

'1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8!'

I developed my voice as a girl, bellowing from my suffragette soap box on Clapham Common and Hyde Park Corner.

*But you need a BBC voice if you wish people to listen, Maman always said. Develop stature.*

True! Stature! Grace! Movement! Whatever our age and situation, it will help us grow younger! If only we will fill our lungs properly and breathe. Keep the spine mobile and upright. Extend - into longevity!

Release your inner dancer. Make beauty. Never wear black. Make colour in the cold grey world around you.

Maman and Papa – though British - educated me in France.

Returned to London by the age of 5, bilingual and ill-fitting, I acted and danced but I hated ballet and all its constrictions.

So at 18 – in 1910 - I created my own dance system, based on the 6 Greek classical poses. And I resolved to teach it to children. Helped by Mother and ...

... A man: John Galsworthy! A man of property in every sense! A high aquiline forehead and sporting an eye-glass ...

*Come to luncheon, he said. I want to discuss my new play. And I want you to arrange the dances.*

Old enough to be my father ...

*Let us call you 'Margaret Morris and her Dancing Children!' I shall buy you a piano. Open you a school in Chelsea! My - ... wife ... and I.*

You mean I would no longer have to fry kippers over the gas-light ring?

*You look – terribly cold, little one. Let me put my coat around you. In a fatherly way.*

So mad with love that I felt I might simply lift off the earth. Three barmy years of it!

I fled to Paris and met another, J D Fergusson, the Scottish Colourist painter.

*But don't hem me in, he said; I must paint.*

*What I treasure about you, he said – is your independence. Go your own way. With me along for the ride, of course.*

We set off on life: the south of France: annual summer schools, not just in Wales and Devon, but Antibes and a permanent school in Paris. The 'mother school' in Chelsea. London's cognoscenti flocked to our club evenings: the Goossens, the Sitwells, the Shaws, the Mackintoshes, the Middleton Murrays. Oh, we rivalled that bunch in Bloomsbury!

Yet not a penny earned. Rates, rent, loans, teachers demanding to be paid! Cugh! Complaints – that Fergusson and I lived out of wedlock! Yes, for 36 blissful years!

The press constantly snooping. Vogue and Tatler! Agog at our girls gambolling on beaches and in and out of woods, all in very short shorts ...

Reviews were favourable:

‘The Margaret Morris system raises dance to the plane of an art.’

‘The whole body brought into play by these seemingly highly-trained athletes.’

Yet still: teachers leaving in droves and parents threatening litigation. Insolvency.

Then, I said, I shall – work! I shall write! My system of Notation – I shall publish it. My story of Galsworthy – that’ll be a sensation!

And I shall train as a physiotherapist: teach in hospitals: rehabilitate the handicapped, restore the nursing mother, hone the skills of sportsmen!

Health shall be at the helm, and my movement system will be taught in British schools – it will!

The second war!

All six schools closed: London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Paris and Cannes. Only the Glasgow school remained open.

After the war:

I founded the Celtic Ballet of Scotland in 1947 and the Scottish National Ballet in 1960 – though it was short-lived. Just like Fergusson who died that year. The very year of my golden jubilee! Ha!

I lived another 25. They all thanked me, you know, gathered to hear my parting words:

‘Dance exists beyond the body. It sets the mind free. Renders the body itself secondary. To dance is thus to feel - immortality.’

And they tell me my international summer schools are still all the rage! Just fancy!