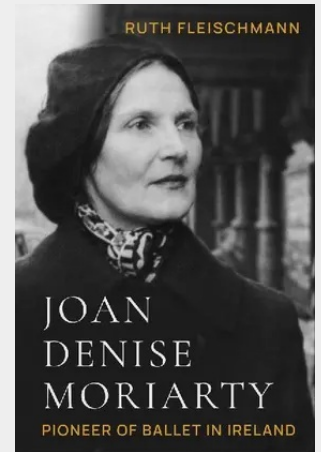


Joan Denise Moriarty

Pioneer of Ballet in Ireland

The inspiring story of the pioneering dancer and choreographer who established professional ballet in Ireland and transformed the country's cultural landscape. This biography presents the life and work of Joan Denise Moriarty (c.1912-1992), the Irish traditional musician and step dancer, ballet dancer, teacher, choreographer and founder of professional ballet in Ireland. It is also the first case-study of the Irish Arts Council's dance policies during its initial forty years. Moriarty's amateur group, the Cork Ballet Company, gave its debut in 1947 accompanied by the Cork Symphony Orchestra conducted by Aloys Fleischmann, the composer who collaborated with Moriarty for forty-six years. With the national festival An Tóstal, funding became available for productions of classical ballets with guest artists during Cork Ballet Week from 1956 to 1993. In 1959 Moriarty founded the first Irish professional ballet company, Irish Theatre Ballet, with the hitherto unheard of mission of bringing ballet to provincial towns throughout the island of Ireland. When Arts Council support ceased in 1964, Moriarty's Cork Ballet Company was the sole remaining performing group in the country. In 1973, the year Ireland joined the European Economic Community, she founded her second professional touring company, initially funded by the government, then by the Arts Council. Moriarty sought to make ballet an intrinsic part of Irish cultural life. The tours staged extracts from classical ballets, modern dance dramas by distinguished foreign choreographers, and her own works based on Irish themes with new music by contemporary Irish composers. This study places Moriarty's work in the social and cultural context of twentieth-century Ireland, demonstrating the great challenges faced by those endeavouring to promote the arts in a country with an educational system from which they were largely excluded.

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