

INTERNATIONAL  
**Herald Tribune**

## **Isadora Duncan Back on Stage**

**By Thomas Quinn Curtiss International Herald Tribune**

Wednesday, February 16, 1994

Isadora Duncan, the rebellious California girl who sought to advance the dancing art with her innovations derived from Greek sculpture, made her debut in Chicago in her early 20s in 1899. Her novel venture was beyond her audiences there and so she left for Europe where she attained great popularity and was acclaimed by Diaghilev and Gordon Craig.

An American playwright, Martin Sherman, has drawn her portrait, all passion spent, in "Quand Elle Dansait" at the Comédie des Champs Elysées (where she often danced in the grande salle).

In this version she is disclosed in her Paris apartment, circa 1922, surrounded by her eccentric entourage and short of money and contracts. She has recently returned from Moscow after the Bolsheviks have seized power. There she had acquired an obstreperous husband, the roaring, drunken peasant poet, Sergei Yesenin, who bullies and beats her when he grows jealous at the arrival of a young composer who hopes to prepare a score for Duncan's next engagement. Others present are a would-be ballerina studying Duncan lessons hopelessly, a woman friend offering unsolicited advice, a German fraulein and a grasping Italian booking agent.

Anny Duperey has adapted the script and undertakes the role of Isadora, conveying its pathos, absurdities and moving flashes of vanished grandeur with extraordinary distinction. As Yesenin never learned English and Isadora knew no Russian, the violent poet, shrewdly cast with Oleg Menshikov, a Moscow actor of repute, recites his verses and insults in his own tongue. There is a touching performance by Catherine Rich as the pupil who can only travesty the Duncan method, while Michèle Moretti as the chatterbox, Louise Vincent as the Teutonic comic maid and Jérôme Berthoud as the naive musician fit their assignments to perfection under Patrice Kerbrat's guidance.