



Kathleen Tacchi-Morris lived her life as a tireless campaigner for peace. “Tacchi”, as she affectionately liked to be called, was born in Johannesburg. She and her family returned to England shortly afterwards. The origins of her heightened sense of injustice, which led her to be a peace campaigner, can be traced to early childhood, when she was expelled from school, aged 10, for leading a strike against excessive caning. Other childhood influences included meeting Annie Besant, H.G.Wells and George Bernard Shaw, when taken to Freethought Society meetings by her father, the inventor Percy Tacchi.

Later, she studied with Jacques Dalcroze, exploring his ‘holistic’ philosophy of dance in the 1920’s. She appeared in several silent movies, including ‘Men Are Not Gods’ (1937) alongside Gertrude Lawrence and Sebastian Shaw. Through dancing she met and formed a close friendship with the Duke of Windsor and Mrs Simpson. She also met Picasso, whose influence was to have a profound effect upon the direction of her life. This was the beginning of Tacchi’s forceful mission for peace.

At the 1950 World Peace Conference in Sheffield, Tacchi pointed out that among the many delegates there were no women. Picasso then asked Tacchi to represent him at the Peace Conference in Warsaw. When Tacchi saw the ruins of Warsaw and heard the story of suffering under Nazi Occupation, she knew that the rest of her life would be devoted to the struggle for peace.

Tacchi lived for 50 years at Longs House in North Curry, with her husband Richard Ratham Morris, who died in 1988. It was here that Tacchi recreated her Tacchomo School, originally founded in 1931. Thirty years later, her radical educational philosophy found its way into the rhetoric of exponents of arts educationalists.

During the Second World War, Tacchi brought up the illegitimate children of black American servicemen.

Her contacts in the Soviet Union led to her phone being tapped and her home being ransacked by “dark suited officials from the Foreign Office.” After their fruitless search, she poured her interrogators a glass of whisky and tried to convert them to her cause.

A woman of rare insight into the hearts and minds of humankind, she was irresistibly seductive in her pursuit of peace, inspiring friendship between many people from many different races and cultures, which found expression in her own foundation, Women for World Disarmament.

In 1989, Tacchi attended a production of ‘Peace Child’, produced by Heathfield Community School. Two years later, spurred on by Tacchi’s infectious optimism, the school put on an international version of the same play, featuring 200 young people from twenty different countries. The show was performed in The Shaw Theatre, London, to sell out audiences and an eight-minute standing ovation. It was out of this production that the partnership between Heathfield and the Tacchi-Morris Trust was formed.

As a result of this relationship and a successful application to the Arts Council of England via the National Lottery, this building became a reality. Used by students of Heathfield Community School and other schools and colleges during the day and the community by night, its aim is to be: “A Centre of Excellence in the Performing Arts in Education.”

The work of the Centre continues to be supported by the Tacchi-Morris Trust via an Endowment Fund.

The underpinning philosophy behind our work is the belief that the creative processes involved in the Performing Arts can bring people closer together and give them a profound insight in what it is to be human. A living tribute to a woman who devoted her life in the cause of peace.

(Kathleen Tacchi-Morris 1899- 1993.)