

DANCES WITH A PURPOSE

A Woman Educator's Interesting Theory of Corsetless, Barefoot, Partnerless Poses, That Develop Resourcefulness, Character and Independence



Miss Josephine McLean in one of the leaps that stimulate the heart action.



Miss Dulce Moore in one of the bending postures that once strengthens the spine and renders it flexible.

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DANCING is practical. At least, the right kind of dancing may be made to lend itself to the most practical uses of life. We ought to dance with a purpose. These dances of mine are dances with a purpose.

It is a mistake to classify dancing as one of the merely ornamental arts. It is essentially a thing of beauty, but it may become a thing, also, of utility. It may be made not a mere aimless form of amusement. The dancing of my "Morgan girls" that I have brought East from Los Angeles to do drawing-room dancing, girls who come from homes of refinement, who are paying their first visit to the East, is of the kind that increases efficiency in every department of life to which they may be called. They are, literally, dances with a purpose.

When, at the Bartik Moments Musicals at the Waldorf-Astoria apartment, I greeted my group of six girls whom I had been training for four years, cries of "Bravo!" changed to murmurings of "What ethereal beauty." Yet I, with my Russian ballet master, Louis H. Chailf, who composed the ballets in which they appeared, knew that it would have been quite as true had these kind spectators said: "Of what infinite purpose in the practicalities of life."

For tangoing and fox trotting in artlessly and in heated rooms I offer no excuse. Of the classic dancing that goes back to Hellenic ideals of pleasure, health and beauty I am an ardent advocate. The classic dances require no partner. They may be danced alone. They should be danced barefoot. And they can be a part of a woman's daily programme in the privacy of her own apartments. Which proves their practicality. Likewise, from a moral standpoint, their greater safety.

By their results we may read their purpose. First let me state the significant fact that each of this sextette of dancers was able to carry five solid studies in high school, whereas their companions, not trained in dancing and the accompanying athletics, could at best master but four. That indicates, you will observe, an increase of 20 per cent in efficiency. If every person engaged in any occupation could increase his or her efficiency 20 per cent, or one-fifth, consider the benefit to that person in salary or income

and to the world in the value of the output of work.

Another practical result that I consider of exceeding value is that each girl is taught to dance in her own way. Unison in variety is our motto. It can readily be understood that this self-expression develops self-reliance.

A girl thus trained depends not upon others, but herself. She draws strength from within, not without. She becomes a human upright, not a human lean-to. Girls who have acquired the habit of independent thought will succeed in any lot in which they may be cast, be it wifehood, motherhood or one of the arts or professions or even in business.

"Of what use is classic dancing in business?" you may ask. I answer: "Classic dancing develops the power of concentration." That power is necessary to all success. What is more necessary in business, especially in executive departments, than concentration? We are apt to think of dancing, when performed by one accustomed to it, as something mechanical which can be done with the mind on something thousands of miles distant. This may be true of one of the easy, slovenly dances of the day. But it is untrue of classic dancing. The steps that have come down to us from the Greeks, in their statues and friezes, are complex, and to execute a complex dance strict at-



Photos by Arnold Genthe, New York.

Miss Myra Belle Daniels in the final posture of a dance with a purpose, this being the development of neck and chest.

tention is necessary—in fact, absolute concentration.

The classic dancing, by which I mean as regards my teaching the best from the Russian and the Oriental as well as the Greek standards, develops absolute poise of body and of spirit. That poise of spirit stands for perhaps the greatest American need, sound nerves and even temper.

Nervousness is caused by lack of co-ordination of the parts and functions of the body. There is no nervousness when there is co-ordination, which means poise. Nervous-

ness is indicated by dwelling on the ugly side of life and thinking upon its imperfections. The classic dancer's mind is fixed upon beauty. We look like what we think. If we think of beautiful things we become beautiful. When I took this class of girls four years ago no one spoke of their being beautiful. Now every one who sees them says: "What beautiful girls!"

Their dance training has made them free, free of mind and body. Such freedom makes for health as well as grace. Corsets need never be worn by the girl with the figure developed by proper dancing. Her firm muscles form a natural and sufficient corset.

Nor will her feet be cramped by shoes that are too tight or that otherwise distort them. Barefoot dancing forms the straight line on the inside of the foot from heel to toe. A perfect foot is very rare. You have only to use your eyes at any bathing beach or in any swimming tank to convince you of this. The right kind of dancing develops the instep, forms the right arch of the sole, preventing flatfoot. The classic dancer gravitates naturally to the sandal as a foot covering when it is impracticable to go barefoot. But every one would be healthier

and happier if she would dance for twenty minutes or more every day.

The right kind of dancing deepens and widens the chest. Every well trained dancer has a better chest than the average person.

Dancers' necks are fuller. Holding the head backward during the full time of a long chord develops the throat amazingly, and banishes a train of throat afflictions.

Part of the dancing of my so-called system, which is surely the best of many schools in which I have studied, requires leaps from the ground. In these leaps the body is naturally in the air, unsupported by the floor or ground, for a time. A short time, but when counted in the aggregate of these leaps the daily sum is considerable. This increases the heart action. It stimulates the circulation, bringing color to the cheeks and brightness to the eyes, so becoming an unquestioned beautifier.

A practical essential of proper dancing is good posture. Posture is most important, not only to the health, but to success. Assume that any one is looking for a position. The way he enters the room, the way he "holds himself," denotes his capability and character. If he slouches in, if his shoulders droop, if he stands with the weight on one side, he will not get the position, for he has not made a good impression. Or if the first impression is made in a social way, the woman who enters a drawing-room with her chest up, head well poised and shoulders erect, will score against the woman who slinks in with head down, shoulders drooping and chin inclining chestward.

Right dancing is the most practical of the fine arts.



A group of "Morgan Dancers" in the climax of an Hellenic Fete at the Greek Theatre of Berkeley, Cal.