

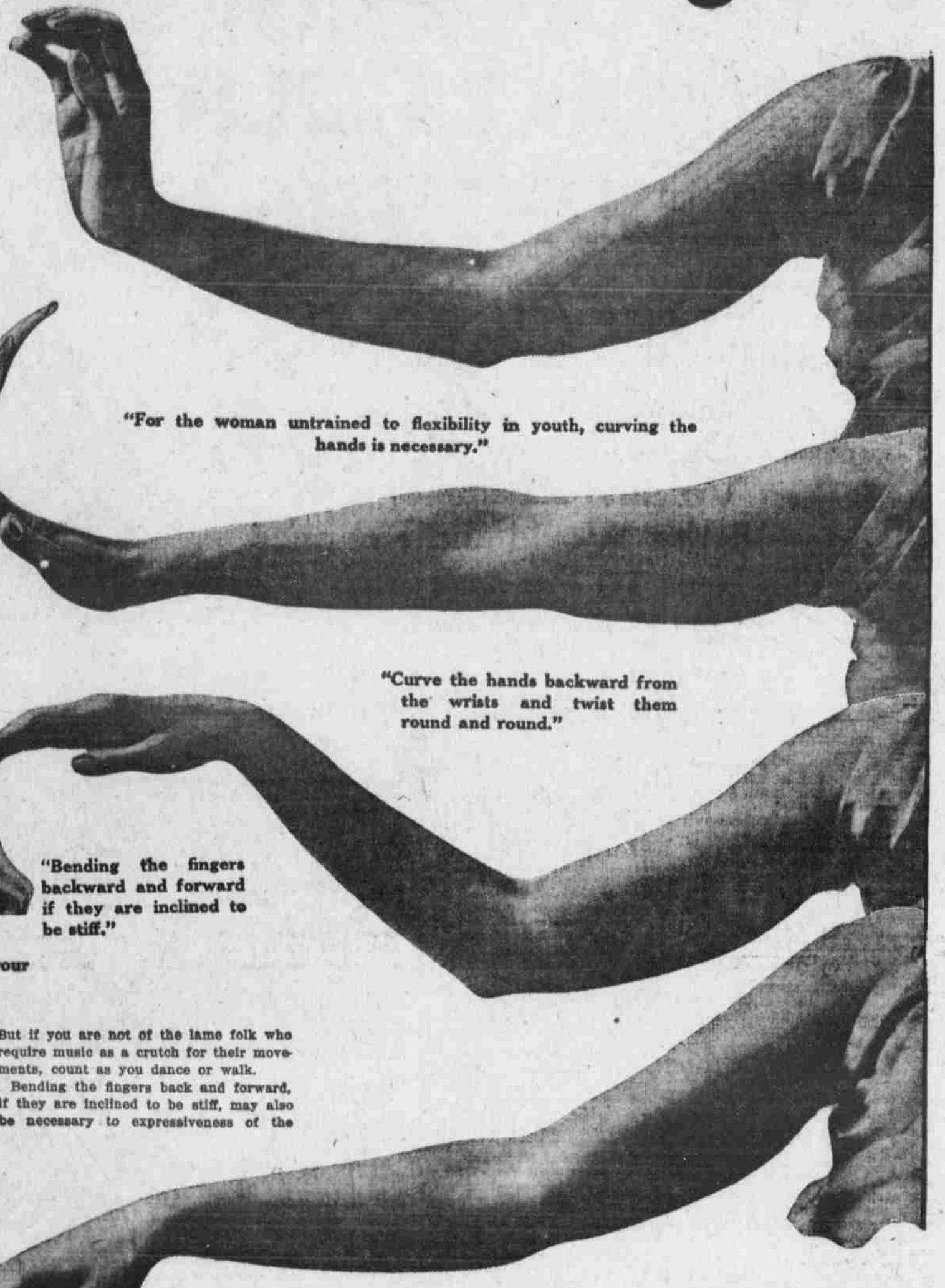
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How Dancing Develops a Beautiful Figure.

Second of an Instructive Series of Articles by the Well-Known Dancer, Ruth St. Denis



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"For the woman untrained to flexibility in youth, curving the hands is necessary."

"Curve the hands backward from the wrists and twist them round and round."

"Bending the fingers backward and forward if they are inclined to be stiff."

"Test the pliancy of the arms by slowly raising them and letting them fall to your sides. Drop one knee and turning slowly from side to side let the arms describe half circles."

No. 2—The Arms and the Hands By Ruth St. Denis The Most Famous American Dancer

WHEN you begin to develop beauty of arms and hands, begin at the point half way between your shoulder blades. This is no misprint, no blunder of copy reader or of any one else. I mean exactly that. To develop the arms and hands begin to work equi-distant between the inner ends of the shoulder blades.

All movement begins in the chest. The mainspring of grace is not in the arms and hands themselves, but in their beginning point, which is the point I have mentioned. As two branches of a tree start at the same point and widen into twin branches, so the arms start from the point equi-distant between the shoulder blades, which is, in a sense, the motion centre of the upper limbs. Think of that point and work from it. It is silly to begin with meaningless flopping motions of the hands from the elbows, yet that is where everybody begins.

Test the pliancy of your arms by slowly raising them and letting them fall to your sides. Then fancy them flowing—so think of something that flows, a stream, say, and then with the arms held out at front or at your sides, imitate the rippling of the water. Don't carry it to the point of snake-like resemblance, however.

We see dancers and women in private life obviously imitate the movements of a serpent. This, unless there is some special reason in fitness, such as an actual serpent dance, is ridiculous. More than that, it is ugly. But, flowing water is beautiful. Try to reproduce with your arm the effect of ripples caused by a light wind on the surface of water. These movements, as I have said, can be made at the sides, or beginning at the front, extend to the sides.

Another and similar movement is that of a child at play with a ribbon. Watch a child playing with a ribbon and you will see a manifestation of all the ebullient joy of a kitten with a ball of wool for playmate. Holding this imaginary strip of ribbon in the hand, shake it up and down, and watch it rippling in the air. Shake it with the hands in front of you, with hands at your sides and behind you. Let the arms flow their will.

I have no suggestion as to their exact angles with the body. I am opposed to mechanical methods in postures. Natural action is always graceful. Obstructed or impeded motion is invariably awkward. That is the reason that a child is the most graceful object in nature and a woman in corsets

is the most awkward. I have never worn a corset—never will. I decline to go to jail in flesh and in spirit.

For a young girl with pliant muscles and the unconsciousness of youth these ripple actions, taken while walking or dancing, are enough to develop the arms and hands to such roundness and fullness as accord with their bodies. If they are slender they do not want the biceps of a blacksmith. Nor, if they are of rounded figure should they possess pipe stem limbs. The ideal of bodily beauty is symmetry. The American idea has transformed it into an object of bulging excrescences. To give any part of the body undue prominence is to be vulgar. It is equally true whether you do this by dressing or by over exercise.

Keep in mind that we do not wish to become a nation of athletes, but of perfect human beings—and that symmetry, which is harmony of each part of the body with every other part, is the beginning and a large part, if not all, of perfection.

But we must consider that not every one is trained to the natural expression, which is grace, in her youth. Even in childhood foolish mothers begin to hinder expression and obstruct freedom with clothes, while we ought to wear as few clothes as possible. Childhood and youth are made stiff, unwieldy and weighty by

tight corsets, tight gloves, tight collars, tight shoes and tight garters. The body loses its flexibility, as a prisoner locked into a six by nine-foot cell grows cramped of motion and wooden of posture. Too many mothers are jailers of their children.

For the woman grown up, this habit of mind and body is not enough to play that the arms are wavelets and to consider as a starting point the middle of the back between the shoulder blades. Certain elementary movements must also be practised by them.

For them shaking the hands loosely from the wrists, up and down, and sidewise, should be practised. Far better if with these and other exercises the various dancing steps, or at least walking to rhythmic counts, be practised.

For the woman untrained to flexibility in youth, curving the hands is necessary. Curve them downward from the wrists and backward. Twist them round and round from the wrists, first by an outward, then an inward motion; in other words, away from the body, then toward the body. Do this rhythmically, by counting slowly or to slow music. Personally I do not care for music with my pantomime. I could do as well without it. But to some persons, rhythm, that is, regular movement, is impossible without music. Therefore if you wish. Have it in slow tempo, six-eight time preferred. If you have no musical instrument, you can whistle or hum an air in that measure.

But if you are not of the lame folk who require music as a crutch for their movements, count as you dance or walk.

Bending the fingers back and forward, if they are inclined to be stiff, may also be necessary to expressiveness of the hands. If the fingers are at all rigid, do this now and then during the day. While sitting or lying down and relaxing the other muscles, take "the starch," so to speak, out of them in that way.

Another means of loosening or "unstarching" the stiff, inexpressive hand is to hold one hand in the other and shake it. Place your thumb in the palm of your fingers at the back of the hand and shake it vigorously, but always in rhythm. I can best describe this motion by saying that it is a "wiggly waggie."

While practicing the movements with the hands and arms assume careful postures. While resting on your couch relax

further by lifting one arm and dropping it beside you as though it were a heavy weight of which you were ridding yourself. Lift the other arm and drop it. That movement in itself unlocks, as it were, the tightened and imprisoned muscles.

While you lie there "uncurl" your fingers. The tendency is to draw the fingers into the palms of the hands and tighten the hand into a fist. Tired nerves incline us to that pugnacious way of presenting our hands to the world. That is one of the things which nature abhors, an obstruction. Our aim should be to remove every obstruction to free natural motion. The forest of such habits as these must be cleared before we reach the state of graceful attitudes and movements.

You can practice the raising and dropping of the hands and shaking them from the wrists, pressing them back and forth,

holding one with the other and shaking it, while you are lying on your bed composing yourself for sleep at night. You can practice them when sitting before your tea table, while lying back in your easy chair, while lying in a deck chair on a cruise.

But you can practice them also while dancing. There is no better time to exercise the arms than while practicing the dance steps, for dancing is not a mere exercise of the feet. It is a pervasive motion of the entire body. When you do not dance with the entire body, as a ripple reaches far out to sea, you are simply indulging in acrobatics. So extend the arms and raise and lower in easy, almost unconscious union with the dance.

Drop to one knee and turning slowly from side to side and twisting the body easily from the waist, let the arms describe slow, graceful half circles.

Was the Deluge Caused by the Fall of a Vast Watery Ring Like One of Saturn's?

ONE of the last works of Isaac N. Vail, the famous geologist, is a very ingenious booklet designed to show that the deluge was caused by the fall of a vast, watery ring from the sky.

Mr. Vail was a well-informed scientist who endeavored to make all natural facts conform to the literal accuracy of the Bible. In describing the creation of the world the Bible says: "Let there be air in the midst of water, making a division between the two waters."

Mr. Vail argues that this must mean that there was a watery body suspended in the firmament above the earth. This body, it is most reasonable to believe, was a watery ring similar in form to the ring which now surrounds the planet Saturn. The fall of this ring is the only phenomenon that could explain such an enormous fall of water as the flood of Genesis, lasting for forty days.

The existence of this ring, distributing the sun's heat over the whole earth and turning it into a greenhouse, would explain the tor-

rid period of life evidenced by geology. Then the ice contraction of the ring as it cooled would explain the glacial period, which science shows to have prevailed upon our planet. Finally the ring fell, and that was the flood.

The Bible also tells us that after the flood the Lord said that He would give man the rainbow as a sign that no such calamity would occur again. Mr. Vail interprets this to mean that a rainbow was not possible when a watery belt hung suspended over the earth; and that after the water disappeared from between sun and earth the rainbow became a possibility.

"Away out toward the boundaries of the solar system," says Geologist Vail, "we may behold that beautiful clockwork of worlds, of which the planet Saturn is the centre. In addition to his eight moons, three stupendous rings revolve about him, two composed of meteoric and one (the inner) of aqueous matter. There, 15,000 miles from his surface, revolves an ocean, 8,000 miles broad and 100 miles thick—an ocean above Saturn's firmament or atmosphere. Were we situated upon that planet, in order to behold those revolving waters we would have to look upward, and could

readily understand how two bodies of water could be separated by a 'rakia,' an expanse—by a firmament. If that aqueous ring were now over-canopying our little earth, no person would say the firmament could not be a natural and philosophical partition between the divided waters. Every man would see a literal and true interpretation of that mysterious passage inscribed on the very face of the heavens. The infidel would see himself confronted and denied by the book of nature on which he so confidently relies.

"Well, then, are we to understand that the earth was at one time surrounded by an aqueous ring, or belt, of waters? We turn again to Genesis: 'And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.' To him who stands by the integrity of the Bible, no account of creation, there can be no doubt upon this subject. The declaration is unqualified that there were waters above and waters below. Those below were on the earth, for it was said, 'Let the waters under the firmament be gathered together that the dry land might appear.' Then the

waters above were overhead. But the language of science, unimpeached and unimpeachable, is that no such body of water could possibly exist there unless it should revolve about the earth as a ring, or belt.

"Geology tells us that there was a time when the native heat of the earth repelled vast quantities of vapor and mists from its surface. These could not avoid being thrown into belts by the rotatory motion of the earth. In fact, it might be said that such formations are the necessary consequences of the evolution of worlds from their primitive state.

"The most eminent astronomers now living claim that both Saturn and Jupiter are to-day repelling, by their native heat, their waters into space. Both are characterized by the presence of aqueous belts, in double or multiple layers, that must successively condense and fall as oceans upon those planets when the heat that now holds them in space ceases.

"And I presume it will not be denied very long that our oceans have many times been augmented by the successive participation of waters from space beyond our atmosphere.

"Since then we have the plain declaration of Scripture that there were waters above and beyond the

firmament; since we see waters so placed above the surface of other planets, and since such bodies of water must revolve about the central body, I claim that the earth in antediluvian times was surrounded by a huge belt of waters. That it was visible to the first inhabitants as the last remnant of waters falling to the earth. These waters originally formed in and repelled from that great laboratory, the primitive earth, skirted the boundaries of a vast and remarkable atmosphere with which the chemist, the geologist and enlightened astronomer are familiar. Well, such an object must have had a name. Mark that the waters on the earth were called 'seas.' The seas remaining Hebrew word which could refer to the waters we render the 'Great Deep.' It was so called because all mankind formerly believed that the clouds were fed from above. They beheld them grow dark and heavy, and expand until they rent themselves and emptied their contents upon the earth.

"When the aqueous ring began to descend upon earth there must have been in the torrid and temperate zones a down-rush of water, but at the poles a down-rush of snow. This explains why we find in Siberia and other Northern regions bodies

of mammoths and other animals that were suddenly engulfed in the ice.

"From the retreating glaciers their remains have been falling for thousands of years," says Mr. Vail. "Whole cargoes of elephantine ivory and other fossils are picked up from the surface or dug up from the frozen soil. There only are they found upon the surface.

"During the fall of the waters here supposed, on that part of the earth sloping toward the North Pole, there must have been a great rush of the same toward the latter. Everything that could float would be swept thither.

"The travels of Erman in Northern Siberia have proved that such a wave did sweep from the Altai Mountains to the Arctic regions. Skirting the Northern Ocean, he says, there are hills 300 feet high, made up in great part of whole carcasses of mammoths and other mammals cemented together by layers of frozen mud and ice. Driftwood piled equally high—trees with their trunks thrown upon each other in the wildest disorder, forced up in spite of gravitation, and with their tops broken off or crushed as if they had been thrown with great violence from the south on a bank and there heaped up.