic mobility of the chest and back. Small (1977 p.32) refers to "the all-important impulse that gradually and gracefully arches the back" in Duncan's dances and Denby notes that photographs capture

a neck and shoulder line that is strikingly plastic, strikingly aware of three dimensional expression.

Denby (1949 repub. 1968 p.339)

The term "plastic" or "plastique" is often used in contemporary descriptions of Duncan's choreography to denote its particular mobile form. This is apt since, as well as drawing attention to the rounded and moulded use of the upper torso, it acknowledges implicitly Duncan's perception of links between sculpture and dance. The emphasis on the three dimensionality of the body in space, which Duncan achieved by siting the source of movement in the solar plexus, is captured in numerous on the spot sketches of Duncan in both motion and stillness. The importance given to the head and the arms and the nuances of possible interplay between them is in direct contrast to the various codified arabesques and attitudes so typical of ballet. It is these characteristic features of Duncan's dances that Brandenburg (1921 2nd edition 1931) comments upon when he writes of her flowing arm gestures and Terpis (1946 p.59) recalls in his comment on Duncan's "lovely energetic head, lively and expressive arms".

In locating the body centre "between the breasts" Duncan might unwittingly have given her dance theories feminine overtones. While this gave many women access to a new art form and may have contributed to Duncan's initial and subsequent success as a dancer,⁷ it is significant that the experiment to teach boys in her schools failed⁸ and until the 1970s no male dancers attempted to perform in the Duncan style.

Two authors embark upon analysis of Duncan's work based upon this first principle and it is of significance that each wrote within a decade or so of Duncan's death and that since then no text of major importance has dealt with the area. Selden's two books (1930, 1935) provide the earliest systematic attempts to state the basic doctrines of what she terms the "new or free dance". Her awareness of the importance of Duncan's principle of the solar plexus as the source of movement and expression is evident as is Martin's (1942) in his essay on Duncan's "basic dance". However, whereas Selden develops her analysis into the movement outcomes and expressive possibilities consequent upon a body centre located in the solar plexus, Martin is more concerned with the validity of Duncan's discovery "of the central spring of all movement, the crater of motor power" (Duncan 1927a p.75).

She discovered to her complete satisfaction that the solar plexus was the bodily habitation of the soul and the centre in which inner impulse was translated into movement. If we are to take her literally and at her word and accept the fact that by these solitary experiments she was able actually to isolate internal nervous experience in this way, it is one of the most outstanding accomplishments on record. But even if she began with a considerable basis of theory, her discovery remains remarkable for its soundness in relating emotion to visceral action and visceral action to outward movement. She had, however crudely and in whatever inaccurate and unscientific terminology, discovered the soul to be what less imaginative men have called the autonomic system.

Martin (1942 p.6)

An examination and discussion of the choreographic outcomes of Duncan's first principle and its place within the totality of her

ideas about dance is undertaken in the following section. Prior to this it is necessary to consider Duncan's second principle both in its own right and in relation to the first.

Duncan's acknowledgement of a gravitational pull on the body⁹ and its effect on the movements of the body is of itself neither remarkable nor significant. Indeed, it could be argued that all movement and dance theorists must necessarily accept this principle whether or not it is explicit in their writings and even though their resulting conclusions in movement terms differ widely. However, to Duncan, the influence of gravity on the movements of the body was not just accepted as a necessary condition but exploited and used.

All movement on earth is governed by the law of gravitation, by attraction and repulsion, resistance and yielding: it is that which makes up the rhythm of the dance.

Duncan (probably written c.1909 repub. 1928 p. 90)

Selden (1935 p.112) claims that Duncan was the first dancer to use "weighted movements" and cites the "drag step" (referred to in Chapters 7 and 8) as evidence of this.¹⁰ The "throwing [of] weight into a run" in the reconstructions of Duncan's dances is noted by Small (1977 p.32) while to Ashton this use of weight is fundamental to Duncan's choreography.

When one sees reconstructions of Duncan's dances today ... one is struck most of all by the fact that the movement does not attempt to conceal the weight of the body as much ballet dancing does - the impulse is down into the floor, even in the many skipping jumps.

Ashton in Vaughan (1977 p.389)

Duncan's use of the gravitational pull on the body was not confined to downward movement since she was well aware of the possibilities that arise when the body alternately resists and yields

to gravity. As Selden points out

the falls of Duncan were magnificent, especially those that came out of flying leaps.

Selden (1935 p.115)

Duncan describes this attraction to and release from gravity and in so doing abhors the often misguided attempts "to hold a balance" between the two saying that

we are ignorant of the repose of a descent, and the comfort of breathing, of mounting again, skimming, returning, like a bird, to rest.

Duncan (1928 p.100)

Thus, to Duncan the weight of the body was not to be denied or to be overcome but was there to be used as an active element and, as the pull of gravity was either resisted or accepted, so the rhythms of her dance were indicated in embryonic form.

The implications of Duncan's recognition of gravitational forces for her choreography and in the development of her ideas about dance are discussed further in the next section but it is useful at this juncture to consider her two principles as they stand in relation to each other. The location of the source of movement and expression in the solar plexus can be said to stress the importance of the individual, of each dancer, since each body is the originator of its own movement. The acknowledgement of the influence of gravity upon the body and its movement can be said to place the individual, each dancer, within the natural order of things since all movement is subject to the same laws. Thus Duncan was establishing both individuality and commonality. This was in complete accord with her notions of naturalism, freedom and romanticism; the uniqueness of the individual being recognised within the "oneness" of all living things.

Although Duncan's writings on her two principles are explicit she does not seem to have posited relationships between them. Even so in

the act of choreographing Duncan patently used the interactive possibilities that exist between the two since in the analysis of her dances the exciting range of dynamics and use of weight and the way she alternated high leaps and bounds with falls and movements into the ground are recurring features. Such features are consistent with principles which locate a movement centre in the upper part of the body and also acknowledge the force of gravity upon the body and its movements.

In the present study reference is made at several points to the various differences between Duncan's style of modern dance and ballet. It is at this stage, however, that one of the fundamental distinctions between the two genres becomes clear. Duncan's location of the central source of movement and expression in the upper torso results in a mobile trunk, free, outward flowing gestures and a tendency to lability. In ballet the location of the body centre at the base of the spine and the holding of the trunk above that centre leads to a peripheral deployment of the limbs and a tendency to stability. Similarly, Duncan's acceptance and use of gravitational force is in direct contrast to the ballet's "defiance" of gravity. Whereas Duncan used the floor to leap from, to fall to and to lie on, in ballet the pointe shoe's minimum contact with the floor symbolises the genre's attempt to redress "the unfortunate mortal limitation" imposed by gravity (Kinney and Kinney 1914 revised edition 1936 p.242).

6.4 Movement guidelines

Duncan's principles of movement do not in themselves constitute "recipes" for movement but rather each acts as an ever-present influence upon the actions of the body. Therefore, Duncan needed to identify second-order factors to promote body action and it is proposed here that she formulated three "movement guidelines" which

functioned in this way. Duncan's formulation of these three movement guidelines is not totally explicit in her writings although all three recur as main themes throughout her essays. In Duncan's choreography, however, her adherence to the three as promoting and governing movement is clearly seen. The proposed movement precepts are discussed here in succession but this is not to suggest a hierarchical order since the three interact and are regarded as being of equal status.

The most frequently mentioned of Duncan's movement guidelines is that of the "wave".

Of all movement which gives us delight and satisfies the soul's sense of movement, that of the waves of the sea seem to me to be the finest. This great wave movement runs through all Nature, for when we look over the waters to the long line of hills on the shore, they seem also to have the great undulating movement of the sea; and all movements in Nature seem to me to have as their groundplan the law of wave movement.

Duncan (probably written 1905 published 1928 p.68)¹¹

This is a very early declaration by Duncan of her notion of the centrality of the wave movement in nature. A page later she writes

it is the alternate attraction and resistance of the law of gravity that causes this wave movement.

Duncan (probably written 1905 published 1928 p.69)

Such an unequivocal statement establishes clearly in movement terms the link between her principle of gravity and the wave concept. Having related the two in this and succeeding essays Duncan then develops the notion to include human movement.

If then one seeks a point of physical beginning for the movement of the human body, there is a clue in the undulating motion of the wave.

Duncan (probably written 1909 published 1928 p.78)

In the literature on Duncan many authors refer to her near-

obsession with water and the wave.

The embrace of spatial vastness, the remote, seemingly, never-ending horizon, the tides, the calm and stormy waters stimulated her imagination to the point of excitement.

Sorell (1981 p.322)

Nevertheless, there are few, if any, attempts to locate in Duncan's choreography the consequences of working to the wave guideline. However, from the choreographic analysis undertaken for the purpose of the present study the crucial part that the wave plays in the structuring of Duncan's dances is evident. One immediate connotation is that of change of level and this is highlighted in Chapter 7 where reference is made to Duncan's undulating travelling actions. On a more fundamental level the wave epitomises an ebb and flow of energy and promotes the continuous succession of dynamic actions such as releasing, catching and surging which are characteristic of many of Duncan's dances. In the Brahms and Chopin waltzes this was manifest in the lightly tensioned waltz steps and the accompanying dip and rise of the body, while in the 'Blue Danube' the surging to-ing and fro-ing was the basic movement action upon which the whole dance was choreographed. For the Chopin mazurkas the energy content was increased and the bounding steps and leaps were repeated in accelerating or decelerating phrases to give the dances an air of endless energy which was arrested in pauses only to be let free again. Duncan's dance of the Furies in 'Orpheus' began with wild outbursts of energy in high turning leaps which, in response to Orpheus' lyre music, rhythmically decreased. In this dance Duncan's structural form consisted of a series of undulating crescendoes and decrescendoes with the dynamics of the action flaring up only to be subdued each time.

Laban acknowledges the particular manner in which Duncan

exploited the energy inherent in the wave motion.

She recognised the dynamic law co-ordinating the flow of expression in her "wave principle" which emphasises the gradual accumulation of force.

Laban (1950 p.38)

However, it is in the overall lyricism of Duncan's dances that the influence of the wave concept is most evident. This aspect of her choreography is noted in Chapter 8 and was one of the early characteristics described by her contemporaries. Selden (1930p.50) comments upon Duncan's "discovery of a freely flowing line, evolving other movements in unending sequence". Ellen Tells, a dancer contemporary with Duncan, puts it succinctly; "when Isadora made a gesture it seemed to leave a ripple in the air" (in Seroff 1971 caption to Plate XIX).

Nevertheless, by itself the movement guideline of the wave applied to human movement generates insufficient material for a wide range of choreographic purposes and, therefore, it is not surprising that Duncan's second guideline, although again general in kind, has particular significance for the human body and the ways in which it moves. This is the notion of "form".

The great and only principle on which I feel myself justified in leaning, is a constant, absolute and universal unity between form and movement.

Duncan (n.d. published 1928 p.102)

Duncan's writings contain many references to her perception of the relationship between form and movement.

Movements will always have to depend on or correspond to the form that is moving. The movements of a beetle correspond to its form ... even so the movements of the human body must correspond to its form.

Duncan (1902-3 repub. 1928 p.102)

Duncan also includes her belief concerning the beauty of the naked body (discussed in section 6.2 of this chapter) as part of this

notion and arrives at a concept of form in which the movement of the body derives from a structure that, in its natural state, is inherently beautiful. This linking of form and function leads Duncan to distinguish between what she terms "free" and "false" dance.

The true dance is appropriate to the most beautiful human form; the false dance is the opposite of this definition - that is, that movement which conforms to a deformed human body.

Duncan (probably written 1909 published 1928 p.69)

It was on this somewhat circular argument that Duncan based most of her criticisms of the ballet of her time considering it deforming and its movements unnatural (see Chapter 4 section 4.27 and Chapter 10 section 10.2). A contemporary of Duncan who commented upon the distinctions between ballet and modern dance noted

the crucial difference wrought by Isadora lies in the re-establishing of the vital relationship of form to movement, or to state it more concretely, the evolving of all choreographic design from the logical and fundamental sources of movement in the human body.

Taylor (1934 p.16)

In Duncan's dances the evidence of her stated form and movement relationship can be seen in the movement components identified in Chapter 7 section 7.2. Duncan did not use full extensions or extreme flexions of the limbs and the weight was taken on either the whole foot or demi-pointe. All these features are consistent with the notion of the human form moving in an appropriate manner and are, of course, in stark contrast to the movement elements characteristic of ballet. Duncan's guideline of form can also be seen to relate to her use of loose and unrestrictive costumes since, in order for the movements of the body to correspond to its form, the body had to be free and to be as near as possible to its naked state.

Duncan's third movement guideline, which in some senses is both a re-stating of the second and a return to the first, is that of the

"natural". Duncan held that all movement should be natural, that is, not only derived from nature in the widest sense (she often wrote nature with a capital 'N' to emphasise the universality of her meaning) but also in specific relation to the human body, its form and consequent movement.

The concept of "natural" is complex and one that has overtones of an aesthetic, anthropological and philosophical nature. Indeed some writers, such as Brandenburg (1921 2nd edition 1931), link Duncan's "naturalism" with the "back to nature" movement and the various body culture systems which held sway in Europe during the first quarter of the twentieth century and, therefore, give Duncan's work a particular physical orientation. However, the intention here is not to embark upon a conceptual analysis of what might be meant by the term "natural" in different contexts but to examine what can be said to be the meanings that Duncan ascribed to the notion in her writings and, more importantly, how this was manifest in her choreography.

In the literature on Duncan many writers compound the various ways in which she writes about the "natural" and in so doing diminish Duncan's convictions and beliefs. Stokes, the aesthetician and critic asserts that

Isadora danced barefoot and her movements were "natural" movements. She felt that she was expressing in her person the ... deep tingling dance inherent in Nature.

Stokes, A. (1942 pp.111-2)

An examination of Duncan's writings on the theme of the "natural" clearly indicates that Stokes and others writing in a similar vein are incorrect in attributing such naive notions to her. It is evident that although Duncan uses the term in three inter-related ways she does not confuse the separate meanings. Firstly, in claiming that movement should be natural Duncan is merely re-stating her Californian-derived belief that human beings can only lead full and

healthy lives if they are in tune with nature. This is the subject of her essay 'The dancer and nature' (1928) which, according to Steegmuller (1974), was written in 1905, and the theme reappears in many of her other writings.

Secondly, Duncan regards the term "natural" in relation to human movement to mean that which "corresponds" to the human form. In this sense the term is closely linked with her second movement guideline. The third sense in which Duncan uses the term is when she writes of the "natural" sources of movement. This also links with her first guideline since Duncan is referring to the movement of the waves and also to the wind rustling the leaves and grass and associated ideas. However, when Duncan writes of the "natural" sources of movement she does not, as Stokes and others imply, mean that in her dances she is "expressing Nature". An examination of the content or subject matter of Duncan's dances reveals no evidence that she ever danced "about" "flowers opening" or "raindrops falling" as is commonly supposed.

Of course some of Duncan's sayings and writings on what she meant by her use of the term natural are neither analytical nor stringent and can best be taken as pithy statements promoting her cause.

Learn from nature. Everything that is natural is truthful.
Everything that is truthful is beauty. What is beauty?
Beauty is truth. Truth is nature.

Duncan in Schneider(1968 p.38)

In contrast, other Duncan texts show lucidity and a total understanding of the particular ways in which she regarded her dancing

as "natural".

Then when I opened the door to nature again, revealing a different kind of dance, some people explained it all by saying "See it is natural dancing". But with its freedom, its accordance with natural movement, there was always design too - even in nature you find sure, even rigid design, "Natural" dancing should mean only that the dance never goes against nature, not that anything is left to chance.

Nature must be the source of all art, and dance must make use of nature's forces in harmony and rhythm, but the dancer's movement will always be separate from any movement in nature.

Duncan (probably written 1909 published 1928 p.79)

The importance of this statement is twofold since it indicates that Duncan was well aware of the process of abstraction and of the choreographic act and that she established such guidelines early in her career.

Duncan's penchant for the natural, evident in her preference for lighting akin to sunlight in her performances and her choice of simply hung curtains for her set, is noted in Chapter 7 section 7.23. However, it is in the movement content of the dances that her use of what she perceived to be natural is most clearly seen. In the choreographic analysis her use of basic movement components, actions and forms is evident as it is, too, in the four exemplar dances (see Chapter 8). Almost all the reviewers and critics of Duncan's dances draw attention to these natural features of her dances. One eye-witness account of a performance of Duncan's dance using Tchaikovsky's 'Pathetique' Symphony notes that in mid-career Duncan's choreography developed further into the natural.

Her materials are simpler than ever. She has cast off everything in her art that might suggest the tricks of her craft. It used to be said that her whole stock in trade consisted of the movements which every normal man and woman can do: now it consists of the things which every man and woman habitually do [sic], yet with such purity ... beauty and grace.

Anon. (1917 p.31)

Margherita Duncan's "recognition" of Duncan's dance, quoted in

Chapter 8 section 8.3 and noted as being typical of the reactions of many of her audiences on first seeing her dance, is the response that such "natural" dance evoked.¹²

The three movement guidelines of "the wave", "form" and "the natural" are proposed here as Duncan's initiating and controlling factors for action. They stand as second-order "rules" to Duncan's movement principles of the solar plexus as the centre and source of movement and the acknowledgement of the gravitational pull on the body and all its movement. Together the principles and guidelines constitute the movement basis of Duncan's theories.

6.5 Summary

Duncan's reverence for the human body is manifest throughout her theoretical writings. Her insistence that the body in its naked and natural state is inherently beautiful was not innovative per se but as the central doctrine of a choreographer and dancer it was a revolutionary creed to preach. Such thinking, and the practice that it promoted, showed Duncan's work to run counter to both prevailing social norms and existing dance theatre forms.

Similarly, her re-location of the body centre and her full acceptance of gravitational forces immediately gave her dance characteristics almost diametrically opposed to those of ballet. Furthermore, in seeking natural phenomena as the source of movement, in aligning natural body movements and the form of the body and in insisting upon dance as a natural activity devoid of all artificiality and pretentiousness, Duncan pioneered a totally new direction in the development of dance.

All these notions are to be found expressed with varying degrees of clarity in her theoretical writings. When examined and seen in relation to each other they show that Duncan formulated a very complex network of ideas about dance which, in some senses, can be considered

as an embryonic theoretical system. Of course what an artist writes about her or his own work is not necessarily the case since creators are not the sole interpreters or evaluators of their work. Nevertheless, Duncan's theoretical writings can be shown to have a coherence and a consistency which, on preliminary examination, seem to relate closely to her choreography.

Duncan's dances were described as allowing "the possibility for all of us to be beautiful" (Arkadii Georgievich Gornfel'd quoted by Levinson 1918 p.27). The typical bodily actions in her dances were seen to reflect her values of promoting healthy, lithe, feminine bodies. The undeniable and overt bodily focus in her choreography and the manner in which her dances seem to celebrate the body underline the importance of this concept in her work.

The discussion carried out in this chapter of Duncan's glorification of the body and her development of the movement basis of her dances is a prerequisite for an examination of her dances, the focus of the following two chapters. The next stage is to see how Duncan's glorification of the body and the attendant movement ideas gave rise to her choreographic structures and to examine the ways in which she realised the "spiritual expressive" potential of the body in terms of subject matter and meanings.

CHAPTER 6 NOTES

- 1 For a general account of the way in which attitudes to the body reflect social norms and mores and are also expressed in various activities such as art and recreation see Bottomley (1979). For an application of this notion to dance see Adshead (1975).
- 2 Steegmuller (1974 p.91n) indicates that Duncan's essay 'The Dance and Nature' was addressed initially to women and draws attention to the way in which she urged them to seek beauty "through the knowledge of their own bodies" (Duncan 1928 p.67).
- 3 The Moscow School motto "A free spirit can only exist in a freed body" is clearly dualistic.
- 4 It is not suggested here that the doctrines of dualism and monism are in direct opposition since this would be to oversimplify a complex area. Nevertheless, Duncan's writings seem to embrace facets of each and thus appear paradoxical.
- 5 A reference not to her educational establishments but to her dance form which she often contrasted with "the ballet school".
- 6 For example, in Laban's movement theories the actual physical centre of the body is identified as well as the body's centres of gravity and "levity", the latter being located in the upper sternum. Similarly, the notion of a body centre is fundamental to Graham's dance technique system and to ballet where it is sited in the upper pelvic region and the base of the spine respectively.
- 7 There is much evidence to support such a view but a counter-position is taken up by Levinson (1929 p.161) who terms Duncan "an androgynous dancer".
- 8 Nevertheless, Duncan stated "it is current opinion that dancing is feminine and, therefore, only girls have joined my School. But personally, I would have preferred boys, for they are better able to express the heroism of which we have so much need in this age" (Duncan 1981 p.58).
- 9 Surprisingly, perhaps, Duncan does not appear to have used the term "centre of gravity" in her writings although she was much closer to the technical meaning of the term than in her use of "solar plexus".
- 10 It is of interest to note that whereas both Selden and Martin stress the importance of Duncan's first principle of the two it is only Selden who goes on to consider the second.
- 11 In this section the dates of Duncan's writings are given as well as publication details so that the formation of her ideas and theories may be seen in chronological sequence.
- 12 It also spawned many Duncan imitators because a "natural" dance genre seemed so easy to perform.

CHAPTER 7

**THE PURSUIT OF HARMONY:
THE STRUCTURES THAT TYPIFY DUNCAN'S CHOREOGRAPHY**

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Structural components
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7.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the delineation of those structures which can be shown to be typical of Duncan's choreography. It is based on a detailed choreographic analysis of Duncan's total output of dances which was carried out for the purposes of the present study using the Adshead et al (1982) model.¹ The first step in any analytical process is to determine the parts of the object or activity under scrutiny that constitute the whole. Since dances are choreographed and then brought into being by performance the two most immediate concerns appear to be the dance as choreographed and the interpretation of it by the dancer(s). However, a third consideration is the context in which the dance is choreographed and/or performed and, for dance as a theatre art, this is usually, but not exclusively, in a special performance area. Such areas allow the performance to be set visually, with the elements of floor or stage space, backdrops and lighting contributing to the dance environment. Dances also occur within an aural context along a continuum between sound and silence. Dances can be performed in silence or dancers can generate their own sound but the usual accompaniment is live or recorded music.

Thus, in this sense, a dance is not merely a certain pattern of movement more or less amenable to analysis but a complex whole made up of four main structural components each consisting of a multiplicity of elements and all identifiable. Every dance consists of these components. Even so the bases of the distinctions between the work of

one choreographer and another, and one dance and another, are the particular choices and rejections made from the constituent parts and their sub-divisions or elements. Therefore, Duncan's particular choreographic style can be determined both by identifying the consistencies in the selections she made from the movement possibilities, numbers of dancers, visual and aural contexts available to her and by noting recurring omissions. In this way it is possible to compile a set of characteristics of which some or all can be found in each of her dances and that distinguish her choreography from that of other choreographers.

From the initial identification of the four structural components it is possible to consider the overall structure of a dance, that is, its form. It is the ways in which these components relate to each other, thereby producing specific networks and configurations, that gives rise to the dance form. Thus statements which attempt to describe and account for the dance form must necessarily be concerned with the structural components and their inter and/or non-connections.

Since a dance exists in time the networks of components and their elements are liable to be particularly complex. Firstly, there are the relations that occur within each component, that is, between one movement and another, between dancers, between elements of the visual and aural contexts and those that are evident between components. Secondly, there are those connections which are apparent at any given moment in time. These might consist of an instant in a body action when there is an associated dynamic and spatial emphasis or the placement of groups of dancers within the performing area at a specific moment. It is the manner in which different components and elements combine or are disassociated at such an instant that gives a momentary visual structure to the dance. These moments occur throughout the dance and thus brief structures are continuously being

presented and immediately superceded by other instant structures.

Thirdly, there are structural networks which permeate time. These may derive from the instant structures presented in succession or from the linear progression of links between various constituent parts. As the instant structures dissolve and are replaced so certain of the momentary links can be sustained and continued.

From the "moment in time" and "through time" structures other networks arise which contribute towards the total dance form. A "moment in time" structure may be of particular importance when considered as part of a "through time" structure and thus gives rise to notions of climax and highlight. Similarly, certain "moment in time" structures may cohere to give isolated units or "through time" structures may terminate and new ones begin, thereby producing distinct entities within the total. Some units may then be seen to combine to give larger segments so that progressively the main sections of the dance are built up.

Therefore, in the analysis of a dance form the procedure is from the basis of an initial identification of the structural components to point to the different ways in which they are associated and/or disassociated. These links can then be traced in order to reveal the basic networks. This in turn leads to the delineation of the units and sections of the dance so that eventually the whole framework of the dance can be articulated. Finally, the framework is considered in terms of its overall complexities and climaxes, the predominance of some units and sections over others and so on until the totality of the structure is recognised and understood. Only then can legitimate statements about the dance form be made and a further basis established for comparing and contrasting dances.

The ensuing examination of the structural components and form of Duncan's dances, which together constitute the choreographic structures of her dance, uses the various kinds of evidence cited in

Part 1. It also relates to the discussion in the preceding chapter on the movement basis of Duncan's work.

7.2 Structural components

7.21 DUNCAN'S DISTINCTIVE CHOICE OF MOVEMENT

The literature on Duncan contains many references to her use of various body actions in her choreography.² Her immediate contemporaries noted her frequent use of leaps interspersed with steps, walks, runs and falls (for example, Selden 1935). In addition particular dances were associated with specific body actions. Terry (1963) describes one of Duncan's early dances, the 'Spirit of Spring', as consisting mainly of runs and leaps. Leaping was also the central feature of Duncan's dance using Chopin's polonaise in A flat major which the Russian critic, Shebuyev, reviewed in 1904 (in Steegmuller 1974).³ In 1922 Kinel (1937 p.215) saw Duncan dance to an unidentified⁴ Chopin prelude in which she "merely walked from one end of the stage to the other".

Although these actions of necessity involve the whole body it is evident that Duncan utilised the upper and lower torso differently in her choreography. The lower trunk and legs were used primarily for weight bearing and locomotion with leg gestures being an incidental rather than prominent feature. The kneeling that characterised both Duncan's 'Berceuse' with Gretchaninoff's music (Levinson 1929) and her 'Revolutionary' Scriabin etude (Kendall 1979) is an example of her use of the lower part of the body for support. This choreographic feature is substantiated by reference to the Genthe photographs which show Duncan in various reclining positions.

Other Genthe photographs illustrate in a particularly striking manner Duncan's use of the upper part of the body. Her uplifted chest and frequent arm gestures, often with wrists and palms prominent and fingers either separated, as in the 'German dances' to Schubert's

music, or clenched as in her 'Marche Slave', were typical of her choreography. In addition Duncan isolated parts of the upper torso in her dances so that the head, the neck, the face and the area of the solar plexus were often mobile while the rest of the body was held in stillness.

Duncan's use of stillness of part of the body and, especially, the whole body in held positions or balances was a feature noted by many authors. Such "action" pauses were frequently held on the balls of both feet with the body erect and preceded or followed a walk or run.⁵ In some dances Duncan's moments of stillness which used other parts of the lower body for support were a dominating compositional element and descriptions such as "hardly moved" (Anon 21 April 1921 p. 400), "scarcely moved" (Stokes, S., 1928 repub. 1968 p.60), "often very little movement" (Tarn 1921 p.524) and "stood still" (Yeats in Steegmuller 1974 p.396) are common. Indeed Hurok's impression of seeing Duncan's famous 'Marche Slave' was that "she moved just slightly" (Hurok in Terry 1963 p.89). From other sources (for example, Divoire 1924 and Duncan and Macdougall 1929) it is clear that some sections of this dance were composed of a succession of held and quickly dissolved positions as was also Duncan's dance to Franck's 'Redemption' which consisted of Duncan rising from her knees to a standing position (Van Vechten 1917 repub. 1974).

The bodily actions characteristic of Duncan's choreography are totally consistent with the movement principles and guidelines that she proposed in her writings and which are discussed in Chapter 6. Duncan's complete reliance on everyday, basic movement actions, such as walking, running and leaping, reflect her premise that dance must be based on the natural actions which stem from the particular form of the human body. Furthermore, Duncan's notion of the source of movement located in the solar plexus which, together with the pull of

gravity, controls action, is clearly seen in her dances where the upper torso is mobile, pliant and free to gesture while the lower torso is mainly concerned with weight-bearing and travelling.

Movement necessarily occurs in space and when the different spatial aspects of Duncan's choreography are noted by her contemporaries it is invariably in relation to specific characteristics of particular dances. Thus Margherita Duncan's (in Duncan 1928) description of Duncan's 'Blue Danube' makes it clear that the basic waltz step was danced in alternating forward and backward directions with a gradual increase in the size of the step pattern. Duncan's 'L'Internationale', based on an "endless spiral" (Schneider 1968 p. 51), exemplifies the curve while the straight line was evident in her dance using Chopin's prelude in A major op, 28 no.7 in which she moved along each of the stage diagonals in turn towards the audience (Kinel 1937). After seeing Duncan dance 'Iphigenia' in 1908 Parker wrote

she moves often in long and lovely sinuous lines across the whole breadth, or down the whole depth of the stage. Or she circles it in curves of no less jointless beauty.

Parker (1982 p.59)

Duncan also exploited level and she frequently contrasted low, lying positions with high, reaching upward gestures of the arms and head. Her dance using Chopin's mazurka in B minor ended with a sinking action (Svetlov 1927) and it was her "raised right arm" in a 1906 performance of Chopin's waltz in D flat that a Dutch critic found worthy of mention (in Loewenthal 1980 p. 240). A few years later both Harrison (1908), the English critic, and Craig (1911 in Rood 1978) commented on Duncan's use of an upward and curved line in her choreography. Duncan's preference for the curved and rounded can be substantiated by reference to drawings of her. A feature common to many of these is a rounding of the upper part of the back with the

arms curving forward to continue the concave line.

Modern writers who have seen performances of the reconstructed Duncan dances tend to generalise on Duncan's choreographic use of space. To Shelton (1981 p.97) it is Duncan's "sense of volume" that is apparent and similarly for Silverman (1978 p.5) it is the "massiveness and volume" that Duncan achieved by the placement of the body in space that is important.

Duncan's spatial concerns can be summarised as being eclectic. In her choreography she was sensitive to the shape and size of the body in space with an immediate focus on near space and she used simple floor patterns and lines placed within a proscenium setting and orientated towards an audience. In particular she exploited the use of levels together with an emphasis on a curved and usually upward line.

From an overview of both contemporary and modern critical reviews of Duncan's choreography her use of a wide dynamic range to enliven the moving body in space is evident. For example, Brandenburg notes

her talent to show the various degrees of force and the minutest degree of negative and soft movements were an achievement of the range of the dynamic scale known and practised by only a few.

Brandenburg in Laban (1950b p.16)

In a later essay on Duncan Brandenburg (1921 2nd edition 1931 p.200) discusses her "use of light and varying intensities of movement" and he cites particularly the "floating" quality that she achieved in dances using Chopin's music. Macdougall (1960 p.158) writes of the "intensity" of Duncan's 'La Marseillaise', an effect gained by a relentless build up of power and strength through the dance. Another of her war-inspired works, the 'Marche Lorraine', also used a strong, powerful dynamic (Van Vechten 1917 repub. 1974). Duncan's solo and group choreography for the 'Dance of the Furies' in Gluck's 'Orpheus', and the 'Scherzo' from Tchaikovsky's 'Symphony

Pathetique' were similarly characterised by a forceful, energetic quality.

There are also many examples of Duncan's manipulation of speed and tempo in her dances. Duncan's choreography using Schubert's 'Ave Maria' was based on simple body actions that were developed gradually to points of climax followed by a return to the original slow pace, an effect described by one writer as "an intense swell of momentum" (Kendall 1979 p. 170). Schneider (1978 p.80) describes Duncan dancing the 'Burden of Life' with a "gradual deceleration of tempo" throughout. In contrast 'Moment Musical', another of her Schubert dances, contained sections of great speed that led the Caffins (1912 p62) to characterise it as "a spontaneous burst of gladness".

The music accompaniment that Duncan selected for her dances often provided her with rhythms that she could exploit and develop but she also superimposed her own rhythmic structures over the accompanying music. Such "disregard of metronomic exactitude" was praised by many writers (for example 'An Admirer' 1921 p. 407).⁶

When Duncan's use of a range of bodily actions is examined together with associated spatial and dynamic elements certain basic characteristics emerge. Her walks, runs and leaps were always coloured by particular spatial or dynamic stresses.⁷ Pikula's reference (1979 p.148) to Duncan's use of "quick small steps" and Selden's note (1935 p.112) about the "drag step" (identified in Chapter 6 as derived from Duncan's acknowledgement of the weight of the body) with which she began her Chopin 'Funeral March' are examples of the way Duncan combined walking with a specific spatial and dynamic texturing.

Similarly there are many references to Duncan's high leaps that were sometimes performed with a great outburst of energy as in her 'Danse des Scythes' from 'Iphigenia', and in other dances given a

lighter more delicate stress, as in her Brahms waltzes. It is pertinent to note that, contrary to many secondary sources and also popular dance mythology, there are few references to Duncan using small, dainty and precise hops and skips in her dances. Roslavleva (1975) and Irma Duncan (1937 repub. 1970) both refer to a particular Duncan hop or "swing step" which was performed with a leg swing⁸ but this is very different from the fussy little steps and hops that MacMillan used in his Duncan dances in 'Isadora'.

These references by first and third generation Duncan pupils to a leg gesture are interesting because, apart from such instances as Eastman's recollection (in Duncan 1928) of Duncan's held position with one knee raised in her 'Marche Militaire', there are few descriptions in the literature of her use of legs other than in stepping, skipping and running actions. However, from sketches such as those of Walkowitz, it is evident that in these actions there was a gesture of the free leg either as a preparation for or a release from weight bearing.

In contrast Duncan's arm gestures are noted so often in descriptions and reviews that it is evident that they were an outstanding feature of her choreography both in terms of their frequency and also their spatial and dynamic range. Duncan's detailed articulation of the upper torso and arms is described at length by many who saw her dance. Rambert (1972 p.50) for example, remembers Duncan's "powerful arm movements" in the 'Danse des Scythes' and Eastman (in Duncan 1928 p.40) writes of her arms being "tensely extended" in one of the pauses during the 'Marche Militaire'. Duncan's use of her pointed index finger to set "the whole linear design" of her dance in the allegro of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony is discussed in a 1917 review (quoted by Anon 1917 p.13) and provides another instance of the importance of arm gestures and their spatial and dynamic texture in Duncan's work.

While a more detailed analysis of some of the separate movement elements of Duncan's choreography would be possible⁹ it is more appropriate here to list the main characteristics of her work that can be identified. Such a tabulation is interesting since it provides an immediate indication of the ways in which Duncan's use of movement within her choreographic structures reflects her theorisings.

Movement elements characteristic of Duncan's choreography

- weight on whole foot, demi-pointe and parts of lower trunk
- full range of body actions
- frequent stillnesses between actions
- comprehensive spatial range
- exploitation of levels
- basic circular and linear floor patterns
- rounded gestures
- wide-ranging dynamic
- clear metric and free rhythms
- fluency of action

It is also evident that certain aspects of movement were relatively unimportant or almost entirely absent from Duncan's choreography.

Movement elements unimportant in or absent from Duncan's choreography

- weight taken on pointe
- angled, flexed or totally extended limbs
- extensive leg gestures
- contractions of the trunk

7.22 DUNCAN'S USE OF DANCERS

In Chapter 5 section 5.23 aspects of Duncan's solo and group works are considered within a discussion of her total choreographic output. Here, in an examination of her choreographic structures, that consideration can be taken a further stage forward. It is evident that Duncan did not capitalise on the wide range of possibilities to be gained by varying the sex of the dancers and by making lead and subsidiary roles and she only partially exploited the use of different numbers of dancers in her choreography. Typically, she created works

primarily for her own solo performance and even in her group works, which were always performed by her female pupils,¹⁰ Duncan took the lead roles. Nevertheless, Duncan often regarded herself as both soloist and chorus. She writes of striving to express the emotions of fifty maidens in her 'Suppliants' dance and her feeling of "multiple oneness" (Duncan 1927a p.136). She also claimed "I have never once danced a solo" in reference to her endeavour "always to be the chorus" (Duncan 1928 p. 96).

7.23 THE VISUAL SETTING/ENVIRONMENT FOR DUNCAN'S PERFORMANCES

The visual context in which a dance is placed is composed of the interacting elements of set, lighting and costume.

Apart from early salon appearances and mid-career performances in the open air, Duncan performed in conventional theatres with a proscenium arch or in concert halls. Some of these performance spaces might well have required occasional adaptations to the choreography of certain dances.¹¹ However, despite the fact that Duncan's tours often took her to small towns with minimal stage facilities, no references have been found to any choreographic changes made in order to accommodate different performance areas. From this it may be assumed that her dances were easily adapted to suit different stage spaces and that this was deemed unremarkable.

The prime interest at this juncture is that of set. It is of some significance since, unlike many other choreographers, Duncan was solely responsible for this presentational aspect of her work.

The French critic Lavedan, who saw Duncan's early 1902/3 Paris performances, described her stage set as

unfurnished, simply and severely draped at the back and sides with a soft, blue fabric.

quoted by Macdougall (1946 p.68)

José Clara, the artist, also saw these performances and recalled

no stage set except long neutral curtains which disappeared
up into darkness and left the imagination free play
Clara quoted by Macdougall (1946 p.67)

An initial response to this unadorned setting was remembered by
Federn the German author who, seeing Duncan dance a year or so later
in Berlin wrote

a simple scene ... a green carpet and a spacious grey-blue
backdrop ... almost childish and laughable seems this stage
decor until she appears.

Federn quoted by Duncan, Irma (1958 p.235)

Apparently, therefore, by 1904/5 Duncan was using curtains which
hung straight in vertical folds as a backdrop. The colour, although
described in the quotations given as "blue", "neutral" and "grey-blue"
and variously elsewhere,¹² was to Duncan "a simple blue" (1927a
p.163). The origin of this set is a matter of speculation¹³ but it is
evident that Duncan established a basic design early in her career and
thereafter toured with her own curtains.

There is ample evidence in the literature of the importance of
this set to Duncan. On at least one occasion during her 1922/3 visit
to the USA Duncan's curtains did not arrive at the theatre in time for
her performance and she refused to dance in front of a set painted
with "galaxies of gold stars" (Hurok 1947 p.107). During her
adventurous and difficult Ukrainian tour of 1924 these same curtains
were often mislaid or delayed en route. In a letter Duncan complained
that the curtains,

being packed wet, are quite grey with mildew and all falling
to pieces, impossible to use them.

Duncan in Duncan and Macdougall (1929 p.270)

Duncan danced in bare feet and it is surprising that there are so
few descriptions of the floor coverings that she must have used.

Duncan and Macdougall (1929 p.90) refer to Duncan's "blue-green carpet" and Hurok (1947 p.107) to her "blue floor-cloth". Duncan herself is not explicit on the subject although she does relate that in 1904 the ballet company in Bayreuth

had even gone so far as to strew tacks on my carpet so that my feet were torn.

Duncan (1927a p.163)

Duncan's set can be characterised as consisting entirely of long blue curtains, amply but simply folded to give a drop, with a matching floor-covering and, on occasions, side curtains. She may have experimented early in her career with various stage settings based on this format but she quickly discarded conventional stage scenery in favour of her curtains. This set, which appears to have been finalised by 1904/5 and remained unchanged¹⁴ throughout the rest of her career, was sufficiently important to Duncan for her to insist that it should be used for all her performances. It is evident that Duncan wanted her dance to be viewed against a formal, neutral background and that this was an essential element in the presentation of her choreography.

Several early references collectively establish the main characteristics of Duncan's stage lighting during the first decade of her career as an international artist.

Lavedan (in Phillips Vierke 1911 p.126) writes of a 1902/3 Duncan performance as being "dimly lighted" and Shebuyev in 1904 notes

a rosy light shone out at the rear of the stage on the left, and pale violet tones began to gleam on the blue backdrop.
Shebuyev in Steegmuller (1974, p.42)

A year later Duncan's stage was described thus:

at either side are electric lights in large, opalescent discs, supported on tall tripods.

Norman (1905 p.37)

In 1906 Duncan was performing her Schubert's 'German dances' "in a roseate light" (reported in Loewenthal 1980 p.238) and "dim rose-coloured lights" were also used in her 1908 New York programmes (Van Vechten 1911 repub. 1974 pp.18-19). At this time, too, Duncan was credited with the virtual abolition of footlights and the promotion of strong side projection lamps (Etscher 1911).¹⁵

Duncan's preference for red lighting tones projected from the wings seems to have been retained up to mid-career when she introduced some minor but necessary changes. A reviewer of a 1917 performance commented

her figure was usually top-lighted on stage to focus on the beautiful arms rather than the torso.

quoted by Rather (1976 pp.78-80)

This is an oblique reference to Duncan's increasing weight. In her 1921 London performances Duncan, by then forty-five, sought to heighten the effect of her dances by introducing dramatic lighting effects. In her 'Polish trilogy' the stage was "dully lit with red" for the 'Heroic Poland' dance (Kiki 1921 p.13) and for the other two dances blue spot limes were used (Fussell 1921).

The only source who claims to quote Duncan on lighting is Schneider who was responsible for carrying out her lighting plans during her Russian period. He writes of her

dislike of white light ... based on her penchant for everything natural, including sunlight. She categorically refused to allow a spotlight to follow her movements on the stage. "The rays of the sun do not run after a man" she used to say.

Schneider (1968 p.53)

These eye witness accounts of Duncan's lighting span her career and it

is evident that

she paid close attention to the lights ...dancing among simulations of shadows on the stage, and subtle colour changes, sometimes amber, sometimes rose.

Kendall (1979 p.68)

Even so Duncan's attitude to lighting might best be described as pragmatic. The term is appropriate for although Duncan was adamant about the type of lighting appropriate for her dances, she did not tour with her own equipment and, therefore, had to adapt her presentation to local facilities. In this respect Duncan's lighting, unlike her set, was variable, both in relation to venue and, to a lesser extent, in individual dances.

However, it would be inaccurate to infer from Duncan's pragmatic attitude that lighting occupied an unimportant place in her work as a whole. As Duncan developed her repertoire from the salon to the theatre context so she worked on the lighting aspects of her presentation.¹⁶ Certainly, the play of soft, warm lights on the dancing figure and the use of light and shadow interested her and was noted in her performances. Nevertheless, except for one short period,¹⁷ she was unable to develop any practice fully consistent with her ideas.

The earliest visual records of Duncan's costumes are the 1898/9 Schloss photographs, referred to in Chapter 2, which show her in a conventional mid-calf lace dance dress and wearing ballet slippers. However Duncan, in relating events prior to these dates, writes of dancing in "a little white tunic" (1927a p.25). It seems, therefore, from this and other evidence¹⁸ that during her east coast period Duncan was experimenting with various kinds of costume.

For Duncan's prestigious New Gallery London performances in 1900 new costumes were required to reflect the theme or mood of each dance. Macdonald (1977a) suggests that these costumes might well have been

designed by Alice Comyns Carr, the wife of Joe Comyns Carr one of the managers of the New Gallery. Alternative proposals are made by Macdougall (1960), who attributes Duncan's new costumes to Marie Hallé, sister of Charles Hallé the other manager of the New Gallery, and H.A.S. (1900) who gives credit to a Mrs. Nettleship. Macdonald's suggestions seems the more tenable since Alice Comyns Carr was a theatre costume designer. Whoever was responsible it is evident from a first hand report that Duncan's costume for the 'Primavera' dance, based on the Botticelli painting, was now more subtle and professional than the tunics her mother had made for her in the U.S.A.

The robe appears to consist of several gauze slips worn one over another. The upper one has angel sleeves and is dim, pale green colour, painted here and there with delicate flowers. The draperies reach to the feet, and are full enough to blow about outlining the figure as she dances. Very Botticelli-like is the long, dark hair crowned with roses, and falling to the waist. Ropes of roses wind about her body and the feet are shod with gold sandals.

Anon. quoted by Duncan, Irma (1958a pp.228-9)¹⁹

Three points emerge from Duncan's choice of costumes for her New Gallery performances. Firstly, these seem to have been the only occasions on which she might have received help in the design of her costumes. Thereafter there are no references in the literature to anyone else being involved and it must be assumed that Duncan took sole responsibility for this aspect of her work. Secondly, the New Gallery costumes provided her with some basic designs that she could rework and eventually simplify. Thirdly, the use of fresh flowers for Duncan's New Gallery performances became a regular feature of all her performances and there are many accounts (for example, Ashton in Vaughan 1977) of her wearing and strewing real flowers in particular dances.²⁰

Thus Duncan's ideas of costume, formulated in the U.S.A. and given substance in London, were established by 1900. From the many descriptions of costumes throughout her career it is evident that

having arrived at a basic design Duncan did not depart from it but gradually refined and simplified what she wore on stage. It is possible to identify two characteristics of her costume.

The main feature of Duncan's costume is that she adopted and used the tunic style of the ancient Greeks for all her dances. Her costumes were, therefore, variations on the one theme. Fussell (1921) describes Duncan's costumes for her 'Polish trilogy' as being of different colours but in the same style and Ashton recalls Duncan achieving variation by dancing first in a long chiton-like garment and then gradually discarding layers in successive dances until, in her last dance, she would be dressed only in her short tunic. He refers to this as "a sort of highbrow striptease" (in Balanchine and Mason 1978 p.304). According to Kaye (1929 pt.3 p.30) Duncan often wore the same tunic for different dances and he cites her use of a short red tunic for all "her military dances".

The second characteristic is manifest in the simple additions that Duncan made to her basic costume in order to achieve particular effects. The flowers that decorated Duncan's costume and were worn in her hair or carried and strewn have already been mentioned but she also used cloaks, veils, scarves and occasionally leaves and branches. Several writers comment upon the dramatic effect Duncan achieved by the particular way in which she manipulated a cloak. Newman (1921) describes Duncan standing still and allowing her cloak to sink slowly to the floor so that it was the only movement on stage. Ashton, too, remembers Duncan in her 'Funeral March' (Chopin) with "a huge cloak wrapped around her" holding a lengthy pause before opening the cloak slowly to reveal an "armful of lilies" (in Balanchine and Mason 1978 p.304). There are several accounts of Duncan dancing with veils and scarves although Irma Duncan maintains (in Joel 1969) that, contrary to popular belief, Duncan had only one dance in her repertoire in

which she used a scarf.

Duncan developed the basic precepts by which she selected the total visual setting for her dances relatively early in her career. Thereafter she endeavoured to maintain them consistently across all her choreography. The visual elements which Duncan sought to bring together in the theatre context can be summarised as dance performed before blue curtains, lit predominantly in reddish hues and costumed in variants of a Greek tunic.

In practice, however, Duncan had to compromise in one respect since on tours her lighting was frequently selected on pragmatic grounds. However, she always travelled with her own curtains to avoid having to use local sets. The other aspect of her visual setting on which she would not make any concessions was her costume. This was always chosen with care and attention to effect and presented as an integral part of the dance.

7.24 DUNCAN'S CHOICE OF SILENCE, WORDS AND MUSIC

The overall features of the aural aspects of Duncan's choreography in relation to her total repertoire are delineated in Chapter 5 while in Chapter 8 the implications of Duncan's use of accompaniment are discussed in relation to the interpretation of her work. Therefore, at this point it is necessary only to bridge these two considerations by marshalling and overviewing material relevant to the establishing of Duncan's dance style.

Duncan's few dances without accompaniment are referred to in Chapter 5 as "dances performed in silence". However, it is appropriate to note that at least once Duncan generated her own aural accompaniment during a performance of one of these dances. Schneider

commented on Duncan dancing 'Death and the Maiden'

the absence of music was compensated for by quite an extraordinarily clear rhythm, accentuated by dull taps of the foot on the floor.

Schneider (1968 p.80)

Apart from this reference there is little to indicate that Duncan had any interest in exploiting the body as a percussive instrument. Indeed the evidence points to Duncan's main aural preoccupation being with the question of which type of music to select (Stegmuller 1974) and the relation of dance to music and poetry (Duncan 1928).

Duncan's choice of the spoken word to accompany her dance seems to have been based on a preference for a strong story line and/or a dramatic content since this is the common factor in the works she used. It is clear from several of Duncan's essays (1928) that she held firm views on the co-existence of dance and the spoken word in performance. Nevertheless, she was unable to put these into any lasting or tangible form.

The importance of music as an aural element in Duncan's work is described in quantitative terms and at length in Chapter 5. Here it is pertinent to summarise Duncan's choice of music so that its contribution to her distinctive dance style can be noted. Pruett's (1978) research provides the basis for such a summary. Pruett proposes that five "patterns of selection" can be identified in Duncan's choice of music for her choreography. Of these five the first three are relevant at this juncture.²¹

Pruett suggests that firstly, Duncan showed great allegiance to a few composers, secondly, she tended to select works composed in the Romantic or neo-Romantic style and thirdly, Duncan was influenced by the national music of Russia and many of the European countries in which she lived. These three "patterns of selection" are fully congruent with the discussion undertaken in Chapter 5. In addition

they are upheld here since they corroborate the evidence gained from the scrutiny of the Duncan literature and the choreographic analysis. It is evident that Duncan's choice of compositions, which varied in length, style and content, provided her with accompaniment for an extensive repertoire and, together with the use of folk and national tunes, facilitated the basic structuring of her dances.

In the literature on Duncan it is often stated that she did not use the works of living composers for her accompaniment. Such statements are somewhat misleading since there is ample evidence to show that she used compositions by Nevin, Humperdinck and Scriabin who were her contemporaries. It is, however, accurate to state that she did not use music written in an identifiable twentieth century idiom since her Scriabin dances were from his early Romantic period. Duncan discarded the Nevin-based dances from her repertoire as soon as her career was launched and she used the Humperdinck pieces only in choreography for her pupils. It is also relevant to note that Duncan did not commission any music works.

In summary it can be said that Duncan very occasionally danced in silence, she sometimes danced to a spoken or sung version of poetry or prose but most frequently she danced with musical accompaniment played by a pianist or orchestra. However, none of these elements in combination occurred in any one dance although, in her early career, she presented programmes in which all three forms of accompaniment were used. The aural element typical of a Duncan performance was the work of a classical composer in the Romantic style played on the piano.

Duncan's work was regarded as revolutionary in her time and, therefore, it is not surprising that the eye-witness accounts dwell upon the innovative features of her dance. These features are rooted in the choices Duncan made from the structural components.

Her use of the body, particularly the baring of the feet so that the whole foot could contact and grip the floor, was in marked contrast to prevailing conditions in ballet. It also reflected her affiliation with nature and her affirmation of gravity. Similarly, Duncan's curving, rounded arm gestures which were soft, pliant and visually very different from the starker, clearly-defined and held gestures of the ballet of her time were the outcome of her relocation of the body centre. The notion of a dancer presenting a complete solo programme was also innovative.²²

As well as being a solo performer, moving in new ways, all the other components of Duncan's choreography contributed to the radical nature of her dance. Her costume revealed her body and enabled an unrestricted performance, whereas hitherto dance costumes had been to embellish and adorn. Her choice of set, with its classic and almost neutral background, was the antithesis of current practice and her use of classical music, to many the most startling of her innovations, was the subject of much dispute and debate.

All these distinctive aspects of Duncan's choreography are revealed in the analysis of the structural components of her dances. Together they suggest a systematic and coherent use of the basic materials of dance.

7.3 Form

7.31 DUNCAN'S BASIC FORMING DEVICES

Duncan's use of a wide range of body actions, dynamics and spatial aspects has been established and when these are seen not just as random elements occurring simultaneously but as juxtaposed events in which action and accompanying dynamic has been deliberately determined then fundamental relations within the dance begin to emerge.

A typical example of this is Duncan's use of a basic rocking and

swaying action in several of her dances. Divoire (1924) saw Duncan's dance using Berlioz' 'L'enfance du Christ' in which a rocking, cradling action of the arms was given a lightly stressed dynamic. In 'Mother', a dance using Scriabin's 'Etude in C sharp minor', Duncan knelt and took the rocking action across her support by gradually transferring weight. Tobias (1976 p.30) writes of the accompanying "curved torso" and "outstretched arm" in this dance and Carroll (1981a) notes the arm gesture which opened out into space as the rocking action increased in size and became weightier and more stressed.

Duncan used the same rocking action in her 'Blue Danube' Waltz.²³ This time she stood and the initial swaying action was slight, confined to the upper half of the body and was taken from side to side (Levinson 1929). Then Duncan began to mark the waltz rhythm with her feet and gradually the swaying action took a forward and backward direction. As the momentum gathered so the action increased until it became a series of to-ing and fro-ing runs with alternate outbursts and catching of energy.

Duncan did not exploit the potential of using groups to any marked degree and so relations between herself and her dancers were neither complex nor varied. It has been noted that Duncan always performed as a soloist whether alone on stage or taking the lead in the group dances. When the groups danced with Duncan they were usually in unison occasionally breaking into smaller groupings and then reforming. In Duncan's group choreography there were major sections of unison movements interspersed with shorter sections in which individual dancers became prominent within the group. Dunning describes these dances as typically containing passages which varied

from

a soloist's summoning [of] the seven members of the chorus onstage individually to ... [a] unison dance ...to a kind of response dance for the chorus and its leader.

Durning (1976 pp.73-4)

Given that Duncan's set was unchanging, her costumes all variations on the one Greek theme and her lighting normally limited in scope, it is not surprising that the relations of elements within her visual setting are few in number. Indeed such relations can be characterised as being constant, with the minimal interplay between costume and lighting giving nuance rather than contrast.

However, Duncan did have the opportunity to experiment with different elements of visual settings and their possible relations during one brief period at the Century Theatre in New York in 1915. The only full description of Duncan's work at this time is from Roberts.

The scenery ... consisted of four wide high flights of steps painted white, that could be moved about and grouped at will, and hundred of yards of blue cheese-cloth falling in full folds from the top of the stage to the floor. A foot back of these curtains all round the stage were partitions and in the space between the curtains and the boards were placed brilliant electric lights.

Roberts (1925 n.p.)

From this account it is evident that Duncan was experimenting both with a variation of her blue curtains and a specific relation between set and lighting. In addition she had introduced multiple steps to provide changes of level. This rare departure from her usual practice was probably in response to the opportunities offered in the production, a Greek tragedy with a full chorus of singers and dancers, and the theatre facilities available. Nevertheless, this period of innovation was short-lived and thereafter Duncan resumed using the normal visual setting for her choreography.

Duncan's preference for music as her aural accompaniment and a

predilection for classical music written in the Romantic style has already been demonstrated. It is, therefore, sufficient at this juncture to note that Duncan chose Romantic music because of the paramountcy of its expressive and poetic elements and it was these elements and their relatedness that Duncan incorporated into her choreography.

There are many other specific kinds of forming devices that Duncan used in her dances. The following four brief examples are typical of the ways in which she chose to relate such elements as movement, dynamics, spatial design and dancers to each other and so on.

Firstly, the particular manner in which Duncan related the movement of the body to its accompanying energy stress has been obliquely referred to above. However, Denby pursues this relation to the point where he is able to make quite specific and definitive statements concerning Duncan's alliance of body carriage, body movement, energy and the resulting focus of attention.

The support [in Duncan's dances] seems continuously improvised and always active, always a little stronger than the gesture in energy and just ahead of it in time. Such an accurate proportioning of energy, as it decreases from a central impulse in the torso through the joints to the extremities, gives the limbs an especial lightness, the hands, head and feet an attractive, as if careless, bearing. It also gives the observer's eye a definite centre from which to appreciate the body movement as a whole.

Denby (1949 repub. 1968 p.338)

If the implications of Denby's last point are taken then one aspect of the relation Duncan achieved between the dancer and the visual setting is immediately apparent. Her neutral, constant set with its seemingly minimal theatrical effect provided the context within which the solo dancing figure, in Denby's terms the focus of energy, could achieve maximum theatrical impact.

Secondly, in a review of a reconstructed Duncan dance programme, Pikula pays attention to the relations that Duncan selects between the body, space, groups and individual dancers. She writes of dancers

scooping their hands across the floor and upward, pulling their bodies into lofty balances ...[with the soloist] travelling in quick small steps, arms raised, swaying from side to side, swirling.

Pikula (1979 p.148)

Denby's and Pikula's remarks point to relations common to many of Duncan's dances and other writers also select these forming devices as being of significance in a named dance. Etscher saw an early performance of Duncan and her pupils in the dance using Fauré's 'Berceuse'. He notes Duncan's relative immobility with only slight side to side inclinations of the head while "the children with their swinging [movements] indicate the rhythm" (Etscher 1911 p.326). Kendall (1979) writes of Duncan's 'Ave Maria' (originally a solo piece and later augmented to a group dance) in a very similar vein. From this and other accounts it is possible to identify a particular kind of relation that Duncan used between herself as soloist and the group and between the dance and the music. In her group choreography Duncan used the dancers to "set" her, spatially, by framing and encircling. Dynamically, too, she maintained the lead while the group performed in counterpoint to her rhythm or marked the musical structure of the accompaniment.

Thirdly, although there are few contemporary references to relations between Duncan's costume and body actions, Levinson was sufficiently impressed by Duncan's 'Orpheus' costume and its limitation on her movement to note that

the white mourning dress, which is too long, seems to pull the chest backward and impedes the movement: falling straight down in severe pleats ...[a] material obstacle to walking.

Levinson (1929 p.157)

Kendall also points to the relation between costume and body action in Duncan's 'Ave Maria'.

The dancers simply twisted slowly in place, opening their arms flat in all the amplitude of fabric that hung straight from their wrists.

Kendall (1979 p.170)

Fourthly, some of the most complex relations in Duncan's choreography are those derived from her musical accompaniment. Kendall characterises these.

In Isadora's dances the feet describe the rhythmical patterns of the music, waltz, march, mazurka; the ribs give expansiveness to the musical phrase, more depth, more impact, more space —and the head and arms gently acquiesce.

Kendall (1979 p.66)

Since the music that Duncan used provided her with both choreographic structures and expressive qualities this aspect needs to be pursued further. Even so it is important at this stage to identify the basic "sound to body" relations from which she developed the expressive character of her dances.

7.32 DUNCAN'S EMPHASIS ON MOMENTS IN TIME

Although dances occur through time it is often the case that at a particular moment an instant set of relations can be seen which is of special significance. As Adshead et al (1982 p.54) note "the parallel here is with harmonic/chordic analysis in music based on a vertical structure". The most simple kinds of relationship evident in Duncan's choreography were, for example, in her Chopin solo waltzes where at any moment in time the body action and the music were very simply and directly related by her stepping to the given rhythm.

However, most relations in any dance contain more strands than just action and rhythm and one such complex moment can be identified in Duncan's 'Marche Slave'. This dance, using Tchaikovsky's music,

was mimetic in character with Duncan portraying a Russian slave under the Tzar's regime. At one point in the dance Duncan, having reached the centre of the stage by a heavy, dragging walk, fell to her knees and

banged her head on the ground, her head hanging down loosely from her neck.

Divoire (1924 p.84).

This moment reveals a complexity of relationships which links a body action with a clear dynamic, to the stage space and to the music, the latter at this moment having reached the section containing the Tzarist national anthem. Other relationships occurring simultaneously were the sudden intensifying of the lights and Duncan's very short red tunic which, as she fell and then deliberately banged her head on the ground before her, revealed and exposed her thighs and legs (Van Vechten 1917 repub. 1974). Such moments in Duncan's dances, where the "vertical" relation of specific structural components made a vivid visual impact, provide clues to the understanding of the meanings she embodied in her works.

7.33 DUNCAN'S DEVELOPMENT OF PHRASES THROUGH TIME

The choreographic device of repetition was used extensively by Duncan and there are numerous references to her repeating both small units of movement and larger sequences in her compositions. Duncan's succession of reaching and falling actions in her dance using Liszt's 'Funerailles' (Duncan and Macdougall 1929) and the way "she bounded repeatedly toward the audience" in her Chopin Waltz in A flat major (Croce 1977 p.255) are typical of the use of repetition of body action and associated dynamic and spatial location in her work.

Duncan's frequent repetition of longer dance phrases was noted by her contemporaries and is also one of the features that impresses those who see the reconstructed dances. Harrison (1908 p.5), who was

present at one of Duncan's Duke of York Theatre performances, mentions the use of "recurrence" in her dances and Baner (1980 p.2) writes of Duncan "she built simple dances with elemental, repetitive structures".

As well as using exact repetition Duncan often modified one or more elements of a phrase prior to and during repetition. Croce points to two such instances. In Duncan's dance using Chopin's Waltz in A flat major the repetitive bounding forward (referred to earlier) was interspersed with a little run backward and

when the arpeggio lengthened, she didn't change the step but merely ran backward longer and faster.

Croce (1977 pp.255-6)

Croce (1977 p.98) also describes some typical Duncan jumps which were repeated, "large bold ones that suddenly reversed their shape in the air".

There are many references to dances in which Duncan started with a simple, short action or phrase and subsequently added further dance material so that eventually the original unit functioned as the beginning of an extended phrase. Dorris (1978) points to the 'Dance of the Furies' from Orpheus and both the Scriabin 'Etudes' as being based upon one or two simple movements which were then built upon. In contrast it is interesting to note that although Duncan manifestly used the choreographic device of addition no references have yet been found which suggest she used the reverse procedure, subtraction. A similar disregard of a choreographic possibility is seen in the way Duncan ordered the events in her dances. Many of Duncan's works were developed linearly in a clear and strong manner, particularly those with a narrative. However, there is no evidence to indicate in either these or her more abstract dances that having once introduced a particular sequence or pattern of events she subsequently manipulated it by altering the original order. The dynamic and spatial qualities

were often changed but the order in time remained constant.

7.34 HIGHLIGHTS AND CLIMAXES IN DUNCAN'S DANCES

Relations often exist between particular moments in the dance and the overall development of the dance through time. They serve to establish the importance of specific moments when viewed against the total span of the dance and thus highlight the moment both in that instant and retrospectively. Terms such as "accent", "focus", "climax" and "resolution" are commonly used to describe particular types of these relations.

In the literature on Duncan there are many eye-witness accounts of the fluency of her dances. Newman (1921 p.4) described this feature as "sculpture in transition" and "endless succession", Wharton (in Macdougall 1960 p.123) as "a flowing of movement into movement" and Parker in 1908 observed "one motion flows or ripples, or sweeps into another, and the two are edgeless" (Parker 1982 p.59). Since this linear development appears to have been such a feature of Duncan's dances the setting against it of particular moments, so that the "verticality" of a movement was seen both in its own right and within the "horizontal" unfolding of the dance, must have produced relations which were of considerable import.

Reference is made earlier in this chapter to Duncan's use of pauses in her choreography. These functioned in several ways but their main purpose was to highlight a particular moment by holding it, to anticipate a climax or to bring a section to an accentuated ending and so on. All these instances point to a relation between that moment and the whole dance.

Reference to the drawings and photographs of significant, as distinct from typical, moments in a Duncan dance and the examination of these alongside written accounts of the same dance enables some of the relations between the visually retained moment and the described

total dance to be adduced. Probably the most well-known photograph of Duncan was taken by Genthe in 1916 showing her in a pose or pause from 'La Marseillaise'.²⁴ This photograph, together with other photographs²⁵ and drawings of Duncan dancing 'La Marseillaise', is examined here as just one example of the very many kinds of relations that can be identified in Duncan's choreography between the moment and the linear progression.

'La Marseillaise', in Duncan's repertoire from around 1914 to 1924, was one of the war-inspired dances in which she embodied her ideas about freedom (Seroff 1971). In the selected Genthe photograph Duncan's costume for the dance is full-length and is gathered over the left shoulder leaving the right shoulder bare. From the written descriptions it is evident that the costume was red, that Duncan sometimes added a long scarlet cashmere shawl and on one occasion also draped herself with the French tricolour. The accounts of Duncan dancing 'La Marseillaise' with "exposed breast" (Van Vechten 1917 repub. 1974 p.25) would presumably have occurred when Duncan was wearing the costume shown in the 1916 Genthe photograph.

The above listing of factual information is more appropriate to an analysis of structural components than of form as is also the detailing of her stance in the photograph, that is, the body held erect, feet apart with the left leg forward and the weight held back over the right side, the left foot slightly inturned, arms upraised and spread, fingers open and curved, the head and face up-lifted and a half-open mouth. However, when this pose is considered as one moment in the linear development of the dance some interesting points emerge which together indicate the kind of relationship that Duncan made between the instant, as captured in the photograph, and the total 'La Marseillaise'.

From contemporary sources²⁶ it is clear that Duncan choreographed

'La Marseillaise' as a dance-mime using de Lisle's music, retaining his four stanzas and keeping to the general story associated with the composition. The moment captured by Genthe, which appears to have come towards the end of the dance and may even have been the final pose (McDonagh 1976), is one that draws together and summarises all the movement happenings of the dance. For example, the half-open mouth was the remnant of the long, silent shriek that occurred during one section of the dance.²⁷ Similarly, the upraised arms were the held moment of a phrase in which Duncan carried and waived her scarf aloft as she strode about the stage. It is the latter image that is recalled in many eye-witness accounts and inspired subsequent drawings on the "winged-victory" theme.

7.35 THE OVERALL CHARACTERISTICS OF DUNCAN'S DANCE FORMS

Some of Duncan's shortest dances, such as those using the Brahms and Chopin waltzes, were based on the simple binary or ternary forms of the music so that sections were related in a contrasting or developmental manner. With other short pieces, such as the Chopin mazurkas, Duncan presented them in performance as a group of dances so that each functioned as a section within the whole. Thus, while the mood of each individual dance was consistent throughout, Duncan achieved related contrasts across the group by placing dances with different keys or rhythms in juxtaposition. Shebuyev saw Duncan perform the Chopin mazurkas in A minor, D major, C major and B minor as a quartet of dances.²⁸ He described them as being respectively "severe", "Bacchic", "just poses" and "a tragedy" (Shebuyev in Steegmuller 1974 p.43) thus giving his perception of the dissimilar moods that Duncan placed side by side.

In Duncan's choreography the various sections of her dances were generally clearly defined and distinct even in the works with a strong linear development of narrative or other thematic material. Therefore

changes of pace, focus, dynamic and so on were readily seen. As a consequence these sections were related more in terms of nuance and subtle variations than by stark contrasts and differences. These features of relatedness of parts in Duncan's choreography can also be traced in her groupings of dances as well as in her programme structures.

Given that Duncan's dances varied in length from short two-minute or so pieces to works occupying a whole programme and from simple one-mood dances to great dance dramas of the Wagnerian ilk, it is not surprising that the relationships of parts to the total dance form vary to a considerable degree.

In Duncan's more abstract dances the sections cohered and related to the whole dance in a way usually dictated or at least suggested by the structure of the accompanying music. Apart from their allegiance to the music the sections were not in any developmental order, what was important was their juxtaposition and their relatedness to the whole composition. Each section thus contributed uniquely to the total dance form. However, in those dances of Duncan's which were structured as a narrative or were concerned with a particular sequence of events, each section of the dance was related to the total dance form by virtue of its order in the unfolding of the story or happening.

It is evident that Duncan choreographed the sections of her dances in various modes but always to achieve the same end, that of a complete, whole, harmonious dance form. The fact, too, that some of her dances, such as 'Orpheus', were choreographed over a considerable period of time while remaining in the performing repertoire is an indication of her ability to sustain the form of a composite dance throughout its choreographic evolution. It is noted in Chapter 5 that as well as adding sections to existing dances to create new wholes Duncan also transformed solos into group works. Duncan created these

group dances by layering choral movement onto her solo pieces. This added linear dimension usually continued more or less intermittently throughout the dance and so engendered further complexities within and in relation to the total dance form.

The central place of music in Duncan's choreography is evident since it provided her "dynamic model" (Shelton 1981 p.98) or even, as Maria-Theresa claims

that the whole architecture of such dancing [i.e. Duncan's] is based on the surge and mood inherent in the music.

Maria-Theresa (1959 reprinted in Nadel and Nadel 1970 p.236)

But if music provided "architectural" structures then that alone does not constitute the form of Duncan's choreography. Croce (1977 p.244) writes of Duncan's ability to "alter the proportions and the investiture of space" and Kendall (1979 p.192) extends this to Duncan's use of "broad planes of space without visible tension, a broad reach and buoyant travelling steps to create the drama of motion".

Such statements, while collectively encompassing the totality of Duncan's choreography, also move the discussion into the realms of interpretation and evaluation, the focus of attention in the following chapters.

In the analysis of Duncan's dance forms two important points emerge. Firstly, the limitations of the evidence available and secondly, the corollary to this, the incomplete picture of the overall characteristics of the forms of her dances that is obtained.

The written evidence provides some information on the relations in Duncan's dance and their contribution to the total forms but the quotations from contemporary sources given in the text are not examples selected from many. In fact the Denby (1949 repub. 1968)

discussion of the relation between Duncan's body carriage, movement and energy is unique in its focus on these aspects. The Levinson (1929) extract, which refers to the relation between Duncan's costume and body action, is similarly the only one of its type. Modern authors, such as Kendall (1979), comment more frequently on elements of Duncan's dance form than their earlier counterparts. Even so, such evidence is based on seeing performances of the reconstructed dances and, as noted previously, these dances are unrepresentative of Duncan's total choreographic output and, for the purposes of the present study, are regarded as secondary source material.

The lack of attention paid to Duncan's dance forms by her contemporaries is interesting since, as is evident in section 7.2 of this chapter, there are ample descriptions of the structural components of her dances. Whether this reflects the inability of Duncan's reviewers and critics to accommodate and be articulate about the innovative dance forms she was promoting or whether it indicates a greater concern with other matters such as the meanings and impact of her dances is debateable. Nevertheless, the inadequacy of the written material to yield an overall description of Duncan's dance forms must be acknowledged.

In contrast the visual materials provide a particular kind of evidence which is of vital importance in the analysis of the forms of Duncan's dances. The photographs of Duncan in dance contexts hold and fix specific moments in time which allow the relations within and between components to be studied. The artists' sketches also capture the structural relations of moments in time and, when available as a series such as those of Walkowitz and Clara, are in addition indicators of relations through time. Used in conjunction the written and visual sources yield details of relations between the moment and the linear development of particular dances.

In the absence of extant Duncan dances it is the aural sources,

especially the musical accompaniment, that might reasonably be expected to provide the bulk of the information on the various "through time" structural relations of her dance forms. Of course, the scores of the music Duncan selected are readily available for analysis but the factual data concerning the sections she used and how her choreographic structure related to that of the music is meagre. Thus, as in the description of the beginning of Duncan's 'Blue Danube' waltz (section 7.31 of this chapter), it is impossible to match with any degree of certainty the rare detailed accounts of dances to the music used.

Collectively the written, visual and aural sources provide strong hints about the overall forms of Duncan's dances and individually, as is the case with the visual materials, can give an excellent basis for the analysis of certain kinds of relation. However, the statements that can be made about Duncan's overall dance forms are necessarily limited by the incomplete nature of the available evidence.

Even so it is evident that the main feature of Duncan's dance forms is their apparently simple structure closely allied to the accompanying musical form. This overall simplicity masks complex inter-relations of many kinds in which congruence, harmony and complementariness are paramount. In part this can be associated with Duncan's allegiance to ancient Greece and notions of classical proportions, balance and purity of form and it is also a direct consequence of her facility for incorporating particular musical structures with her choreography.

7.4 Summary

The examination and discussion carried out in this chapter is the first methodical account of Duncan's choreography. It shows that even though Duncan's works are no longer performed as originally composed it is possible, and indeed profitable, to analyse her dance structures

since from this emerges crucial evidence concerning her distinctive choreography. Furthermore, when Duncan's selection of particular movement elements, dancers, visual and aural environments is identified and her forming devices revealed it is evident that her dances were far from the near-formless improvisations or even the naive, simplistic "moving to music" that popular mythology asserts.

What is apparent is Duncan's systematic use of elemental movement and associated materials which she transformed into dance. This she accomplished in such a way that aspects of her unique compositional design can be located in each individual dance and a distinctive choreographic style is discernible across all her works.

Duncan's choices and rejections within the structural components indicate a choreographic consistency and a well-developed sense of the presentation of dance within its theatre context. The specific manner in which Duncan made relationships both in and between the structural components shows the internal networks of her dances to be complex and densely textured. Overall, however, they give rise to dance forms which appear to be simple, uncluttered and seamless.

All these characteristics of Duncan's choreography are fully congruent with her stated adherence to nature and the natural movements of the body, her notions of harmony derived from the ancient Greeks and her belief in her pioneering mission.

Nevertheless, dances are not only particular movement structures given shape and form. They also carry meaning and, when presented in the theatre context, are for public appraisal. Therefore, the next stage in the examination of Duncan's work is to point to and discuss the subject matter of her dances and to examine the meanings that can be discerned. In Duncan's time it was this aspect of her choreography that was regarded as totally revolutionary.

CHAPTER 7 NOTES

- 1 The Adshead et al (1982) four stage charts are given in Appendix C. The terminology of the Adshead et al model has ben adapted for the particular purposes of this and subsequent chapters in Part III and is similar to the later modifications proposed by Adshead (1986).
- 2 For an indication of the major importance of body actions in the Duncan technique see Duncan, Irma (1937 repub. 1970).
- 3 In Steegmuller's translation (1974) the reference is to 'A sharp major op. 53'. It is assumed this is an error since there is no polonaise in this key in opus 53. Pruett (1978) cites primary source material which indicates that the Chopin polonaise in A flat major op. 53 was in the Duncan repertoire in 1904. Other references to Chopin's works in the Steegmuller translation show similar errors in the key cited. These have been amended for the present study.
- 4 Probably prelude in A major op.28 no.7 by reference to other sources.
- 5 These need to be distinguished from Duncan's "music" pauses. In the latter she listened to the music accompanying her or marked the cessation of sound by a cessation of movement.
- 6 It was this specific aspect of her work, however, that was criticised by Jaques-Dalcroze (1921 new edition 1967).
- 7 This is one of the features of Duncan's choreography which impressed Ashton and was recaptured by him in his 'Five Brahms Waltzes in the manner of Isadora Duncan'. (Ashton 1968 reprinted NYPL Dance Collection 1969).
- 8 Kendall considers that this was "a step common to early Duncan dances" (1979 p. 170).
- 9 For example, by reference to particular sections of reconstructed works and using sophisticated choreutic techniques such as those employed by Preston-Dunlop (1983).
- 10 Although for brief periods Duncan did recruit boys to her schools there is no evidence to indicate she choreographed especially for them. Similarly, it is not known whether Duncan considered that her works could be performed by male dancers.
- 11 Duncan's dislike of such settings and her views on the ideal placing and relationship of performer and audience are the subjects of two of her essays, 'The Greek theatre' and 'Dancing in relation to religion and love' (in Duncan 1928).
- 12 As, for example, "grey" (Phillips Vierke 1911 p.126) and "green" (Stokes, S., 1928 repub. 1968 p.36) and "nice dark grey" (Craig in Steegmuller 1974 p.24).
- 13 The use of curtains may have been derived from Duncan's earlier salon recitals but the possible Craig influence, discussed in Ch. 4, is another factor to be considered.
- 14 Except for an experimental period in 1915 at the Century Theatre, New York.
- 15 Craig's immediate response and claim that Duncan had copied his earlier lighting innovations, referred to in Ch. 4, was prompted by this article.
- 16 The possible initial influences of Fuller and then Craig in this respect are discussed in Ch. 4.
- 17 At the Century Theatre New York in 1915.

- 18 For example, see 1899 newspaper articles quoted by Macdougall (1960).
- 19 Irma Duncan cites this quotation as from "'The Times' London March 16, 1900" but this is not the case, Macdonald (1977a) also includes the same quotation and fails to acknowledge its source.
- 20 On occasion Duncan had to use artificial flowers as in the particular Primavera costume preserved in the Dance Collection of the NYPL.
- 21 Pruet's 4th and 5th patterns are relevant to the discussion in Part IV.
- 22 Although Pavlova also toured as a soloist she usually performed solo items rather than solo programmes.
- 23 No references have been found to indicate which part(s) of this score Duncan used. It seems likely from various descriptions that she began with either the introduction or the first waltz theme.
- 24 For example, reproduced in Duncan (1928) and in Magriel (1947).
- 25 One uncredited photograph of Duncan (in Kirstein 1971 p.37) dated 1916 is captioned 'La Marseillaise' (p.257 n69). However, the costume, the pose, and Duncan's youthful looks would place it in the 1900-1902 period, rather than a decade and a half later, and, therefore, well before Duncan choreographed 'La Marseillaise'.
- 26 For example, Anon (1917), Van Vechten (1917 repub. 1974).
- 27 A feature included by Béjart in his Duncan-inspired choreography.
- 28 The mistranslation of the keys in the Chopin polonaise references in Steegmuller (1974) has been noted and this error is also to be found in his references to the Chopin mazurkas. For opus and number details of the mazurkas see Choreochronicle A.

CHAPTER 8

THE RADICAL MESSAGE: DUNCAN'S SUBJECT MATTER AND MEANINGS

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Duncan's subject matter
- 8.3 Four exemplar dances
- 8.4 The radical qualities and meanings of Duncan's dances
- 8.5 Summary

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter 7 Duncan's choreographic works are examined collectively by reference to their discernible features. These features, be they structural components and their sub-sets or the relations of various kinds that give rise to form, can all be identified, described and discussed. It is these same perceptible constituents, too, that the dance notator records. Such analyses, therefore, are of import since they enable statements to be made about the choreographic structure of any Duncan dance for which evidence exists.

Nevertheless, neither the study of a choreographic structure nor the notated score can be said to yield all that there is to know and to understand about a dance. Dances come into the category of objects and events which are not immediately understood and apprehended by reference to their "surface" qualities alone.¹ In order to comprehend a dance it is necessary to make sense of what is readily apparent. The process of making sense, that is, of interpretation, is not haphazard but rather it involves paying close attention to the structural components and form of a dance and ascribing characteristic features and qualities. Interpretation also entails the recognition of certain parameters and contexts of a dance. Indeed, in order to understand a dance it must be seen and recognised as arising from a very specific set of circumstances which influence its meanings. The contexts of a dance give it an identifiable stamp and enable it to be

classified according to genre and style. Such typifying furthers the discussion of the subject matter of a dance since this is never totally divorced from the contexts within which each dance exists. When the context bound character of a dance is acknowledged consideration can be given to associated qualities, moods, ambience and so on. Finally the interpretation leads to the recognising and understanding of the significance and meanings of a dance. While rules cannot be laid down which result in a single set of interpretations being made of each dance it is nevertheless the case that the range of possible interpretations is limited.

Thus the meanings of a dance are not ascribed in an arbitrary fashion. In practice they are only arrived at after a process of interpretation in which the contexts, subject matter, character and qualities of the dance are successively articulated.

Although the consideration of the contexts of individual dances is deemed by Adshead et al (1982) to be the first step in arriving at interpretative statements (and was taken as such in the choreographic analysis undertaken for the present study) here that discussion is best delayed until Part IV since it is a vital factor in assessing Duncan's contribution to the development of dance. In this chapter the focus of attention is the subject matter of Duncan's choreography and the radical nature of the qualities and meanings of her dances.

8.2 Duncan's subject matter

In examining the subject matter of Duncan's dances two important aspects need to be considered, that is, her source material and the manner in which she treated it in terms of compositional manipulation.

8.21 SOURCE MATERIAL

The intention at this juncture is to identify and describe the different types of source material that can be seen across all

Duncan's works. These range from dances concerned with "pure" movement, that is, works in which the movement does not appear to represent or symbolise anything other than itself, through dances based upon a single idea or topic, or with a thematic thread running through them to those incorporating a clear unfolding story-line. Thus three main categories of source material are proposed.

Duncan's "pure" movement dances, devoid of literal meanings and any overlay of expression, are typically short with the choreographic structure a simple, unelaborated exploration of a body action or gesture manipulated in time or space or given an altered dynamic. Most of these dances are untitled other than by that of the music used as accompaniment, such as a Chopin etude or nocturne or, more usually, a Chopin, Brahms or Schubert waltz. Nevertheless, titles denoting moods were sometimes given in reviews. These apparently simple dances were always well received by audiences and critics and were among the most enduring in Duncan's repertoire but, despite numerous references to them in the literature, there is a dearth of detailed descriptions. Perhaps, even though these pure movement dances delighted the eye and captivated all who saw them, it was not possible in the first quarter of the twentieth century to say why and how this was so. Duncan was pioneering a form of dance which drew from a wider movement basis than hitherto and was often devoid of the expected narrative. But although her work was acclaimed it was not as yet placed in any descriptive, let alone theoretical, context. One reporter, who perceived that these simple dances might have import other than their sheer entertainment value, saw a Duncan performance in London in 1921 and wrote

then followed the lyrics, delicious, slight waltzes by Brahms and Schubert and one found oneself harbouring blasphemous thoughts about all other dancing, wondering if the Russian Ballet itself was not after all only a clever, beautiful stunt.

Anon. (20 June 1921 Daily Herald)

Tobias, reviewing a Gamson performance of some of the reconstructed Duncan repertoire, describes the Brahms waltz dances;

[they] are filled, characteristically, with running motions; overcurves and undercurves; ebullient springs into the air; soft, heavy drops to the floor. Rightly done, they create the image of a human completely in tune with itself and its environment.

Tobias (1976 p.30)

The Tobias account, following over fifty years after the anonymous report, provides an interesting point of comparison with it. The movement content is now accepted and described in its own terms and the final interpretative statement offers a generalised imagery.

The second category is formed by grouping together a wide range of works based on ideas which were either simply stated or were elaborated to various degrees. Duncan herself (1927a p.212) gives the origin of 'Moment Musical' as capturing "the pleasure of the moment" (a quotation adapted from Oscar Wilde) which epitomised one of her love affairs. In a different vein Duncan found the main idea for a later work, the 'Dante Symphony', while watching the furnaces in a Russian steel works (Duncan, Irma, 1966 p.318). However, there are difficulties in isolating the creative trigger point or idea which gave rise to any particular Duncan dance on the sole basis of the choreographer's statements and/or hearsay evidence.² For example, Macdougall writes of Duncan's choreography to the two Scriabin etudes during her Russian period in which she

compressed all the horror of the famine ...then stalking the greater part of the country.

Macdougall (1960 p.196)

Nevertheless, in their reconstructed form, these two etudes are regarded as based on the ideas of motherhood and revolution, the former being described as "a Niobe figure" and "a stark monument to

grief" (Tobias 1976 p.30, 1977 p.13) and the latter "a chained figure breaking free" (Dorris 1978 p.332).

Some of Duncan's dances, particularly those using Chopin mazurkas and preludes, were more patently derived from universal ideas such as "love", "happiness", "spring". Irma Duncan's (1958a p.232) typifying of these as "little dance poems" is probably the most apt comment on the Duncan dances in which the choreography was developed from a single idea.

In other works in this group Duncan selected a more substantial starting point than in her choreography stemming from a single idea yet not to the extent of having an obvious plot or story-line. This is evident in many of Duncan's earlier dances based on paintings. Shebuyev (in Steegmuller 1974 p.43) likens Duncan's dancing to having "stepped out of a painting", a reference to the general air of antiquity she engendered in her early performances, but there are also Duncan dances choreographed from actual paintings. 'Angel with viol', 'Bacchus and Ariadne', 'La Bella Simonetta', 'Orpheus returning from the Shades' and 'La Primavera' are all dances derived from the one incident depicted in the paintings of the same titles. From various accounts it seems that Duncan used the painted visual scene as the reference or starting point for her choreography often returning at the end of the dance to that point and holding it with a pose. Levinson (1929 p.156) refers to these dances as "choreographic copies" of pictures. Indeed it seems that in selecting such material Duncan was developing the choreographic potential of the tableau vivant notion.

Other dances in this category are not confined to a visual topic. For example, Duncan's 'Dance of the Apprentices' from Wagner's 'Meistersingers' was a "gay careless swagger" (Caffin 1912 p.62) in which she did not begin with the operatic libretto but instead selected the notion of apprenticeship and youth. Pruett (1976),

however, refers to a 1911 Duncan programme note in which the Wagnerian story of the apprentices was outlined, perhaps an indication of the necessity to provide some audiences with clues to her choreographic starting points. Similarly, in her choreography using parts of Wagner's 'Tannhauser' Duncan took the solo figure of Venus as the focus of the dance rather than the sequence of events in the opera. Her "all-possessive Venus in Tannhauser" (Kaye 1929 pt.IV p.39) was variously regarded as "sensitively imagined" (Duncan, Irma, 1966 p.203) to "a sensual grotesquerie" that was "not at all ... a romantically glamorous Wagner" (Parker 1911 quoted by Palmer, W., 1945 p.23).

In the third category of source material, which includes many of Duncan's most famous dances, the choreography is based on dramatic events, stories and epics. Duncan's 'La Marseillaise', originally conceived as one of her "war" dances where victory would lead to liberty and peace, was eventually performed by Duncan as a revolutionary dance with similar meaning to 'L'Internationale'. 'Redemption', another of Duncan's war inspired dances, took the theme of pain and anguish and "reflected the suffering of a world at war" (Moore 1938 repub. 1969 p.278). Many of the critics and reviewers who saw 'Redemption' regarded it as one of her most moving works because of the successful embodiment of fundamental human experiences. Van Vechten (1917 reprinted 1974 p.27), a critic who could not at first understand Duncan's works, came to appreciate "Isadora's poetic and imaginative interpretation of the symphonic interlude from Cesar Franck's Redemption" and found it "full of beauty and meaning". Unlike Van Vechten, Divoire (1924 p.81) was an early supporter of Duncan's art form and he wrote of her thematic approach in 'Redemption', "the whole history of humanity is evoked, imprisoned, in pain, redeemed, exalted".

The themes of death and mourning preoccupied Duncan at various stages in her career and, although 'Death and the Maiden' and 'Death of Adonis' were two of her earliest dances, the deaths of her children in 1913 and 1914 were significant events in this respect since she subsequently choreographed several dances each of which developed different aspects of the death theme. In 'Ave Maria' (Schubert) the emphasis was maternal mourning, in 'Funerailles' (Liszt) a tension was built up between the contrasting moods of happiness and the devastation of death and in Chopin's 'Funeral March' the theme of mourning was developed through the sequential events of a burial.

It appears that Duncan found the concept of death and the associated notions of mourning and resurrection a rich source of thematic dance material throughout her career. In addition to the works mentioned she also choreographed to Siegfried's Funeral March in Wagner's 'The Ring of the Nibelung' and as late as 1924 she composed her 'Funeral March for Lenin' and her 'Funeral songs for revolutionary heroes'.

In audience terms some of the most accessible of Duncan's dances were those in which she took well-known stories as starting points. Together these works constitute the third category of source material. At the turn of the century Duncan used various Greek epic poems as the basis for her narrative choreography but she soon abandoned these in favour of the operas of Gluck and Wagner. In her dances using music from Gluck's 'Iphigenia in Aulis' and 'Iphigenia in Tauris' Duncan kept to the operatic libretti throughout (Dumesnil 1932). Even so, she could not always rely upon audiences' knowledge of the narrative. One reporter of her 1908 London 'Iphigenia' performances complained

that there was

little reference to the old Greek story. Indeed it would have been agreeable to have had a hint now and then from the programme as to what was the meaning of some of the dances which evidently were meant to depict something.

Anon. (11 July 1908 The Era)

Generally, though, Duncan's 'Iphigenia' was considered to be amongst the most successful of her epic-based dances. A Brazilian critic who thought her "interpretation" of the story outstanding went on to speculate

one knew not if it was she who interpreted the music or if on the contrary it was the music which attempted to translate her attitudes.

Ferres (1916 in Macdougall 1960 p.164)

Duncan's selections from 'Iphigenia' and 'Orpheus' provided her with a full evening's programme but with other operas, such as Wagner's 'Parsifal', she choreographed episodes or cameos from the original work rather than incorporating the complete plot. Even so, Duncan was not limited to opera libretti for her choreography derived from well-known fictional or actual events. Some of her shorter pieces, such as 'Narcissus' (Nevin) and 'The Legend of St. Francis of Assisi' (Liszt), were simply danced versions of the stories indicated by the title in which the choreography followed closely the well-known sequence of events.

In her pure movement dances, where the creative impulse stemmed from movement alone, Duncan explored new ground and showed the inadequacy of the prevailing dance theatre forms to encompass such a development. In contrast, Duncan's works based on ideas, themes and stories did not break with tradition in that such areas were accepted starting points for choreographers. However, Duncan went beyond the usual sources of fairy tales and myths and frequently selected material from a wide range of human experience. This immediately gave

her work one of its innovative and controversial features.

8.22 TREATMENT

The manner in which the source material of the dance is dealt with is termed "treatment" by Adshead et al (1982). In effect this is the process by which the material selected to constitute a dance is manipulated and "packaged" to give that dance its particular presentational style. Styles of treatment may be termed representational, narrative, literal, abstract, lyrical, impressionistic and so on, such notions not being confined to dance but having "currency across the arts" (Adshead et al 1982 p.57).

Some kinds of starting points, such as pure movement, lend themselves to or can only be treated in one particular way, in this case by abstraction. Others, for example where thematic material prevails, are amenable to treatments of various kinds. In an overall consideration of Duncan's work it is appropriate initially to consider the treatment of the source material of her dances under three main headings of near-abstract, impressionistic and narrative.

Duncan's pure movement dances with their almost abstract treatment were a staple constituent of her repertoire throughout her career. In a review of reconstructed Chopin and Schumann dances Dorris (1978 p.332) remarks particularly on their "creation of an abstract poetic image flowing from the music" which he locates in "the fluidity of head and arms". The Caffins (1912 p.61) write of Duncan in mid-career when they regarded her work as having "less of the abstract, impersonal quality which constitutes the charm of Miss Duncan's earlier work" (p.61). These remarks raise an interesting point. Although it is the case that most of Duncan's dances in these particular source material and treatment categories were choreographed during the first decade of the century and thereafter remained in her repertoire, Duncan did not continue to compose in this idiom. Of

course she may not have needed to work in an abstract manner again because her early works retained their popularity or perhaps, since she was one of the first of the early modern dancers to use pure movement and degrees of abstraction, she may have been unable to develop her choreography beyond the short statements of the earlier works.

In her compositions based on an idea, topic or theme Duncan often worked the content in an impressionistic manner. There are several accounts of Duncan capturing a fleeting moment or alluding to the subject of her dance by a particular pose, gesture or key phrase. Levinson's description of Duncan's solo 'The Three Graces' from Wagner's 'Tannhauser' clearly demonstrates her ability to treat material in impressionistic terms. This made some of the meanings of the dance easily accessible to the audience and was achieved by lightly sketched-in visual references and innuendos rather than in direct mime or through literal movement.

The dangling nymph holds out her hand to the invisible companion; but she has already become that other, the new one, who enters the harmonious dance; then the third appears! In the multiplicity of these almost synchronistic incarnations, in this dissociation of the personality which divides into three distinct and charming creatures, there is magic which reveals the genius of the theatre.

Levinson (1929 p.161)

In Duncan's 'Blue Danube' dance she alluded to "the river in spring with love in the air" (Duncan, Irma, 1958a p.232) with little runs, short lilting phrases and above all a fluency and gathering of momentum. Similarly "her personification of the Blue Danube" (Hodges, quoted by Duncan, Irma, 1958a p.233) could be taken to be a reference to an impressionistic treatment although it also has overtones of a more literal handling of her source material.

In fact in many of Duncan's dances, but particularly those concerned with an epic story or an unfolding of events, there was a

very clear emphasis on literal or near-literal treatment. For example, Duncan's works using the Gluck and Wagner opera scores were simply long narrative dances in which the characters, and the events that took place, were identified by an amalgam of realistic, representational and mimetic movement interspersed with short cameo-like impressionistic dances.

Both Divoire and Shebuyev describe Duncan's ability to portray a Bacchante. The former refers to Duncan being "a greedy and realistic Bacchant" in her dance using Wagner's 'Tannhauser' (Divoire 1924 p.83). The latter, in a review of Duncan's dance using Chopin's mazurka in D major, states

now she is a Bacchante - she leaps wildly - calls and entices someone, and suddenly runs off in a torrid whirlwind.

Shebuyev in Steegmuller (1974 p.43)

A point of interest highlighted by juxtaposing these two references is that in 'Tannhauser' Duncan is dancing a character known from the narrative while in the Chopin mazurka it is Shebuyev who perceives the emphasis of the dance to be Bacchantic. However, despite Shebuyev's particular interpretation there is no other evidence to suggest that this was one of Duncan's narrative dances. In fact it is likely that it shared characteristics with her other works using Chopin mazurkas which were either treated in a near-abstract or impressionistic manner.

Throughout the contemporary literature on Duncan there are many references to her "realistic", "representational" and "naturalistic" treatment of her dance material. It would be possible to sub-group these according to type but the danger in this would be to place too much credence on the choice of a particular word from an eye-witness account. The nuances of meaning between such terms as "realistic" and "representational" are not necessarily exploited when used generally

and there is no reason to assume that this terminology was employed in any technical sense in the reviews of Duncan's dances in the early 1900s.

Nevertheless, within the extensive third category of narrative treatment one area does demand further examination and this is the manner in which Duncan used mimetic movement and incorporated it into her dances. In the present study more than twenty authors have been identified who have made reference to Duncan's use of mime in their first hand reports of her dances. In one respect the arguments adduced above concerning the difficulty of determining what exactly is meant in the use of a specific term apply here but in this particular case the sheer number of reports and their descriptive nature do allow a short discussion and some conclusions to be drawn.

Mime is currently considered to be an independent art form although a very stylised tradition of mime is associated with some of the nineteenth century ballets. Duncan's mime, however, appears not to have been derived from any developed system but to have been a direct response to her choreographic needs to relate a story in a very detailed way.³

Terry claims that Duncan

used a great deal more explicit pantomime at the start of her choreographic career than she would use later when, with experience, she would distill from pantomimic gestures the essences of feeling.

Terry (1963 p.121)

Conversely, Enters (1966) suggests that Duncan turned to mime towards the end of her career. Nevertheless, it is the case that many of the references to Duncan's mime passages are in relation to works

choreographed at the turn of the century. In 'Narcissus' Duncan

seemed to be peering into a pool and, amazed by the loveliness of the reflected image, proceeded to make love to the mirrored self through blown kisses and ecstatic poses.

Terry (1963 p.17)

Other references to mime in Duncan's early dances include her holding the sides of her body in 'A dance of mirth' (Terry 1963), drawing water with a cupped palm in 'Ballad' (Levinson 1929) and in 'Angel with viol' reproducing bowing movements with her arm (Levinson 1929). These dances were soon dropped from her repertoire but Duncan continued to incorporate mime into her new and more substantial compositions. 'Orpheus', 'Iphigenia', 'La Marseillaise' and 'Marche Slave' all contain passages of pure mime and it is interesting to note that in these narrative dances the mime sections occur at points when the story becomes detailed or is explicit. Thus Duncan mimes lifting a huge rock in 'Orpheus', playing knuckle-bones in 'Iphigenia', kissing the flag in 'La Marseillaise' and struggling with heavy chains in 'Marche Slave'.

If the proposed three categories of Duncan's source material and the three categories of treatment are seen in relation to each other then it is interesting to note that generally a one to one relationship exists. This means that instead of exploiting her source materials in diverse ways Duncan tended to treat each group in the same manner. Thus all her pure movement dances were treated in a near-abstract manner, the majority of the dances derived from ideas and topics were composed in an impressionistic mode and virtually all the story-based dances were choreographed so that the narrative was not only intact but even elaborated.

Furthermore, there is an over-riding feature of Duncan's manipulation of dance materials which gives her work one of its main stylistic features. This is her preference for choreographing in a

lyrical mode.

Lyricism in dance can be characterised as a concern with an ongoing, easy fluency, a preoccupation with the linear rather than the vertical development of the dance, a free use of space and a tendency for the body movement to be unrestricted and only lightly tensioned. As early as 1908 Parker noted that in Duncan's 'Iphigenia' "one motion flows or ripples, or sweeps, into another, and the two are edgeless." (Parker 1982 p.59). In Duncan's dance 'Death of Isolde', Levinson describes a section in which her movement

melts into vibrating waves, into a soft swinging motion of her arms which are extended horizontally as though carried on an invisible tide.

Levinson (1929 p.160)

Shawn also gives an eye-witness account of a 1917 Duncan performance in which he remembers "she had a lovely, lyric quality of movement" (Terry 1963 p.165). Modern writers, too, comment upon this feature of Duncan's work. Tobias (1977 p.13) notes the "sensual lyricism" of the Brahms waltzes and Pikula (1979 p.148) comments upon the "clear lyricism in the structure of her group works".

Of course, not all of Duncan's dances were lyrical throughout; many of the highly dramatic mimed passages would have been incongruent had Duncan given them lyrical overtones. Nevertheless, it is evident from contemporary accounts that lyricism was the predominant mode in which Duncan treated her material and within this approach she worked as appropriate in a near-abstract, impressionistic or narrative manner.

8.3 Four exemplar dances

On the basis of the identification of three main types of source material that Duncan used, the three major ways in which she treated such material and the overall lyricism of her choreography, it

is profitable to consider a few works in great detail. This enables the specific subject matter of these dances to be seen alongside further concerns of interpretation.

Four works held to be typical of Duncan's choreography have been selected for detailed examination. The criteria governing their choice were that between them they should encompass the compositional range of material and style of treatment which Duncan employed and, in addition, be representative of Duncan's choreography in relation to date choreographed, solo and group work, accompaniment, frequency of performance and duration in the repertoire. The final criterion was that a substantial number of critical reviews and other evidence should be available.⁴ Thus, between them the four works, 'Symphony no. 7 in A major' (Beethoven), 'Iphigenia' (Gluck), 'Funeral March' (Chopin) and dances from 'The Ring' (Wagner), represent typical features of Duncan's choreography which are described in Chapter 5 and identified in the discussion of the material and treatment aspects of interpretation in section 8.2 of this chapter. It is acknowledged that these dances are referred to at several points in the discussion so far. However, the objective here is to consider each dance in turn as a unique choreographic work which can be interpreted in the light of its character, qualities, meanings and significances. Therefore, a few of the particularly illuminating references and quotations used prior to this analysis are given again, this time within their fuller context.

In this section there are several areas of interest. Firstly, the character of each specific dance is given in terms of content and treatment. Secondly, the qualities belonging to the dance, which are dependent upon its particular character and evident in its moods, textures and atmosphere, are delineated. Thirdly, the meanings and significance of the dance are discussed with reference to its qualities, its character and its artistic statement. Ultimately,

interpretative statements are made concerning the uniqueness of each dance.

8.31 SYMPHONY NO.7 IN A MAJOR

Accompaniment	- Beethoven, Symphony no. 7 in A major.
Date choreographed	- possibly 1903, certainly performed early 1904.
Solo/group	- solo dance but group version taught to pupils c1917 and 1920.
Duration in repertoire	- 1903/4-1922.
Frequency of performance	- multiple performances in most years except for 1910-1915 period.
	- a few fragments in reconstructed forms.
Review literature	- many references, a few extended reviews.

From the majority of the accounts of this dance it is clear that the first movement of Beethoven's music was played by the orchestra alone and then Duncan danced to the second, third and fourth movements with orchestral accompaniment (see, for example, Pischl 1948). Occasionally, Duncan seems to have danced to only one or two movements while Pruett (1978) refers to a "full" performance in 1917. The work held a central place in Duncan's repertoire and both during and after the 1914-1918 war she expanded parts of it by choreographing several group dances so that her pupils could perform with her. However, by 1922 it had become the "outgrown conception" described by Margherita Duncan and referred to in Chapter 5.

Duncan's 'Symphony no. 7' dance was one of the most controversial of all her works. The debate arose from her use of Beethoven's music and was particularly fierce since this was her first dance to incorporate a major classical composition. Roberts (1908) claims that Duncan studied the music for five years before presenting her dance and although this is probably an exaggeration⁵ it is possible that she worked on the composition for a year or two; perhaps a reflection of the length of the dance and her awareness of the innovative choice of such music.

Whether Duncan selected Beethoven's music because of Wagner's

appellation of the Seventh Symphony as "the apotheosis of dance" is not known but to the critics of her early performances this was the crux of the matter. Loewenthal quotes the Dutch reviewers of Duncan's 1907 performances who were generally adverse in their comments and advised that

to probe its [Beethoven's Seventh Symphony] depth to discover the meanings within, there the dance art cannot be of help.
Anon. in Loewenthal (1980 p.249)

Another Dutch critic commented

the impossibility of her attempt was all too obvious - even if the dancer were a hundredfold more musical than she is, the visual dance has nothing to do with Beethoven's symphony...The little figure leading its own life alongside it was a frustrating and upsetting experience - this immense art work accompanied by all that triviality.
Zynen in Loewenthal (1980 p.250)

Yet other critics were prepared to overlook the "desecration" of the music because of the compensations of Duncan's dancing.

We can criticise, we can even recognise the discrepancy at times between the music and the dance, but her delightful, moving art, her eloquences, brings happiness.
Anon. in Loewenthal (1980 p.250)

To the Dutch critics then it was axiomatic that by selecting Beethoven's Seventh Symphony Duncan was committed to interpreting it and, in their opinion, she failed. The American critic, Van Vechten (1909 repub 1974 p.17) acknowledged Duncan's right to choose any accompaniment she wished but noted that Wagner's titling was "not sufficient reason why it should be danced to". Nevertheless, after seeing her perform the 'Symphony no. 7' dance he wrote

there is no doubt of the high effect she achieves. Seldom has she been more poetical, more vivid in her expression of joy, more plastic in her poses, more rhythmical in her effects than she was yesterday.⁶ Wagner's title for the symphony might properly be applied to Miss Duncan.
Van Vechten (1909 repub. 1974 p.17)

Van Vechten is close to recognising that, although the accompaniment and meanings of the dance are related to a greater or lesser degree, in Duncan's case it was not a one-to-one relationship in which the choreography attempted to express the music.

Much of the initial furore provoked by Duncan's 'Symphony no. 7' dance abated within a few years of its premiere. Two criticisms, both written in 1909, demonstrate the extent to which the critics had become reconciled to Duncan's choice of music and, more importantly, were able to review the dance in its entirety rather than alighting on one controversial element.

With the second movement, an allegretto, the dancer came forward clad in gauzy Greek drapery of ghostly hue in harmony with the music and the background of coloured bunting. With a sinuous gliding movement she felt her way along, swinging and swinging to the movement of the music seeming to feel in every pore, the solemnity of this.

With the third presto movement she gave way to delicious abandonment and broke into the dance with the freedom of a child in a glad sport. With marvellous motions of the hands and arms she seems to woo and capture the mystic spirit of the earth and air and bestow their influence on the audience. The lights cast on her and her surroundings were now of roseate hue and increased in brightness during her mad revelry of the last movement, allegro con brio.

No more wonderful exhibition of grace, poetry and power of rhythmic motion can be imagined than that of Isadora Duncan.

Anon. in Pruett (1978 p.91)

A few days ago I saw Miss Isadora Duncan in her dance interpretive of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony... It appears that some of the musical pundits of the press were shocked. It was a desecration of such music to associate with it so "primitive" an art as dancing...

From their own standpoint, quite possibly, the pundits are right. Like so many musical folks, they have trained their ears at the expense of of their eye-sight, and accustomed their brains to respond exclusively to aural impressions.

Why should they sympathise with an effort to reach the imagination simultaneously through the avenues of sight and sound? So they belittle the dancer and her art.

If you have seen her dance, I wonder whether you do not agree with me that it was one of the loveliest expressions of beauty one has ever experienced. In contrast with the vastness of the Metropolitan Opera House and the bigness of the stage her figure appeared small, and distance lent additional aloofness.

The figure became a symbol of the abstract conception of rhythm and melody. The spirit of rhythm and melody by some miracle seemed to be made visible... The movement of beauty that artists of all ages have dreamed of as penetrating the universe through all eternity, in a few moments of intense consciousness, seemed to be realised before one's eyes. It was a revelation of beauty so exquisite, that it brought happy, cleansing tears.

Caffin (1909 pp.18-19)

In the first extract it is interesting that the reviewer immediately describes the components of music, costume and set and their "harmony", a reference to the overall form in the allegretto movement. The second sentence then focusses on perceived qualities of the dance with the movement having "sinuous" and "gliding" ascriptions and, finally, "solemnity". The presto movement is described almost entirely in qualitative terms, with reference to moods of "abandonment" and "freedom", followed by an interpretative statement beginning with "she seems to woo and capture..." A return is made to the components of the dance in the account of the last section in order to note their part in reinforcing the change of mood.

In contrast Caffin, in the second extract, first takes the "musical pundits" to task for elevating the music component to the inappropriate position of totally governing the dance. He then quickly returns to the components of space and the performance area and the impression gained of "aloofness". Finally he suggests that the meanings and significance of the dance, that is "the spirit of rhythm and melody... made visible" and "penetrating the universe through all eternity", arise from Duncan's "abstract conception of rhythm and melody".

From these and other eye-witness accounts it is evident that Duncan's 'Symphony no. 7' dance was composed entirely of pure movement

and treated in a near-abstract way. It had a profusion of specific qualities ascribed to it, as might be expected of a long work, nevertheless, all the interpretative statements point to it being symbolic. It was regarded as dealing with universal ideas of motion, rhythm and eternity. Eventually, too, it was recognised as a work of art in its own right, no more dependent on its music than on any other of its components and with a distinctive form characteristic of Duncan's early extended works. Its significance and meanings were seen to be

the glorious affirmation of the rhythm and the mystical power of re-creation.

Maria-Theresa in Walkowitz (1945)
quoted by Pruett (1978 p.90)

Duncan's 'Symphony no. 7' dance inspired Divoire to recollect it in poetic terms

Unreal and perfect shadow
Peaceful and majestic sign
Continuous lines
Handsome Apollo, meditating, is exalted
Which Bacchic god will appear?
The dignity of music
'Compelling thought'.

Divoire (1924 p.86)

8.32 IPHIGENIA

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Accompaniment | - | Gluck, 'Iphigenia in Aulis' and 'Iphigenia in Tauris' (extracts). |
| Date choreographed | - | 1904, extended work by 1905, full length work by 1908 consisting of 21 parts. |
| Solo/group | - | solo dance with group dances added in 1907/8. |
| | - | performed as a full length work in either solo or group versions. |
| Duration in repertoire | - | 1904 - 1917. |
| Frequency of performance | - | multiple performances throughout period in repertoire. |
| | - | some group dances in reconstructed forms. |
| Review literature | - | over thirty authors have written descriptions, many extended. |

Duncan writes that at the end of an early love affair

the sorrow, the pains and disillusion of love, I transformed
in [sic] my Art. I composed the story of Iphigenia.

Duncan (1927a p.108)

It is not known, however, on what grounds she chose Gluck's music as accompaniment. Reviews and extant programmes indicate that Duncan's extracts were mainly from 'Iphigenia in Aulis' with a few from 'Iphigenia in Tauris' and that she used some, though not all, of the ballet sections as well as the operatic solos and choruses. The critics Fuller-Maitland and Van Vechten each had reservations about Duncan's use of certain sections of the operas but generally her choice, unlike that of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, was uncontroversial. This was because having selected Gluck's operas Duncan followed their narrative with the choreography incorporating the epic sequences of events. At certain points Duncan suspended the narrative (as did Gluck) and inserted dances of a more impressionistic kind such as the 'Danse des Scythes',⁷ 'Choeur des Prêtresses' and 'Bacchanale'. However, the choreography was primarily preoccupied with narrative concerns as Duncan noted.

I danced from 'Iphigenia' the maidens of Chalcis playing with their golden ball on the suave sands, and later the sorrowful exiles of Tauris dancing with reluctant horror the sacrifices of their Hellenic countrymen and victims.

Duncan (1927a p.140)

Hurok (1947 p.91) writes of Duncan dancing "continuously, impersonating the entire cast of the Greek tragedy, for forty-five minutes" and one reviewer reported

in her interpretation of the greater portion on Gluck's music... I felt a perfect agreement between the picture and the music. Indeed, at times the mimic powers of the dancer far exceeded the expressiveness of the music she was portraying.

Anon. in Rather (1976 pp.77-78)

In fact almost all the eye-witness accounts of performances of 'Iphigenia' accept that the subject matter of the dance is Gluck's libretto and that Duncan's choreography treats this in a narrative and, particularly, a mimetic manner. In such accounts the authors have no difficulties in interpreting the dance since Duncan's storytelling and mime were explicit⁸ and, therefore, the description of the dance is the stating of its meanings.

Bump, bump, bump, she was hitting the bouncing ball - there she picked it up, and up it went into the air, and again, up, up, now she was swinging it around and throwing it far, and immediately she became the catcher and seized it again... and all this in the finest, the most aesthetic, graceful movements. Sometimes she was lying on the ground, leaning on one arm and throwing the knuckle-bones, picking them up, throwing them up in the air and catching them, in her hand, on her hand and down again, always graceful and in feather-light motion.

'Giovanni' in Loewenthal (1980 pp.234-5)

But although the mime conveyed explicit meanings it was a dance mime and critics also looked for features characteristic of dance. This is indicated in the 'Giovanni' reference above "and all this in the finest, the most aesthetic, graceful movements". The writer here is identifying the qualities, in this case "aesthetic" and "graceful", which to him give 'Iphigenia' significance as a dance over and above its narrative content and mimetic treatment.

To the Caffins (1912 pp.55, 57), however, Duncan's 'Iphigenia' was "never mimetic" but "ever suggestive" and Cortissoz, too, perceives her dance to go beyond mime.

There is at least one episode in Miss Duncan's dancing to the music of Gluck's 'Iphigenie' in which she wonderfully humanises... stately lines and contours... But it is to this stateliness to the pure and flowing linear beauty of her dancing, that one is bound to come back, and, so doing, one is also struck by its perfect adaptation to the music.

Cortissoz (1909 p.204)

Again, in this quotation it is the qualities of the dance, this time "stately" and "flowing", which are perceived to take the

choreography from the sole realm of mime into making statements about the story of 'Iphigenia'.

Other critics regarded Duncan's 'Iphigenia' primarily as a mimetic rendering of Gluck's music and only secondarily as narrative.

[One] hears the rhythm of the music and one sees that her gestures and motions are in total accord with the curved, stretched, or broken lines of the melody... Such a fusion, a unity in which gesture seems to spring from its own origin... is like the rhythm in Gregorian church music - free within its own restrictions.

Anon. in Loewenthal (1980 p.234)

This extract is particularly explicit since in analytical terms it begins with a noting of components, acknowledges the form in terms of "fusion" and "unity" and then likens the dance to a particular genre and style of music.

Parker, too, felt that the narrative of Iphigenia was not of sole importance. He saw an interplay between dance and story and maintained that in her choreography Duncan used Gluck's music as often for pure dance as she did to relate the Greek epic.

She made no...effort to follow the dramatic narrative of the opera, still less... did she try to individualise herself as Iphigenia...Rather Miss Duncan chose certain episodes from the legend, or the opera, or from both, that suited the manner and purpose of her dancing.

Parker (written in 1908 repub. 1982 p.58)

In his review Parker focusses upon the way in which the choreographic form of Iphigenia related to the music but was not determined by it. "The music merely points the dance rather than persuades it" (Parker 1982 p.59).

Nevertheless, it was the overall Hellenic evocation that most critics found praiseworthy. The Greek character and atmosphere of 'Iphigenia' is, of course, a direct consequence of the literal or near-literal manner in which the narrative is presented. It is also a recognisable feature of Duncan's early works which audiences responded

to readily and with understanding.

No matter how often I attend the Iphigenie series they surprise me anew with ardor, the classical purity of line.
Anon. in Loewenthal (1980, p.244)

The prevailing Greek mood of 'Iphigenia' provided an unambiguous context in which meanings were made explicit. This powerfully evoked mood was felt by the audience and Duncan alike; hence her refusal on one occasion to give the 'Blue Danube' as a encore after an 'Iphigenia' performance (quoted in Chapter 5 section 5.5).

'Iphigenia' was one of Duncan's most widely acclaimed works. Margherita Duncan's account of seeing Duncan perform it is an indication of the way in which audiences identified with Duncan in their interpretation of the dance.

The first time I ever saw Isadora Duncan she was dancing on the Carnegie Hall stage to the music of Gluck's Iphigenia. I experienced what I can only describe as an identification of myself with her. It seemed as if I were dancing up there myself. This was not an intellectual process, a critical perception that she was supremely right in every movement she made; just a sense that in watching her I found release from my own impulses of expression; the emotions aroused in me by the music saw themselves translated into visibility. Her response to the music was so true and inevitable, so free from personal eccentricity or caprice, her self-abandonment to the emotion implicit in the music so complete that although I had never seen nor imagined such dancing, I looked at it with a sort of delighted recognition.

Margherita Duncan in Duncan (1928 p.17)

8.33 FUNERAL MARCH

Accompaniment	- Chopin, Sonata no. 1 in B flat minor. op. 35, 3rd movement (Funeral March).
Date choreographed	- 1913 solo version. - 1918 group version.
Solo/group	- 1918 part of Polish trilogy. - originally a solo work, later a group dance.
Duration in repertoire	- 1913-1922 Duncan. - 1918-1926 Pupils.
Frequency of performance	- records of performances, some multiple, for every year. - performed in reconstructed form.
Review literature	- many references, some short reviews.

Duncan's 'Funeral March', for which she used the Chopin music of the same title, is a work associated with the middle period of her career. Duncan describes the "premonitions" of death which prompted her to improvise this dance at the end of a performance of her Chopin programme in Kiev and how she conceived it.⁹

I danced a creature who carries in her arms her dead, with slow, hesitating steps, towards the last resting place. I danced the descent into the grave and finally the spirit escaping from the imprisoning flesh and rising, rising towards the Light - the Resurrection.

Duncan (1927a p.264)

Subsequently, Duncan must have rechoreographed parts of the dance if later descriptions of it are accurate, but the subject matter, that of death and mourning, was retained. However, the manner in which Duncan manipulated her material seems to have been a matter for dispute as reference to accounts of her London performances of the Funeral March in 1921 indicate. "Tarn" of The Spectator was critical of Duncan's use of mime.

She seemed to me to point to the moral far too plainly and to tell the story of grief, of the abandonment of the grave, and then of a happy resurrection only too clearly. In the miming all the subtlety of the music was lost.

Tarn (23 April 1921 p.525)

Grein, in The London Illustrated News, also commented upon Duncan's mime but found it unsuccessful, rather than too explicit.

When she is mimicking a hallowed "Marche Funebre" she fails to realise the opening of the gates of Paradise after the elegy of the prelude, I, for one... am not to be taken in [sic].

Grien (23 April 1921 p.552)

The music critic of The Sunday Times acclaimed Duncan's performance

but suggested that

with the very slightest of literary clues given us in the programme our pleasure in her miming would be enormously increased [particularly when] the mime's gestures strike violently across our own preconception of the music.

Newman (17 April 1921 p.4)

The different views on the relevance and success of Duncan's mime in the Funeral March were echoed in disagreements about her costume. Ashton's admiration for the manner in which Duncan, dressed in a large purple cloak, held a long pause before slowly opening the cloak to reveal an armful of lilies, is noted in Chapter 7 section 7.23. However, to "Claudio", writing in Lloyd's Sunday News, this same passage was "little more than stage trickery with a mantle" (Claudio 1921b p.5). Nevertheless, the

heavy, purple cloak in the "Funeral March" which brought out the culminating grandeur of the death scene

Fussell (1921 p.657)

was in several accounts regarded as one of the key points in the dance.

The qualities of grandeur, heroism, solemnity and power noted in the reviews, the prevailing funereal mood, together with the well-known music, all reinforced Duncan's themes of death and mourning. The immediate meanings of the 'Funeral March' were patently clear since the chosen theme and its mimetic and representational treatment, the narrow range of qualities ascribed to it and the atmosphere set by the music, all shared the same focus of attention.

Her supreme triumph in the Sonata... is unforgettable; especially the genius with which she indicated, in the concluding Presto, the worldly chatter of the mourners leaving (and forgetting!) the grave with its inevitable tragedy.

An Admirer (1921 p.407)

Divoire did not see Duncan's London performances of the 'Funeral

March' but was present at her Paris seasons when the dance was included in the programme. He viewed the choreography in far more impressionistic terms than his London counterparts and also regarded it as having significance beyond its more literal meanings.

Chopin's 'Funeral March' - where the human body becomes a huge, square funeral monument; where it has never before been given such architectural representation; the dancer lets hope sink into oblivion; here are the funeral flowers, thrown away behind one, here we see the ecstasy of being born again.

Divoire (1924 p.81)

8.34 RIDE OF THE VALKYRIES AND SIEGFRIED'S FUNERAL MARCH

Accompaniment	- Wagner, The Ring, The Valkyrie, Act III and The Twilight of the Gods, Act III.
Date choreographed	- c1918.
Solo/Group	- solo.
Duration in repertoire	- c1918-1927.
Frequency of performance	- relatively infrequent (due to difficulties in using Wagner's music - see Chapter 5 Section 5.41).
Review literature	- some references, few reviews.

Duncan's 'Ride of the Valkyries' and 'Siegfried's Funeral March', her dances using 'Ring' music, were presented separately either as items in a Wagner programme or in a "mixed" composer programme. These dances of Duncan's later career were neither performed very frequently nor reviewed at any great length yet they are important because they indicate particular developments in her choreography.

In her 'Siegfried's Funeral March' dance Duncan returned to the subject matter of death which she had worked with earlier in her Chopin 'Funeral March' but instead of a mimetic and representational treatment of the narrative she appears to have taken a thematic approach with sketched-in allusions. Some reviewers of her performances of this dance expected her conception to be "Wagnerian". MacCormack considered that any "visual commentary" on such music should have been as Wagner imagined it with the dead Siegfried carried

on his shield instead of a woman

in a Greek tunic and purple scarf alternately lifting her hands aloft and then brandishing her fists at the audience.
MacCormack (1927 p.523)¹⁰

MacCormack concluded that such music was beyond Duncan's physical powers of expression. In contrast the American dance critic Denby was so impressed by Duncan's 'Siegfried's Funeral March' that twenty years after the event the memory of it was still vivid.

On her last American tour I watched a program from up in the Carnegie Hall gallery from where she looked, all alone on the stage and facing the full blare of a Wagnerian orchestra, very small indeed. But the slow parts of her Venusberg dance and her Siegfried Funeral March remain in memory two of the very greatest effects I have seen: I can still feel their grandeur and their force.

Denby (1949 repub. 1969 p.339)

Duncan's 'Ride of the Valkyries', also a dance of impressions and moods rather than of literal meanings, was similarly both condemned and praised. In this case, however, it is possible to distinguish between the unfavourable reviews, mainly from non-specialist journalists and reporters, and the very complimentary accounts, many of which were from music and dance critics.

The most wonderful illustration... was at a certain moment in the miming of the 'Ride of the Valkyries' when, in dead immobility, she gave us an incredible suggestion of the very ecstasy of movement: something in the rapt face, I imagine, carried on the previous joy of the wild flight through the air. The sudden cessation of physical motion had the overwhelming effect that Beethoven and Wagner now and then make, not with their music, but by a pause in it.

Newman (1921 p.4)

Divoire saw a later performance of this dance and compared it with

earlier performances

1923. So much joy lost, so much casting down and raising up, has this not fatigued and diminished the soul of Isadora? At the last performance which we saw her give... her face seemed to bear the grimace of hell. Even her 'Valkyrie' was no longer as before a silver virgin, intoxicated by the wind and galloping, (the movement of the gallop rather than the gallop itself, which was suggested to us through the broad step of a goddess, not by a gallop), rushing to the help of the warriors, but a sort of Gorgon presiding at the battle.

Divoire (1924 pp.82-83)

From these two accounts, even though Newman refers to "miming", it is patent that Duncan's choreography has developed from its earlier narrative form to a point at which she deals with a theme in a broad impressionistic manner. Her starting points in both 'Ride of the Valkyries' and 'Siegfried's Funeral March' were narrative and music-based as before, yet she began to use a less literal style. Her movements were no longer mimetic or near-mimetic but suggestive and evocative.

This confused many of her audiences since their access to the dance through an unfolding narrative was replaced by hints and impressions and by a paring down of the formerly full body actions. Divoire's reference to Duncan's treatment of the gallop and Newman's to her pause in 'Ride of the Valkyries' are examples of this. Nevertheless, the more Duncan abstracted her movement material the further she took it from the explicit meanings that many of her reviewers expected.

Thus, as with a few of her other later works, audiences were often perplexed in attempting to interpret Duncan's 'Ride of the Valkyries' and 'Siegfried's Funeral March'. The content of these dances was, seemingly, made apparent by their titles and the choice of music. In addition Duncan's 'new' style of dance had, by the post-war period, gained general acceptance and her audiences now had certain expectations of her. Yet the particular ways in which Duncan elected

to deal with the subject matter of these later dances gave rise to certain moods and qualities which some eye-witnesses were unable to interpret. To others, however, such developments in Duncan's choreography were welcomed as a further indication of her continued revolution of dance.

The examination of the four exemplar dances shows clearly the high degree of innovation in Duncan's choice of subject matter and treatment and the diverse ways in which audiences and critics responded to such originality. The detailed study of the four exemplar dances paves the way for a consideration of the overall characteristics of Duncan's works.

8.4 The radical qualities and meanings of Duncan's dances

A full and detailed typification of the character of each of Duncan's works is not possible within the parameters of the present study and is, in any case, unlikely to be undertaken at some future date because of the lack of detailed evidence for the vast majority of her works. Nevertheless, on the basis of the preceding discussion four broad categories are proposed by which Duncan's dance may be typified.

At the beginning of her theatrical career most of Duncan's dances were short, "light-hearted" and mood-evoking. Early dances in a this vein were her compositions using Brahms, Chopin and Schubert waltzes, which were near-abstract, and her longer works, such as that using Beethoven's Seventh symphony. The term "poetic" for this type of dance is not entirely apt but it does serve to distinguish the mood-evoking, non-literal nature of such compositions.

Some of Duncan's dances were "psychological" in their orientation and took themes such as motherhood, as in the two 'Berceuses' using Faure's and Gretchaninoff's music, and bereavement and mourning, as in the funeral dances. These psychological works were composed in an

increasingly impressionistic manner alongside other developments in Duncan's choreography as the difference in treatment between the earlier 'Funeral March' (Chopin) and the later 'Siegfried's Funeral March' indicates.

Duncan's "epic" dances, of which 'Iphigenia' and 'Orpheus' are examples, occupied important places in her repertoire throughout the major part of her career and were totally narrative in orientation. In these the age-old tales were told anew using a new movement basis which, while being radical, seemed to recapture the spirit of antiquity. These were the works to which Duncan added group dances, probably in recognition of the advantage of having many dancers involved in the telling of complicated plots. Even so, these dances were successful in their solo versions.

In mid-career Duncan began to choreograph works which can be typified as "socio-political" dances. These were comments upon the major international events of the first quarter of the twentieth century, namely the 1914-1918 War and the Russian Revolution. Duncan's "war" dances, such as 'La Marseillaise'¹¹ and, in a related vein, 'Ride of the Valkyries', were prompted by a deep personal conviction as were her "political" dances, of which 'L'Internationale' and 'Marche Slave' were notable examples.

Although these four categories are not entirely mutually exclusive they provide a means by which individual dances may be typified within Duncan's total choreographic output. It is also of interest to note that her choreography did not extend far into the realm of wholly abstract works or have a major emotional orientation. The former was a later development in modern dance, the latter typical of Duncan's near-contemporaries working in the Central European modern dance genre.

In terms of the qualities of Duncan's total choreographic output

it is realistic only to generalise since, as is evident in the four exemplar works, the range of moods she created, atmospheres she engendered and impressions she gave were almost limitless. The "pitiful tenderness" of her 'Ave Maria' (Duncan and Macdougall 1929 p.356), the "caressing langour" in a Chopin mazurka (Shebuyev in Steegmuller 1974 p.43) and Duncan "poised in terrible impatience" in 'Marche Militaire' (Eastman in Duncan 1928 pp.39-40) give indications of the range of qualities with which she imbued her dance. Kendall (1979 p.192) refers to a typical "frothiness of atmosphere" in Duncan's dances but it was this very aspect that Benois found jarring since to him "they exhibited thoroughly English airs and graces and a sugary affectation" (Benois 1964 p.217). A fellow Russian, Karsavina, comments in almost exactly the same terms on the qualities of Duncan's dance which she regarded as having "the sentimentality of the New Englander" (Karsavina 1930 revised edition 1954 p.170). Geographical exactitudes apart it is interesting that Watkins echoes these comments with her phrase "almost saccharine beauty" (in Hering 1951 revised edition 1954 p.92) in referring to aspects of Duncan's dance. Nevertheless, it is the multitude of different qualities that permeate Duncan's dances which nearly all the eye-witness accounts find worthy of comment. The range and scope of these qualities was an innovation characteristic of Duncan's work and enabled her to explore new areas of meanings in her dances.

The meanings and significance of some of Duncan's individual dances have been referred to. Also, by implication, the categorisation of Duncan's total works according to type is an acknowledgement both of her interest in certain great themes and her recurring need to explore them in different dance terms at various times in her career. Some of Duncan's dances acquired particular significances. For example, 'Ave Maria' was always associated by her audiences with the death of her children and the Moscow school

invariably began its programmes with a performance of the 'Funeral March' (Chopin) as a tribute to Deidre and Patrick. However, over and above the specific meanings of individual dances Duncan's works were generally regarded as dance statements of a highly significant kind. No choreographer before her had culled such wide-ranging starting points for dance from all aspects of human experience or had been able to treat dance material in such a variety of different modes. Furthermore, her interpretation of these works in performance emphasised their expressive range and importance as works of art. Duncan's dances were accepted as a new theatre dance form and accorded universal significance.

[Duncan] carries us through a universe in a single movement of her body. Her hand alone held aloft becomes a shape of infinite significance.

Henri quoted by Macdougall (1946 p.80)

8.5 Summary

The examination and discussion carried out in this chapter has revealed many vital features of Duncan's work. Her source material was eclectic and she treated it in many ways from near-abstract through impressionistic to narrative modes although the over-riding characteristic was of a lyrical dance style. In the interpretation of her works the individual dances can be grouped according to type and from the written descriptions and artists impressions of her work it is possible to discern their qualities, moods and atmospheres. The meanings of Duncan's individual dances can also be recognised and described and similarly the universal significances that Duncan's dances held for her audiences can be understood and appreciated.

Overall what emerges from this consideration of the subject matter and meanings of Duncan's dances is that collectively her works encompassed a telling range of meanings. Duncan's dance statements were unorthodox and innovative but above all else her dances were

comments about the human condition and situation. In this respect she pioneered the notion that dance as a theatre form can legitimately and successfully reflect upon and inform the everyday lives of all people.

CHAPTER 8 NOTES

- 1 This term is borrowed from aesthetics where it is used to refer to an object's immediate perceptible qualities.
- 2 Even when this is established it does not necessarily follow that the creative impetus for a dance becomes the content of that dance since allowance must be made for degrees of abstraction as well as the vagaries of the artistic impulse.
- 3 The Delsartean canons of stylised gestures may have been an indirect influence (see Ch. 4).
- 4 This term is used in a relative sense since, as is clear throughout the present study, few of Duncan's dances have been reviewed at length.
- 5 A five year compositional span prior to the 1903/4 premiere is unlikely since the dance would have been atypical of Duncan's work during this period.
- 6 This is a reference to Duncan's performance with Damrosch and the New York Symphony Orchestra at the Metropolitan Opera House 16 November 1909. Many accounts cite the Duncan-Damrosch performances as being highlights in her career.
- 7 This dance so influenced Rambert that it became the basis for her own composition 'Dance of Warriors' (Rambert 1972).
- 8 It is possible that the explicit nature of the mime was, however, dependent upon the viewer's knowledge of the Greek myth. One London critic was obviously perplexed by the meaning of the mime passages in 'Iphigenia' (see the earlier discussion in this chapter section 8.21).
- 9 This is one of few dances that Duncan identified as initially being improvised in performance.
- 10 From an article in the Dancing Times in which he reviewed Duncan's last performance. Pruett (1978), however, claims that this item was not danced by Duncan in her last concert but played by the orchestra.
- 11 Later to be included in her "revolutionary" programmes of dances.

SUMMARY OF PART III

In Part II evidence is presented to show that contrary to popular belief Duncan choreographed a substantial number of dances. In Part III the detailed examination of that work demonstrates conclusively that as well as being a prolific choreographer Duncan's dances were of considerable import and merit attention. The latter point is one not generally accepted in the scholarly circles of the dance profession where Duncan's reputation as a pioneer is acknowledged but her work per se is often dismissed as being largely improvised and, consequently, fairly slight and trivial.

In Part III it is established that Duncan formulated a set of values grounded in her notions of the sacrosanct nature of the human body. From this reverence of the body, together with all things natural, she developed choreographic working procedures in which she transformed ordinary, everyday natural movement into dance form. Duncan's dances can be seen to be intricately crafted with complex choreographic structures in mainly lyrical modes reflecting both the movement basis of her work and her use of a well-defined range of musical accompaniment. In addition Duncan's choice of material and the manner in which she manipulated and presented it resulted in dances of considerable meaning and significance.

It was this innovative use of movement and its presentation in a new dance style carrying meanings far wider in scope than any choreographer had previously dared that gave Duncan's work its radical stamp. Thus Duncan's work is of considerable importance in its own right and in Part III the first detailed examination of her choreography shows that such a study is both feasible and worthwhile.

It now remains to place Duncan's work within the general context of the development of Western theatre dance and this is the focus of Part IV.

PART IV**ISADORA DUNCAN: HER CONTRIBUTION
TO WESTERN THEATRE DANCE**

Introduction to Part IV

Chapter 9 The pioneer of dance as expression

Chapter 10 A founder of modern dance

Summary of Part IV

INTRODUCTION TO PART IV

The work of any artist is subject to reassessment over time. Changes in perceptions of an artist's oeuvre and consequently in its status are normally based not only on a reconsideration of the work per se but also retrospectively in relation to the development of the art form to which it belongs.

The general acknowledgement of Duncan as a founder of modern dance implicitly carries an assessment of her achievements within the evolution of Western theatre dance. Nonetheless, as indicated at several points in this study, without a detailed analysis of Duncan's choreography and its underlying values, it is impossible either to articulate the nature of her contribution (beyond terming it "inspirational") or to put it in perspective.

In Part III the importance and significance of Duncan's work is established. In Part IV these achievements are placed in context and seen from the present day perspective. The most immediate context is that of the modern dance genre itself. Early modern dance, in its total departure from the existing theatre dance genre of the turn of the century, is often characterised by dance historians in three ways; firstly in its premise that all movement can provide material for dance; secondly in its lack of dependence on narrative and thirdly in its eschewing of restrictive clothing. These features provide a useful starting point for the discussion in Chapter 9 in which Duncan is specifically characterised as the pioneer of dance as expression. In Chapter 10 the contexts are widened and the perspectives lengthened in order to establish her general contribution to both the founding and development of modern dance and to its acceptance as an alternative theatre dance genre.

CHAPTER 9**THE PIONEER OF DANCE AS EXPRESSION**

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Duncan's life style and her art
- 9.3 Duncan's choreographic style
- 9.4 Duncan's performance style
- 9.5 Duncan's notion of dance as expression
- 9.6 Summary

9.1 Introduction

Throughout this study references have been made to the expressive nature and impact of Duncan's choreography and performances. The notion of art as expression is a well understood, if controversial, topic in discourse about the arts. While Duncan could not in any meaningful sense be said either to have contributed to or profited from that debate there is substantial evidence which underlines the importance of the notion of dance as expression to her. Indeed it pervades her writings and, as shown in Part III, is clearly identifiable in her choreography. Other early modern dancers incorporated an expressive element in their work but to Duncan it was an *idée fixe*.

In this chapter the ways in which Duncan pioneered the notion of dance as an expressive act are explored by reference to the close relationship between her life style and her art and through discussion of her choreographic and performance styles. From these distinct but related areas it is possible to arrive at some definitive statements about Duncan's notion of dance as expression.

9.2 Duncan's life style and her art

The life and the work of an artist stand in complex relationship to each other. In one sense they are inextricable, since the latter may be subsumed under the former, but in another very real sense they

can be regarded as separate, though interacting to various degrees. In the consideration of Duncan as a pioneer of dance expression the life/art relationship is of particular significance. She herself perceived very close links between specific experiences in her life and the subject matter of some of her dances. In addition she claimed that the dance ideals that formed her art also pervaded her life. This two-way relationship is intriguing and in order to set out the basis for its exploration it is relevant to recapitulate certain facts about Duncan.

By reference to Duncan's chronology (outlined in Chapter 3), the cultural contexts within which she worked and the influences upon her (overviewed in Chapter 4), and the two choreo-chronicles (Appendices A and B), the location of her life and work in time and place can be readily and irrefutably established. If the first and last few years of Duncan's career as a choreographer are discounted on the grounds of negligible choreographic output¹ then the time span of her career coincides exactly with the first quarter of the twentieth century. Throughout this period Duncan lived almost exclusively in France with brief sojourns in Germany and Russia. Nevertheless, Duncan's origins need to be acknowledged and, therefore, it would be accurate to characterise her as an American expatriate who developed her work in a European milieu during the 1900-1925 period. Thus Duncan bridged the new and the old worlds with her Whitmanesque philosophies and her quest for classicism. Her life, full of revolutionary fervour, was also much likened to the Greek epics she so often used for source material in her work. Furthermore, she lived at a time when the Western world was in turmoil economically, politically, socially and not the least, artistically.

Pruett (1978 p.i), in the fourth of her "patterns of selection" concerning Duncan's choice of music (noted in Chapter 7 section 7.24), proposes that Duncan "matched" her life situations to her musical

selections. On the basis of evidence presented in Chapter 8 there are grounds for extending Pruett's proposal from music to include subject matter. Duncan's exploration of the themes of love and death, as in 'Iphigenia', 'Moment Musical', 'Ave Maria' and the funeral dances, appears to have been prompted by personal experience and this is supported by the times of such occurrences and the subsequent choreography. Even if this is not the case Duncan's audiences and her reviewers certainly linked her life experiences to the subject matter of her choreography. The consensus of opinion, that Duncan's performances of 'Ave Maria' were all the more poignant because she was a bereaved mother, is noted in Chapter 5. Divoire (1924 p.80), too, claimed that "Isadora's dance follows her life" and, with d'Annunzio the Italian poet, he considered that Duncan's loss of her children made her a more perceptive and sensitive artist, able to explore new areas of human feelings and emotion in both her choreography and in her performances.

The affinity perceived by audiences and critics between particular personal events in Duncan's life and specific dances is in keeping with Romantic notions of art. In these the artist is considered to be primarily concerned with feeling and content, responding to life experiences in sensitive, intuitive ways through the production of art.

Duncan also took the themes of war and revolution and used them as subject matter for 'Redemption', 'La Marseillaise', 'L'Internationale' and other similar dances. As indicated in Chapter 8, Duncan regarded these dances as directly inspired by the 1914-1918 war, the Russian Revolution and related incidents. These events were further removed from her immediate experience but occurred during her lifetime and were within the experience of many of her audiences. In some quarters the initial responses to Duncan's choice of war and

revolution as subject matter were of incredulity and outrage. Nevertheless, dances such as 'La Marseillaise' were an immediate success and it was widely accepted that Duncan was working in a modern idiom in which it was appropriate to respond to and comment upon contemporary events.

For an artist to believe that a particular experience prompted an identifiable artistic response is not remarkable but to assert the reverse is. Yet, just as Duncan claimed that her art was an expression of her being, so she averred that she tried to live her art. Since Duncan was articulate about the ideas which underpinned her work it is of interest to identify exactly what she meant in this respect.

In her essays Duncan (1928) commented frequently about the oppressive nature of the society of her day. She regarded her own dance as expressing high moral and social values and, as indicated in Chapter 4, condemned the current social dances, such as the "Charleston", as immoral. To this end she claimed that in her everyday life, no less than in the theatre, she endeavoured to make all her movements pure, harmonious and expressive of an inner and outer beauty. She encouraged others, particularly women, to develop their own movement patterns and habits on this basis and, of course, this was also one of the main tenets of her school. Duncan stated many times that the children in her schools were not being trained for a performing career in the theatre but were, through their dance experiences, being educated for a harmonious movement life which, by extrapolation, would form the basis of a full, creative and expressive life.

Duncan's attitudes to the body (discussed in Chapter 6) not only prompted her use of Greek-derived costume on stage but also led to her adoption of such a style of dress generally. In this respect it is interesting to note that while Duncan's brother, Raymond, endeavoured

to wear "authentic" ancient Greek garb, she herself opted for the more fashionable versions created by the haute-couturiers Fortuny and Poiret. Indeed throughout the period when "classicism" dominated the European fashion houses Duncan was an acknowledged leader of style.

Other aspects of Duncan's life style in which she claimed to be living her art were in her refusal to marry any of the fathers of her children, her insistence on her freedom to have many lovers, her support of all revolutionary ideologies, particularly communism, and her promotion of feminist ideals. These claims may be seen to be naive, self-indulgent or even a licence to act without reference to any established norms. Even so, it must be acknowledged that Duncan believed that such a life was completely moral and that it reflected all the ideals central to her dance. In her writings there are several brief, tantalising references to the greek god Dionysius and her Paris school had the title "Dionysian". Duncan characterised her dance as having Dionysian inspiration, the ecstasy of the soul being manifest in spontaneous, creative expression. It seems evident that since Duncan believed life was art, and her art was founded on ideals which had life as well as dance ramifications, then the notion of her life style and her art being congruent in creative and expressive ways was, to her, a logical consequence.

9.3 Duncan's choreographic style

At this juncture it is useful to bring together the main conclusions reached from the discussions on Duncan's choreography in Parts II and III in order to make precise statements concerning her choreographic style. This is a fundamental aspect of Duncan's work and one in which her notion of dance as expression can be readily identified.

The style of Duncan's dances is "early modern". The placing of her work as "early" is obviously in accord with historical facts and

Duncan's role as one of the founders of modern dance but other, more discrete features, deriving from the internal structure and orientation of her dances are evident. In the introduction to Part IV three characteristics of early modern dance are cited. These reflect the ways in which the new theatre dance genre departed from the traditional. Duncan as a choreographer in the early modern dance style was particularly aware of this dance revolution since she was one who worked at the first point of departure. Later modern choreographers, such as Doris Humphrey, concerned themselves with the development and the consolidation of the new genre, but Duncan was preoccupied with creating a new dance form and one that was radically different from the ballet of the day. To this end Duncan turned to new sources for her dance and, like other early modern dance choreographers, was influenced by either historical or ethnic dance forms.² At the beginning of her career Duncan regarded the ancient Greek dance as a basis for her own but quickly discovered the futility of attempting any full reconstructions and instead she embodied what she considered to be certain classical notions in her choreography. Loewenthal (1980 p.244) is just one of many authors who include a contemporary account of "the classical purity of line" in Duncan's dances. The reference back to classical antiquity is a distinctive feature of Duncan's choreographic style and one that is amply substantiated in the extant contemporary visual Duncan materials.³

The first characteristic of early modern dance, that of drawing upon all movement, is evident in Duncan's use of ordinary, everyday basic movement actions. Neither the extreme body contractions of the second wave modern dance choreographers, such as Graham, nor the minute movement explorations of later choreographers, such as Cunningham, are present in Duncan's work. Her choreographic style, evident in all her dances, is embedded in her use of full body actions

which are neither distorted nor fragmented but presented as basic movement units built into dances. In addition Duncan imbued her bodily actions with the whole gamut of dynamics since this, too, was for her a characteristic of everyday movement. "Both the weighted and lyrical, almost airy [qualities]" (Silverman 1978 pp.5-6) of Duncan's dances exhibit a range not used to such a marked degree by the majority of the modern dance choreographers who followed her and, therefore, this feature can also be seen as typical of the early style of the modern dance genre.

The second characteristic of early modern dance, that of demoting what hitherto had been the central importance of narrative, is reflected in the Duncan choreochronicles which contain dances with and without storylines. The nineteenth century ballet choreographers worked predominantly within the narrative idiom and frequently their scenarios were based on myths, legends, fairy stories and folk tales. Early modern dance choreographers reserved the right to decide whether or not a story line, with its resulting imposition of a developmental structure to the dance, should be the basis for a composition. In Duncan's case, when a narrative theme suited her choreographic purposes, she selected either the ageless Greek myths⁴ or modern counterparts of the human struggle for freedom, peace and self-realisation. The desire of the early modern dance choreographers to make their subject matter relevant to contemporary events in the first quarter of the twentieth century is characteristic. Another feature redolent of the early modern dance style and evident in the dramatic dances is the use of mime.⁵ Duncan often underlined the location, the happening or the character of one of her dramatic dances by inserting passages of mime, as in 'Narcissus'. Her use of mime is seen particularly in the early works but throughout her career she exploited the use of facial expressions and gestures which were often mimetic in character, as in 'La Marseillaise'. Modern dance

choreographers subsequent to Duncan turned away from mime and began to stress the torso to the extent that dancers' faces were required to be expressionless.

Although many of Duncan's best known works, such as 'Marche Slave' were highly dramatic and literal and some, such as the 'Maidens of Chalcis' from 'Iphigenia' where Duncan mimed playing with a ball, contained both narrative and mime passages, she was one of the first choreographers to explore the possibilities of non-narrative dance. Many of her dances were simply expressions of a mood as in 'A Dance of Joy' and 'A Dance of Mirth'. Such works are outside the narrative category since they are concerned with the impressions and essences of moods and feelings. Other works, such as the dance using Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, have a near-abstract, lyrical style. However, Duncan did not pursue the notion of abstraction as far as many of the later modern dance choreographers, such as Nikolais. It is this characteristic of being at the transitional stage from literal story telling to abstract movement that gives Duncan's work another of its early stylistic features.

The third characteristic of early modern dance, that of performing in unrestrictive clothing, is seen in the prevalence of bare feet and Greek-derived tunics. Duncan was more concerned with freeing the body to move than with highlighting the movement of the body by costume. Hence the ballet slippers were discarded in favour of bare feet and the stiff bodices and tutus of the classical ballet replaced by the loose, light clothing that allowed the body to bend and sway and the limbs to gesture freely in space. In addition, the material, the cut and pleating of her dance costumes was such that frequent curving gestures, pauses, leaps and runs were enhanced by the accompanying rippling and flowing of the folded and draped cloth. The whole Greek-derived costume effect, expressive of a generalised notion

of antiquity, is a feature of the early style of modern dance which reflects the genre's focus on freeing the body. Duncan and her contemporaries borrowed their costume ideas and, as already noted, their dance ideas from either historical or ethnic sources. Later modern dancers "re clothed" the body that Duncan and her contemporaries had revealed with leotards and tights to give a clearer, uncluttered body line. Thus it was only after the early period of modern dance that its own distinctive clothing image emerged.

In addition to noting those features of Duncan's choreographic style which are the consequence of the centrality of expression in her work and which place it within the early modern dance genre there are two other aspects of her choreography that embody her notions of expression. These are her improvisations and her response to music.

It is shown in Chapter 5 that the typifying of Duncan as an improviser rather than a choreographer is erroneous. While there is no evidence to assume that she confused improvisation with the choreographic act there were a few public occasions when she improvised on stage. This could be compared with a musicians' impromptu performance but for Duncan it occurred only when she was profoundly moved and her feelings aroused. She recounts that she first improvised her 'La Marseillaise' in New York in 1915 because she was "indignant at the apparent indifference of America to the War" (Duncan 1927 p.316). On this, and the few similar occasions recorded, Duncan was expressing very deeply held convictions through the immediacy of her dance.

In a like vein music often functioned for Duncan as a vehicle for her expressive needs. This occurred during her normal working procedures in the composition of new works. It seems that the music acted as a releaser of emotional energy so that, instead of working in a calculated and systematic manner towards "music visualisations" as did Ruth St Denis, Duncan used the moods and the qualities of music

to evoke powerful responses and feelings. Subsequently, in the refinement of the choreographic process, Duncan transformed these emotional states into movement which retained, to a greater or lesser degree, these same expressive overtones.

9.4 Duncan's performance style

Duncan's style as a performer is a subject worthy of study in its own right and too extensive to be embarked upon here other than in outline but it is of relevance in an examination of her belief in the expressive function of dance. Since Duncan only danced her own choreography and few of her dances were performed by others during her lifetime it is inevitable that in the literature her choreography and her performances are frequently conflated. Thus matters of technical competence and interpretation, of consequence in an analysis of performance, are invariably confused with choreographic concerns and vice versa. The intention here is to draw attention to those interpretative features of Duncan's performance style which are of significance in placing her as a dancer in the early style of the modern dance genre and give further evidence of her notion of dance as expression. The matter of Duncan's technical abilities and, more important, the question of whether her dance style could be said to have an underlying technique are considered in Chapter 10.

Duncan's interpretative powers in performance are legendary and there is much of interest that could be considered. In the present discussion four issues, namely her powers of communication, her physique as a dancer, her use of costumes and her choice of music are explored.

The first feature of Duncan's performance style is typical both of the early modern dancers and of other women performers in allied arts of the same period. This is the sheer communicative power and rapport that she achieved with her audiences. To pursue the former

point first, Duncan and her early modern dance contemporaries, Loie Fuller, Maud Allan and Ruth St. Denis, were predominantly solo artists who gained their impact in performance by projecting themselves as much as the dance. Of course, in some sense the dancer is the dance, although the two can also be regarded as separable, but in performing their own choreographic works the early modern dancers were not concerned with this distinction. Duncan was 'La Marseillaise', it was her choreography, her performance and unthinkable to her audiences that anyone else could interpret the dance. In this respect the intense personal expression of Duncan together with her mission

to accept and glorify the innate power and communication of
the human body

Silverman (1978 p.5)

was manifest in her body and in her performances. The focus of audiences and critics on performances to the virtual exclusion of choreographic matters in the work of the early modern dance pioneers led to the cult of the individual dancer and a response to their charismatic powers; an understandable development in the period prior to the establishment of the modern dance companies.

The communicative impact of individual women performers was not confined to dance during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Ellen Terry and Eleanora Duse, both friends and admirers of Duncan as she was of them, had a charismatic presence on stage and Duncan's performances of her dramatic dances were akin to this. Duncan was able to touch and to move her audiences by eliciting a particular sympathetic response. Kendall (1979 p.169) puts forward a similar argument when she includes Pavlova as one of these "women performers so loved by audiences".

One further point concerning Duncan's powers of communication needs to be made. In Chapter 5 it is noted that Duncan retained many

works in her repertoire for one or even two decades. Such choreographic consistency demands evolving and changing interpretations if a work is to remain viable in performance. In this sense it is easy to understand why Duncan's dances appeared to be improvised. However, it was not the choreography that was being spontaneously created but her interpretation of it. Her performances were characteristically fresh and, to the uninitiated, apparently complete "of the moment" creations. This ability to re-create and to re-imbue her works with a startling on stage vivacity and immediacy was one of Duncan's outstanding talents as a dancer and was also a direct consequence of the expressiveness of her dancing.

The second aspect of Duncan's performance style to be considered is that of her physique since many reviewers paid considerable attention to this factor. The novelty of the revealed body was no doubt an element in this interest but as Duncan's career progressed so her increasing weight, size and physical deterioration became inextricably bound up with arguments concerning her interpretative powers.⁶ In a reference to two of Duncan's early dances, 'Pan and Echo' and 'Angel with viol', Levinson describes Duncan as being "an androgynous dancer" (1929 p.161). Duncan in her twenties⁷ certainly had a youthful, slim figure and this was the time when she choreographed many of her short lyrical dances to Brahms and Chopin waltzes. However by 1917, when she had borne three children, she was considered "heroic in build" by Van Vechten who regarded this as "the secret of her power" (Van Vechten 1917 repub.1974 p.28). Thereafter there is an increase in the number of references to Duncan's figure, the transition in her choreography to profound, dramatic themes, her dancing ability and the effect of her performances on audiences. The majority of contemporary reports acknowledge Duncan's "ageing flesh and weakened human features" (Seldes 1930 in Moore, L., 1938, repub. 1969 p.279) "her heavy mature figure...bare legs...massive and rather

too thick around the knees" (Rumnev 1921 in Roslavleva 1975 p.11) and "the solid neck and thighs" (Levinson 1929 p.145). Nevertheless, many of those eye-witnesses go on to testify to the impact of Duncan's performances in the latter part of her career and either explicitly or implicitly regard her increasing physical limitations as forcing her to explore new areas of bodily expression. Seldes (1930 in Moore, L., 1938 repub. 1969 p.279) writes of the miracle of late Duncan performances in which she "transformed herself suddenly into something fantastic and superhuman" and Divoire, overlooking Duncan's appearances in the early 1920s when she was in her mid-forties, refers to her being "more diverse...more unexpected...more daring" in each successive performance (Divoire 1924 p.82).

The phenomenon of a few dancers pursuing their careers well into middle age and beyond is not unknown today; Fonteyn and Nureyev can be cited in this respect. However, the element which distinguished Duncan's work and exemplifies her place in the early modern dance performing style is her demonstration that dancers need not necessarily be expected either to retain their youthful physiques as the ideal dancer's body or to continue to interpret the same roles. Duncan did not accept her physical ageing easily⁸ but as a dancer she endeavoured to compensate for her decreasing physical mobility with richer and deeper interpretative performances; a development which met with a mixed response from audiences and critics.

Duncan's determination not to relinquish her career as a dancer can be seen to stem directly from her notion of the importance of dance as expression. Although she was well aware of the ways in which a young, supple body could move in order to create aesthetically pleasing visual effects, paramount was the communicative power of dance. Thus her body might age, but the potential of dance as an expressive force remained and this could be exploited in increasingly

mature and significant ways.

The third aspect of Duncan's performance style is her attitude to and use of costume during performance. Duncan's choice of costume is described in Chapter 7 and it is evident that her selection was a considered one. Even so, in performance she appeared to be ambivalent towards what she was wearing. At times she seemed almost careless with her costumes on stage as if, having made her choice prior to the performance, it was the latter which now totally preoccupied her.⁹ Roslavleva (1975) quotes Rumnev's comments on Duncan's refusal either to wear a bra or to have more substantial fastenings on her tunics and her total unconcern when her breast was revealed.

Frequently her breast fell out of the chiton. With a gesture full of chastity and grace she would replace it to the murmur of the orchestra seats and considerable din from the gallery. She treated this as an absolutely natural thing and was not confused in the least by the reaction in the auditorium.

Roslavleva (1975 p.11n)

This nonchalant attitude to her costume is in contrast to the times when Duncan deliberately revealed her breast to audiences. Most of these latter occasions were during after-performance speeches in which she taunted her audiences, particularly during her last American tour. However, there is some evidence to suggest that this may have become an integral part of Duncan's performances during the latter stages of her career.¹⁰

Duncan's artistic and political motives for revealing her body as part of her performance were idiosyncratic but it is typical of the early modern dancers in that they fostered either unwittingly or deliberately an ambivalence towards the body in their performances. While their admirers were convinced that the body was being revealed in the service of a new art form, sceptics wrote of voyeurism. Duncan's 'La Marseillaise', and in a different vein, Maud Allan's 'Salomé' were variously referred to as examples of the innovative in

dance or as a striptease elevated to pseudo-artistic levels. Certainly to Duncan the naked or the revealed body was a matter of glorification rather than shame or titillation. In this respect it is not surprising that she was unperturbed by the disarray of her costume during performances or that at times she flaunted nakedness to dramatise her point.

The fourth feature of Duncan's interpretation of her dances is that of being "moved" by the music which she used as her accompaniment and this, too, aligns her with other early modern dancers and seems to be characteristic of them as performers. As a choreographer Duncan selected her musical accompaniment according to her particular choreographic needs but as a dancer she relied upon that same music for quite a different purpose, that of inspiration.¹¹ To Duncan each performance was necessarily an inspirational act and in listening to the music she was able to "feel an inner self awakening deep within" (Duncan 1928 p.52) and this was the basis of her inspiration.

One source of information on Duncan's use of music as a performer is from musicians themselves, the conductors and pianists with whom she performed. Fuller-Maitland, the music critic who was so influential in Duncan's choice of music in the dances she choreographed for her New Gallery programmes, was also apparently equally concerned with Duncan's interpretation of that music in performance. In his memoirs Fuller-Maitland writes of working with Duncan prior to one of her New Gallery performances at which he was to be her pianist.

I told her how anxious I was to have the rubato of Chopin carried out in the dance, and she came and went through one or two of the Chopin pieces until she could get the right elasticity of rhythm.

Fuller Maitland (1929 pp.202-3)

If in this instance, as Fuller-Maitland implies, he acted as a tutor to Duncan, she very quickly learned the importance of having her

music performed well. Only when the music was played with what she regarded as the appropriate tempo, dynamic stress and expressive quality could she in turn respond to it. This need to be moved, literally, by the music explains what at first sight appears to be totally contradictory evidence about her rehearsal techniques. There are some accounts of Duncan dancing at rehearsals (as in her letters to Craig in Steegmuller 1974) and other references to her sitting still throughout (in Schneider 1968). Loewenthal (1980) quotes Dutch sources from 1907 which describe Duncan stopping in mid-performance, apologising to the audience and explaining that she had been ill, unable to attend rehearsals and, consequently, the tempo being set by the conductor was too slow for her dance. Harold Bauer, a pianist who performed with Duncan in her mid-career San Francisco performances in 1918, describes Duncan's insistence in rehearsal on a particular dynamic stress in a Chopin phrase. He states that subsequently he found Duncan's intuitive phrasing was identical with that shown in a Chopin manuscript (Bauer in Macdougall 1960).

It is apparent that Duncan had a clear idea of how she wanted the music played and, when the pianist or conductor did not meet her requirements, she would endeavour to impose her own views. However, when the musicians gave an alternative interpretation that she could accept as equally valid she did not intervene and instead of dancing and working out such matters as tempi at rehearsals she listened intently and concentrated on preparing herself inwardly for the coming performance. Walter Damrosch, conductor of the New York Symphony Orchestra who performed with Duncan on her 1908, 1909 and 1911 American tours, was a musician whose interpretations Duncan admired. Duncan's (1927a) description of these occasions is a vivid account of how she was inspired by Damrosch's conducting and the way in which she responded emotionally in her dancing.

Some of Duncan's most ardent supporters single out her total rapport with the music in performance as one of her greatest attributes. Eastman writes of her dancing

in a stream of music, as though the music had formed out of its own passion a visible spirit to live for a moment and die when it died - all the world recognised in that an artistic revolution, an apparition of creative genius and not merely an achievement in the established art of the dance.

Eastman in Duncan (1928 p.38)

Duncan and her early modern dance contemporaries all sought some form of inspiration both before and during their performances. It could be postulated that this was because they danced mainly as solo artists in large theatres and concert halls. In these circumstances projection of performance was necessary to reach the gallery and stamina in performance was required to dance two-hour long programmes. Whatever their reasons, the early modern dancers regarded their performances as inspirational acts. To Duncan it was the music that provided her with the necessary stimulus and regenerative powers with which she could undertake the expressive act of dancing.¹²

Duncan's individual style as a dancer within the early modern dance style can be typified as being one of outstanding interpretative and expressive abilities. Indeed there is little doubt that Duncan as a dancer gave such rounded, meaningful and moving interpretations of her dances that the reconstructed versions, even though claimed to be more or less choreographically intact, are invariably regarded as only pale reflections of the originals in performance.

So far this discussion has focussed upon the main factors which contribute to and characterise Duncan's performance style. However, since performance entails an audience it is profitable to consider specific responses by spectators to her dances.

In a letter to Craig (quoted in Steegmuller 1974 p.179) Duncan writes of her Chopin waltz dances creating a "furor" but other dances

evoked similar responses. When she danced the 'Blue Danube'

the attention heightened, everyone sat up straight [and then] the hall rose to its feet. The applause was thunderous.

Anon. in Loewenthal (1980 p.230)

Audiences stood when Duncan danced 'La Marseillaise', 'Y.V.' (in Steegmuller 1974 p.44) writes of "many admirers...endlessly demanding encores" and Hastings (1941 p.30) tells of audiences being "profoundly moved".

Maria-Theresa's description of Duncan dancing 'Iphigenia' is interesting because it attends to those qualities of her performance that audiences found so appealing and attempts to parallel them in poetic terms, a not atypical response.

Gliding, swaying she achieved an almost unearthly lightness. At times her movements had the quasi, unreal flowing continuity of dissolving into endless horizons as she danced the imperceptible transition of a dream-like calando [sic], seemingly lifted on the rosy cloud of a zephyr, sempre legatissime vanishing into the periphery of unheard sound and unseen movements suspendent [sic], dissolving with infiniter [sic] gentleness ... beyond the sphere of musical imagination.

quoted by McDonagh (1977 p.33)

In contrast Guggenheimer attempts to explain why Duncan's audiences were so completely captivated by her performances.

The art of the dance was revived by her into an experience that stirred great numbers to a quickened enthusiasm. The current of her artistry charged her audiences with responsive emotion as though electrified and the whole metabolism of their souls arose to a new vigour The unimpeded grace with which her motion suggested a transcendent rhythm released her audiences from their self-imposed bondage of egoistic restraints and anxieties. By an empathetic surge they felt themselves drawn and lifted into an effortless communion and identification with the dance.

quoted by Pruett (1978 p.93)

Caffin's review of Duncan's 'Symphony No. 7' is quoted in Chapter 8 though at that point its last phrase is not commented upon.

It was a beauty so exquisite, that it brought happy cleansing tears.

Caffin (1909 p.19)

The reference to tears might legitimately be taken to be a figure of speech rather than a literal description of a response but in the literature on Duncan there are at least eight first hand accounts of performances in France, the UK and the USA where people in the audience, particularly men, wept.

That was why people wept when they watched her. People came out of the brisk stream of life flowing up Broadway, and sat in the Metropolitan Opera House or Carnegie Hall, a few feet from the hard surfaces and pert hopes and immediate worries of that stream, and she tuned them like lutes and swept them with rhythms their forebears had forgotten ages ago, and the beauty and wonder of it summoned tears as the rod of Moses wrung water from the rock. It was an emotion as far removed from sentimentality as her art was distinct from prettiness.

O'Sheel in Duncan (1928, p.34)

This is an interesting audience response to a solo dancer performing works within an innovative theatre dance genre during the first quarter of the century. Of itself it would repay further study, particularly in relation to other artists working in the allied performing arts of drama and music during the same period. For the purposes of the present discussion on Duncan's performance style it is further evidence of her remarkable on stage presence.

However, it is the eye-witness accounts of Duncan dancing that recapture her outstanding abilities.

She put on some bits of stuff which when hung up on a peg looked more like torn rags than anything else; when she put them on they became transformed. Stage dresses usually transform the performers but in her case it was these bits which actually became transformed by her putting them on. She transformed them into marvels of beauty and at every step she took they spoke. I do not exaggerate.

Craig (1952 p.193-4)

9.5 Duncan's notion of dance as expression

The notion of dance as expression occupies a central place in Duncan's writings and the topic is frequently introduced into her discussions about movement and dance. Duncan was well aware that all movement could not be equated with dance. She was dismissive, for example, of Jaques-Dalcroze's¹³ 'Eurhythmics' which she regarded as "only arranged gymnastics" (Duncan 1928 p.53) but she recognised her own limitations in trying to differentiate between movement and her own dance in words.

One explains the dance better by dancing than by publishing commentaries and treaties.

Duncan (1928 p.101)

Nevertheless, Duncan did attempt to explain the difference between movement and dance, as she saw it, in both practical and theoretical terms. Margherita Duncan describes Duncan demonstrating the difference to her pupils in two versions of an identical skipping phrase. In one she moved in "a merely graceful manner" and in the other "heavenly beauty was created" (in Duncan 1928 pp.22-23).

In an essay Duncan expands upon the difference between just moving and dancing.

There are ... three kinds of dancers: first those who consider dancing as a sort of gymnastic drill, made up of impersonal and graceful arabesques; second, those who, by concentrating their minds, lead the body into the rhythm of a desired emotion, expressing a remembered feeling or experience. And finally, there are those who convert the body into a luminous fluidity, surrendering it to the inspiration of the soul. This sort of dancer understands that the body, by force of the soul, can in fact be converted to a luminous fluid.

Duncan (1928 p.51)

If the metaphorical status of this statement is accepted then the quotation can be seen to contain several crucial ideas. The first characterisation of a dancer (who, by Duncan's definition, is a dancer

only in name) is similar to her criticism of Eurhythmics. Perhaps, too, by reference to "graceful arabesques" it is also a thinly disguised attack on ballet. There is no doubt, however, that it corresponds to Margherita Duncan's description of Duncan's demonstration of moving in a "merely graceful manner" and the result being discounted as dance.

Thus, the crucial distinction between non-dance and dance or between movement and dance is what Margherita Duncan calls the "animating spirit" and, in the quotation, Duncan terms "emotion" or, more frequently elsewhere, "expression". It is this concept of dance as expression which Duncan held to be the distinguishing feature of dance.

In Duncan's early writings there are apparent equations of self and expression, of soul and expression of emotions, of the individuality of the dancer and the statement of personal feelings and so on, but some of her later and, significantly, less-quoted essays reveal a greater sophistication of ideas. It is in a 1920 essay entitled 'The philosopher's stone of dancing'¹⁴ (Duncan 1928 p.51) that Duncan's description of three types of dancers, quoted earlier, is given and the distinction made between the second and third kind is of particular relevance in the clarification of her ideas about dance as expression. The second type of dancer is characterised as

those who... lead the body into the rhythm of a desired emotion, expressing a remembered feeling or experience.
Duncan (1928 p.51)

Duncan makes a parallel with the corresponding type in music,

those who know how to translate their own emotions into the medium of sound, the joys and sorrow of their own hearts creating a music that appeals directly to the listener's heart, and brings tears by the memories it evokes of joys and sorrow, by the remembrance of happiness gone by.
Duncan (1928 p.51)

Taken together these extracts indicate that Duncan understood very well the notion of art as a form of self expression and that artefacts created on such a basis might well be both successful and popular. In fact, as is evident from contemporary sources and the discussion in section 9.2 above, many of Duncan's audiences responded to her dances on the assumption that her work was a form of self expression. Certainly those who identified their own experience of bereavement with that of Duncan in 'Ave Maria' were interpreting her dance on such a premise. This may also account for the numerous reports of people weeping at her performances. Many critics, too, evaluated her dances solely by the criterion that Duncan was a supreme expressive artist and the expression was of herself, her emotions, her feelings and her experiences.

It is pertinent to this discussion to note that there are three senses in which it is unsurprising that Duncan's dance should be deemed "self expressive" both during her life-time and subsequently. One is the sense in which all art works are expressions of the creator. They derive from a unique individual whose life and experience is different from that of any other. Thus, most art works are recognisable as bearing the "signature" of their maker and, since Duncan interpreted her own choreography, her performances bore the double stamp of her identity.

The second sense derives from the nature of the movement with which Duncan chose to work. It was closer in type to ordinary everyday action than the specific movement phrases and sequences used in the prevailing theatre genre of ballet. Changes in emotional states frequently result in changes in movement, in everyday posture and gesture, hence the view that movement is in itself expressive. In consequence individuals may well develop patterns of movement responses which distinguish one person from another. These 'symptomatic' responses may also be said to be self expressive.

Therefore, Duncan's choice of a range of movement which normally carried personalised overtones was interpreted as being an outpouring of emotion.

The third sense relates to the newly emerging modern dance genre which took as its content statements about emotions and significant life experiences. This subject matter was elaborated and extended into major choreographic works which, by developing new structural devices, increased the expressive potential of dance. Thus, the impact of Duncan's dances was enhanced because of its direct relationship to the life experience of both performer and audiences alike. This highly expressive feature was a key characteristic of Duncan's performance style yet it was an innovation not immediately understood, hence the use of the misleading term "self expressive".

In the description of the third kind of dancer, Duncan writes of those "who convert the body into luminous fluidity, surrendering it to the inspiration of the soul" (Duncan 1928 p 51). The music counterpart is described in similar terms:

those who, subconsciously, hear with their souls some melody of another world, and are able to express this in terms comprehensible and joyous to human ears.

Duncan (1928 p.51)

The common feature here is the reference to the soul and to a more generalised universal expression.

This is the truly creative dancer, natural, but not imitative, speaking in movement out of himself and out of something greater than all selves.

Duncan (1928 p.52)

Obviously Duncan considered the third kind of dancer, the "truly creative dancer", to be an artist capable of making dance an expression of universals and this was the state to which she herself aspired. In many of the reviews and eye-witness accounts of her

performances it was accepted that she was concerned with a generalised rather than a personal expression of her own feelings and experiences. Indeed those of her contemporaries who regarded her as a genius of the dance did so primarily on such criteria.

When Duncan's writings on dance as expression are compared with the conclusions drawn from the choreographic analysis and ensuing discussions in Part III it is possible to make definitive statements about this central aspect of her work. Three reasons can be adduced to support the claims that Duncan held the notion of dance as expression to be crucial and that she understood in theoretical as well as choreographic terms the necessity for artistic rather than self expression.

Firstly, the analysis of the components of Duncan's dances in Chapter 7 shows clearly that she did not string together a series of symptomatic gestures and designate this a dance. Although Duncan used everyday or natural movements these were neither habitual gestures nor stereotyped movement responses to felt experiences but units of movement that, in their formal structuring, were abstracted and selected. Such a process is not one of self expression except in an unexceptional ordinary sense.

Secondly, even if some of Duncan's dances were originally conceived from actual life experience the choreographic process ensured that it was the dance forms which were ultimately imbued with meaning (Chapter 8). Thus, as a performer, Duncan was not remembering and expressing past events but finding again in the movement the expressive potential of the choreography. The fact that many of Duncan's dances remained for so long in her repertoire is further support that the dances themselves were meaningful. The onus of a continuous outpouring of previous felt experience was not placed upon her as the performer.

Thirdly, it is evident from the examination of subject matter

and meanings (Chapter 8) that the wide range of content which Duncan explored in her dances far exceeded the bounds of her own immediate experience. On these grounds, too, the notion of her dance being limited to a crude form of self expression is not viable.

9.6 Summary

The act of making expression the central notion in her work is one of Duncan's most important legacies not only to the modern dance genre but also to theatre dance as a whole.

Duncan was an eloquent choreographer and a passionate performer and underlying what were for her these two complementary acts can be seen her commitment to dance as expression. Indeed her claim to have lived her art can be countenanced well beyond what might normally be perceived as the close relationship between the artist and the art object especially when the body is the instrument of the performing artist. However, it is as a supreme expressionist, both in her choreography and in her performances, that Duncan's greatness lies. The notion of dance as expression, an integral but by no means a crucial element in the ballet of the turn of the century, was elevated by Duncan to be the dance *raison d'être*. She set out to engage with her audiences in a fervent, communicative and overtly expressive manner. In pioneering the notion of dance as expression Duncan's contribution to the development of the art form is of paramount importance.

CHAPTER 9 NOTES

- 1 This term is used here both in the qualitative and quantitative senses. During the period up to 1900 Duncan choreographed at least 26 dances but soon discarded most of these from her repertoire in favour of her post-1900 compositions. During the 1925-1927 period Duncan choreographed dances generally accepted to be of merit but these totalled only 4 in number.
- 2 Duncan's immediate contemporary, Ruth St. Denis, was inspired by the notion of Eastern dance.
- 3 Both Duncan and Maud Allan were referred to as "classical dancers" by the British press in 1908 and on a later visit Duncan was regarded as the "first and finest of the classical dancers" (Arkay 1921 p.123).
- 4 Later to become an equally rich choreographic source for Graham.
- 5 Mime of a traditional kind was a feature of some of the ballets performed in the first quarter of the twentieth century.
- 6 See Chapter 5 for arguments linking Duncan's decreasing physical abilities to both her choreographic output and the duration of dances in her repertoire.
- 7 It is relevant to note that Duncan consistently deducted several years from her actual age. At the launch of her career in London in 1900 she was actually 23 and not under 20 as she led people to believe and by the time she achieved her first successful theatre debut she was 26.
- 8 See Kaye (1929 ptIV) on her efforts to get fit for her later performances.
- 9 See Ashton's testimony (in Balanchine and Mason, 1978).
- 10 See Roslavleva (1975) and McVay (1980).
- 11 It is suggested that Duncan's use of music to inspire her performance and to enhance her interpretation is a further factor which has led to the erroneous assumption that she improvised her dances.
- 12 Reference has been made earlier to the interest Duncan and Stanislavsky had in each other's work. The total involvement in the re-creation and expression of actual moods and feelings that Duncan sought in performance is very similar to the principles upon which Stanislavsky worked. This link is discussed by Rene (1963) and Roslavleva (1965) but is amenable to a much more stringent comparison than has been attempted hitherto.
- 13 Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865 - 1950) was Professor of Harmony at Geneva and originally developed Eurhythmics as a means of teaching musical rhythms through bodily movement. The system became widespread in Europe during the first quarter of the twentieth century, particularly in educational institutions. Some advocates of Eurhythmics claim for it the status of dance. It is interesting to note that whereas Jaques-Dalcroze (1912, 3rd ed. 1920) acknowledges Duncan's artistry as a dancer, Duncan's remarks on Eurhythmics are derogatory (e.g. in Steegmuller 1974).
- 14 Cheney (in Duncan 1928) notes that some of the material for this particular essay was probably written earlier since it exists in several versions. This is an indication of the way in which Duncan reworked much of her written material as her ideas developed and became clarified.

CHAPTER 10

A FOUNDER OF MODERN DANCE

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Duncan's opposition to ballet
- 10.3 The technique basis of Duncan's work
- 10.4 An evaluation of Duncan's choreographic contribution to the founding and development of modern dance
- 10.5 The emergence of an alternative theatre dance genre
- 10.6 Summary

10.1 Introduction

In this final chapter Duncan's pioneering work is assessed both in relation to the development of the modern dance genre and to the traditional theatre dance genre, ballet. The initial discussion is of Duncan's opposition to ballet and of the way in which she used it as a springboard to clarify and to promote her own ideas. This leads to a consideration of the technique basis of Duncan's work, an aspect that her contemporaries, in turn, compared unfavourably with ballet. The section following consists of an evaluation of Duncan's unique contribution to modern dance. Finally, modern dance is considered as an alternative theatre genre by setting Duncan's work alongside ballet and highlighting the crucial distinctions.

10.2 Duncan's opposition to ballet

Ballet, the prevailing main theatre dance genre in Duncan's formative years, is seen in section 4.27 of Chapter 4 as providing her with a ready model against which she was able to develop her own ideas about dance and, eventually, to establish a counter genre. Yet it would be simplistic to propose (as many authors do) that Duncan's opposition to ballet was formed at an early age and remained absolute and unambivalent thereafter.

At the turn of the century Western European ballet had (as noted in Chapter 4) reached one of its periodic nadirs only to be

subsequently rejuvenated in the Diaghilev era. In parallel to this complete transformation Duncan's strong views on ballet can be seen to have undergone subtle changes at various times in her career. In 1898, if not earlier, Duncan had some private ballet classes. In 1904 in St Petersburg, when she first saw ballet in its most highly developed theatrical setting, she was full of admiration for the artistry of Kschessinska and Pavlova. Furthermore, Fokine claims that in 1909 Duncan invited him to teach dance technique at her school (Fokine 1961). In these three events at least Duncan appears to have been open to the experience of ballet. Yet it is during this same first decade of the century that Duncan wrote many of her most condemnatory articles on ballet.

Some reasons need to be offered to explain this seeming ambivalence. Firstly, Duncan's participation in ballet classes can be regarded as part of the exploratory process by which she arrived at her own distinctive dance style. Just a brief introduction to the particular demands of the classical class was probably sufficient to convince her that the development of her work could not encompass such a codified training. Secondly, the impact of seeing the Imperial Ballet in its full magnificence, possibly coupled with the ecstatic reception of her own performances by the Russian ballet critics, dancers and the Diaghilev coterie, led her to appreciate the on stage presence of Kschessinska and Pavlova, albeit with reservations. She was moved by their dancing but she deplored the methods by which such results were achieved. (She likened the morning class of the Imperial School of Ballet at St. Petersburg to a "torture chamber", Duncan 1927a p.166.) Thirdly, her invitation to Fokine coincided with the first Ballet Russe season in Paris. The impact of this spectacle generally and the specific fervour it generated among Parisian art circles did not exclude Duncan. Indeed in one respect she endorsed the Ballet Russe by accepting Astruc's invitation to the famous

opening night (see Chapter 3 note 10).

Nevertheless, although a few of Duncan's actions may appear to have contradicted or at least lessened the impact of her condemnations of ballet it is in her writings that the systematic detailing of her criticisms of ballet abound. It is important to examine these dissenting statements since they form part of Duncan's dance polemics and also accentuate the distinguishing features of the two theatre dance forms.

Duncan's starting point for the development of her ideas about dance was a belief in the inherent beauty of the naked body (see Chapter 6 section 6.2). Clothing, therefore, should enhance not conceal. This was fundamentally different from the then current practice in ballet since almost all the works in repertoire prior to the Diaghilev period, and indeed many of the dances performed by the Ballet Russe, had costumes consisting of tight body corsets for the women dancers and required the wearing of pointe shoes. Duncan not only abhorred the resulting limitation on the movement of the upper part of the torso and the inevitable deformation of the foot but she also railed against the dressing of young girls and boys in

fantastic costumes which make them look like clowns or languishing lovers.

Duncan (1928 p.98)

Duncan's two principles of movement, the solar plexus as the source of movement and the necessity to acknowledge gravity, do not appear to have been arrived at in direct opposition to ballet but even so they contrast totally with that genre's basic precepts (see Chapter 6 section 6.3). Duncan regarded the placing of the centre of movement at the base of the spine as responsible for what she saw as ballet's "artificial, mechanical movement" (Duncan 1928 p.137) and she derided the prevalence of "toe-walking" (Duncan 1928 p.49). She deemed pointe

work as a denial of the basic need of a dancer to contact and to be part of the earth and all things natural.

Similarly, Duncan's three movement guidelines of "the wave", "form" and "the natural" (see Chapter 6 section 6.4) can all be seen to promote a movement style very different from that associated with ballet. Duncan dismissed ballet because of its concern with straight lines, held angular positions and

a sterile movement which gives no birth to future movements, but dies as it is made.

Duncan (1928 p.55)

The valuing in ballet of each action as an end in itself was to Duncan a direct contradiction to her "wave" notion. Her insistence on the relationship between form and movement she saw violated in ballet's requirement that dancers should execute codified technical movements such as pirouettes.

Duncan was particularly outspoken about the technique basis of ballet; "technical exercises cannot pretend...[to] constitute an art" (Duncan 1928 p.101). Not surprisingly she found the emphasis on virtuosity, such as raising the leg to head height, unnatural and unnecessary but above all she regarded the acquiring of a ballet technique as an insidious process which separated the mind from the body. After watching Pavlova in class with Petipa Duncan concluded that this was the crucial difference between her own dance and ballet. Her aim was not to deny, to overcome and to discipline the body but rather to cherish and enable it to become the medium for a full, creative expression. She found "deep emotion" and "spiritual gravity" totally lacking in ballet (Duncan 1928 p.100).

As well as criticising ballet for its technical basis and the rigidity of movement outcomes such a set system produced, Duncan also pointed to the inadequacy of ballet as an art form to relate to contemporary life in any meaningful manner. She regarded ballet's

irrelevance to the twentieth century as stemming from its origins in Louis XIV's "most polluted of courts" (Duncan 1928 p.73). She may also have felt that Tzarist patronage had given it an élitist image. Her withering remarks about ballet's teaching of

young girls to imitate either nymphs or houris or courtesans
Duncan (1928 p.98)

and her choice of socially relevant subject matter for her own choreography provide yet a further contrast between the two theatre dance forms.

Ballet does not extend beyond its theatre context whereas Duncan envisaged her dance becoming a universal experience with everyone, particularly children and women, enjoying and revelling in dance as a newly found medium of expression. Her vision of dance as a participatory art form for the people was also prompted by her feminist ideals since she realised that it was the female ballet dancers whose bodies were most deformed by their years of training and performance.

The dance school of the future is to develop and to show the ideal form of woman.

Duncan (1928 p.61)

Duncan's other strictures against ballet included its pretentiousness in aspiring to be a separate art and its complete unsuitability for the American physique. Duncan believed that dance should be part of "one harmonious unity", a "single art" that embraced poetry, music and drama as well as dance, as in the ancient Greek theatre (Duncan 1928 p.94). She pinpointed a weakness in those ballets which used "pantomime" in order to make meanings clear. However, in levelling this particular criticism she did not claim, as in all her other judgements, that her dance was completely different from ballet in this respect. Possibly this was because she

choreographed phrases of mime in many of her narrative dances. Nevertheless, she claimed that the unity of the arts was a condition to which she aspired and in this respect her dancing, which she likened to the Greek chorus, sought such an ideal.

Duncan's assertion that "the real American type can never be a ballet dancer" (Duncan 1928 p.49) is interesting in that it was probably true, given the ballet aesthetic of her day. However, the very physical features which she cites as being the reason for this, that is long legs, supple bodies and tall frames, are just the attributes which modern ballet choreographers, such as Balanchine, have exploited in making current American ballet companies among the best in the world.

It is interesting to note that Duncan did not criticise ballet for its particular use of decor or music. This is perhaps one aspect in which the Diaghilev initiative of bringing together composers, designers and painters to work with the choreographer for each new production was regarded by Duncan as being unremarkable or perhaps, given her views on the unity of the arts, something of which she tacitly approved.

Nevertheless, it is patently clear from Duncan's attacks on all the major aspects of ballet that she was in total disagreement with the basic tenets of the genre and that her own dance ideas, and the dance style they generated, were diametrically opposed to the ballet tradition and all that it epitomised.

From the technical basis of ballet, through to its characteristic movement style, overall qualities, subject matter and costuming Duncan scorned it all. But above everything else Duncan despised the ballet of the early twentieth century for its lack of expressiveness, for its aridity and for its deadening effect on the human body. She regarded ballet as decadent and she determined, with pioneering zeal, to create

an alternative theatre dance genre. To Duncan ballet deformed and, therefore, her missionary role was to reform.

10.3 The technique basis of Duncan's work

Duncan's disparaging views on ballet did not pass unheeded by the protagonists of that genre. While there was little need to defend ballet, particularly when the magic appeal of the Diaghilev era was underway, it was the balletomanes who were among Duncan's most vociferous critics. Of course not all the ballet world was arrayed against Duncan. Some leading figures, notably from the Russian Imperial tradition, found much to commend in her work. Nevertheless, many detractors and indeed some supporters found common ground when considering the technique underlying Duncan's performances since there was a general agreement that in this aspect her work was seriously impoverished.

Just as it is difficult to distinguish the dancer from the dance, particularly when the choreographer is also the performer (a point noted in Chapter 9 section 9.4), so matters of technique and technical ability are similarly frequently confounded. Generally, the notion of technique is applied when there is a consistent and systematic manner of moving which characterises and is associated with a specific school or style of dance. The positions and movements which form the basis of a particular technique are built up over time into a series of graded exercises and patterns of training that can be taught. Although the resulting codified system is fundamental to any choreography made in that style it is also more or less distinct from it. Thus currently the most well established technique is that of ballet, with its many sub-divisions and sub-styles, and alongside it can be placed the newer techniques originating from modern dance choreographers such as Cunningham, Graham and Hawkins.

Given that today's professional dancers are often competent in

more than one major technique it is possible to speak of dancers' technical abilities over and above their grounding in a particular technique. In such instances it is the dancers' overall physical skills and virtuosity which are being noted even though these may be judged in part by reference to existing techniques.

In Duncan's case the difficulties in describing and evaluating the technique underlying her work and distinguishing this from her own technical prowess as a dancer stem from three factors. Firstly, her powers of performance were such that it was not easy for viewers to distance themselves in order to differentiate between the newly emerging technique and Duncan's own physical abilities, even if they had so wished. Secondly, discounting her pupils, she was the only dancer to perform in this mode and thus points of comparison were not available. Thirdly, she was presenting a new dance genre that was still evolving and, therefore, any attempt to identify a full developed technique capable of being set alongside the traditional training systems of ballet was likely to be problematic.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, belittling comments on Duncan's lack of technique abound although, as might be expected, none of these attempt to separate the two aspects of the issue. The British dance critic, Haskell, observed that Duncan's work was devoid of the "fortifying discipline of technique" (Haskell 1938b p.43) and Fuller-Maitland, one of Haskell's music counterparts, advised Duncan to learn the "conventional" movements (Fuller-Maitland 1929 p.203), a reference to ballet. Levinson wrote of Duncan's "dilettantish technical abilities" (1918 (p.30)¹ while a reviewer of her autobiography concluded

had she numbered discrimination among her gifts, she might have pushed her analysis far enough to elicit the merits as well as the fallacies of the older technique.

Anon (1928 p.392)

In fact almost every comment about Duncan's technique which emanated from the the world of ballet castigated her not only for being "techniqueless" but also, and perhaps more importantly, for ignoring the possibilities of using the established and revered ballet technique. The exceptions to this criticism are interesting. Fokine, in retrospect, was able to concede that the ballet technique was not the pre-requisite for all theatre dance.

Duncan proved that all primitive, plain, natural movements- a single step, run, turn on both feet, small jump on one foot- are far better than all the richness of the ballet technique, if to this technique must be sacrificed grace, expressiveness and beauty.

Fokine (1961 p.25)

In a similar vein the London critic who, after seeing Duncan dance, had "blasphemous thoughts" about whether the Russian ballet "was not after all only a beautiful stunt" (Anon. 20 June 1921 Daily Herald ²) was perhaps also questioning the over-riding place of the overt, brilliant technique of ballet when compared with the seemingly unforced basis of Duncan's choreography.

In Chapter 5 two points are made concerning Duncan's ageing and the resulting limitation on certain of her physical skills. In section 5.24 the manner in which Duncan's choreographic range developed and changed over the years partly in response to declining physical abilities is mentioned. In section 5.42 Duncan's ageing is seen to be one of the factors determining the duration of some dances in her repertoire. It is important to note, however, that while her technical abilities in certain skills declined (such as her performance of quick, light jumps) it developed in others (such as her achievement of convincing fermatas.) This, then, gives a picture of a dancer whose technical abilities changed as a result of increasing age but who continued to perform successfully. This is one indication of some kind of technique underlying Duncan's work.

Similarly in Chapter 6 there are further references which can now be marshalled in respect to a consideration of a Duncan technique. In section 6.3 one of Duncan's principles of movement, that of the solar plexus as the source of all movement, is discussed. Irma Duncan's point that Duncan's "entire technique" was based on this principle can be taken further. As one of Duncan's foremost pupils and, later, as the most experienced of the first generation of Duncan teachers, Irma Duncan was in a privileged position from which to make statements about the technique basis of Duncan's work. An early Irma Duncan text (1937 repub.1970) is devoted to an exposition of "The technique of Isadora Duncan". It is a slim volume which does not compare in terms of either precision or detail with the many ballet technique manuals but nevertheless the rudiments of the Duncan technique are presented. Indeed Irma Duncan is adamant in claiming that Duncan

could not have produced something entirely new in our time without creating a new and definite form of technique.

Duncan, Irma, (1937 repub.1970 p.xi)

Irma Duncan sets out the technique in the form of twelve lessons each consisting of several exercises. The emphasis throughout is not on correct positions and specified movements, as in ballet, but on free, basic body actions, whole movement phrases and, above all, the acquisition of moving in a lyrical and harmonious style.

When these technique exercises are compared with the written and visual evidence of Duncan's dance there is a marked congruence. Furthermore, the discussion in Chapter 7 of the present study on the structural components in Duncan's choreography (section 7.2) adds to this evidence. From the summary of Chapter 7 it is clear that Duncan selected structural components in a manner consistent with her principles of movement and which reflected her choreographic aims. Thus she developed a technique that enabled her to train the body to perform in the dance style she promoted. Like Graham who followed her

Duncan did not devise a technique and then choreograph but rather the former grew out of the needs of the latter.

The technical competence of a dancer determines the ability to perform any given dance. In Duncan's case, as both choreographer and performer of her dances, it is self-evident that she did not compose dances which were beyond her technical abilities. This led some critics to conclude that Duncan was technically incompetent and her dance devoid of any technique structure. To those who saw Duncan dance and who compared her performances with, for example, those of the Russian-trained ballerinas, it was perhaps inevitable that the dances appeared easy and simple to perform. However, to look for the technique of one dance genre within the canons of another is to misunderstand the nature of particular techniques and their essential, structural place in each genre.

Even allowing for a bias in Irma Duncan's testimony it is evident that Duncan can be said to have established a dance technique albeit in little more than embryonic form. In a comment on the performances and the technical requirements of the reconstructed Duncan dances Tobias notes that "today's virtuoso professionals are regularly defeated by it" (Tobias 1977 p.13). In addition Small writes

there is a technique to Duncan dance, though it may be elusive to our eyes. There is a way of floating the arms up and down softly, a use of the whole foot in walking, a push of the pelvis as one arches backwards, definite ways of boosting the skip, throwing weight into the beginning of a run. The movements are teachable.

Small (1977 p.32)

The Small reference to the apparent elusiveness of the Duncan technique provides the clue to its virtual non-recognition by her contemporaries. The Duncan technique was not codified in the balletic sense nor was it so clearly articulated and formulated as was later to be the case with that of Graham. It was a technique that remained

below the surface of the dance but it served Duncan's dance purposes without obtruding or calling attention to itself. The early modern dance style did not require virtuoso performance and so the technique that Duncan demanded as a choreographer and excelled at as a dancer was an effacing one.

10.4 An evaluation of Duncan's choreographic contribution to the founding and development of modern dance.

The evaluation of an individual dance entails seeking out the crucial components of that dance, appreciating its form, coming to understand it, being able to interpret it, and locating it in terms of genre and style so that, finally, it can be appraised as being more or less good of its type. In the evaluation of a choreographer's complete works the same process is used although it takes place at the macro- rather than the micro- level. At such a stage notions of particular genres and styles are of paramount importance since the oeuvre which is a candidate for inclusion must conform to their distinctive canons, criteria and standards.

In Chapters 7 and 8 the detailed accounts of Duncan's choreographic structures and the subject matter and meanings of her dances show that her work merits attention not the least for its highly innovatory features. This is reinforced in Chapter 9 by the discussion of Duncan's commitment to expression and its particular impact as *avant garde* work within the theatre dance of her time.

However, it was these same innovations which made Duncan's choreography difficult for her contemporaries to evaluate since, by definition, it did not conform to any of the criteria of existing genres and styles. Today the perspective of time and the acceptance of modern dance as a fully established genre makes possible the evaluation of both Duncan's work and its contribution to the development of the genre. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the canons, criteria and standards by which the works of modern dance

choreographers are now judged stem to a large extent from Duncan's innovations, since in these she was simultaneously defying traditional theatre dance and also laying the grounds for a new genre.

In the evaluation of Duncan's contributions to the founding and development of modern dance it is useful to begin with the structure and form of her dances. Here her innovations need to be differentiated into what proved to be temporary, partial and permanent changes as well as being set against those conventions that she accepted.

Firstly, Duncan did not challenge the prevailing early twentieth century notions of dance as a theatre art, that is, to be performed in specific spaces set aside for that purpose, usually with a proscenium arch and before seated audiences. Her acceptance of such contexts was, as indicated in Chapter 7 note 11, against her ideals but she did not attempt in any systematic manner to change the status quo. Similarly, she furthered the theatre dance tradition of the star female solo dancer by choreographing mainly in this idiom.

Secondly, some of the new ideas which Duncan incorporated into the structure and form of her choreography proved to be only temporary characteristics of modern dance. For example, neither her use of facial expressions, particularly those in mimetic phrases, nor her total reliance on ancient Greek-derived costume became central to the work of the modern dance choreographers who followed her.³ Nevertheless, it is important to reiterate that the principle underlying Duncan's choice of costume, that is, the need to free the body in order for it to move easily (as discussed in Chapter 6 section 6.2) became one of the basic tenets of the modern dance genre.

Thirdly, some of the changes that Duncan brought about were only partial in that what she achieved was taken and developed much further by her successors. An example of this is her stage decor and lighting. The discussion of Duncan's set in Chapter 7 section 7.23

shows it to be uncluttered and neutral with classic allusions. Duncan's stripping away of scenery allowed those that followed her to consider design afresh from a relatively bare stage.⁴

However, fourthly and most importantly it is the new choreographic structures and forms which Duncan pioneered and which became permanent and characteristic mainstream developments in modern dance that identify her as an outstanding and innovative choreographer. Her use of natural, everyday movement performed in bare feet are two of the hallmarks of modern dance which have survived into the last quarter of this century.

Similarly, Duncan's attitudes to music have been adopted by succeeding generations of modern dance choreographers. Pruett in her "fifth pattern of selection" states that Duncan chose the music of composers whose "intellectual basis" she understood (Pruett 1978 p.ii). Pruett's first three patterns, which can be summarised as Duncan's allegiance to a few Romantic composers and her interest in national music, are upheld in this study (see Chapter 7 section 7.24). The fourth, Duncan's matching of her life to her choices of music, is augmented (see Chapter 9 section 9.2) but the fifth needs to be rephrased if it is to be relevant to the evaluation of Duncan's choreographic contribution to modern dance. Pruett does not substantiate the grounds for her fifth pattern proposal nor does she elaborate on her term "intellectual basis". Nevertheless, the consistencies in Duncan's choice of composer and style of music throughout her career (see Chapter 5 section 5.3) point to a commitment to music of a high quality and, particularly, to those compositions with which she had an immediate expressive rapport. Thus Duncan's insistence on the selection of music from the works of great composers set standards which later modern dance choreographers upheld. Furthermore, her need to identify closely with the emotional content of the music, as she perceived it, meant that henceforth

choreographers in the modern dance genre would not relegate the sound accompaniment to a level inferior to that of the movement.

In addition to this, Duncan's reliance upon the organic growth of the selected movement material to determine the form of her works, rather than the imposition of form by narrative, is a touchstone still used by many current modern dance choreographers.

In Chapter 9 discussion of Duncan's subject matter and the meanings of her dances shows clearly that in this particular respect her contribution to the development of modern dance is difficult to overestimate. By widening the choreographers trawl-net of source material she gave modern dance a new and highly articulate voice. Duncan's immediate legacy was taken by some to be that of a nascent feminism and consequently modern dance was thought to be the prerogative of women but this limiting viewpoint was shortlived.⁵ The early twentieth century preoccupations with war and politics and with social and psychological matters became the province, too, of modern dance. Duncan gave the newly emerging genre a political voice and with it the possibility of dance being subversive. In giving dance a relevance to the lives of ordinary people she restored to it a capacity to move and to disturb audiences.

Nevertheless, over and above the structure and form of Duncan's dances and their startling freshness of content and meanings was the lyricism and expressiveness of her style. It was this characteristic which she stamped indelibly on the new and evolving genre. Later modern dance choreographers developed these characteristics in many diverse and subtle ways but it was Duncan, as one of the founders of modern dance, who gave the genre a major canon by which it came to be judged.

10.5 The emergence of an alternative theatre dance genre

At several points in the present study reference is made to

ballet as the prevailing Western theatre dance genre at the beginning of the twentieth century and in section 10.2 of this chapter Duncan's opposition to it is examined. In this final discussion of Duncan as a founder of modern dance it is relevant to place her work alongside ballet in order to consider the ways in which it provided a viable alternative.

Ballet, particularly in its the music hall context, engendered expectation of entertainment and spectacle. The valuing of ballet as entertainment promoted three characteristics. Firstly, there was a striving for theatricality evident in the emphasis on virtuosity, scenic effects and the appeal to popular tastes of "prettiness". Secondly, dances were presented in an unambiguous manner with either clear, strong narratives or slight, inconsequential story lines. Thirdly, much of the music associated with dance was non-serious and popular in style, with a few notable exceptions such as the Tchaikovsky ballet scores. Thus the generally held value of dance in the theatre in the early 1900s was of entertainment and this gave rise to notions of dance as explicit spectacle accompanied by non-serious music.

In pre-revolutionary Russia Tzarist patronage ensured that ballet was held in high esteem but in Europe dances as works of art were generally accorded neither the significance nor the prestige of literature, music or poetry. Indeed, even when Diaghilev brought his Russian experience of the other arts to enliven and to enrich ballet, the focus was still on spectacular entertainment.

It was against such a tradition that Duncan, together with one or two of her contemporaries, introduced and developed a new theatre dance genre. This subsequently and appropriately came to be termed "modern dance" although in Duncan's time the more immediately apposite and also mocking appellation "barefoot dance" was commonly used.⁶ Duncan pioneered an alternative to the traditional classicism of the

Romantic ballets (which in their non-Russian context had largely degenerated into a state of sterility) as well as to the music hall's obsession with dance as spectacle and extravaganza. She brought a new classicism inspired by ancient Greece and a veneration of nature that in its underlying principles of movement and attitudes to the body promoted an innovatory and radical aesthetic. Thus the traditional theatre form was opposed by a new dance genre which demanded viewing and appreciating in fresh ways.

Similarly, Duncan's subject matter, far wider and more trenchant than that of ballet, threw in to stark relief the latter's preoccupation with peripheral and unworldly matters. In so doing Duncan's dance immediately attracted the attentions of a wide cross-section of the public, including those not normally given to attending theatre dance performances. This was in direct contrast to ballet which either appealed to an elite by virtue of its attenuated form or, in order to hold its own amongst the diversity of the music hall, pandered to notions of popular entertainment.

Duncan's choice of music, too, was diametrically opposed to much of that used in the ballet of the twentieth century. Indeed, the outcry at her use of classical and romantic compositions was as much against her presumption that dance could align itself on equal terms with the works of great composers as against her notion that dance might share with music a quest for expression.

Thus Duncan and her contemporaries promoted dance as art instead of dance as spectacle. With the onset of the Diaghilev era ballet, too, began to reclaim its status as an art form but it did so without losing its adherence to spectacle, a tenet which Duncan eschewed.

Interestingly, the Diaghilev inspired rejuvenation of ballet served to highlight even greater differences between the traditional and the new. Duncan reappraised the relationship of music to dance

and for her choreography chose works mainly composed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Diaghilev, determined to bring the magnificence of the Russian ballet to a full flowering amidst the other arts did so by commissioning music from avant garde twentieth century composers such as Stravinsky. The sets that characterised the Ballet Russe also contrasted sharply with those of Duncan. The former were the work of living artists, such as Bakst and Picasso, each intent on contributing a new and exciting visual dimension to ballet. Duncan, however, went back even further in time than in her choice of music with sets inspired by classical Greece.

The phenomenon of Duncan creating her new dance genre by reference to the arts of previous periods while concurrently Diaghilev was revitalising the traditional ballet with an injection from the avant garde arts of the twentieth century is particularly interesting. Both Duncan and Diaghilev combined the new with the old. Duncan radically changed the movement content of dance while Diaghilev altered the movement context; perhaps a reflection of the fact that in art tradition and innovation are both mutually opposed and yet interdependent.

The Duncan-Diaghilev distinction, and with it the theatre dance genres they promoted, can be furthered by reference to the circumstances in which they each worked. Duncan wrought her revolution virtually alone and unaided for although she enjoyed the support and admiration of many artists this did not lead to any collaborative artistic endeavours. Nor was she part of any organised group. In addition, unlike her modern dance contemporaries, Duncan worked as an expatriate. While Ruth St Denis and Ted Shawn developed the Denishawn modern dance ideology in the USA, where ballet had no roots and little tradition, Duncan elected to work in a potentially hostile Europe, the birthplace and stronghold of ballet.

Diaghilev, too, eventually worked as an expatriate but he functioned as a catalyst amongst a coterie of talented artists and developed his ideas in a supportive European milieu. Undoubtedly Duncan needed to be free from any organisational structures since these would have inhibited her innovations while Diaghilev required the hierarchical structure of a ballet company with which to accomplish his reforms. Such factors were of import in their time and they had implications for the future. Without the benefits of the traditional structures of ballet, in terms of repertoire, répétiteurs and schools, Duncan's choreography, which epitomised the early modern dance genre, survives only in part and this is in reconstructed forms. In contrast many of the works associated with the Ballet Russe have enjoyed an unbroken place in the general ballet repertoire since their premieres.⁷

Other less immediately obvious distinctions can be drawn which are nevertheless of import since they indicate further the different ways in which modern dance provided a viable alternative to ballet.

The commonplace movement basis of Duncan's work and its non-virtuosic technical demands gave her choreography an unpretentiousness which appealed to many. It also opened up the possibility of a new theatre dance genre with accessibility to non-professional participants. Duncan, of course, advocated her free dance form for all although this aspect of modern dance, whereby it flourishes in educational and amateur performing contexts, is a fairly recent development. However, this is in direct contrast to ballet which has hardly developed outside its theatre context mainly because of its high technical demands.

In ballet, particularly at the turn of the century, sex roles were clearly assigned. The choreographers were male, the star dancers female and the male dancers took minor supporting parts. Duncan ushered in a new era of sex equality since she was one of the first

women choreographer/dancers. Later the Ballet Russe provided the opportunity for male dancers, such as Nijinsky, to achieve fame in their own right and, similarly, for female choreographers, such as Nijinska, to develop and present their work. But, while modern dance from its inception has not distinguished between the sexes in making and performing roles and has developed democratic procedures in terms of company structures, ballet has been slow to respond in this respect. Even at the present time there are few female choreographers of note working in the idiom and ballet company structures are invariably highly hierarchical.

Two final points need to be made; the first distinguishes the two theatre dance genres further, the second indicates an area of relatedness. Firstly, in Duncan's contribution to the development of modern dance certain features were latent and only exploited after several decades. Duncan's use of improvisation, a much misunderstood and maligned practice in her time (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 9 section 9.3) has become integral to the choreographic procedures of the American post-moderns and the British "New Dance" artists. These same recent offshoots of mainstream modern dance, possibly in themselves the beginnings of a new theatre dance genre, also rely heavily on other elements identifiable in Duncan's work but not developed by her. The current explorations of minimalism and reductivism in choreographic terms can be traced back to Duncan as can the use of recycling material and the flexibility of programmes (see Chapter 5 section 5.5). This potential for continued growth and development, interspersed with vigorous innovative spurts, typifies modern dance as a theatre genre. In contrast ballet tends to evolve slowly. Since the Diaghilev era it has not encompassed any radical changes but has largely developed in a gradual and uncontroversial manner.

Secondly, it would be surprising if the exponents of two parallel

and distinct theatre dance genres, however hostile initially, did not eventually assimilate some ideas from each other. Apart from the much debated Duncan influence on Fokine, it is clear that the advent of modern dance promoted a new lyricism in ballet. Later, too, ballet choreographers began to seek subject matter from the wide spectrum already exploited by the early modern dance choreographers. In the latter part of the twentieth century this has culminated in a discernible sub-genre of ballet, "modern ballet", and along with it a general hybridisation of ballet genres and styles.

Modern dance began with an embryonic technique which was compared unfavourably with the centuries old technique of ballet. Post-Duncan choreographers developed and refined several techniques integral to the genre and its sub-style. Nevertheless, while the vocabulary of the ballet technique has widened during the twentieth century, modern dance itself has taken much from the traditional technique to the extent that many modern dance companies have incorporated training in various ballet techniques and styles into their class structures.

However, despite present day cross-influences between the two theatre dance genres it is evident that, with the advent of modern dance at the beginning of this century, a viable alternative to ballet was founded and in this Duncan played a seminal role. She challenged the traditional supremacy of ballet and laid the foundations of a new theatre dance genre which was different in nearly every respect from that which existed. In this she gave the art of dance a new point of departure.

10.6 Summary

Duncan did not initially set out to create an alternative theatre dance genre to that of ballet. Indeed, at the beginning of her career she had little knowledge of it. However, as her contact with ballet increased so she developed diametrically opposed ideas. In one

respect she can be said to have used the ballet of her day in order to hone her own dance values and beliefs. Conscious of her pioneering role she condemned ballet and its deforming nature and she determined to reform dance. In accomplishing this she incidentally informed ballet.⁸

One of Duncan's major reforms was to relocate the body centre. This rendered the technique of ballet obsolete for her purposes but gave her the possibility of moving in new ways and widening the expressive potential of the body. The lyrical expressiveness of Duncan's choreography, so typical of her style and encapsulating all her innovations, gave modern dance both a major characteristic and a premise capable of development. Duncan did not supplant the traditional theatre dance genre of ballet but she helped to found a vigorous and viable alternative.

CHAPTER 10 NOTES

- 1 Lieven (1936 repub.1973) uses the same terms when he writes that Duncan was a "dilettante and did not possess an adequate technique" (p.71). In view of their common Russian background it is a moot point whether this is evidence of a similarity of ideas or plagiarism.
- 2 For the full quotation see Ch.8 section 8.2.
- 3 Even so this type of costume was adopted by the British early modern dancers during the period of the development of their work in the theatre. Eventually, most of this work became established within an education rather than a theatre context where it retained the basic Greek-style tunic.
- 4 An opportunity exploited by Graham in her collaborations with the sculptor Noguchi.
- 5 Sylvia Pankhurst, the British suffragette and pacifist, wrote to Duncan in London in 1921.
- 6 Levinson likens this feature of Duncan's choreography to "sans culotte". "It was in this way that the dancer's bare feet served as a revolutionary emblem. She was without shoes as certain members of the platoons in 1793 were 'without trousers'" (Levinson 1929 pp.148-9).
- 7 This is another outcome of the consequences of dances not being notated. In this case the innovation was largely lost while the traditional, because of its tradition, survived albeit in a performance rather than a choreographic mode.
- 8 On the basis of the present study it would be possible to return to the Fokine-Duncan debate since the detailed evidence is now available both to examine Duncan's possible influence on Fokine and to compare their respective beliefs on dance.

SUMMARY OF PART IV

From the discussion of Duncan's contribution to modern dance and her general influence on Western theatre dance two important factors emerge. Firstly, Duncan's many innovations, which led to the establishing of modern dance, mark her as one of the main founders of the genre. In almost every aspect of her work she charted new territory and in so doing she bequeathed to modern dance a wide-ranging potential for growth and development. Secondly, in promoting a new theatre dance genre she provided both a parallel to ballet and a viable alternative. Some modern authors write of the schism or rupture that Duncan caused in Western theatre dance. Such terms reflect vividly the nature of her impact, particularly as it was regarded in her time, but they also over-emphasise the disruptive force of her work and minimise the high degree of creative vigour and renewed energy which she brought to theatre dance as a whole. It was this opening up of new horizons which revitalised Western theatre dance.

Duncan gave theatre dance a new starting point but also and perhaps more importantly she initiated new working processes leading to new dance outcomes. No choreographer before her had so totally and comprehensively changed the face of dance as a theatre genre. Duncan's innovations in dance were recognised in her time but it is only recently, on the basis of detailed research, that the importance and the significance of her contribution is becoming fully understood and recognised.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

In the Introduction to this study Duncan's immediate historical context is outlined, the initial impetus for the research noted and the Duncan paradox, wherein her seminal influence is acknowledged but her work discounted, is stated. The working hypothesis, that a value-system underlined Duncan's work, is then presented, certain procedural problems identified and a methodology proposed.

In this last section it is pertinent to return to the issues raised in the Introduction in order to consider the total ground subsequently covered and, in so doing, to evaluate the research procedures adopted. It is also relevant to point to those areas of research which can now be addressed on the basis of the work accomplished. Most important of all, however, is the need to draw major conclusions concerning the central focus of the current research, that is, Isadora Duncan's life, work and contribution to Western theatre dance.

An assessment of the methodology employed provides a useful starting point since its adoption facilitated the research to a considerable degree. Firstly it is evident that the general historical practices of source-based research, documentation, analysis, corroboration etc, can all be adapted for the study of a choreographer whose works are no longer extant. In the case of Duncan the fragments of her choreography lie in the various kinds of source materials which are available today. Thus the initial stage of the research procedure, essentially the identification and amassing of the vast quantity of written, visual and aural sources, is itself of interest. Even so, it is the exploitation of different types of source material as interactive evidence which is of particular significance. The use of reliable eye-witness accounts, supplemented by artists' sketches (where a precise visual memory is paramount) and

informed by Duncan-inspired choreography (where this is derived from a finely developed kinetic memory) is to pioneer a profitable research strategy.

Secondly, the documentation process, which in this study has resulted in the drawing up of a Duncan chronology and two choreo-chronicles, is shown to be vital in the furtherance of research on Duncan. The chronology and choreo-chronicles constitute a unique contribution to the study of Duncan in that they provide accurate time and place parameters for her life, choreography and performances.

Thirdly, the choreographic analysis is shown to be the crucial factor in the present work in that it provides the framework for the accurate piecing together of information concerning Duncan's choreographic structures, forms and meanings as well as promoting their detailed examination. This again marks a new departure in dance studies since it is the first time that this procedure has been used in the study of a historical dance figure whose works are not in repertoire.

Fourthly the corroborative process, used to place the results of the choreographic analysis side by side with Duncan's own extensive writings, has proved to be capable of yielding research material unlikely to be revealed in other ways.

Thus the use of the four stage methodology has generated a powerful research tool which has furthered this study in a substantial manner.

In the Introduction the working hypothesis for the present study is stated simply as the assumption that Duncan had a set of values which governed her work. The intention was to see whether a detailed examination of her choreographic and written work would support such a hypothesis. If support was found it was anticipated that it would then be possible to determine whether these values were consistent and, furthermore, could be fully detailed. If this was the case it

was than envisaged that statements concerning Duncan's specific contribution to modern dance and her general legacy to Western theatre dance as a whole could be made with confidence.

As the research has developed so the working hypothesis is progressively seen to gain validity. The overview of Duncan's life is an important element in this. The study of her formative years spent on the West coast of the USA during the last decades of the nineteenth century affords both clues and answers to some of the seeming contradictions in her artistic development. Similarly, the survey of her career as an international artist, launched and honed in the cultural ethos of rapidly changing Europe in the first quarter of the twentieth century, provides the all-important context for an understanding of her choreographic work. The facts concerning Duncan's dances and performances, which range from her choreographic output to her different types of programmes, are also presented and as such lay the basis for study. Thus the results of the work in Part II counter-act the myth-generating texts on Duncan.

Duncan's achievements as an outstanding choreographer are clearly demonstrated in this study. In her work she is shown to have pioneered several important concepts, all stemming from her reverence of the human body and all giving rise to new dance forms with radical subject matter and meanings. Such statements, based on the detailed research findings of Part III, can now be set against the oft made but ill-founded assertions and dismissive characterisations of Duncan's work.

Lastly Duncan's contribution to dance is stated comprehensively and assessed. The evidence examined and discussed in Part IV points to and underlines her achievements in promoting an entirely revolutionary theatre dance form. Furthermore, in addition to confirming her status as a founder of modern dance, it is also clear

that she contributed to the development of Western theatre dance as a whole in a substantial and hitherto unspecified manner.

Thus from the initial working hypothesis the research has proceeded systematically to the point where, as projected in the Introduction, it is possible to make unambiguous statements concerning Duncan's life, work and contribution to Western theatre dance.

Even so research frequently raises as many problems as it solves and this is true of the present work. There are at least five important areas of further research in relation to Duncan which can be readily identified. Firstly, there is a need to compare the results of this study with the reconstructed Duncan dances. These reconstructions present an interesting counterpoint since they are the practical outcomes of a less than systematic handing-on process via successive generations of Duncan pupils. To apply the theoretical constructs arrived at here to such reconstructions would be of considerable interest not only in the outcomes but also in the shedding of critical light on the traditional manner in which most theatre dances are passed on to performers and audiences alike.

Secondly, the work begun on the Duncan chronology and choreochronicles is capable of extensive development. In the present study, the documentation of Duncan's many European and Russian tours is incomplete. Nevertheless, the fact that in the present work the tabulation of events in Duncan's life, her choreography and performances is advanced to a degree well beyond that of any previous study points to the considerable rewards which can accrue in the process of meticulous documentation.

Thirdly, while this research has focussed upon the main thrust of Duncan's work in relation to theatre dance, her strong and clearly articulated views and theories concerning education, and dance as a participatory art form accessible to all, are of import. Therefore, these topics now need to be studied and their relationship to the

central ideas discussed here determined.

The above three areas are close to the main concerns of this study but a slight shift to a wider context immediately suggests two further research fields. The relation of Duncan's work to the British early modern dance pioneers and also to the other arts of her time are important areas, both of which have yet to be fully investigated. As indicated in the Introduction, preliminary work points to Duncan's seminal influence on the development of a distinctive British early modern dance style, but this has been hampered by the non-availability of detailed study of Duncan's work. The completed research meets this need and the way is now clear for studies of the style of British early modern choreographers, within the modern dance genre promoted by Duncan, to proceed.

The discipline of dance studies is not yet sufficiently developed to the stage at which a revolutionary such as Duncan can be related in depth either to her contemporary iconoclasts in the arts or to innovative periods in other art forms. The present study has laid the grounds for further work in this field since several starting points, such as the relation of Duncan's work to that of Craig and Stanislavsky and to theories of romanticism and classicism, have been indicated.

Further and more general areas of study are now amenable to stringent research on the basis of the present study. The methodological procedure used provides a useful model for the study of any choreographer whose works are unavailable. The use of visual artefacts as source materials clearly has a vast potential in the furtherance of historical choreographic and performance studies while the choreographic analysis employed indicates that whole new vistas in the historical study of dance can now be charted. Lastly, although the main focus of a study of a choreographer's work is likely to be

the dance itself, the technique employed in this thesis of examining choreographic structures alongside the choreographer's written statements may prove of value in research where the intention is to compare theory with practice.

However, although the research areas opened up in this study are of value, its importance lies in the major research findings.

This research took as its starting point the paradox wherein Duncan is recognised and revered as a founder of modern dance yet regarded as a choreographer of little significance. Her far-reaching ideas on the reform of dance, her passionate performances, her tragic, salacious life are all well-known; indeed it is these very aspects, particularly the dramatic vicissitudes of her life, which dominate both the literature on Duncan and the general dance history texts. The present work has not attempted to discount and dismiss all such texts although a valuable by-product of the research is that enshrined assumptions have been questioned and myths exposed. The central aim of the research, carried successively through each of the four parts of the thesis, has been to determine whether Duncan could be said to have bequeathed to dance more than a new starting point, important though such a legacy is.

The results and outcomes of the study show in a comprehensive manner that the so-called Duncan paradox is no longer tenable. From the detailed examination of her work and ideas it is now possible to state her choreographic innovations with clarity and to point to them in her work. In effect her acknowledged role as a founder of a new theatre dance genre and as a major contributor to the development of Western theatre dance as a whole can now be substantiated by reference to individual dances as well as to her total choreographic work.

Thus the study of Duncan's life, work and contribution to Western theatre dance has yielded important outcomes. Duncan's reputation is enhanced and she is confirmed as an innovator of the highest order.

Her return to everyday movement as choreographic material, her startling relocation of the body centre and willing acceptance and exploitation of the gravitational pull on the body, her quest for harmony and lyricism, her commitment to dance as expression and to subject matter of relevance, all these, along with other new ideas in dance, have long been notions associated with Duncan. This study shows clearly that such innovations were part of Duncan's consistent set of values and beliefs, that they were the results of detailed experimental working processes and that they were manifest in her choreography.

Duncan influenced the dance of her time and its subsequent development in a fundamental manner. With Duncan dance gained seriousness and integrity. This study shows how this was so.

APPENDIX A

Choreochronicle A
Dances choreographed by Isadora Duncan
for her own public performance

Choreochronicle A

Key * post 1927 performances by others
 D sometimes performed with Duncan
 P sometimes performed with pupils
 P? possibly performed with pupils
 O? dance or orchestral item

NPDK No performance dates known
 B Bellevue
 G Grunewald
 M Moscow

Dances choreographed by Isadora Duncan for her own public performance

Dances (Listed alphabetically)	Accompaniment (Music unless otherwise stated)	Pre	1898	1898	1899	1900	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Post* 1927				
After reading, Dante	Sonata from Italian Album Book 2 - Liszt																																		X			
Air on the G string, see Suite in D																																						
L'Allegro (From the poem by John Milton)	Une promenade du matin Gustave Lange			X	X																																	
Andante cantabile	O? String quartet no 1 in D op 11 Tchaikovsky														X	X																				X		
Angel with viol or angel playing the viol (From the painting by Leonardo da Vinci)	Merri or Peri					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																							
Ave Maria	P Ave Maria from Lady of the Lake Schubert																			X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X						X	X		
Bacchanale - see Iphigenia, Tannhauser																																						
Bacchus and Ariadne (From the painting by Titian)	Picchi or Gluci.					X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X																								
Ballad (From Goethe)																																						
La bella Simonetta (From the painting by Botticelli)	Minuet - Lully					X	X																															
Benediction de Dieu dans la solitude	Harmonies poetique et religieuses no 3 Liszt																								X			X	X									
Berceuse	in D flat major op 57 Chopin																																				X	
Berceuse	P Faure																																					

Dances (Listed alphabetically)	Accompaniment (Music unless otherwise stated)	Pre	18 98	18 98	18 99	19 00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Post* 1927		
Berceuse	Gretchaninoff						X																													
Berlioz dance	Berlioz														X																					
Blue Danube	blue Danube waltz Strauss, J.							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X														X				X		
Cocteau poems	Poems - Cocteau																																	X		
Dance(s) of the furies see Orpheus																																				
Dance of the future see - La Primavera																																				
Dance of joy	Schubert														X																					
Dance of mirth	Pizzicato - Strauss			X	X																															
Dance of wandering	Melodic - Paderewski			X	X																															
Danse des Scythes see Iphigenia																																				
Dante symphony	A symphony to Dante's La Divina Commedia																																		X	
Death and the maiden	Usually performed unaccompanied		X	X				X	X	X	X																X	X								
Death of Agonis	Schubert			X																																
Dionysion																					X															
Duncan tango																							X													
Ecossaie(s)	Quintet - Schubert																																		X	
Elegiac march see Marche militaire																																				
Elysian fields see Orpheus																																				
L'enfance du Christ	P? Berlioz																					X														
Entrance of the Gods see The Ring																																				
Etudes	in A flat major op 25 no 1 Chopin																				X		X		X										X	

Dances (Listed alphabetically)	Accompaniment (Music unless otherwise stated)	Pre	18 98	18 98	99	19 00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Post* 1927				
Etudes (continued)	in E major op 10 no 3 Chopin																		X			X					X											
Butterfly wings	in G flat major op 25 no 9 Chopin																		X			X													X			
Etudes	revin				X																																	
Etudes, No. 1	in C sharp minor op 2 no 1 Scriabin																										X	X							X			
Revolutionary	in D sharp minor op 8 no 12 Scriabin																										X	X							X			
Forest Murmurs	Wagner																																					
Four songs	Der Engel) Fünf Gedichte In Treibhaus) Wagner Schmerzen) Traume)																																					
Funerailles	Harmonies poetique et religieuses no 7 - Liszt																							X		X	X	X	X	X			X		X			
Funeral march - performed separately and as part of 'Polish Trilogy'	Funeral march from Sonata no 1 B flat minor op 35 Chopin																		X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X							X			
Funeral march	Schubert																			X	X					X									X			
Funeral march (Wagner) see The Ring																																						
Funeral marches for Lenin and Funeral song for revolutionary heroes see Songs of the revolution																																						
The gallant, the bee	arr from Fisher			X	X																																	
Cavottes, two	Bach																																				X	
German dances, six, seven	German dances - Schubert										X	X		X	X																							
Gigue	Bach												X																								X	
Holy Crail																											X											
Hungarian dances	Hungarian folk dances							X	X																													
Hymn to Demeter	Poem - Homer					X																																

Dances (Listed alphabetically)	Accompaniment (Music unless otherwise stated)	Pre	18 98	18 98	18 99	19 00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Post* 1927		
I shot an arrow into the air	Longfellow - Poems		X																																	
I went a-roaming, maidens	Minuet - Holst, E				X	X																														
Ioylls	Poems - Bion				X	X																														
Ioylls	Poems - Theocritus				X	X																														
Impromptu	Chopin																						X													
L'Internationale	P L'Internationale - Degeyler																										X	X	X	X						
Invocation to the Muses	Song - Schubert																				X	X														
Iphigenia, including Bacchanale, Danse des Scythes, Maidens of Chalcis	P Iphigenia in Aulis and Iphigenia in Tauris - Gluck								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							X		X			X	
King Stephen																					X															
Legend of St Francis of Assisi	St Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds - Liszt																															X	X			
Liebestod) Love death of Isolde) see Tristan and Isolde																																				
Lohengrin	O? Prelude, Lohengrin - Wagner																X	X	X																	
Marche Lorraine	P Marche Lorraine - Louis Ganne																					X		X												
Marche militaire	Marche militaire op 15 Schubert														X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X											X	
Marche slave	Marche slave - Tchaikovsky																					X				X	X	X							X	
La Marseillaise	La Marseillaise Rouget de Lisle														X	X				X	X	X	X	X		X	X				X					
Mazurkas	in A flat major op 24 no 3 Chopin									X																										
	in A minor op 17 no 4 Chopin				X	X				X																										X
	in B flat major op 7 no 1 Chopin									X																										X
	in B flat major op 17 no 1 Chopin																																			X

Dances (Listed alphabetically)	Accompaniment (Music unless otherwise stated)	Pre	18 98	18 98	18 99	19 00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Post* 1927		
Mazurkas (continued)	in B minor op 33 no 4 Chopin									X				X	X																			X		
	in C major op 33 no 3 Chopin									X	X			X	X																			X		
	in D major op 33 no 2 Chopin									X				X	X	X																		X		
	unidentified Chopin						X					X	X	X	X				X			X	X				X	X	X					X		
Die Meistersinger	Die Meistersinger - Wagner																X												X	X				X		
Mussumer night's dream	Mendelssohn		X			X																													X	
Minuet	Minuet - Bach													X																						
Minuet (Gluck) - see Orpheus																																				
Minuet	P Minuet - Rameau										X			X																						
Minuets, seven	P? Minuets - Beethoven									X																										
Moment musical	Moments musicaux F minor op 94 Schubert													X	X		X		X				X				X	X	X					X		
Morning	Poem - Henri Chantovin			X	X																															
Musette	Musette - Couperin									X	X	X	X	X																					X	
Musette	Musette, Amida - Gluck									X				X																					X	
Musette	Musette en rondeau from Pieces de Clavecin - Rameau									X	X	X	X	X																						
Mussorgsky dances, five	Mussorgsky														X																					
Narcissus	Narcissus - Nevin <small>From Water scenes op 13</small>		X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X																						
Night on the bare mountain	U? Mussorgsky - St John's night on the bare mountain																												X	X						
Nocturnes	in C minor op 48 no 1 - Chopin									X																										
Nocturne tragique	in C sharp minor op 27 no 1 Chopin																					X														
Angel on the battlefield	in E flat major op 9 no 2 Chopin														X	X						X					X								X	

Dances (Listed alphabetically)	Accompaniment (Music unless otherwise stated)	Pre	18 98	18 98	18 99	19 00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Post* 1927			
Nocturnes (continued)	in E major op 62 no 2 - Chopin												x																								
Remembrance of a vanished love	in E minor op 72 no 1 (posth) Chopin																					x													x		
	unidentified - Chopin												x						x		x	x															
Norwegian dance	Grieg													x	x																				x		
Oedipus	Poem/Symphony no 5 in C minor Mackaye/Beethoven																				x																
Offenbach dance	Offenbach												x																								
Old Glory	Elgar																						x														
Ophelia	Ophelia - Nevin ^{from Water Scenes op 13}		x	x	x																																
Orpheus, including Dance of the blessed/happy spirits, Dance(s) of the Furies, Elysian Fields, Minuet, etc.	Orpheus and Eurydice Gluck					x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x				x	x		x	x									x	
Orpheus returning from the shades (from the painting by Richmond)	Orpheus Act 4 - Monteverde					x																															
Overture	O? Overture - Rameau											x																									
Ovid	Poems - Ovid				x																																
Pan and Echo (from the Iyull by Moschos)	performed unaccompanied or with music by Ferrari or Ariosti				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																							
Parsifal, including Dance of the Flower maidens, Kundry's dance, etc.	Parsifal - Wagner														x		x							x		x	x										
Penseroso (from the poem by John Milton)	Penseroso - Stephen Heller			x	x																																
Polonaises	in A flat major op 53 Chopin										x																										
parts of 'Polish - (Happy/Triumphant Poland, or Resurrection Tragic Poland)	in A major op 40 no 1 - Chopin ↑ in C minor op 40 no 2 - Chopin ↑ unidentified - Chopin												x									x					x	x								x	
										x											x	x					x	x							x		

Dances (Listed alphabetically)	Accompaniment (Music unless otherwise stated)	Pre	18 98	18 98	18 99	19 00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Post* 1927			
Preludes	in A major op 28 no 7 - Chopin								X	X	X		X	X	X													X						X			
	in B minor op 28 no 6 - Chopin									X			X	X																							
	in C minor op 28 no 20 - Chopin					X	X			X																											
	in D flat major op 28 no 15 Chopin									X			X																						X		
	in E minor op 28 no 4 - Chopin								X	X			X	X	X																				X		
	unidentified - Chopin					X	X			X			X	X	X				X		X	X					X								X		
	from op 11 & 22 - Scriabin																												X					X			
La Primavera, sometimes called Dance of the Future, Spring (from the painting by Botticelli)	usually "Spring song" (Songs without words) - Mendelssohn Caroso or Gluck		X		X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X																						
Rachmaninov	Rachmaninov																																				
Redemption	Symphonic poem - La redemption Franck																																		X	X	
Revolutionary hymn to the heroes of Hungary	Rakoczy march - Bihari								X																											X	
The Ring, including Entrance of the gods, Funeral march Ride of the Valkyrie, etc.	The Ring of the Nibelung Wagner																																			X	X
Romance	Romance op 5 - Tchaikovsky								X																												
Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam	Poem transl. by Fitzgerald or Waltz, Strauss, or Song, Mendelssohn		X	X	X	X																															
Scherzo	Symphony no 1 in E - Scriabin																																				
Sicilienne															X																						
Slavonic dance	Dvorak														X	X																					
Slow march	Schubert																																				X
Sonata, "Moonlight"	Sonata no 14 in C sharp minor op 27 no 2 Beethoven									X	X		X										X			X											

Dances (Listed alphabetically)	Accompaniment (Music unless otherwise stated)	Pre	18 98	18 98	18 99	19 00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Post* 1927				
Sonata, pathétique	Grande sonata pathétique op 13 Beethoven									X	X		X									X		X														
Sonata, presto	Sonata no 5 in C minor op 10 no 1 Beethoven									X												X																
Sonata	Sonata no 4 op 30 Scriabin																											X		X								
Songs of the revolution	Traditional Russian folk songs																													X								
Sonnet to the beautiful	Songs without words - Mendelssohn		X	X																																		
Spanish dances(s)	Mussorgsky													X	X																							
Spirit of spring	Waltz - Strauss		X	X																																		
Spring	Spring - Nevin		X	X																																		
St Matthew Passion	St Matthew Passion - Bach																					X																
Suite in D	from 3rd orchestral suite second movement - Bach															X	X																		X			
The Suppliants	Aeschylus - Words spoken by Greek chorus								X	X																												
Swinnburne	Poems - Swinburne				X																																	
Symphonies	no 5 in C minor - Beethoven																					X					X											
P	no 7 in A major - Beethoven							X	X	X			X	X	X							X	X		X		X									X		
	no 9 in D minor - Beethoven																																				X	
	no 1 in C minor - Brahms				NPOK																																	
	no 1 in G - Mozart				NPOK																																	
	no 7 in E - Schubert																									X												
	no 8 in B minor (Unfinished) Schubert																		X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X				X	X					
P	no 9 in C major - Schubert																						X														X	
P	no 6 in B minor (Pathétique) Tchaikovsky																					X	X			X	X	X	X								X	
Tambourin	Tambourin - Rameau									X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X																	

Dances (Listed alphabetically)	Accompaniment (Music unless otherwise stated)	Pre 98	18 98	18 99	19 00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Post* 1927	
Tanagra	Tanagra - Corelli			N	DK																												X	
Tanagra	Tanagra - Gluck			N	DK																													X
Tannhauser, including Bacchanale, Overture, Three Graces	Tannhauser - Wagner								X			X			X	X	X			X	X			X	X	X	X	X					X	
To joy	Song - Schubert																		X	X														
Träume	Wagner																																X	
Tristan and Isolde including Liebestod and Prelude	Tristan and Isolde - Wagner														X	X	X							X	X	X	X			X	X		X	
Triumph of Daphnis	Nazurka				X																													
Trois poemes																							X											
Waltz from Faust	Gounod?												X																					
Waltzes	in A flat op 39 no 15) op 52) - Brahms unidentified)					X		X	X	X					X	X	X			X	X			X	X	X	X							X
	in A flat major op 34 no 1 Chopin									X											X													X
	in A flat major op 69 no 1 (posth) Chopin									X																								
	in C sharp minor op 64 no 2 Chopin				X	X			X	X		X	X																					X
Minute	in D flat major op 64 no 1 Chopin							X	X	X	X	X	X																					X
	in G flat major op 70 no 1 (posth) Chopin									X		X	X	X																				X
	unidentified Chopin				X	X			X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X						X	X								
	Liszt																																	X
	Schmitt, F				N	DK																												X

APPENDIX B

Choreochronicle B
Dances choreographed by Isadora Duncan
for her pupils' public performance

Choreochronicle B

Dances choreographed by Isadora Duncan for her pupils' public performance

Key * post 1927 performances by others
 D sometimes performed with Duncan
 P sometimes performed with pupils
 P? possibly performed with pupils
 O? dance or orchestral item

NPDK No performance dates known
 B Bellevue
 G Grunewald
 M Moscow

Dance	Accompaniment	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	Post 1927*
		G																	M							
Ave Maria	D Ave Maria from Lady of the Lake - Schubert																				X					X
Ballet I and II	Rosamunde - Schubert			X		X																				
Berceuse	D flat major op 57 Chopin																							X		X
Berceuse	D Berceuse - Faure								X																	
Ecosseise(s)	Quintet - Schubert																			X	X					X
L'Enfance du Christ	D? Berlioz												X													
Entre acte	Rosamunde - Schubert		X			X																				
Funeral march	Funeral march from Sonata no 1 in B flat minor op 35 - Chopin															X		X						X		X
Gavotte	Gavotte - Rameau		X																							
German folk songs	German folk songs					X																				
Happiness	Schumann																			X						
L'Internationale	D L'Internationale Degeyler																		X	X	X	X				

Dance	Accompaniment	1904 G	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921 M	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	Post 1927*
Iphigenia	D Iphigenia in Aulis Iphigenia in Tauris Gluck				X	X	X				X		X	X	X			X			X	X				X
Irish jig	Schubert																				X	X				X
Lullaby	Schubert																									X
Marche Heroique	Schubert											X														
Marche Lorraine	D Marche Lorraine Louis Ganne														X			X								
Marche Militaire	Marche Militaire op 15 Schubert											X				X					X	X		X		X
Minuet	D Rameau				X	X																				
Moment Musicale	Moment Musicaux F minor op 94 - Schubert															X								X		X
Musette	Couperin												X													X
Norwegian Jance	Greig																									X
Orpheus	D Orpheus and Eurydice Gluck								X		X					X										X
Parsifal	D Parsifal - Wagner																	X	X							

Dance	Accompaniment	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	Post 1927*
		G				I					B	I							M							
Pictures of old German towns incl. Cathedral of Cologne	Waltzes - Schmitt, F.											X							X							X
Polka	Rachmaninoff																		X							X
Polka 'Ninische'						X																				
Polonaise	Polonaise - Chopin																	X								
Requiem march	Schubert																					X				
Revolutionary songs and dances of Russia	Russian folk and revolutionary songs																					X				X
Revolutionary songs and dances of Western Europe incl. Carmagnole	Folk songs																					X				
Ringelreigen	Konigs-Kinder Humperdinck		X			X	X																			
Romanesca						X																				
Rondo	Max Merz					X																				

Dance	Accompaniment	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	Post 1927*
		G																	M							
Russian folk dances						X																				
Russian folk songs						X																				
Sarabande	Sarabande - Schubert		X																							
Scenes from childhood	Kinderscenen op 15 Schumann		X	X		X															X					X
Symphonies	D No 7 in A major - Beethoven														X				X							
	No 7 in E minor - Schubert																		X							
	No 8 in B minor (Unfinished) - Schubert																			X						X
	D No 9 in C major - Schubert														X											
	D No 6 in B minor (Pathetique) - Tchaikovsky																		X	X						X
Tanz																										X
Turkish march	from The Ruins of Athens Beethoven																			X						

Dance	Accompaniment	1904 G	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913 B	1914 I	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921 M	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	Post 1927*
Waltz	Minute in D flat major op 64 no 1 - Chopin																X									X
	from Hansel and Gretel - Humperdinck		X																							
	Reflection Schubert																			X		X				
	Sunbeam Schubert																			X		X				
	The three Graces Schubert																			X		X				X
	With a scarf Schubert																			X		X				
Waltzes	Brahms																		X	X		X				X
	incl. Southern Roses Strauss, J.																	X				X				
Weber Waltz	Weber Waltz - Lanner		X	X	X	X	X	X	X																	

APPENDIX C

Extract from Adshead, J., Briginshaw, V.,
Hodgens, P. and Huxley, M. (1982)

A chart of skills and concepts for dance
Journal of Aesthetic Education Vol. 16 no.3 pp.49-61

A Chart of Skills and Concepts of Dance—STAGE 1

1.	Skills	2.	Concepts
1.1	discerning, describing, and naming components of the dance	2.1	components
		2.11	<i>movement</i> —whole body or parts—including actions, gestures, and stillness, e.g., steps, jumps, turns, lifts, falls, locomotion, movement in place, balances, positions
		2.111	spatial elements
		2.1111	shape
		2.1112	size
		2.1113	pattern/line
		2.1114	direction
		2.1115	location in performance space
		2.112	dynamic elements
		2.1121	tension/force—strength, lightness
		2.1122	speed/tempo
		2.1123	duration
		2.1124	rhythm
		2.113	clusters of movement elements—simultaneous occurrence of any of 2.11, 2.111, and 2.112
		2.12	<i>dancers</i>
		2.121	numbers and sex
		2.122	role—lead, subsidiary
		2.123	a cluster of elements concerned with dancers—simultaneous occurrence of 2.121 and 2.122
		2.13	<i>visual setting/environment</i>
		2.131	performance area—set, surroundings
		2.132	light
		2.133	costumes and props
		2.134	clusters of visual elements—simultaneous occurrence of any of 2.131, 2.132, and 2.133
		2.14	<i>aural elements</i>
		2.141	sound
		2.142	the spoken word
		2.143	music
		2.144	clusters of aural elements—simultaneous occurrence of any of 2.141, 2.142, and 2.143
		2.15	<i>complexes</i> —simultaneous occurrence of elements of clusters and/or clusters, i.e., any grouping of 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, and 2.14.

A chart of skills and concepts for dance—STAGE 2

1.	Skills	2.	Concepts
1.2	discerning, describing, and naming relations of the dance form	2.2	form
		2.21	<i>relations according to components</i>
		2.211	relations within and between movements, e.g., within and between spatial and dynamic elements and clusters of movement elements
		2.212	relations within and between dancers, e.g., within and between numbers, sex, and roles of dancers and clusters of elements pertaining to dancers
		2.213	relations within and between elements of the visual setting/environment, e.g., within and between the performance area, light, costumes, and props and clusters of visual elements
		2.214	relations within and between aural elements, e.g., within and between sound, the spoken word, music, and clusters of aural elements
		2.215	relations within and between complexes (see 2.15—Stage 1)
		2.22	<i>relations at a point in time</i> , i.e., any combination of 2.21
		2.221	simple/complex
		2.2211	likenesses/commonalities
		2.2212	differences/opposition
		2.23	<i>relations through time</i> , i.e., between one occurrence and the next, e.g., between one movement and the next or one dancer and the next resulting in named relations (canon, fugue, ostinato, etc.) and general categories (elaboration, inversion, etc.)
		2.231	exact repetition/recurrence
		2.232	alteration of one or more components and/or clusters
		2.233	addition or subtraction of one or more components and/or clusters
		2.234	alteration of the order of events
		2.24	<i>relations between the moment and the linear development</i> (at a point in time and through time), i.e., relations accounting for particular effects which depend to some extent on a specific moment(s), e.g., emphasis by means of accent, reinforcement, focus, climax
1.21	recognizing the comparative importance of relations within the dance	2.25	<i>major/minor/subsidiary relations</i>
		2.251	complexes, strands, units, phrases, and sections in relation to each other
		2.252	complexes, strands, units, phrases, and sections in relation to the total dance form
		2.253	the total web of relations

A chart of skills and concepts for dance – STAGE 3

1.	Skills	2.	Concepts
1.3	interpreting, recognizing, and characterizing the dance statement/meaning	2.3	interpretation
		2.31	<i>genre</i> , i.e., a particular form of dance, e.g., ballet, modern dance, stage dance
		2.311	general style, i.e., a distinctive example of a genre: ballet—preromantic, romantic, classical, modern; modern dance—pretraditional, Central European, traditional, contemporary, postmodern; stage dance—tap, musical, jazz, cabaret
		2.312	a distinctive choreographic style, e.g., Ashton, Balanchine, Tetley, Graham, Hawkins, Cunningham, Robbins
		2.32	<i>subject matter</i>
		2.321	content, e.g., “pure” movement, a story, a theme, a topic, an idea
		2.322	treatment of the subject matter, e.g., representative, narrative, literal, dramatic, mimetic, lyrical, expressionistic, impressionistic, abstract, symbolic
		2.33	<i>quality, mood, atmosphere</i> , i.e., aesthetic descriptions of clusters, complexes, relationships, phrases/sections, and the whole dance
		2.34	<i>artistic statement/meaning</i>
		2.341	relationships between 2.31, 2.32 and 2.33

A chart of skills and concepts for dance—STAGE 4

1.	Skills	2.	Concepts
1.4	evaluating, appraising, and judging the dance	2.4	evaluation
		2.41	<i>choreography</i>
		2.411	appropriateness and effectiveness of genre—general and choreographic style, subject matter—content, and treatment in relation to quality, mood, atmosphere, and meaning
		2.412	appropriateness and effectiveness of this dance vis-à-vis other dances which have similar characteristics
		2.42	<i>performance</i>
		2.421	appropriateness and effectiveness of a particular performance of the dance in terms of technical competence and the interpretation given
		2.422	appropriateness and effectiveness of other interpretations of the dance
		2.43	<i>response and appraisal</i>
		2.431	appropriateness of the response—liking/disliking, reasons offered and substantiated
		2.432	validity of other appraisals, of the critical response of others.

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