



BIOGRAPHY

Dame Adeline Genée DBE

Dame Adeline had a long and illustrious career as a dancer. Born in Denmark, she had been taught exclusively by her uncle, and received her early stage experience with his touring company. By the age of 15 Genée was already a veteran of five years on the stage, she had danced at the Zentralhallen Theatre at Stettin and at 17 appeared at the Imperial Opera in Berlin. In 1897, at the age of 19, Genée's reputation was such that it earned her an engagement, albeit a provisional one, as a ballerina at the Empire Palace of Varieties in Leicester Square. She remained a star of the Empire ballet for more than 12 years, winning not only the adoration of theatre-goers but also a growing respect that did much to raise the standing of the dancing profession in the general public's estimation.

The first of what has been described as the "Genée Ballets" was a modest production, *The Milliner Duchess*, in 1903. Another Genée Ballet was *Cinderella*, in 1906. Her best-loved role was probably that of Swanhilda in *Coppelia*. Genée's influence on the ballet world did not end with her performing career. She joined Philip Richardson, Edourd Espinosa and other ballet professionals at a series of 'Dancer's circle' dinners and, when a resolution was passed to set up an Association of Teachers of what was then called Operatic Dancing, she was elected President.

Two of its most significant developments were directly due to Genée: Queen Mary's acceptance to become the Association's Patron in 1928, and eight years later, the granting of a Royal Charter which transformed the Association into the Royal Academy of Dancing, known today as the Royal Academy of Dance.

Throughout the Second World War Genée remained at the head of the Academy and worked tirelessly on its behalf. In 1950 her services to ballet were recognised by the honour of a DBE, the first to be bestowed on a member of the dance profession. She retired as President in 1954 but took a healthy interest in the Academy's affairs until her death in 1970.

Today Adeline Genée's name is remembered by the studio at Academy headquarters and by the annual Genée International Ballet Competition.

Taken from *Adeline Genée and her legacy*, Ivor Guest