

Philip John Sampey Richardson (1875 – 1963)

Philip Richardson was born at Winthorpe, Nottinghamshire (UK) and educated at Beaumont and University College School. In 1910 he founded the *Dancing Times* magazine with publisher T.M. Middleton and immersed himself in the developing British ballet scene. It was through the columns of this nationwide, monthly publication that Richardson aired his views, and provided a platform for in-depth discussion on the current state of dance and dance teaching. He became the driving force behind the establishment of many influential committees and associations, organising the 'Dancers Circle' dinners that led to the formation of 'The Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain' in 1920, later to become the Royal Academy of Dancing. Richardson recognised the need for teachers to work together to ensure a consistent standard of dance teaching in this country. He was the only non-dancer on the original committee but served as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Academy until his death in 1963.

Richardson's other activities were varied and he worked quietly in the background to ensure that the British dance scene developed in a carefully considered and sustainable manner.

Theatre Dance

Between 1919 and 1930, Richardson organised a series of 'Sunshine Matinées' in aid of 'Sunshine Homes for Blind Babies'. His influence is evident from the stellar line-up of artists who appeared at the matinées including Ninette de Valois, Yvonne Daunt, Ruby Ginner, Margaret Morris and Mary Wigman.

In 1930 Richardson co-founded the 'Camargo Society' with his friend the dance critic Arnold Haskell. Although the society was short-lived (disbanded in 1933) it kept ballet alive in the theatre following the death of Serge Diaghilev in 1929, and provided a stepping-stone for British dancers and choreographers who would go on to work with the Ballet Rambert or Vic-Wells companies. Some of the ballets produced by the Camargo Society are regularly revived including Frederick Ashton's *Façade* and Ninette de Valois' *Job*.

Ballroom

Richardson frequently appeared on the judging panel for 'The Star Ball & Ballroom Championships' during the 1920s. He also served as 'Chairman of the Adjudicators' at nearly every Blackpool Dance Festival from 1920 to 1960.

In 1929 Richardson was largely responsible for the formation of the 'Official Board of Ballroom Dancing', and in 1950 established the 'International Council of Ballroom Dancing'. He served as Chair of both these organisations and instigated the 'European Professional Championship' in 1951 and 'The Richardson Cup' in 1956.

Journalist, Historian & Author

In addition to his editorship of the Dancing Times, Richardson also contributed dance articles to various national newspapers and magazines including the Daily Sketch, The Star, The Strand magazine, the Evening Standard and Daily Mirror.

In 1946 his first book 'A History of English Ballroom Dancing (1910-1945): The story of the development of the modern English style' was published. This was followed in the 1950s by his history of 'The Blackpool Dance Festival, 1920-1950', and in 1960 by 'The Social Dances of the Nineteenth Century in England'.

Richardson's interest in the history of dance led him to be an astute collector of resources, and his personal library contained some of the finest and earliest printed books on dancing. He also acquired some rare documents, press cuttings and illustrations in relation to his research on social dance in England. These valuable, historical resources are held as part of the Philip Richardson archive collection here at the Royal Academy of Dance.

Honours and Celebrations

In 1951 Richardson was appointed an 'Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire' (OBE), for services to ballet. The Official Board of Ballroom Dancing held a dinner at the Savoy Hotel on January 29th to celebrate both his Investiture and also the completion of his 21st year as Chairman of the 'Board'.

Later the same year Richardson was appointed as a 'Knight of the Royal Order of the Dannebrog' (Danish Flag), for "services rendered to Danish-Anglo friendship through the dance".

In 1954 the Official Board of Ballroom Dancing presented Richardson with an oil painting of himself by Cowan Dobson at a dinner held at the Savoy Hotel to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Board. This was followed in 1955 by Richardson's 80th birthday celebrations at the Savoy Hotel.

In 1960 he retired from the Blackpool Dance Festival after 40 years of service as Chairman of the Adjudicators. The announcement of his retirement was made on the last night of the Festival and he received a standing ovation from the entire audience.

In 1962 Richardson received an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Dancing in recognition of services to the Academy over a long period of time.