

Dancing East: Three American Votaries  
of Asian Dance

In 1920 there appeared a book entitled Ruth St. Denis: Pioneer and Prophet by Ted Shawn, the husband of the subject. The book was in two volumes, one of text, the other of photographs. It was in a limited edition of 350 copies, each signed by the author and the subject.

In the preface, the author states

Ruth St. Denis completely changed the notion in the American and European mind of Oriental dancing. It was she who rescued this art from the shaking and suggestive, she who gave it great vogue, and now after thirteen years she draws in her train a myriad of disciples and imitators.

Further on he notes,

Today hundreds of young dancers have copied the externals of her art: the music, the scenery, the costuming . . . the very dances themselves.

In this lecture, "Dancing East: Three American Votaries of Asian Dance," we will examine the work of three of the most important of these disciples of Ruth St. Denis--Regini Devi, La Meri, and Xenia Zarina.

St. Denis, Shawn and their mutual creation the Denishawn Company served in the period before 1920 as the inspiration for the American vogue of Oriental dancing. They were joined in this constellation by another book and author, Ananda Coomaraswamy, who was responsible for the