

# Kennedy Center for Performing Arts

## March 26, 2024

Following the performance of a ballet, *The White Feather*, created in memory of the Iranian National Ballet, Robert de Warren was honored at Kennedy Center for Performing Arts for his contributions as Director under the patronage of Empress Farah Pahlavi. As requested by the Shah and the Empress, Dame Ninette de Valois, the founder of the Royal Ballet, recommended Mr. de Warren to be the one to bring the national ballet to an international level. During his directorship from 1965-1978, Mr. de Warren introduced the international ballet repertoire to the Iranian audience and also choreographed Persian legends to specially composed music. While in Iran, Mr. de Warren researched the dance treasures of the nation thus creating the National Folklore Institute of Iran and their performing company, the Mahali Dancers, which toured the world as ambassadors of their country's culture.



L to R: Robert de Warren, Empress Farah Pahlavi, Indira Mehrpour of the Mahali Dancers

Mr. de Warren began his career as a member of the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden and went on to choreograph, direct, design and produce. Of his many achievements, he became Artistic Director of the Northern Ballet Theatre in Great Britain under the patronage of Princess Margaret with Rudolf Nureyev, as artist laureate, often performing with the company. In addition, Mr. de Warren was Director of the Ballet at La Scala, Milan, artistic supervisor of its long-standing school and Director of the Sarasota Ballet in Sarasota, Florida. During these directorships, his work was performed internationally. Coming full circle, Mr. de Warren created a ballet based on a Persian legend, Zal and Rudابه, in Sarasota to which the Empress attended as guest of honor on opening night.

“I was deeply moved when I was invited on stage to take a call in recognition of the work I had done to develop and preserve dance in Iran and to be received so warmly by the Empress and the Imperial family who attended the performance. These memories have awakened me to how much I can still contribute to the dance world.”

