

Margaret Morris became involved with a bold, but short-lived venture in Scotland. In 1960, she founded a full-scale company which she called the Scottish National Ballet, a choice of name which horrified some partisans of classical ballet and modern dance alike. The programs of Morris's new company featured both traditional Scottish songs and dances and contemporary pieces by Morris and other choreographers. Among the premieres was *Gods in the Gorbals*, choreographed by Morris and Bruce McClure, which showed ancient Celtic gods coming to the Gorbals, a notorious Glasgow slum.

The Scottish National Ballet, which remained almost entirely unknown outside Scotland, did not survive beyond 1961. Modern dance still seemed to be a suspicious foreign artistic interloper. John Ashford, who became director of the Place Theatre in London in 1986, is not the only Briton to confess, "We are very xenophobic on this island."²

Yet outside influences did seep into the British dance scene. Dance companies from abroad regularly visited Britain before and after World War II. Although most of them were balletic, they served as reminders of how varied dance can be. American modern dancers also visited Britain. Martha Graham's company made its London debut in 1954. Although it stimulated a small and articulate band of critics and dancegoers, it mystified other people and its performances were sparsely attended. But when Graham returned in 1963, she received a considerably more favorable reception, and the houses were nearly all sold out. The companies of Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, and Alvin Ailey also visited Britain in the early 1960s.

And suddenly, unexpectedly, modern dance became a thriving British art.

In 1966, Ballet Rambert completely transformed itself. Ballet Rambert was the creation of Marie Rambert (1888–1982), a Polish-born dancer and teacher who began her career as an enthusiast for "free" dance. She idolized Duncan and studied with Dalcroze.

It was Rambert's knowledge of eurhythmics that brought her into the ballet world. She was hired by Serge Diaghilev in 1913 to help the choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky analyze Stravinsky's complex score for *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Working with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, she developed a new respect for ballet as an art (and, she later confessed, fell secretly in love with Nijinsky). After settling in London and marrying the playwright Ashley Dukes, she established her own ballet school in 1920. Its students gave occasional performances

throughout the 1920s; in 1931, when her husband opened a tiny playhouse called the Mercury Theater, the Rambert troupe began to perform on a regular basis.

Rambert may have been a convert to ballet, but she never lost the modern dancer's faith in individual creativity, and she nurtured and guided a remarkable number of gifted choreographers, among them Frederick Ashton, Antony Tudor, Andrée Howard, Frank Staff, and Walter Gore. Inevitably, however, her discoveries would desert the Mercury for companies that performed on larger stages and were headed by less volatile directors (for Rambert was as celebrated for her fits of temperament as she was for her taste and intellect). But she never gave up in her search for fresh talent.

Eventually, her company outgrew the Mercury, and from the 1940s onward it danced in many theatres. Premieres continued to be emphasized, but the company also staged fine versions of such nineteenth-century classics as *Giselle*, *La Sylphide*, and *Don Quixote*.

Therefore it came as a surprise in 1966 when Rambert and Norman Morrice, her latest choreographic protégé, announced that Ballet Rambert was to be reorganized as a contemporary company and that its members would be required to be proficient in modern dance. A precedent existed for this sort of ensemble: Netherlands Dance Theater, which had been established in the Hague in 1959 by the American choreographer Benjamin Harkavy and for which the Dutch choreographer Hans van Manen created many works. Both Harkavy and van Manen were ballet-trained yet interested in modern dance, and the hybrid company they developed exerted a tremendous influence throughout Europe.

Netherlands Dance Theatre stressed new productions, a policy that has been continued by Jiri Kylian, its director since 1975. In its early years, there were creations by such modern dance choreographers as John Butler, Glen Tetley, and Anna Sokolow, all of whom made contributions to the new Rambert repertoire, as did Morrice who, though classically trained, had studied at the Graham school during a stay in New York, 1961–1962. Morrice left Rambert in 1974 to do freelance choreography; he directed the Royal Ballet from 1977 to 1986. He was succeeded as director of Rambert by John Chesworth (1974–1980) and Robert North (1981–1986).

With the transformation of her company, Rambert in effect retired, serving as an artistic inspiration to her troupe, but leaving its day-to-day running to others. The new Ballet Rambert soon developed a