

A photograph of a dancer in a pink dress performing in a classical architectural setting with columns and vines. The dancer is seen from behind, with her arms raised in a graceful pose. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, creating a dramatic and artistic atmosphere. The background features large, fluted columns and climbing vines, suggesting a grand, historical building.

Lori Belilove

D
The Isadora Duncan
Dance Company

... today's leading exponent of (the) legacy.

Backstage 2007




Maria Vittoria K. Pinocchio



THE DANCER OF THE FUTURE

will be one whose body and soul have grown so harmoniously together that the natural language of that soul will have become the movement of the human body. The dancer will not belong to a nation but to all humanity. She will not dance in the form of nymph, nor fairy, nor coquette, but in the form of woman in her greatest and purest expression. From all parts of her body shall shine radiant intelligence, bringing to the world the message of the aspirations of thousands of women. She shall dance the freedom of women – with the highest intelligence in the freest body.

ISADORA DUNCAN



What speaks to me is that Isadora Duncan was inspired foremost by a passion for life, for living soulfully in the moment.

LORI BELILOVE



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Lori Belilove at Temple of Wings, Berkeley, California, photo by Margaretta K. Mitchell

Inside Front Cover:
Lori Belilove, photo by Rose Eichenbaum

On Page 1:
Isadora Duncan, photo by Arnold Genthe

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THE ISADORA DUNCAN DANCE FOUNDATION

HISTORY, VISION, OVERVIEW



The Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation (IDDF) was founded by third generation Duncan dancer, Lori Belilove to expand public awareness and understanding of the legendary American dancer Isadora Duncan, the undisputed visionary icon of American modern dance and her impact on the art of the dance. Isadora Duncan, “the feminine feminist,” expounds Belilove, “challenged the world to rethink living and left her mark as an internationally famous performer and choreographer, innovator, feminist, educator, author, philosopher.”

Under the artistic direction of Lori Belilove, the Foundation brings the unique vitality of Isadora’s dance and philosophy to audiences around the world. Belilove’s direct lineage and prestigious performing career have earned her an international reputation as the premier interpreter and ambassador of the dance of Isadora Duncan. Belilove was trained by first and second generation Duncan dancers who performed with Isadora and studied at the Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan Schools in Germany, France, Russia, and America.

The Foundation maintains a Performing Wing, offering public performances by the resident performing company, Lori Belilove & The Isadora Duncan Dance Company, an Educational Wing, offering educational programs that train future generations of Duncan dancers and teachers, and an Archival and Historical Wing, which supports the documentation and preservation of the Foundation’s archival collections.

Breathing new life into Isadora’s legendary solos and group works through public performances and residencies, The Foundation’s resident performing company is dedicated to nurturing creative new choreography while keeping Isadora’s original works alive as priceless jewels of American modern dance.



Photo by:



THE THREE WINGS OF THE ISADORA DUNCAN DANCE FOUNDATION

I. THE PERFORMING COMPANY

"This is Duncan dancing of unusual vigor, physical weight and whole-heartedness. The dancers stood out for their lyrical, beautifully shaped arms and hands... emotions and gestures rose out of the dancing rather than any look of acting. Throughout the program one felt much closer to (Duncan) the artist than to the romantic legend." – Jennifer Dunning, The New York Times



The company performs over 80 authentic dances that highlight the unique qualities of Isadora Duncan's repertoire, from the early lyrical pieces to the tragic solos, with a purity hailed by the international press.

The all-female company is a spirited ensemble of highly trained and educated dancers; moreover, each member has received private coaching from noted Duncan authorities. They are distinguished by their deeply felt connection to the art of Isadora and to Artistic Director Lori Belilove's interpretive vision and aesthetic sense. As a creative team, the troupe delves into new artistic territory as it explores ways to deliver the essence of Duncan into the 21st Century.

The Company's programs are conceived, developed and realized by Lori Belilove for contemporary audiences. The programs weave the life story of Isadora Duncan together with dances from her repertoire and contemporary stagings. Further, Lori Belilove, inspired by Duncan's technique and philosophy, collaborates with musicians, costume and scene designers, composers, filmmakers and multi-media artists in the creation of new contemporary works. Our workshops, teacher training, and certification programs prepare future generations of dancers and teachers to carry on the Duncan legacy. Our educational and community outreach programs reach students and audiences of diverse cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, and economic statuses in the United States and abroad.

The Company has toured widely in the United States and Canada, Mexico, South America, Russia, South Korea and throughout Europe, in diverse settings ranging from performing arts centers, museums, outdoor festivals, and dance events to college and university residencies. The Company has toured Cologne, Aachen, and Bonn, in Germany, and appeared at the Design Exchange in Toronto, Canada with the Baroque Ensemble. The Company toured to Hungary performing at the Theater of the Russian Army and, in 2002 at the Urania Theater (where Isadora made her 1902 debut) in Budapest.



The New Yorker, The New York Times, The Smithsonian, Dance Magazine, Dance Spirit, Dance Teacher Now, Ballet Internationale, Dancer Magazine (Brazil), The Greek-American, Dance Australia, Korean Times have published articles, photo spreads and interviews. In America, Brazil, Greece and Russia, Lori Belilove and other company members have been featured in TV specials and film documentaries.

On their home turf in New York City, the troupe has performed seasons at The Ailey Citigroup Theater, The Duke on 42nd Street, Symphony Space, The Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College, Whitney Museum of American Art, Carnegie Recital Hall, Judson Memorial Church Theater, 92nd Street Y, and has made guest appearances at numerous dance festivals around the country. The Company is also known for their intimate and well-attended Salon Series, hosted at the Foundation's studio in the Chelsea neighborhood. Often, Salon Series are combined with residencies, which include lectures, workshops, or master classes. The Company's performances range from evening-length programs in proscenium theaters to salon performances presented in intimate settings.

"Isadora Duncan is one of America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures, as selected by the Dance Heritage Coalition, and Lori Belilove & The Isadora Duncan Dance Company is the pre-eminent Duncan dance company performing in the world today."

- Cynthia Gregory, former Ballerina, American Ballet Theater



THE THREE WINGS OF THE ISADORA DUNCAN DANCE FOUNDATION

II. THE SCHOOL

“Lori Belilove, the artistic director of this soulfully polished company has maintained a phenomenal high standard of clean line, passion, grace, and kinetic transcendence for decades. No wonder she has been hailed by Janice Ross of the Oakland Tribune as ‘...one of the most impassioned and authentic Duncan interpreters around.’ Dancing through the spirit of Isadora Duncan’s system of naturalism requires the honesty of spiritual vulnerability—affirming life and the joy to be alive. Lori Belilove seems to possess an uncanny ability to train young dancers to affirm life through the spirit of Isadora Duncan.”

– Arthur Wilson, Attitude Magazine, 2009



ABOUT OUR CLASSES

As taught by Artistic Director Lori Belilove, Associate Artistic Director Cherlyn Smith, and members of the teaching faculty, Duncan Dance is made accessible to all ages and skill levels. This dance form sets itself apart with its unique musicality and flowing movement. All classes begin with a series of Duncan gestures and movements that expand upward and outward from the chest (at the point of the solar plexus) to flow through the entire body. Dance phrases from the original repertory of Isadora Duncan follow, as do studies in dramatic themes, gestures, improvisation, and basic vocabulary. At the barre, students learn Duncan leg swings, plies, and fluid body circles. The strongest focus of the class is based on the dancing, running, sliding, skipping, polka, waltz, high lift and flying leaps the basic vocabulary of the Duncan technique. The Duncan technique, developed from the natural movements of walking, running, skipping, and jumping, and emphasizing the seamless flow from one movement to the next, and serves as an ideal conduit for developing artistic voices.

The Isadora Duncan Dance School provides educational programs with on-going technique classes, intensive workshops, basic teacher training, and apprenticeship programs with The Company, as well as certification programs in Basic and Advanced Studies in the Dance of Isadora Duncan. Our workshops and master classes give dancers a kinesthetic knowledge of the training demands and standards of the Duncan aesthetic. Classes include floor, barre, center, and movement combinations improvisation, partnering, and excerpts of Isadora Duncan dances. Lori Belilove and company members are available to teach and coach Duncan repertory for other companies and performing ensembles. Packages include solo and/or group repertory and reconstruction kits with music, photos, reviews, notes on historical context, lighting, and costume designs. Our K-12 school program has been developed as an interdisciplinary educational package of residencies that introduce the beauty and physicality of Isadora Duncan dance. Isadora and The Healing Arts is an interactive mind/body/spirit program



that focuses on the healthful benefits of Duncan dance. Participants are guided to move to the cadences of classical music, an experience that increases vitality and instills hope and reduces stress.

Teacher Training Seminars are offered for educators in the basic technique and repertory of Duncan and includes a laboratory class with hands-on experience with children and young adults. Educational materials include visual handouts, music, DVDs, and lesson plans. The Duncan Foundation is also involved in successful community outreach and residency activities throughout the country and on international tours.



THE BELILOVEABLES, RESIDENT JUNIOR COMPANY

“Seeing the Beliloveables perform restores my faith in humanity.”

Audrey Cozzarin, artist

TRAINING YOUNG DUNCAN DANCERS

In the tradition of Isadora Duncan’s Isadorables, Ms. Belilove has established a young performing company known as The Beliloveables, young dancers training to be artists within the Duncan style. Selected for their grace and energetic spirit, they work as an ensemble, training in technique, improvisational studies, and the rich, multi-faceted choreographic repertoire of Isadora Duncan, all of which provide them with a broad education in modern dance. With fresh eyes and playful hearts, they are giving new life to Isadora’s work, and just as she once did, astonishing audiences with their simplicity and honesty of movement, and their lack of gimmicks and commercial enterprise. Through them, the vigor and relevance of Duncan dance is being seen anew.





THE THREE WINGS OF THE ISADORA DUNCAN DANCE FOUNDATION

III. THE HISTORICAL ARCHIVE



During its existence, the Foundation has acquired a variety of historical materials related to Isadora's life and works, largely through donations and gifts. The archives include a collection of fine art comprised of over 70 works, among them rare historical textiles, photographs and personal papers. The archive also houses the Foundation's institutional history of programs, collaborations, video, film, and photo documentation of Lori Belilove and The Company. The collection includes unique materials from second and third-generation Duncan dancers, such as correspondence, rare programs, papers, photographs and drawings. The Foundation is also fortunate to own Isadora Duncan's technique notebook, written in her own hand, as well as first edition and rare books. Archival-quality storage materials ensure the longevity of these objects and materials for future use as part of exhibitions and for merchandising purposes. Through on-going conservation, these treasures of the Duncan legacy will be made available for research for years to come.

PRESERVING ISADORA DUNCAN DANCE

Calling on her direct lineage to guide her, Lori Belilove has scrupulously reconstructed, documented, restaged, and performed the majority of Isadora's works to make them accessible to the dance world and the public at large. Through Lori, Isadora's groundbreaking oeuvre is being preserved for future generations. Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation recordings have been donated to the **New York Public Library of the Performing Arts** and filed with the **Library of Congress**, where they exist to provide a permanent digital archive of the repertory and support the preservation of the visionary legacy of the mother of modern dance, Isadora Duncan.

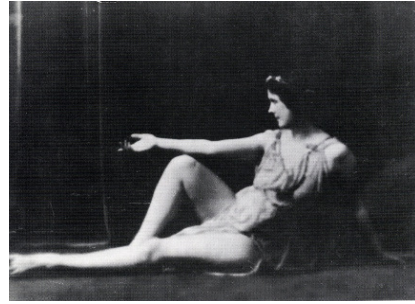
“... the woman who put the Modern into Modern Dance.”

Jack Anderson, dance critic

“When we dance Isadora, we dance with the whole world. Our planet needs that.”

Alice Bloch, critic and dance teacher,
Dance Magazine, 2008

WHO WAS ISADORA DUNCAN?



Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) was an American pioneer of dance and an important figure in both the arts and history. Known as the “Mother of Modern Dance,” Isadora Duncan was a self-styled revolutionary whose influence spread from American to Europe and Russia, creating a sensation everywhere she performed. Her style of dancing eschewed the rigidity of ballet and she championed freedom coupled with the high ideals of ancient Greece: beauty, philosophy, and humanity. She brought into being a totally new way to dance, and it is this unique gift of Isadora Duncan that the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation endeavors to preserve, present, and protect.



Dancer, adventurer, and ardent defender of the free spirit, Isadora Duncan is one of the most enduring influences on contemporary culture and can be credited with inventing what came to be known as Modern Dance. With free-flowing costumes, bare feet, and loose hair, she took to the stage inspired by the ancient Greeks, the music of classical composers, the wind and the sea. Isadora elevated the dance to a high place among the arts, returning the discipline to its roots as a sacred art. Duncan shed the restrictive corsets of the Victorian era and broke away from the vocabulary of the ballet. Stepping out of the dance studio with a vision of the dance of the future, Isadora embraced artists, philosophers, and writers as her teachers and guides.

According to Isadora, the development of her dance was a natural phenomenon—not an invention, but a rediscovery of the classical principles of beauty, motion, and form. Her dances were born of the impulse to embrace life’s bittersweet challenges, meeting destiny and fate head-on in her own whirlwind journey, filled with both tragedy and ecstasy. She was determined to “dance a different dance,” telling her own life story through abstract, universal expressions of the human condition.

Shocking some audience members and inspiring others, Isadora posed a challenge to the prevailing orthodoxies of her time. Isadora joined the struggle for women’s rights. Many saw a glorious vision for the future in Isadora’s choreography. Her influence upon the development of progressive ideas and culture from her time to our own has yet to be measured. She has inspired artists, thinkers, and idealists everywhere.

Isadora Duncan was born in San Francisco, California on May 26, 1877, the youngest of four. Her parents were divorced by 1880 and her mother Dora moved



“Passionate, sincere, moving, impractical, illogical and maddening. But alive...Isadora is a gigantic personality.”

Agnes DeMille, choreographer



with her children to Oakland, where she struggled to make ends meet as a piano teacher. Mrs. Duncan spent her evenings reading aloud to her “Clan Duncan”, the works of Shakespeare, Browning, Shelley, Keats, Dickens, Ingersoll and Whitman, all of which sowed the seeds of artistic inspiration in her youngest child, Isadora. In her early years, Isadora attended school but found it stifling and dropped out at the age of ten to be self-educated at the Oakland public library under the guidance of poet-laureate Ina Coolbrith. Ever resourceful, Isadora and her sister Elizabeth earned extra money by teaching dance classes to local children. After a series of ballet lessons at age 9, Isadora proclaimed ballet a school of “affected grace and toe walking,” and quit. Later, in her autobiography *My Life*, Isadora wrote that in her opinion, ballet training resulted in the look and feel of an “articulated puppet... producing artificial mechanical movement not worthy of the soul.”

In contrast, she wrote of her early dance experiences; “As a child, I often ran away alone into the woods or to the beach by the sea, and there I danced. I felt even then that my shoes and my clothes only hindered me. My heavy shoes were like chains; my clothes were my prison. So I took everything off. And without anyone watching me, entirely alone, I danced, naked by the sea. And it seemed to me as if the sea and all the trees were dancing with me.”



As Isadora grew, her gifts as a dancer became apparent to all those around her. In 1895, with a voracious appetite for art and life, Isadora traveled first to Chicago, and then to New York with her reluctant yet supportive mother. When she was 18, Isadora was hired as a dancer to join the cast of a theater company directed by the world-famous Augustin Daly. Isadora grew disheartened when she realized that the dance was considered a decorative diversion on Daly’s stage. She broke away from New York City in 1899 and moved to Europe to continue developing her art.

During her youth in San Francisco, Isadora had already formulated her signature movement style. As she matured, she developed her choreography and started setting her dances to early Italian music, with costumes and dance motifs inspired by Renaissance paintings and ancient Greek myths. As a “California novelty” Duncan was invited to perform for salons and garden parties by wealthy patrons of the arts, including Lady Astor in New York and Mrs. Joseph Campbell in London. She was often met with opposition and ridicule. One society lady is known to have remarked, “If my daughter dressed like Miss Duncan I would lock her up in the attic!” Isadora struggled financially but rejected invitations to perform in vaudeville circuit variety shows.



Eventually, this original and intrepid Californian caught the attention of the Hungarian press. In 1902 her debut performances in Budapest with a full orchestra were a critical success and ran sold-out for 30 days. Her encore was Johann Strauss’s popular and intoxicating waltz *The Blue Danube*.

What mattered in Isadora’s Hellenic dances was not the Greek themes or the gauzy costumes, but the uninhibited vitality, the sense of a glorious nakedness.”

Lewis Mumford, Cultural Critic

Within two years of performing original choreography, Duncan had achieved both notoriety and success. At this point, she could afford to take her spiritual pilgrimage to Greece, realizing her life’s dream to touch the sacred marble of the Acropolis and steep herself in the ancient mysteries of Greek art and architecture.

In 1905, Isadora settled in Gruenwald outside of Berlin and opened her first dance school. She subsidized the entire establishment with proceeds from her tours. Along with her sister Elizabeth, she started training the young dancers who would become her performing company, “The Isadorables,” as dubbed by the press. Initially, she enrolled twenty girls and boys, but her effort to include boys was unsuccessful and was finally dropped due to a lack of funds.

By this time, Isadora had begun to achieve celebrity status among the artistic and cultural illuminati of her day. Auguste Rodin, Michel Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, and Gertrude Stein all paid tribute to her in sculpture, choreography, and poetry. When the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées was constructed in 1913, Antoine Bourdelle sculpted Isadora’s image for the facade and murals in the auditorium.

Duncan had vowed never to marry, but out of wedlock, she had a daughter named Deirdre whose father was the famous set designer, Edward Gordon Craig. Although their passionate love affair ended after several years, he was to remain her lifelong friend. Paris Singer, the wealthy heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune, fathered her second child, Patrick. Singer underwrote the founding and operation of another of Duncan’s second school prior to World War I in Bellevue, just outside of Paris. Later, in 1913, Deirdre and Patrick drowned with their nanny as their car rolled into the river Seine. Isadora was devastated. Her dances *Mother* and *Marche Funebre*, featuring music by Scriabin and Chopin respectively, were inspired by her loss and conveyed her heartbreak on a universal level.

Picking up the pieces, Isadora retreated to Italy to spend time with her friend Eleanora Duse, and started work on choreography set to Schubert’s 9th Symphony and Tchaikovsky’s 6th Symphony. Between 1916 and 1920, she performed solo and toured extensively across Europe and America, including one sojourn to South America.

Isadora was greatly taken with the social and political revolution that led to the creation of the Soviet Union. Believing that she could contribute to the development of a free and heroic society, Duncan followed her conviction and passion to Moscow in 1921 to make arrangements with the new government to found a new school of dance. She longed to “give her art in exchange for a free school,” and to “teach a thousand children.” Operating the Moscow school with help from Isadorable, Irma Duncan, Isadora experienced one of her most artistically prolific and critically successful periods. Timeless and mature works including *The Revolutionary* with music by Scriabin and a suite of dances set to Russian work songs which communicate her fury at social injustice, her empathy with human suffering, and her faith in the power of perseverance to overcome obstacles. In Moscow, Isadora met the young poet Sergei Esenin (and broke her previous vow to never marry) by marrying him in order that he might be allowed to travel with her during a tour of America. America denounced Isadora’s outspoken love of Russia but Duncan was unrepentant: “Yes, I am a revolutionist,” she said to the press, “All true artists are revolutionists.”

Isadora Duncan’s death was as dramatic as her life. On September 14, 1927, she encountered a young driver in Nice, France and suggested he take her for a spin in his open-air Bugatti sports car. As the car took off,

“She emphasized the connectedness of body and soul at a time when links between human beings, their work, and the land were being severed and Victorian prudery shaped moral law.”

Deborah Jowitt

she reportedly shouted to her friends, “Adieu, mes amis, je vais a la gloire!” — “Goodbye, my friends, I go to glory!” Moments later, her trailing shawl became entangled in the rear wheel, breaking her neck instantly.

Despite Duncan’s untimely death, her legacy continues to inspire contemporary artists and boundary-breaking minds around the world. Early in Isadora’s career, sculptor Laredo Taft had described her as “Poetry personified. She is not the tenth muse but all nine muses in one.” And so it was. There are over 40 books about Isadora Duncan, countless drawings, paintings, and sculptures, two major motion pictures, a dozen TV documentaries, and several plays, and poems.

HOW ISADORA REVOLUTIONIZED DANCE

Isadora opened our minds to a new way of experiencing theatrical dance. Before her innovations, dance in America was limited to ballet imported from Europe, vaudeville, circus acts, pantomime, and folk dancing. Concert dance, as a creative art form, did not exist.

Isadora strove to free the dance from all “hind bound conventions”— from the whalebone corsets, tutus, and toe shoes of formal ballet, as well as from the personal abuse that stage dancers endured. Isadora said the school of ballet was “vainly striving against the natural law of gravitation.” She felt that ballet conventions not only deformed the body and restricted artistic expression but that they compromised personal freedom. “She denied that a dancer needed men to direct her, train her, guide her, clothe her, shape her body and assign her roles that trivialized her utterly and left her powerless and expendable,” wrote Peter Kurth in his 2002 biography *Isadora: A Sensational Life*. Isadora later claimed, to the astonishment of all, that her greatest dance masters were Beethoven, Nietzsche, and Wagner.

Isadora was inspired by the primal forces of nature. She studied the ripple of waves and the swaying of trees in the wind. She wrote, “Of all the movement which gives us delight and satisfies the soul’s inner sense of movement, that of the waves of the sea seems to me the finest. This great wave movement runs through all Nature... sound and light travel in waves. The motion of water, wind, trees and plants progresses in waves. The flight of a bird and the movements of all animals follow lines like undulating waves.” Her own dance movements flowed organically from one into the next. She was deeply inspired by ancient Greek art and culture, and admired the harmonious beauty of the human form found in Greek statues and vase paintings (and adopted her own version of their tunics).

Using the solar plexus and the torso as the generating center of her movements, Duncan created powerful physical drama in her walking, running, skipping, and jumping. Her kneeling, rising and reclining movements were groundbreaking expressions of hope that promised rebirth. So successfully did Isadora’s technique convey a natural and uplifting beauty that many critics incorrectly presumed that she had no technique at all. Isadora integrated athleticism into her approach to dance that was wholly American: independent, brave and free. Duncan’s choreography also incorporated familiar elements from the folk and social dances of her time, including the polka and the waltz.

ISADORA’S DREAM – A FREE SCHOOL

Isadora loved art, music, history, and philosophy. She was a passionate critic of contemporary society, culture, and education. In all of the schools that she founded and operated, her policy was that no national or social discrimination would be used in the process of selecting pupils. Duncan’s motives and methods were revolu-

tionary and uplifting. She said, “To dance is to live – what I want is a school of life, for the riches of man are in his Soul and his Imagination.” During negotiations with the Soviet government in 1921 she proclaimed;

“Give me a thousand children, and, in five years I will return to you beauty and riches beyond imagining. I will teach them to dance like gods.”

DOCUMENTING ISADORA DANCES – THE LEGACY

Many visual artists including August Rodin, Henri Matisse, Antoine Bourdelle, and José Clara successfully portrayed Isadora in her dance. Photographers, using cameras that required subjects to remain still, sought to capture Isadora’s image. As Max Eastman recalled: “It was never easy to coax Isadora Duncan into a photographer’s studio. Like a wild and wise animal, she fled from those who sought to capture the essence of her—which was motion—by making her stand still.”

The early cinema rendered dance movement jerky and spasmodic. Even when motion picture technology advanced to add sound, Isadora distrusted the medium and protected any compromises in the documentation of her work by refusing to be filmed. She told biographer Victor Seroff “I would not consent to lower my art now by appearing in the motion pictures where you are entirely at the mercy of the script writers, director, and producers. I can easily imagine what they would do, should they decide to film my memoirs!”

Isadora’s refusal to be filmed created a void in the historical record of her art and fueled the notion in later decades that either her work died with her or she was so free and spontaneous that she didn’t have a consistent style. In his book *The Dance through the Ages*, Walter Sorell wrote, “Isadora Duncan was the soul of spontaneity. She left no work that could be recreated on the stage, no school of technique, no pupil of distinction.” Such unfounded notions have been perpetuated in many dance history books.

Isadora never directly documented her own choreographies or techniques. To date we have only one 7-second film clip of her movement, uncovered recently. Fortunately, the dancers who trained in Duncan’s first school in Germany stayed with Isadora and remained Duncan Dancers throughout their lifetime. They embraced her work with their whole being. The six Isadorables; Irma, Anna, Maria-Therese, Erika, Margot, and Lisa, were able to teach, train and pass the technique and repertory on in one unbroken line. This oral tradition continues today with the activities of Lori Belilove & The Isadora Duncan Dance Company, junior company The Beliloveables, and other Duncan dancers and teachers worldwide.

ISADORA, THE MUSE OF MODERNISM

Duncan's legacy has survived through generations of dancers stemming from her first school in 1905, and is alive as a creative force today. Over the decades, Isadora Duncan's genius inspired other dancers and choreographers to create their own individual styles within the field of post-modern and contemporary dance. Isadora birthed a dance revolution. Artists of the Ballet Russe, namely Mikhail Fokine, Sergei Diaghalev, and Vaslav Nijinsky were influenced by Isadora's first performances in St. Petersburg in 1905. Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham, and Jose Limon specifically acknowledged her vision and creativity, while following

their own calling. Jose Limon created a work in tribute to her as did Sir Frederick Ashton in his *Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan* (1975).

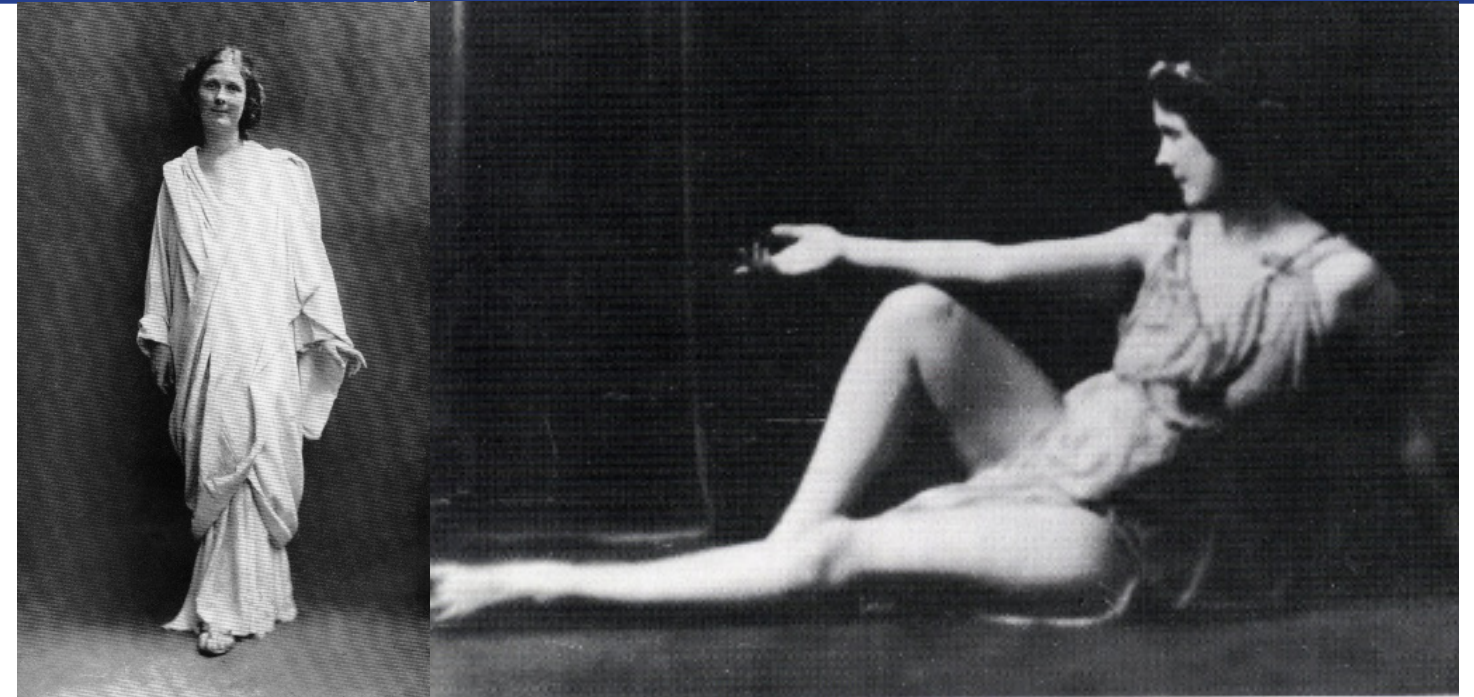
Naturally, contemporary choreographers and dance artists including Anna Halprin, Paul Taylor, Erick Hawkins, Pina Bausch, Gabrielle Roth, and Mark Morris cite Isadora's importance. They continue to be influenced by her profound theories, strength, and uncompromising artistic principles. The purity of her vision is sure to inspire generations to come.

Isadora's influence was not limited to the stage. Artists were breaking new ground at the turn of the century, searching for new forms of expression and inspiration—They found a touchstone in Isadora Duncan, the outspoken, freedom-loving American. Throughout the world, Isadora inspired poets, writers, artists and sculptors, as well as musicians and dancers.

ISADORA, THE AMERICAN

Isadora was a revolutionary. She would often close her evening-long solo concerts with fiercely impassioned speeches defending women's rights, excoriating poverty and worldly injustices, and demanding the universal liberation of the human soul. In her insistence on a better way of life for all, she was a true American. Isadora was well known for her post-performance speeches "The Dance of the Future" and "I See America Dancing" which she later turned into published essays.

She wrote "I See America Dancing" in response to Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing," which was a glimpse into the future, one that foretold America's innovation in music and the arts. "I too had a vision, a vision of America dancing," she wrote, predicting "first, America's music will be something different...it will gush forth from the great stretches of Earth, rain down from the vast sky spaces...long-legged strong boys and girls will dance to this music - a striking upward tremendous mounting, a powerful mounting above the pyramids of Egypt and beyond the Parthenon of Greece, in an expression of Beauty and Strength such as no civilization has ever known. That will be America dancing."



“Meeting Lori Belilove can be eerie... Both Belilove and Duncan were born in the San Francisco Bay area. Both were raised as free spirits, encouraged early to love the arts and nature. Both traveled extensively with their families through Europe. Both drew inspiration from classical Greece. And both were passionate believers that dance begins deep within the soul, not strictly at the barre.”

Robin Reid, Smithsonian, 2008

WHO IS LORI BELILOVE?



“Lori Belilove is arguably the best, most devoted Duncan interpreter in America. When she performs Duncan’s dances, you see the glorious sweep through space, the oppositional skips, the swooping torso. You see the emotional range, from breathy joy through seductiveness, to earthbound despair.”

Wendy Perron,
Dance Magazine, April 2006



Lori Belilove, the Founder, Artistic Director and choreographer of The Isadora Duncan Dance Company & Foundation, is recognized around the world as the premier interpreter and ambassador of the dance of Isadora Duncan. She is sought after as a unique contemporary artist who understands the essence of Isadora. Known as a solo dance artist for her interpretations of Duncan’s signature solos and staging of Duncan’s group masterpieces, she has also been recognized for creating powerful, contemporary works in her own voice. The purity, timelessness, authentic phrasing, and musicality of Duncan dance has been passed down to Lori through a direct line of Isadora Duncan dancers. Among her first teachers were first-generation Duncan dancers Anna Duncan and Irma Duncan, two of the six adopted artistic daughters of Isadora. She was also extensively trained and coached for performance by second-generation Duncan Dancers Julia Levien, Hortense Kooluris, and Mignon Garland. Ms. Belilove is considered the living embodiment of Isadora’s grace, power, and mastery of weight.

Lori received a B.F.A. in dance, religion, and classical studies from Mills College. Since the age of twelve, she has pursued her passion for modern dance, training primarily in the San Francisco Bay Area and New York. For years she trained in the modern technique of Doris Humphrey as a private student of both Eleanor King and Ernestine Stodelle. Lori Belilove is the leading dancer in the award-winning PBS documentary *Isadora Duncan: Movement From the Soul*, narrated by stage and screen actress Julie Harris. Lori has toured extensively both nationally and internationally in Europe, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Korea, and West Africa. As a master teacher, she has held residencies at such distinguished institutions as The Juilliard School, Harvard University, Smith College, Ohio State University, Princeton University, New York University, Northwestern University, among others.



“I never truly thought of (Duncan) as a serious dancer – one with a technique, a discipline, choreography and substance. Then I met Lori Belilove and my eyes were opened. My heart and my mind were opened, too. I began to appreciate Isadora’s art.”

Cynthia Gregory, former prima ballerina,
American Ballet Theater

“In ‘Mother,’ Belilove brings a quiet authority to movement in which each gesture falls softly into place, and her glance seems to look back calmly upon a landscape familiar with suffering. Dressed in whispering veils tinged with mourning, she carries flowers to the far corner of the stage and seems to recall leading her children to this place, arms circling them and pressing them to her breast, then loosening and releasing their spirits to the air. In stillness her crisp figure is unforgettable.”

Robert Johnson, *Star Ledger*, 2010

“It’s not just another night at the theater, but something from another world.”

Gia Kourlas, *The New York Times*

“...this is Duncan dancing of unusual vigor, physical weight and whole-heartedness.”

Jennifer Dunning, *The New York Times*

AN INTERVIEW

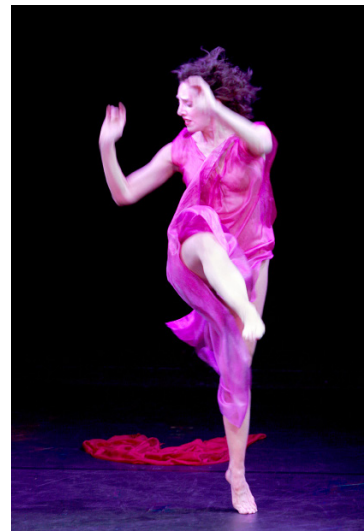


How did you learn about Isadora?

I was raised in Berkeley, California. I was a tomboy, athletic and strong, and I loved the outdoors. My parents exposed me to the arts and encouraged me to develop my own artistic sensibility. I was free to pursue often messy, time-consuming projects and explore my ideas. Dance appealed to me almost from the beginning. I was about six when I was brought to a ballet class, but something about it wasn't right for me. A few years later, a U.C. Berkeley student who was living with us introduced me to modern dance. And then, when I was twelve, my whole family toured Europe. I didn't know it then, but this vacation would open me to the world of Isadora Duncan.

That summer, we traveled for months in a Volkswagen bus, visiting England, France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, and Yugoslavia. My mother had drawn up an extensive itinerary of places to see and things to do. I think we visited almost every church and museum. The last part of our trip was to Athens, Greece, where a family friend suggested we look up a remarkable man named Vassos Kanellos. Vassos had been a dancer, painter, and scholar all his life. He had trained with the famous Russian master Mikhail Fokine, but before that his inspiration had been Isadora Duncan. He met the whole Duncan family when they came to Greece in 1902 to build what they called “the palace of Agamemnon” as a home and temple for the dance in the outskirts of Athens. Isadora taught him, along with other young boys, and later presented them on stage in Vienna in an experimental production of a tragic Greek play by Aeschylus. When we met, he still had Isadora's photo, framed with a lock of her hair. It was an amazing visit. I guess I asked him interesting, maybe even precocious questions, because my brother remembers Vassos saying, “Lori, you must be the next Isadora.” He invited me then and there to study with him. I was so surprised I couldn't answer but I was intrigued by his offer and excited with the idea of becoming a dancer.

I picked up Isadora's autobiography *My Life* the minute we got home and became utterly fascinated with her. I felt connected to her spirit and passion for life, but more than anything else I wanted to find her dance. I had to know her dance. She had described her art so clearly that I was intent on finding it. So, between ages twelve and sixteen, I danced. I danced in pursuit of Isadora and the freedom of movement that she wrote about.



“Lori Belilove's grace and talent are inspiring and educational. This experience has been life changing for me.”

Karen Heusinger,
dance student 2008



There were no classes in Isadora's technique at that time so I read everything I could about her. I wondered if her dances had died with her. I searched for her spirit in all my dance classes. I was looking to be nurtured artistically and incorporate my whole being in the dance training process in an Isadorian way. Ultimately, that's what led me back to Athens to study with Mr. Kanellos. After I finished high school, my mother accompanied me to Greece. With my savings, I got an apartment in Athens and trained with him for two years as his private pupil. Isadora taught Kanellos her principles of movement and directed him to research his Greek roots. Mr. Kanellos taught me the basics of Duncan dance as well as his system of ancient Greek Chorodrama, which he developed over the course of his career. I trained in church basements and performed in Greek temples and amphitheatres, and by the sea. We went to archeological sites and museums; it was a total immersion in dance, classical art, mythology, and history.

How did you come to study with Isadora's adopted daughters, the Isadorables?

After I returned to Berkeley, an interview about my unusual dance training was published in a local paper. Mignon Garland, a Duncan dancer who lived in Berkeley, read the article. She got in touch and asked to meet, “a young girl so interested in Isadora.” As it happened, Mignon connected me directly to Isadora's lineage.

Mignon had danced with Irma Duncan and Anna Duncan. Irma and Anna were two of the six dancers adopted by Isadora that made up the group known as The Isadorables. As young dancers they were selected by Isadora to train, perform, tour, and teach her work. My meeting with Mignon was wonderful and she took me on as her private pupil. College was also important to me, so while I was studying with Mignon, I pursued my B.F.A. in dance, religion, and classical studies at Mills College. Soon, I was performing the same dances that Isadora had performed.

Mignon also encouraged me to teach children, so I opened a small school in a back room of my parent's home. It came naturally for me to use Isadora's movement vocabulary as a language for my own dances and class studies. Through Mignon, I was introduced to Irma Duncan, who, at age 76, invited me to come and study with her privately in Santa Barbara. She taught me the strength of the technique and the fullness of the movement. After a year with Irma, I was sent to her former students for further training: namely, Hortense Kooluris, and Julia Levien. Hortense and Julia had also performed with Anna Duncan and Maria Theresa Duncan. They were in New York, and actively teaching a new group of dancers.

At the same time, I was introduced to Anna Duncan, who invited me to start rehearsals with her to participate in her dream project of filming the dances. In those days, Anna worked at Brentano's bookstore and we rehearsed at the original Dance Theater Workshop Studios on 19th Street. Through her continuous encouragement I felt she was imparting the inner workings of Isadora's art to me. The rehearsals were extraordinary because she told me the stories behind the dances. Unfortunately, the film never materialized, but my studies with Anna were invaluable and deepened my commitment to being a Duncan dancer.

Through these women, who were first and second generation Duncan dancers, I had direct access to the Duncan repertory. It was as close as one could get to studying with Isadora herself because all of these Duncan dancers had exclusively trained and performed only Isadora Duncan dance.

In 1975, to commemorate 100 years since Isadora's birth, Julia Levien and Hortense Kooluris founded The Isadora Duncan Centenary Dance Company and started rehearsals. This company's focus was to revive the known dances of Isadora and teach them to the next generation. With support from The New York State Council on the Arts, the Company reintroduced Isadora's work to the dance world prompting a renewed interest. Many of the dances from the repertory we performed hadn't been seen since the 1930's. Julia and Hortense recognized my ability to assimilate Isadora's style and invited me to join as a founding member. I performed as a soloist and principal. I settled in New York, performing, teaching and creating new dances within the Duncan style.

What prompted you to create the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation?

When the Centenary Company dissolved in 1980, I was compelled to carry on the Duncan legacy by creating a center for teaching Isadora's technique, performing her repertory, and maintaining a forum for the creation of new works based on her philosophy. I founded The Isadora Duncan Foundation for Contemporary Dance, Inc. and invited Julia Levien and Hortense Kooluris to join my newly founded organization as honorary lifetime artistic advisors. They wholeheartedly accepted.

At this point I was teaching children and young professional dancers, both men and women. I began exploring lesser-known works from the Duncan repertory, as well as using my students to create new works within the Duncan style. This was a very exciting and meaningful time in my life. Since 1980, when I created the Isadora Duncan Foundation for Contemporary Dance, (currently The Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation), and its performing troupe Lori Belilove & The Isadora Duncan Dance Company, we have achieved an important international presence in the dance community. I give thanks to the audiences, students, and reviewers who have supported our mission to keep her legacy alive. Nothing could be more interesting or gratifying to me. Today, Duncan dance is recognized not just as an innovative force of the last century, but also as a poignant and inspirational dance form for contemporary performers of all ages and audiences everywhere. Isadora has left us priceless jewels of American modern dance.

Have you ever ventured beyond Duncan?

Yes, I have explored many other techniques, from ballet to yoga, from classic modern to release-techniques. I love dance!

I have studied the techniques and performed the works of numerous master choreographers and dancers including Anna Halprin, Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham, José Limon and Merce Cunningham. I gravitated to the Humphrey technique for its stern simplicity, and use of weight and breath as taught to me by Eleanor King and Ernestine Stodelle, both members in the original Humphrey/Weidman Company. I performed in the company of Sin Cha Hong, a movement artist from Korea, whose work was rugged and raw. One summer I studied and performed with Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. I keep exploring new work to gain insight into the depth and craft of dance, and go to performances as often as I can. With a wide training and performing background, I still find myself recommitting to Isadora again and again. Her dances speak to my soul, to my passion for life. The ingenious simplicity of her movements and the glorious musicality have become the vehicle for my own self-expression. I love teaching, lecturing, restaging, and above all, performing her work.

Regarding training, I regularly complement my dance training with other disciplines that help me open my body to the rigors of Duncan. Yoga and ballet and some forms of modern dance are compatible with Duncan, but, it was by learning a variety of breathing and release techniques that I gradually achieved the level of physical artistry that I dreamt of. I owe it to my training in ballet and yoga with Pamela Pribisco and Leslie Journet, Zena Rommett Floor Barre, White Cloud Yoga, Feldenkrais, and bodywork with Monica and Harmon Hathaway, among others. This has allowed my body to become the supplest of instruments possible. I used these somatic modalities to help me achieve my highest potential.

What makes the experience of dancing Isadora different?

Hard to answer, except that I feel a combined heart/body/spirit expression coming together.

What is required for dancing Isadora's work is an open heart. Today our hurried way of living leaves little time or room for us to be in touch with that intuitive space that connects the body, mind, and spirit. Isadora, without going into any religious doctrine, offers a natural spirituality. When students connect their hearts to their bodies, and feelings to their movements, they start to connect with themselves and with each other. That's when they really start dancing. It happens all the time and it is not sentimental: it is a genuine experience and it can be life changing.

As source material, Isadora's technique, her autobiography and writings, and over 80 of her dances have been passed down to us. Put together, this material confirms that she created a deliberate and distinct art form that is not only technically sophisticated, but, from my perspective, also relies on improvisational studies to keep the movements fresh and alive. Improvisation brings ones' heart, body and soul together.

As a performing artist, Isadora wrote about feeling like an instrument of expression. Isadora opened herself to experiencing a very physical vitality that started by placing her bare feet on the ground and exposing her limbs to the air. She then went inward to feel what she called an inner motor at the solar plexus, where she could access her soul. She did not feel she created a dance style, but that, by moving from her solar plexus where her soul dwelled, she rediscovered the essence of dance. As the dance was passing through her, she was giving it back out to humanity, a kind of reciprocity giving out and receiving back. And I experience this also. Frankly, when I reach that level of self-awareness and selflessness in my dancing, it is bliss.

Isadora brought her own talent, personality, and education to her art form which is natural, yet rigorous and sophisticated. Nothing in her choreographies is left to chance. Many dance troupes have performed her work or created works in her style. Often performers lack the mental frame of reference, or training in the basic vocabulary, and—just as importantly—the physical skills to do Isadora's work justice. Dancers can do the steps and maybe achieve the lines with academic precision, but Isadora didn't call that dancing—and I don't either. Without connecting to the inner vibrancy that is unique to each person, all dancing is dead. When Isadora encountered dancers who merely imitated her, she would ask: "What have I done wrong?" Training in Duncan Dance cultivates the artist—the whole self—and encourages authentic self-expression.

Some think Isadora created dances only for female dancers. But my first Duncan teacher was a man and two of my favorite dance teachers were men. Let the boys come, let men and women of all ages experience the power and vitality. Duncan Dance is organic and healthy for the human body, whether male or female,

young or old, amateur or trained.

Do people ever ask you if you channel Isadora?

Maybe from the controversy and sensationalism of Isadora's life, people wonder why I would dedicate my life to her work. Hmm... I have heard people say there is only a personality or shadow to follow. I don't feel that way- not at all. I never, ever wanted to be Isadora. My life is quite full, thank you!

But, as a young person first exploring her philosophy of the dance and then going and studying with all the wonderful teachers I could find, I reached an ah! ha! moment when all the fragments of the teachings I had received unified in me. There really was no exact coherent whole from my teachers, as they all painted part of the Isadorian picture, with different strengths and viewpoints on how to interpret the legacy. In my process I realized I was not interested in being an archivist or historian with the work. I wanted to experience it, know the truth of its essence as an artist. Something came alive in me as I was studying. It all fell into place and I felt I truly understood her. I could embrace her work and make it mine – it was an experience of artistic synthesis that has remained with me ever since.

What is so special about Isadora's teaching style?

Well, let's back up a minute... Isadora had schools, yes, but she left lots of the daily teaching to her sister Elizabeth and later her accomplished dancer, Irma. Isadora's innovation was to teach the whole dancer as an artist. It is well documented that she inspired her students with imagery and poetry as she taught choreography.

Isadora's work cultivates our own inner well-being, so the mind, spirit and body are all engaged as part of the learning process. In fact, all three are addressed from the very first lesson. Isadora wanted the dancer to awaken their body, mind, and soul to open, breathe, and allowing themselves to move beyond day-to-day stresses. In contemporary terms, it is almost a "be here now" welcome to the body. As Isadora said, "Am I not striving to fuse soul and body into one unified image of beauty?"

Isadora was determined not only to make her art known through her performances and lectures, but to pass it on to students who would keep it alive. At several points in her life she founded schools into which she democratically welcomed students, including orphans and children who were unable to pay for tuition. She viewed these schools as more than academies of dance training, saying, "To dance is to live. What I want is a school of life!"

Her first school was founded in Grunewald, Germany in 1905, and students were chosen from girls who answered a call in the newspapers for "Physically and mentally fit, graceful girls under the age of ten, wishing to be educated in the art of Dance." The selected girls lived together and received a holistic education incorporating not only dance but art, science, literature, music, and history.

From this first school, six dancers were chosen by Isadora to tour and perform with her. Their names were Irma, Anna, Maria-Theresa, Erika, Lisa, and Margot. They grew up with Isadora as their adopted artistic mother, eventually taking her last name legally as their own. As they won success as performers, the press

dubbed them "The Isadorables" and the name stuck.

How did Isadora distinguish dance for the stage from dance for the non-dancer? What did she mean when she said, "To dance is to live, what I want is a school of life?"

After Isadora's death they continued her work by teaching and performing, establishing companies of their own and preserving Isadora's technique and choreography for future generations.

She meant that dance should be a reflection of a dancer's life in all aspects, that we should dance our lives the way Gabrielle Roth 5-Rhythm's work says, "Sweat your prayers."

She asked the young student, "Listen to the music with your soul. Do you not feel an inner self awakening deep within you?" This is how she engaged them, so that they would transcend to a deeper level. These were the first lessons: to go back to the beginning to find something in themselves. Once supported by ideas that ignite the imagination, movements and gestures follow. In her training she wanted to enliven a student's motivational impulses and their imagination. She defined the creative dancer as someone who uses movement to attain transcendence, literally: dance as an expression of something out of "another profounder world," with no religious subtext.

Isadora knew that young people would listen and be most open to her innovative ideas. In starting her schools she selected children who had a sparkling artistic sensibility and physical fortitude. The dancers were often brought to her from broken homes and difficult circumstances. Isadora announced that, "in the selection of pupils, no national or social discrimination will be made." Further she wrote, "Fatherless and motherless children as well as children of uncertain origin are also welcome." This was an incredibly modern idea in this post-Victorian era. Isadora embraced these young dancers and gave them an extraordinary life in the arts.

From everything I read about Isadora and her ideas on education, she stressed the notion that anyone can dance. This concept inspires me to teach open-level classes for anyone interested in experiencing an Isadorian approach to learning and dancing.

What's your overall goal now?

It's always been my goal to keep Isadora's work alive with a contemporary vision. I have spent most of my life investigating the nuances of Isadora's choreography and revitalizing her dances for contemporary audiences. My goal is to bring Isadora Duncan's art to the stage so that everyone can enjoy and appreciate it.

"My dream is to give the Foundation a permanent home in the setting and support of an eminent dance college or institution within the next five years."

- Lori Belilove

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The Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation, established in 1980 by third-generation Duncan dancer Lori Belilove, is dedicated to the preservation and extension of Isadora Duncan's legacy through the performance of her extant repertory, the creation of new work inspired by her technical style and philosophy, the cultivation of research through the use of its rare archival materials, and the fulfillment of educational and community programs which will extend her work to future generations.

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