



10 YEARS IN ENTERTAINMENT



Isadora Duncan Was First Exponent of Modern Greek Dance



The writer of this article is Graeme Carswell, A.T.R.G.D., a talented young dancer who is in New Zealand as a representative of the Association of Teachers of the Revived Greek Dance, London. The photograph of Miss Carswell (left) was taken by S. P. Andrew, Wellington.

DURING the last ten years there has been a new movement established in England known as the Revived Greek Dance. The first exponent of this form of art was Isadora Duncan, who regarded movement not only as a means of artistic expression, but as a power wherein to reform life. This method is being carried out by her pupils in New York and Paris. Other schools have been inspired by the Greek Ideal—one of the best known in England is the Ginner-Mawer School of Dance and Drama, London—and it is from this school that the movement known as the Revived Greek Dance has spread from the British Isles throughout the world.

It has been the result of many years of research in the history, literature, sculpture, and other arts of Greece, and these years of study and experiment led to the steady growth of the Ginner-Mawer School, whence every year qualified teachers of this method are sent out into the world. From this source the work spread so rapidly that an association was formed to centralise the activities connected with this teaching—hence the "Association of Teachers of the Revived Greek Dance" was inaugurated by Ruby Ginner at Stratford-on-Avon in August, 1923. The membership of the association is only possible through the results of the practical and theoretical examinations, so by standardising the work, much has been done to prevent unqualified teaching. The work has established itself in many educational centres in England, and has met with interest and success. This interest is now becoming world-wide, and has spread itself from England to the Continent, to China, Japan, India, Burma, South Africa and Australia, and is now being introduced to New Zealand.

Originally, it started in the post-educational training in drama or dance; now it takes place in the curriculum of big educational girls' colleges in England, small private schools, secondary schools, elementary schools and recreational clubs, for working women. This increasing demand from the people, as well as educationists, shows that a system of normal, sanely-balanced movement is necessary.

The movements of the Revised Greek Dance develop the body equally without physical strain and over development of the muscles, and at the same time provide a medium for self-expression. Then the most important factor is that it is in direct communication with the classic arts of Greece. The Greeks based their lives on the ideals of beauty, simplicity and strength, and their civilisation was built from the great arts which have survived all the centuries that have rolled over them because of their essential quality and beauty of perfection. The art of the dance was the root idea of the Greek education, and in those days art and education were indivisible, but as the centuries went by they grew more and more apart, education being confined to the classroom, and the arts to the Theatre, especially the art of dance, which played no part in the life of the people, but only by a band of expert exponents.

The Greek dance was a translation of the movements of everyday happenings in Greek life, and the normal thoughts and emotions of the human mind. It was developed by the people for the people, and was a vital power in every phase of Greek life—we read of the dance in literature, drama and poetry—we see representations on Greek vases, sculpture and architecture. Traces of all their various types of dance are to be found in Greek art of every period, and we find that the lines are never taken away from the natural movements of the body. So the Greek dance has been reconstructed and based on the fact that the natural movement of the Greeks was the combination of the perfect physique of their bodies, and the beauty of their ideals. This form of movement requires as much study and practice as any other form of dance. To most people, at first it appears simple and easy of achievement, but the apparent simplicity proves only the perfection of the art. The dancing of the supreme artist, Anna Pavlova, always appeared to be the easiest thing in the world, so perfect was her command of technique. This lack of effort was a proof of the great artist, for true art never appears difficult.

During the last ten years, people have been surrounded by everything which is in direct opposition to the Greek ideal—the fact that mechanical transport is available everywhere has caused a great lack of the natural powers of movement. Walking takes too much time, and no one can afford to "waste" a moment. In the same way machinery now produces all that was once made and done by manual labour. Then, again, the ceaseless noise of the cities is one of the worst afflictions our minds and nerves have to