

# Yesenin's American Wife

Charles Borden Photo: Corbis/RPG

Isadora Duncan will return to Moscow in June, some 82 years after she left the city and her stormy marriage to one of Russia's greatest writers, Sergei Yesenin – at least her spirit will return in the form of Lori Belilove, the founder of the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation in New York. Because of Lori's dedication from childhood to the preservation of Isadora's dance, and their similar backgrounds, some have even suggested that she is actually Isadora's reincarnation. Lori will have a series of performance in Moscow between June 29 and July 6 for the festival *Moskovskoe Deistvo*, some in the building where Isadora's dance school was located on Uliitsa Prechistenka. If Lori is Isadora's reincarnation, one can only wonder where Yesenin is today.



Isadora Duncan is considered by some to be the mother of modern dance. She lived and performed to express the inner spirit of women. She transformed Ancient Greek rituals, with their expressions of beauty and strength, into her dance. The first two decades of the 1900s were not only revolutionary in Russia; the sounds of revolution were beating in other countries, and in culture and the arts. Isadora was part of this artistic revolution.

Isadora first visited Russia briefly before the Russian revolution and made her debut there in the Hall of Nobles, St. Petersburg, in December 1904. Other performances followed in St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1905. She returned to Moscow in 1921 with one of her students from Hamburg, Irma Erich-Grimme, to open a dance school. There she met Yesenin, in the studio and apartment of artist Georgy Yakulov at Malaya Bronnaya 10, a house built in 1903 by Ilya Pigit, the owner of the Ducat tobacco factory. The house had been divided into flats that became artist studios; Yakulov, Konchalovsky, Ryabushinsky, and others worked in this house. This was the time of the *Bubnovy Valet* (Jack of Diamonds) artists group, known as the Russian Cezannists, who met in Konchalovsky's studio. Their first exhibition was staged in 1921.

For Americans, Sergei Yesenin was simply Isadora Duncan's Russian husband; but in Russia, Yesenin was one of the country's greatest poets, a poet of the people, whose simple straightforward verses inspired workers and soldiers. Shortly after the revolution, Yesenin tried to join the Communist party, but he was



