

LILA ZALI

1918 - 2003



Born Elisaveta Borisova Zalipskaya in Tblisi, Russia, Lila Zali came to the United States in 1921 at the age of three. During World War II she organized a trio of dancers called "The Three Debs," who were involved in a USO tour. After the war, Lila returned to New York and starred in a weekly CBS television show called "Balleretta," and later a weekly ballet program called "The Don Lee Show."

Lila starred in many movies, including "An American in Paris" (in which she was Leslie Caron's stand-in), "Limelight" with Charlie Chaplin, "Daddy Long Legs," "Gaby," "Anything Goes," "Silk Stockings" and "The Ten Commandments." She also appeared on "The Colgate Comedy Hour" with Harpo Marx and

Tony Martin. Her ballet teacher during this time was Imperial Russian Ballet star Adolph Bolm. In addition, she taught at the studio of Michel Panaiëff, which included her most famous student, a young Cynthia Gregory.

Lila opened her own dance studio in 1959, and founded a small ballet company called Laguna Beach Civic Ballet, which later became Ballet Pacifica. Under her direction, the company evolved into a semi-professional group, performing 60-70 times per year. She served as director, choreographer, costume maker, fundraiser, and many other roles until 1988. Lila served for many years on the board of the National Association of Regional Ballet, which later became Regional Dance America.