



Eighty Years On

Ballet, modern dance, and Dance Magazine were up and running while I myself was only toddling.

It is no problem for me to remember when *Dance Magazine* started its long journey. It was 1927. It's a date not just engraved in my memory; it's actually on my birth certificate. I have always thought 1927 was a pretty good year to be born—and make no mistake about it, as Lincoln Kirstein observed, the date and place of one's birth are destiny. Well, part of it. So, 1927 did fine for me, but was it a good year for dance, or for the start-up of *Dance Magazine*?

Well, we're still all here, happy and functioning, but 1927 was perhaps a dodgy year for dance itself. The great ballet companies in Paris, Copenhagen, Leningrad (aka St. Petersburg), and Moscow were treading water rather than making waves. The two major classical troupes of the early 20th century were Diaghilev's Monte Carlo-based Ballets Russes and, of markedly less significance, the Paris-based Jean Börlin's Ballets Suédois, which had started in 1920 and collapsed in 1925. As for Diaghilev, in 1927 both he and his company had only two years left.

Yet in 1925 Balanchine had left Soviet Russia and joined Diaghilev—creating *Apollo* in 1928 and *The Prodigal Son* a year later. In modern dance in 1927 the American scene was still dominated by Denishawn, the celebrated school founded by Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis on the West Coast in 1915. It was the school from which Martha Graham emerged, giving her first solo recital in 1926, while Denishawn's other champion alumna, Doris Humphrey, formed her own company in 1928. In Europe, Mary Wigman had opened her own school in Dresden in 1920.

Yep, in picking 1927 as our year of birth, *Dance Magazine*—or Ruth Eleanor Howard, who started it under the name of *The American Dancer*—and I had both been pretty shrewd. But how shrewd, even we couldn't have known. In 1930 Marie Rambert formed the Ballet Rambert in London (not to be confused with the much later Rambert Dance Company), followed a year later by Ninette de Valois starting what was to become Britain's two Royal Ballet companies (The Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet).

In 1933 even more wonderful things happened. René Blum and Col. W. de Basil put together their own companies from the remnants of Diaghilev, providing the beginnings of the various Ballets Russes touring troupes that sparked a worldwide cult of what dance critic Arnold Haskell dubbed balletomania. Also in 1933 Lincoln Kirstein persuaded Balanchine to leave Europe and establish the School of American Ballet in New York.

Classical ballet, modern dance, and *Dance Magazine* were up and running, and while I myself was only toddling (I started paying serious attention to dance in 1943, my first world premiere being Ashton's *The Quest* that same year), *Dance Magazine* had already recorded a whole world of dance. As for me, I began to write professionally in 1950, and made my first hookup with *Dance Magazine* in 1955 as its monthly London correspondent. Neither of us has ever looked back, except with a certain nostalgia.

What a period for dance this has been. Maurice Béjart (also the same age as *Dance Magazine*—Happy Birthday, Maurice!) once said that if the 19th century was the century of opera (and theatrically it was), then the 20th century was the century of dance. And the 21st? Too early to tell—something wildly technological no doubt. We'll know a bit better when we're 100. Meanwhile for the past 80, dance has been twinkling in its own spotlight.

And the highlights of that spotlight? Gosh, goody-gumdrops! A list of the major dancers and choreographers could comfortably fill the column, but I would refer you to "80 Great Moments" on page 52. What I would say has characterized dance during the days of our twinned lives has been fusion and eclecticism. Theatrical dance has seen not only inventive alternatives to classical ballet, but also a thirdstream fusion of ballet and modern dance.

And we have also seen a geographical fusion. Ethnic dance has emerged more strongly, not simply as a social pastime, but also a theatrical art, while theatrical dance has spread its wings to embrace the globe. In places where theater dance once hardly existed, it now flourishes. And in 1927, in ballet at least, there was Russia and the West. In 1956 I reviewed the first visits of Soviet ballet in these very pages. Now, there is no Soviet ballet, but we have learned from Russia and Russia has learned from us, and American modern dance has invaded St. Petersburg's Maryinsky Theater. Japan and China dance *Swan Lake*, while we dance—Terpsichore above knows what we dance! But it's been, all 'round, a great 80 years.

So, happy birthday to both of us! Now let's get on with the next 80.

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