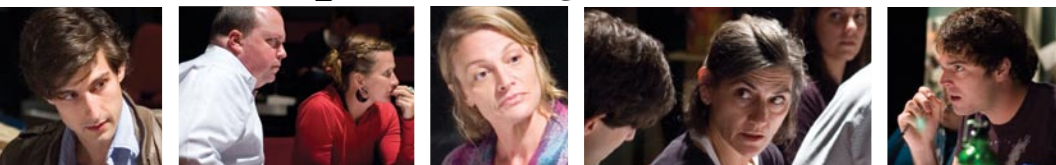


BACKSTORY



BY MARTIN SHERMAN

When She Danced



Your behind-the-scenes look at TimeLine productions

YESTERDAY'S STORIES.
TODAY'S TOPICS.

TimeLine
Theatre Company

a message



Isadora's boldness had ripples through time that she never could have imagined.

Dear Friends,

I'm delighted to welcome you to the second show of TimeLine's 2009-10 season.

The last seven months have been among the busiest and most exciting in the company's history: *The History Boys*, the last show of our 2008-09 season, opened in April and closed Oct. 18 after being extended three times. *All My Sons*, the first play of this season, recently concluded its acclaimed, sold-out run at the Greenhouse Theater Center.

Whether you were recently introduced to us through one of those shows or if you've been experiencing TimeLine's work for years, we are so grateful to have you join us for *When She Danced*, giving you a glimpse inside the world of dance icon Isadora Duncan.

Before you dive into this *Backstory*, filled with information about Duncan's life and work, I have a shocking revelation: I am not an accomplished dancer; never took classes, never

owned leg warmers. And you would be best served to not see me attempt, well, virtually any form of dance. My grasp of dance history is also minimal, and I couldn't claim to know much about the "mother of modern dance" prior to beginning work on *When She Danced*.

For those of you who are disciples of her astonishing career, I offer my apologies. And for those of you who share my ineptitude, I say, fear not the story we have to share! Her tale is a hilarious, romantic and uproarious ride, to be enjoyed by dance enthusiasts and novices alike.

What is so thrilling and enchanting about *When She Danced* is that it captures the seemingly intangible joy of experiencing art. Any art.

So often in this play, everyone is speaking a different language. Duncan's eccentric circle of friends struggle to communicate while having little in common, including a shared native tongue. But what unites them—where they find communion—is their shared adoration for how Duncan's work affected their lives.

Art becomes their shared vocabulary.

As is so often the case with trying to recall a certain performance—be it theater, dance, music, poetry, sports, whatever—we search for words to articulate who and what we saw, what a performer did or how they stood or moved or sounded. Normally, names and titles are butchered, details are foggy and words never can quite capture our experience.

But what was *felt* watching a performance—*that* can be called up with ease, whether the experience was good, fair, abysmal or (ideally) transcendent. Of course, the abysmal ones we strive to forget. But those transcendent few are memories that leave an indelible mark on our lives: Those are the ones that keep us coming back for more.

And so it was with those who saw Duncan's work. Hers was a career that rejected tradition, exploded the status quo, dared to go to new places and, ultimately, inspired generations of arts practitioners and enthusiasts.

Accounts of Duncan often talk about her standing motionless on stage for what seemed like an eternity, as an audience sat breathless, leaning in to see what move she'd make next. That anticipation has been taken a step further in *When She Danced*. What playwright Martin Sherman shows us is a legend past her prime years of dance, uncertain of what move she'll make next. This time, she's far from stationary, grappling with new fears

of financing, mortality and the uncertainty of what her legacy will be.

Hers was a life filled with drama, intrigue, passion and scandal. It was a life that ended too soon, in an infamous and staggering accident. Happily, Sherman dwells not on the scandals or the tragedies. He's more captivated by trying to catch lightning in a bottle, to capture how and why she moved so many people.

TimeLine offers this tribute to Isadora Duncan—a pio-

neer, enchantress, visionary and teacher. Her boldness had ripples through time that she never could have imagined, reaching and inspiring masses of dance aficionados as well as neophytes like me. Her body of work is worth celebrating, and we're delighted to engage you in a discussion about what it was like when she danced.

Best wishes,

Special Events and Resources

the conversation

TimeLine looks forward to engaging our audience in conversations inspired by our productions. We hope you will participate in the array of additional resources and online communities available:

SUNDAY SCHOLARS

After the show on **Sunday, Nov. 15** is Sunday Scholars, a one-hour panel discussion featuring experts talking about the play's themes and issues. **Admission is free.** Visit timelinetheatre.com to learn more.

COMPANY MEMBER DISCUSSION

Our Company members shape the artistic vision and choose programming for TimeLine. On **Sunday, Dec. 6**, join them for a free post-show discussion.

POST-SHOW DISCUSSIONS

On **Thursdays, Nov. 12, 19 and Dec. 3; Sundays, Nov. 22 and 29; and Wednesday, Dec. 9**, moderated by a TimeLine Company member and featuring cast and production staff.

DRAMATURGY

A **study guide** is available at timelinetheatre.com.

BLOG AND MORE!

Find behind-the-scenes insight and conversation on our blog, **Behind the 'Line**, via timelinetheatre.com.



For the latest, be a Facebook fan (**TimeLine Theatre Company**) and follow us on Twitter ([@timelinetheatre](https://twitter.com/timelinetheatre))!

the inspiration

“How can we write the truth about ourselves? Do we even know it?

There is the vision our friends have of us; the vision we have of ourselves, and the vision our lover has of us. Also the vision our enemies have of us—and all these visions are different. ... So, if at each point of view others see in us a different person how are we to find in ourselves yet another personality of whom to write this book? Is it to be the Chaste Madonna, or the Messalina, or the Magdalen or the Blue Stocking? Where can I find the woman of all these adventures?”

— Isadora Duncan

Isadora Duncan began her autobiography, *My Life*, with an introduction bemoaning the hopelessness of writing about one’s life, and the autobiography is only a partial picture. She is not always the most accurate recorder of her life and has, as might be expected, a flair for the dramatic in how she describes it.



Isadora Duncan in New York, 1916. Photograph by Edward Steichen. (Duncan Collection)

A biography of Duncan by her friend Mary Desti is considered notoriously unreliable by historians. Her Russian friend and biographer, Schneider, had a vested interest in how her years in Russia were portrayed. Even press stories about Duncan during her life were wildly divergent in their praise and criticism of her life and work.

In part, deciphering Duncan’s life is a study in contrasts. She was an iconoclast, breaking with tradition in dance and her

personal life. She could praise certain ballet dancers, but hated the ballet; she supported revolutions and workers’ rights, but praised the quality of British servants; she lectured others on her theories of dance while still a teenager; she made money and lost it just as quickly; and she experienced great fame and deep sorrow.

Angela Isadora Duncan was born May 26, 1877, in San Francisco, the last of four children of John Charles and Mary Dora Duncan.

Her father left the family before Duncan was born, and her mother divorced him shortly after her birth. The “Clan Duncan,” as Isadora would call her family, was very poor: Her mother taught piano lessons to earn a living for Isadora, her two brothers and sister. While still a child, Duncan gave dance lessons to neighborhood children and was a surprising success.

The family led a peripatetic life. In 1896, Duncan and her mother traveled to Chicago, hoping to improve Isadora’s career options. A year later they were joined by her siblings after moving to New York City. In New York, Duncan appeared in some pantomimes of impresario Augustin Daly but spoke contemptuously of the roles and movement style. She had some success performing her style of dance at society parties,

but had mixed feelings about these performances

In 1899, “Clan Duncan” left for London, traveling by cattle boat to save money. Duncan, after spending her days at the British Museum looking at Greek sculpture, danced for society gatherings in the evenings. Although she danced one of the fairy parts in a production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, she did

not attain the success she hoped for. In 1900, the family moved on to Paris, where Duncan soon met artists, literary figures and sculptors, including Pierre Auguste Rodin.

In 1902, she received her first solo engagement and went to dance in Budapest, Hungary, where she met her first lover, an actor named Oscar Beregi. When Duncan would not quit

(Top) Duncan dancing to *Orpheus* by Gluck, Munich, circa 1903. (Bottom) Duncan dancing *The Priestess to Iphigenia in Taurus* by Gluck, Munich, circa 1903. Photographs by Elvira.



REVOLUTIONARIES: A Timeline of Duncan, Esenin and the turn of the century

- **May 27, 1878** Angela Isadora Duncan is born in San Francisco, the fourth child of John Charles and Mary Dora Duncan.
- **October 3, 1895** Sergei Alexandrovich Esenin is born in the village of Konstantinovo, Russia.
- **1896** Duncan and her mother travel to Chicago to improve her career prospects.
- **1897** The family travels to New York City to further Duncan’s dance career. She performs in pantomimes and for society gatherings.
- **1899** The “Clan Duncan” sails to London on a cattle boat.
- **February 22, 1900** Isadora appears as a fairy in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Lyceum Theatre in London.
- **1900** The “Clan Duncan” leaves London for Paris.
- **April 1902** Isadora performs in Budapest at the Urania Theater, where she meets Oscar Beregi. The Hungarian actor is portraying Romeo, and Isadora calls him “Romeo.” He becomes her first lover. When Beregi wants Duncan to quit the stage, she refuses and the liaison ends.
- **1904** Duncan establishes a school of dance in Grunewald, Germany.
- **1904** Duncan visits Russia for the first time.

the lovers

dancing, as he wanted, the relationship ended and she left to tour Germany.

Buoyed by her success, Duncan and family traveled to Italy and Greece, where they planned to build a temple. They purchased a piece of property before discovering there was no water on the land. Despite the often ill-conceived plans that seemed to deplete her bank account, Duncan was well-received in Europe and her fame grew. In 1904, Richard Wagner's widow and son asked Duncan to perform, and she established a school of dance in Grunewald, Germany.

Also in 1904 Duncan met Edward Gordon Craig, a former actor who was now a set designer. She would have her first child with Craig: Deirdre, born Sept. 24, 1905.

Throughout her life, Duncan would struggle to reconcile her artistic career with her passionate love affairs. She and Craig had similar artistic goals: Much as she was trying to find the essential form of

dance, he wanted to design simple stages, doing away with overwrought sets. However, their competing careers ultimately would drive them apart.

In 1909, Duncan found perhaps the most security with Paris Singer, whom she called Lohengrin, after the hero of the eponymous Wagner opera. Heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune, he could provide financial support for her and her school. They had a son, Patrick, born May 1, 1910. Duncan's happiness was short-lived, though.

On April 19, 1913, Deirdre, Patrick and their nurse, Annie Sim, drowned when the driver of their car failed to set the brake and the car rolled into the Seine River. Duncan's grief was overwhelming and contributed to the unraveling of her relationship with Singer.

As usual, Duncan focused on her work to bring her through her difficulties. But she also claimed she had an affair with an Italian sculptor, Romano Romanelli, and they had a son, who died shortly after birth.



Duncan with her children Deirdre and Patrick in Paris, 1912. Photograph by Paul Berger.

In her autobiography, Duncan noted she was profoundly influenced by inequality in the treatment of women: "I was deeply impressed by the injustice of this state of things for women. ... I decided, then and there, that I would live to fight against marriage and for the emancipation of women and for the right for every woman to have a child or children as it pleased her, and uphold her right and her virtue."

By her own account, Duncan had children with three men and liaisons with numerous others. She did not marry until May 2, 1922, when she and the Russian poet Sergei Esenin planned her tour of Europe and the United States.

"Yes, I am a revolutionist. All true artists are revolutionists; but that does not necessarily mean I am a Bolshevik. I am not, neither is my husband."

— Isadora Duncan, in the Feb. 4, 1923, *New York Tribune*

In 1921, Duncan accepted an invitation to start a school of dance in Moscow, Russia. It was there she met Sergei Esenin, the so-called "peasant poet." Esenin, who was at the height of his fame in Russia, was 25. Duncan, now known world-wide for her dancing, was 42.

The accounts they give of their meeting are highly dramatized. Duncan claimed to have met Esenin in a dream so that when they met in person they already were in love. Ilya Ilyich Schneider, who would become the director of Duncan's Russian school, recounted that they met at a party at the home of artist Georgi Yakulov: Esenin entered, shouting, "Where is this Duncan?" and then spent the evening lying down with his head in Duncan's lap.

Esenin accompanied her home that night, and shortly thereafter they began living together. In spite of the fact that Duncan knew

little Russian and Esenin knew no French or English, they communicated by gestures and shared a sort of revolutionary idealism and artistic sympathy. While she did not understand his poems, Duncan called them musical and repeatedly proclaimed him a genius.

Duncan planned what would become an ill-fated tour of Europe and America in 1922-1923 to raise funds for her Russian school. The couple married so Esenin could get visas more easily. However, fears they might be Bolsheviks would lead to visa problems numerous times during their travels.

By the time they reached the United States, the relationship was in trouble. Duncan was jealous if Esenin showed interest in other women; he was envious of her greater fame. Both were drinking heavily. Tellingly, Esenin's Russian friends blamed Duncan for his drinking, while Duncan's friends blamed Esenin

■ **December 1904** In Berlin, Duncan meets former actor and set designer Edward Gordon Craig, who becomes her lover. She misses scheduled performances while she and Craig hide for two weeks in his apartment avoiding her manager and family.

■ **September 24, 1905** Duncan gives birth to a daughter by Craig and names her Deirdre.

■ **Spring 1906** Duncan performs in Copenhagen.

■ **Dec. 1907 - Feb. 1908** Duncan performs throughout Russia.

■ **1908** Duncan's school in Grunewald closes; she moves some of her pupils to Paris.

■ **1909** Duncan meets Paris Singer, heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune. She calls him Lohengrin, after the hero of the eponymous Wagner opera, and they become lovers.

■ **May 1, 1910** Patrick, Duncan's son by Singer, is born. Although Singer is divorcing his wife, Duncan refuses to marry him.

■ **1913** The Théâtre des Champs Élysées in Paris is completed, with bas relief murals by Emile-Antoine Bourdelle and murals by Maurice Denis that are based on Duncan.

■ **April 19, 1913** Duncan's children Deirdre and Patrick and their nurse, Annie Sim, drown when the driver of their car fails to set the brake and it rolls into the Seine River.

■ **April 23, 1913** Deirdre and Patrick are cremated and interred at Père-Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.

"Of course, Esenin was partly in love with Isadora and partly with her fame, but he was as much in love with her as he was generally capable of loving." —Sergei Gorodetsky, *Russian poet and friend of Esenin*

for her increased alcohol consumption. They were detained at Ellis Island because of growing national fears about the spread of Bolshevism.

Duncan's first performances in New York were successful, but the pair did not allay any U.S. fears about their politics with their behavior. They arrived dressed in traditional Russian clothes, and Duncan often danced in a red tunic and lectured from the stage about the need for friendship between Russia and America.

In Boston, she caused a scandal when she either accidentally or deliberately bared her breast in one of her dances; her sheer tunics already had set morally conservative Americans

In Boston, she caused a scandal when she either accidentally or deliberately bared her breast in one of her dances; her sheer tunics already had set morally conservative Americans on edge.

Prohibition was in force, but they regularly drank bootlegged liquor.

In addition, an increasingly unhappy Esenin took to making public scenes and destroying hotel rooms. Cities cancelled performances, and the press became vicious. The press and Duncan's manager, Sol Hurok, also claimed Esenin beat Duncan, a claim she vigorously refuted in letters to the newspapers.

Esenin and Duncan left America Feb. 3, 1923, on the aptly named ocean liner George Washington,

vowing they never would return. When they arrived in France Feb. 14, Duncan unleashed a torrent of anger to the French press about the narrow mindedness of Americans and blamed Esenin's declining health and poor behavior on bootlegged alcohol. In response, the U.S. government claimed Duncan had revoked her citizenship when she married Esenin and would have to appeal to enter the country again.

In France, though, Esenin's drinking and erratic behavior continued. He destroyed the furniture in their room at the Hôtel de Crillon and was arrested. Duncan obtained his release from the police with the promise that her maid, Jeanne, would escort him to Berlin and he would not return to France. The couple's breach seemed final, with Esenin telling the Berlin press about his happiness in being free of Duncan. But by April the pair had reconciled and traveled in France and Germany, leaving behind a string of angry hotels and bills, as Esenin continued to destroy furniture.



Isadora Duncan in paintings by Abraham Walkowitz between 1908 - 1917. (Duncan Collection)

They returned to Moscow in August. Esenin continued to drink and also would disappear for days at a time. Duncan took to her bed with an unspecified illness. With the help of her pupil, Irma Duncan, she left Moscow for a spa to recuperate. Esenin began living with Galina Benislavskaya, who would commit suicide on his grave, and, at the same

time, began seeing and writing poems for actress Augusta Miklashevskaya. The hurtful information was imparted to Duncan by letters and telegrams that may have been from Esenin using Benislavskaya's name. They may have met a few more times but the relationship was over, though they never formally divorced.

- **1914** Duncan gives birth to a boy, who dies a few hours after his birth. She claims he is the child of an Italian sculptor, Romano Romanelli, whom she begged to impregnate her after the deaths of Deirdre and Patrick the previous year.
- **1914** With Singer's support, Duncan opens a school in Neuilly, a Paris suburb. When World War I breaks out, she turns the 62-room school over to the Red Cross and takes her students to the United States.
- **June 28, 1914** Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria is assassinated; the murder is one of the causes of World War I.
- **1915** Duncan performs around the U.S.; she lectures audiences because she doesn't have sufficient funds for a school.
- **March 16, 1917** Czar Nicholas II abdicates the throne after the February Revolution in Russia.
- **October 1917** Vladimir Ilyich Lenin is appointed Commissar after the October Revolution, which replaces the provisional government of the February Revolution with Bolshevik, or Communist, leadership.
- **November 11, 1918** The Armistice is signed between the Allies and Germany, ending World War I.
- **January 16, 1919** The 18th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution is ratified, leading to the prohibition of alcohol.
- **1921** At the invitation of the People's Commissar of Enlightenment, A.V. Lunacharsky, Duncan travels to Russia to begin a school of dance for children in Moscow.



Irma Duncan, Isadora Duncan and Sergei Esenin on Duncan and Esenin's wedding day on May 2, 1922. (Photograph courtesy of collection of Gorokhova family, Moscow)

In September 1924, Duncan left Russia to dance in Berlin, but she was plagued by continued rumors about her Bolshevism and alcohol problems.

When she learned of Esenin's suicide on Dec. 27, 1925, she wrote letters to Mary Desti and Irma Duncan that she was shocked by his death but that she already had cried so many tears over him she had none left. Yet she wrote publicly of her sorrow and privately suggested she would follow him by walking into the sea.

In 1925, she was finally able to obtain a visa and return to France; she divided her time between Paris and Nice. As usual, she had very little money and had to rely on friends. In letters to Irma she blamed her lack of success on political prejudice because of her time in Russia. In the hope of reviving her bank account, she started writing her memoir. Though she talked of starting another school in Paris, it never became a reality.

Duncan had one more love affair, with the young Russian pianist, Victor "Vida" Seroff. After a fight, she attempted to walk into the ocean, but it is unclear if this was a serious



Isadora Duncan in Redemption, in New York, 1915. Photograph by Arnold Genthe.

It was reported that Duncan's last words were, "Adieu, mes amis, je vais à la gloire," or "Goodbye, my friends, I go to glory."

suicide attempt. A number of accounts report that Duncan was drinking and still deeply affected by the deaths of her children.

The stories surrounding Duncan's death have been widely misrepresented and mythologized. While in Nice, Duncan became enamored of a young driver and airplane pilot, Benoît Falchetto. She began calling him "Bugatti" after his car, which many believe was actually an Amilcar Grand Sport.

On Sept. 14, 1927, Falchetto came to fetch Duncan for a drive. She wore a red batik shawl of crêpe de chine which had been designed for her by Mary Desti. It was two yards long and five feet wide with 18-inch fringe. As they drove off, she wrapped the shawl around her neck but didn't notice that it was hanging over the side of the car. Its fringe got caught in the car's rear left open-spoked wheel, breaking her neck almost instantly. Though her death was likely immediate, the force of the scarf in the wheel pulled Duncan's body from the car, dragging it into the street. The horrified Falchetto cried that he had killed the Madonna.

Desti, in her biography, reported that Duncan's last words as she got in the car were, "Adieu, mes amis, je vais à la gloire," or "Goodbye, my friends, I go to glory." Later, though, Desti claimed she had made it up to make Duncan look better, and what she really said was, "Adieu, mes amis, je vais à l'amour," or "Goodbye, my friends, I go to love."

For Duncan, either quotation would be appropriate.

Sherman's play is based on real people and certain incidents in the life of Isadora Duncan, but he also created certain characters that function as composites of various people in her life:

Mary Desti was a real friend of Duncan and later in her life would gain notoriety from her marriage to British occultist Aleister Crowley. Desti's son by an earlier marriage was filmmaker Preston Sturges.

Jeanne was the name of Duncan's longtime French maid. She is mentioned in several biographies as accompanying Duncan everywhere and often looking after Esenin when he was drunk.

Belzer is likely based on the recollections of Lola Kinel, a 23-year old Polish woman who was hired to be an interpreter for Duncan and Esenin. She remained in their employ only about

two months. Esenin grew mistrustful of her after she refused to send telegrams to Russia that he wrote while drunk.

Alexandros may have been based on a number of pianists with whom Duncan had an artistic affinity, such as Russian pianist Victor "Vida" Seroff, her lover after Esenin. She also had an affair with pianist Walter Rummel and was fond of her fellow artists and beautiful young men, which is reflected in Alexandros' character.

The characters of **Luciano** and **Christine** also seem to be fictionalizations, though Duncan did seek help in starting schools in many countries, and she did have students and imitators, some of whom assumed her surname.

Duncan in a Masurka to Chopin, Opus 17, No. 4, New York, 1915. (Photograph by Arnold Genthe)



■ **1921** Duncan meets the Russian poet Sergei Esenin, and they begin living together. Duncan is 42 and Esenin is 25—though when they travel to the U.S. the next year, Duncan gives their ages as 38 and 27.

■ **April 12, 1922** Duncan's mother dies in Paris.

■ **May 2, 1922** Duncan and Esenin are married in Moscow.

■ **1922** Duncan, needing funds for her Russian school, embarks with Esenin on an ill-fated tour of Europe and the U.S.

■ **February 3, 1923** Duncan and Esenin, with her maid Jeanne, depart the U.S., swearing they will never return.

■ **Autumn 1923** Duncan and Esenin return to Russia, but soon separate.

■ **1924** After Lenin's death on January 21, Duncan creates funeral marches in his honor.

■ **September 1924** Duncan leaves Russia to dance in Berlin, where she is plagued by rumors about her Bolshevism.

■ **December 27, 1925** Esenin hangs himself after writing a suicide poem in his own blood.

■ **July 8, 1927** Duncan gives her last public dance performance at Paris' Theatre Mogador.

■ **September 14, 1927** Duncan dies in Nice, France. The fringe of the large red shawl around her neck gets caught in one of the open-spoked wheels of the sports car in which she is riding, breaking her neck and dragging her in the street.

■ **September 19, 1927** Duncan's body is cremated and her ashes placed at Père-Lachaise Cemetery with her children's.

the interview

At the start of rehearsals for *When She Danced*, TimeLine artistic director PJ Powers (PJP) interviewed actress Jennifer Engstrom (JE) about her role as Isadora Duncan.

(PJP) What did you know about Isadora Duncan before you auditioned for this play?

(JE) Well, I knew she was a dancer—and an important one—though, admittedly, I knew more about her death than her life. A few months before this project came to me, I stumbled quite serendipitously upon a collection of *Constant Reader* book reviews by Dorothy Parker and read one on Duncan's autobiography, *My Life*. It was then that I realized how important Duncan was—not just as a dancer, but as a visionary, a pioneer of woman's freedom. It also was a life dotted with tragedy.

(PJP) What was your reaction after first reading the play?

(JE) I reacted with wonder. ... How can this role be realized? The idea of portraying this woman was one of much thrill and much consternation. ... I felt it important to find the human being in there and not just the glittering, glamorous legend that most people think of.

(PJP) Have you played characters like Isadora before, either a larger-than-life personality or such a notable historical figure?

(JE) I played Lillian Hellman in a production of *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been...* at Next Theatre. That was more of a snapshot, though. This is a more thorough depiction.

I seem to be drawn to rather large characters, though Duncan is different. There is a purity of soul to her, a not-so-cynical heart that most of my former characters, if allowed, would laugh bitterly at. It's refreshing, actually.

(PJP) Has research played a big role in your process of preparing to play Duncan, or do you tend to focus just on the script and develop a character based on what is put forth for the audience in this one day/moment of her life?

(JE) Both. I started with a mammoth pile of her biographies, then moved to her autobiography. Now that rehearsals have begun, it has become more about squeezing all of that into this one day during which



the play takes place. Dramaturg Maren Robinson's ongoing supply of additional insight has been indispensable.

(PJP) What do you think we have to gain today from looking at Duncan's legacy and doing this play?

(JE) I always find it comforting to know that throughout history there have been individuals who sort of looked beyond their time and place and lived as they saw fit. There was no other option for Duncan. It's inspiring (to say the least) that there are people who cast off the restrictions and expectations of their societies.

But I love that this play doesn't deify her—it shows the cracks and bruises of such a life. It humanizes

her, which somehow makes her legend more accessible and therefore, in my view, even more inspiring.

(PJP) How do you think Duncan's work would be received today? Could she have the same impact with the current arts scene and its relationship with media and technology?

(JE) Wow. I don't know. It's impossible for me to say. Today's audiences have seen it all, to be sure. But as jaded and weary as we may be today, it is always clear when an artist is speaking from the soul. I often wonder what her expression would consist of in 2009. But, God forbid, she'd likely be a fixture on TMZ or some such nonsense. Yuck.

(PJP) Tell me about how you got your start acting?

(JE) I moved to Chicago at the tender age of 18, knowing nothing, really. I just thought I possessed a degree of sincerity that might allow for me to act. I sort

of learned as I went—still learning, obviously.

(PJP) Do you have a dance background?

(JE) No dance. Nope.

(PJP) Why have you chosen Chicago as your artistic home?

(JE) Well, aside from the incredible theater scene in Chicago, it is also a city in which it is possible to live a decent life. Striving occurs, and all that struggling actress stuff, yes, but it's not economically prohibitive. Having been raised on a hog farm in Cambridge, Iowa, it seemed less daunting at 18 than, say, Los Angeles or New York City.

(PJP) You're a company member with A Red Orchid Theatre, correct? What is it about that company that makes it a home for you?

(JE) Ah, A Red Orchid. I was named an ensemble member in 2003, and it has provided an artistic home for me—I love my theater

company. I love our mission and commitment. It is an honor to be among some of the best artists in Chicago.

(PJP) I know that you're early in the rehearsal process for *When She Danced*, but how is it thus far working with director Nick Bowling for the first time?

(JE) Nick Bowling! I cannot say enough about Nick Bowling. I adore him. I have seen much of his work here at TimeLine and always sensed something magical in his productions. He stays out of the way, yet there always seems to be a stamp of his authenticity on his work. This process has been wonderful so far.

I feel incredibly fortunate to have Nick at the helm of this somewhat unwieldy ship. He is a smart and economical director, and I trust him completely. Let's also not forget our two powerful assistant directors, Eva Breneman and Mechelle Moe. We have some good eyes on us.

“I always find it comforting to know that throughout history there have been individuals who looked beyond their time and place and lived as they saw fit.”

The History Boys 100th

First-time donors and subscribers joined TimeLine for an exclusive celebration of the 100th performance of *The History Boys*—the first time a TimeLine show reached this milestone. To celebrate the exciting accomplishment, new donors and subscribers gathered on September 3, 2009, in the beautiful Art de Triumph gallery for drinks with the cast and crew of *The History Boys* prior to the highly anticipated performance number 100. Thanks everyone who helped us reach this milestone!



Cast members of *The History Boys* celebrate the 100th performance.

The Benefits of Being a TimeLine Donor

Throughout the season, TimeLine invites our donors to special opportunities to mingle with artists and Company and Board members. These events were created as a way to bring our supporters even closer to the art at TimeLine in grateful appreciation for their generosity.

Upcoming donor appreciation events include:

**Dessert on Stage
November 13, 2009**
Invitations extended exclusively to donors giving \$250 or more

Following the evening performance of *When She Danced*, donors are invited onstage for champagne and sweet treats with the cast and crew to continue the conversation about art, inspiration and the incomparable Isadora Duncan.

Supporting TimeLine is easier than ever!
Donate online via timelinetheatre.com and opt for a “recurring donation” to effortlessly make monthly, quarterly or annual gifts. You’ll be continuously supporting the art on our stage!

**The History Makers Event
December 1, 2009**
Invitation extended exclusively to donors giving \$1,000 or more
This exclusive party was created to thank TimeLine Theatre’s most generous donors. TimeLine enthusiasts are invited to mingle with other supporters, Company members and staff over cocktails and hors d’oeuvres in celebration of the prior year’s successes.

**Private Play Reading
February 9, 2010**
Invitation extended exclusively to donors giving \$150 or more

Donors are among the select few to experience the reading of a play under consideration for next season and also to engage in a conversation with TimeLine Company members about our season selection process.

**Donor Breakfast
May 16, 2010**
Invitation extended exclusively to donors giving \$500 or more

Donors are invited to join Artistic Director PJ Powers and Managing Director Elizabeth K. Auman for a light breakfast as they discuss their future vision for TimeLine Theatre.

Martin Sherman is a playwright and screenwriter.

The only child of Jewish Russian immigrant parents, he was raised in Camden, N.J. He was brought up steeped in the arts, and began acting when he was 12. His plays include *Absolutely! (Perhaps)* (an adaptation of Pirandello), *Aristo, Rose* (which debuted with Olympia Dukakis in the title role), *A Madhouse in Goa*, *Blackout*, *The Chain Play*, *Cracks*, *Fat Tuesday*, *Passing By*, *Rio Grande*, *Soaps*, *A Solitary Thing*, *Some Sunny Day* and *Things Went Badly in Westphalia* (an adaptation of *A Passage to India*). He also wrote the book for *The Boy from Oz*.

He regularly has been nominated for the Olivier Award, Britain’s version of the Tony Award. His landmark play *Bent*, depicts the



Sherman’s landmark play *Bent* earned him a Tony Award nomination in 1980.

Nazi persecution of homosexuals and earned him a Tony Award nomination in 1980; it later was adapted into a film.

Sherman’s film scripts include *The Summer House*, *Indian Summer*, *Callas Forever*, *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* and, most recently, *Mrs. Henderson Presents*.

When She Danced was first performed in 1990 at Playwright’s Horizon in New York City with Elizabeth Ashley as Isadora. In 1991, it was produced at The Globe Theatre in London, with Vanessa Redgrave as Isadora.

Sherman has lived in London, England, since 1980.

*Isadora Duncan with her lover Sergei Esenin in Paris, circa 1922, around the time during which Martin Sherman sets *When She Danced*.*

BACKSTORY: THE CREDITS

Dramaturgy @ Historical Research by Maren Robinson

Written by Maren Robinson, PJ Powers, Lydia Swift and Lara Goetsch

Edited by Karen A. Callaway & Lara Goetsch

Photography and Graphic Design by Lara Goetsch

When She Danced Photo by Ryan Robinson

Backstory is published four times each season.

Pictured on front cover (from left): Actor Alejandro Cordoba; director Nick Bowling with assistant director Mechelle Moe; actor Jennifer Engstrom; actor Janet Ulrich Brooks and stage manager Kat Saari; and actor Patrick Mulvey.

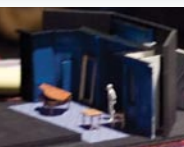
Pictured on back cover (from left): Set model by scenic designer Keith Pitts; actor Mary Williamson; research materials from dramaturg Maren Robinson; actor Jeannie Affelder; and cast and production staff at the first read-through of the script.

Our Mission:

TimeLine Theatre presents stories **inspired by history** that connect with today’s social and political issues.

Our collaborative artistic team produces provocative theatre that engages, educates, entertains and enlightens.

the play



November 7 - December 20, 2009

previews 11/4 - 11/6

by **MARTIN SHERMAN**

directed by
NICK BOWLING

Visit Paris in 1923 to eavesdrop on the bohemian life of international star Isadora Duncan — renowned as the “mother of modern dance” — in this evocative and incredibly funny portrait. A multi-lingual script of great heart mixes the high comedy of a colorful cast of characters with a poignant view of how art can move and inspire us.

Cast

Jennifer Engstrom*:
Isadora Duncan

Jeannie Affelder: *Jeanne*

Janet Ulrich Brooks: *Belzer*

Alejandro Cordoba:
Alexandros

Patrick Mulvey: *Sergei*

Mark Richard: *Luciano*

Jessica Steans-Gail: *Christine*

Mary Williamson: *Mary*

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.

Production Team

Keith Pitts:
Scenic Designer

Bill Morey:
Costume Designer

Seth Reinick:
Lighting Designer

Josh Horvath, U.S.A.:
Sound Designer

Julia Eberhardt:
Properties Designer

Maren Robinson:
Dramaturg

Kat Saari:
Stage Manager

James Ogden:
Production Manager

Those designers and scenic artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United Scenic Artists, IATSE Local 829, AFL-CIO.

Location

When She Danced is performed at TimeLine Theatre, 615 W. Wellington Ave., Chicago.

NOVEMBER 2009

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| 29 | 30 | | | | | |

DECEMBER 2009

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- Regular Performance
- Preview Performance
- Opening Night *Sold Out*
- Post-Show Discussion with cast & production crew *Free*
- Sunday Scholars a one-hour post-show panel discussion with experts on the themes and issues of the play *Free*
- Company Member Discussion a conversation with TimeLine's Company members *Free*

SHOW TIMES

PREVIEWS 8 PM
 OPENING NIGHT 7 PM
 WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS 7:30 PM
 FRIDAYS 8 PM (also 4 PM on 11/27)
 SATURDAYS 4 PM & 8 PM
 SUNDAYS 2 PM