

suis un député très important' eventually secured their release.

Philip Ziegler, Hansh Marshall
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As the end of her last American tour drew near, Diana began to speculate about the future. She was never going to be so long separated from Duff again, of that she was sure, but a short season in Canada might be a possibility. She was now determined to acquire another £2000 a year. Gest proposed she should do a round of the super-cinemas acting the Madonna coming to life against a drop scene. Diana was revolted by the idea. She was more attracted by Diaghilev's proposal to give her the part of "Nature" in a new ballet he was putting on, but this came to nothing. Still more hopeful was Otto Kahn's promise to back her in any play she cared to put on in London. Reinhardt volunteered to produce it and Kommer to manage the theatre. John Barrymore was about to act in *Richard III* and urged Diana to join him as Lady Anne. More cautiously George Arliss said that she should do a year in provincial repertory before undertaking a major speaking part in London. 'I wanted to say "Balls to you, old fool!" but I agreed in word, while knowing it was foolish because it's too late. What's the use of starting at the bottom at my age?' Privately, though, she suspected that Arliss might be right. She was not qualified to act a speaking rôle on the London stage and had no wish to make a fool of herself in front of all her friends.

But there was life in *The Miracle* yet. In the summer of 1927 came a European tour. First stop was Dortmund, a visit made memorable by the fact that Diana had to play both Nun and Madonna in the same performance. Rosamond Pinchot was back in the cast - 'She's looking hideous and acting abominably but I like her all the same,' wrote Diana. Reinhardt was brutal to her and she responded by spraining her ankle at the last minute, leaving Diana to dash around the theatre as the Nun and then, under cover of darkness, to slip into the niche above the altar, freeze into immobility and finally make the gradual transformation and descent. The strain was crippling, but she survived. To make matters worse, she was convinced the drains were unhygienic and went everywhere with an orange pressed to her nose, like some medieval courtier.

A few weeks to recover, and the caravan was on the road again, this time to Budapest. Diana spelt Hungary "Hungry" and complained she always over-ate there. All the men had wives who shot themselves or were lovers who had shot husbands; all the aristocrats were Jews and anglophiles who read the *Sketch* and *Tatler* weekly; all the

impresarios as well as aristocrats, Jews and anglophiles - flung themselves on their knees before her and treated her like the prima donna which she knew she wasn't but half wished she was. Diana enjoyed Budapest. She enjoyed Prague too, though she was shamed when Duff, as usual, remembered their wedding anniversary and she, as usual, forgot it. 'Is it eight years? Oh dear, how quick it's gone, and the rest will go quicker. Please always love me as you have done, I don't need more. I can never change. It is only with you I am happy, safe and not anxious or wondering if all's well. Hold me, hold me!'

Vienna, the end of the tour, should also have been the high spot. Diana filled Sacher's Hotel with close friends - Alan and Viola Parsons, the Hutchinsons, Iris Tree's husband Curtis Moffat - yet somehow the mixture failed to work. Tempers wore thin, the performances seemed threadbare, Diana's health never fully recovered from the exertions of Dortmund. She appealed to a doctor for something to stop her coughing on the stage and was recommended a long sea-voyage. Other prescriptions proved more relevant but equally ineffective: 'The great Austrian Medical Faculty,' she wrote crossly, 'seems to me about as advanced as the Deauville one - leeches and cataplasms are this year's discovery.'

It seemed an inglorious end to what had been a spectacularly successful chapter in her life; but Diana would not accept that it *was* the end. *The Miracle* should be filmed; if it could not be filmed, then at least it should be staged in London. It had been a great success there before the war, why should it not be even greater now? C. B. Cochran agreed and wished to produce the play; after protracted negotiations Reinhardt accepted; *The Miracle* was to be revived. Earl's Court in 1930 was the original proposal, the Lyceum in April 1932 proved the final answer.

By the standards of the United States the production was done on the cheap - costing a mere £30,000. 'Hollywood Perpendicular,' Brian Howard described the decor; the cathedral 'more a triumph of the parrot than the Paramount mind'; the forest 'resembling an effeminate vegetable garden'. The cast, however, was more ambitious; Massine played the *Spielmann*, Glen Byam Shaw was the Cripple, and Tilly Losch, the talented Viennese dancer-cum-actress, was cast as the Nun. Unfortunately Miss Losch proved as mischievous as she was talented. When Diana descended from her niche to put on the Nun's clothes she had devised graceful movements to fit the music, by which she slipped the habit smoothly over her head and emerged triumphant. Tilly Losch put the habit back to front so that, far from emerging smoothly, Diana was left thrashing around ingloriously looking

for the exit. Not to be caught twice Diana next time carefully inspected the costume, decided it was correctly placed, plunged in and emerged to find two of the largest hairpins ever made hanging from the veil so that they swung to and fro in front of her eyes. To her credit, Diana neither complained to Cochran nor allowed the incidents to put her out of her stride. A complaint to Cochran would anyway have achieved little; he was besotted by Tilly Losch and even allowed her to rewrite the final scene so that the Nun died dramatically, making the Madonna's previous descent to take on her duties entirely pointless.

'My lovie, my dovie, my duck and my dear,' telegraphed Lord Beaverbrook. 'I am certain you will have a great success on your first night and for ever after.' On the whole his certainty was justified. The critics were somewhat less reverent than they had been in New York. 'A remorseless production,' the *New Statesman* described it, consisting mainly of 'processions of what seem gleaming debutantes disguised as nuns, supporting electric-fixtures and intoning they know not what.' A pageant, wrote *The Times*, which laid claim to a spiritual beauty beyond its grasp. 'The play is full of ingenious substitutes for the truth which, like the electric bulbs that do service as candles, are enemies of the spirit while decorative of the substance.' But no critic spoke harshly of Diana and some glorified her, notably *The Times* once more:

'One thing stood apart from and above it, Lady Diana's representation of the Virgin. There are long passages during which a wise man will look at nothing but this glowing stillness, this superb passivity on which all action is gathered up and transcended. It is as if, coming in from a hot and turbulent street, one is resting coolly before the picture of a master.'

Friends rallied loyally to admire. Robert Bruce Lockhart was moved to hot tears and was still more impressed when he found that Diana had a huge mosquito-bite on her shoulder but had resisted the urge to scratch it; was suffering from a cold but had managed not to cough. The King, too, was more impressed by her immobility than her acting. 'You played this part twenty-five years ago?' he suggested. 'No,' said Diana firmly. 'How's your broken leg? I remember you broke it on our Coronation Day.' 'No, sir, on Peace Day.' 'Does it not tire you to stand so long with your head on one side?' 'Yes, sir, it is a little tiring.' 'But of course you have no words to say, and talking is three quarters of acting.' Diana was little better pleased by Max Beaverbrook, who did not come till the last night of the tour and then arrived so late that he missed three quarters of the play.