

**MILESTONES**  
**in the life of François Malkovsky,**  
**1889-1982**

A familiarity with Malkovsky's history and the factors influencing him enables us to analyse the inner coherence of his work.

The choreographies which still exist are testimonials to his creative life; they are its visible part, and reveal an aesthetic, ethical and artistic way of thinking. The process by which they were created is unknown, but texts, photographs and programmes do remain, and they allow us to recreate the context in which the dances were crafted.

François Malkovsky was born into a wealthy family on September 22, 1889 in Bohemia. His father, a judge, introduced him to the observation of flora and fauna; his mother was a musician and singer who had a passion for Schubert. He was the youngest of four children. He studied violin at a very young age--his parents used to bring him to concerts and to the Opera. He had a happy and carefree childhood.

He lost his mother when he was thirteen and a half, his father when he was twenty; he studied engineering in the Forestry Commission and took singing classes in Prague. Unwilling to enter military service in the Austrian Army, which occupied Bohemia at the time, he came to Paris in 1910.

In Paris, Malkovsky continued studying singing and philosophy while working in a bank to earn his living. He had perfect knowledge of the works of Wagner.

During World War I, he joined the Foreign Legion. He was injured and discharged. "We were cannon-fodder," he later recalled.

Upon his return, he attended the Raymond Duncan Academy<sup>1</sup>, where he studied "integral gymnastics," learned to weave and deepened his understanding of Greek art.

*"If we undertake the creation of a new kind of gymnastics, it is not only because we wish to increase or conserve our energies, nor is it so that all parts of our body will work in harmony with each other, but rather because we wish to be*



Drawing for a recital, Nov. 22, 1922

*in harmony with the movements of our soul, which is itself in contact with divine movement, so that we might truly feel, truly understand and truly fulfil our role in the Universe.”*

Raymond Duncan

What were the mutual influences? He never mentioned them.

We know little about Malkovsky's first encounter with dance, but one thing is certain: between 1912 and 1925, he saw Isadora Duncan dance. He would later say, with gratitude and admiration, *“She showed me what I had to seek.”*

After Isadora's death on September 14, 1927, Malkovsky wrote this text for the magazine *Vivre* in October 1927:

*“The one whose dancing was all Prayer, Love and Joy will dance no more. Relentless fate has snatched her from her ecstasy. May we piously keep, in our heart of hearts, the divine blossoming visions of our communion with Her. Her painful life has come to an end. We have come with the crowd, humble, silent....*

*To the strains of the music of Beethoven, Bach, Chopin and Handel...the flames transformed her body into a light white cloud which floated into infinity.”* Though he was never close to Isadora, he nevertheless understood her message, no doubt because it contained echoes of his own quest.

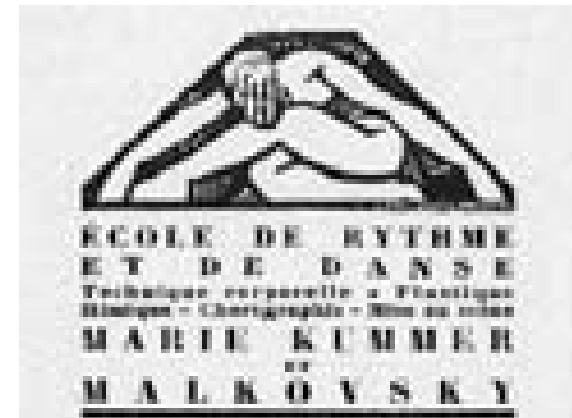


Isadora's students, by do Rego Monteiro

Malkovsky was, for a certain time, an associate of Marie Kummer, as can be seen in the invitation designed by Jan and Joël Martel, as well as in this excerpt published by Fernand Divoire in *Pour la Danse*:

*“Born in Geneva, a student of Jacques Dalcroze and a dedicated rhythmician, she was obliged, when faced with evidence of rhythmical errors, to painfully seek her way towards another truth.*

*The natural value of musical rhythm was at stake; she was*



Invitation by Jan and Joël Martel