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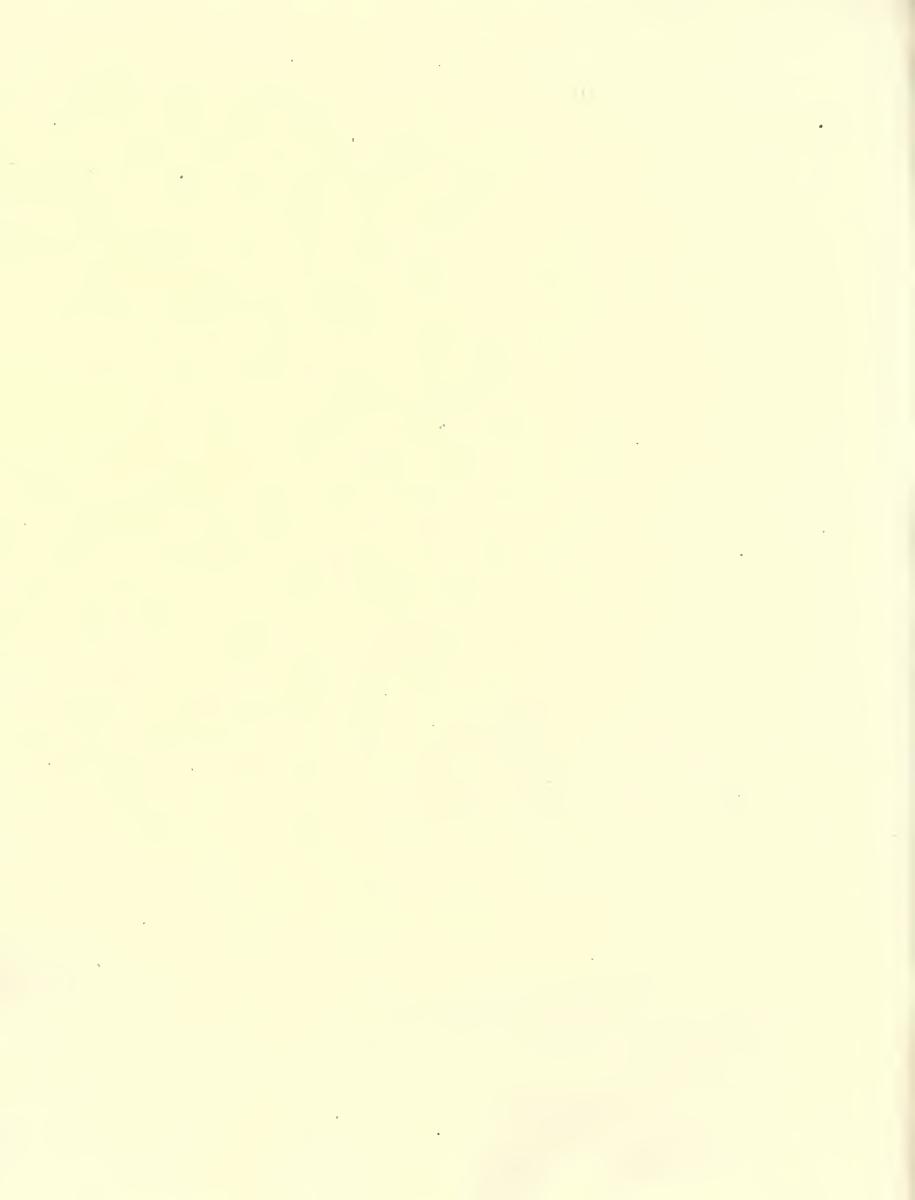
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Volume I

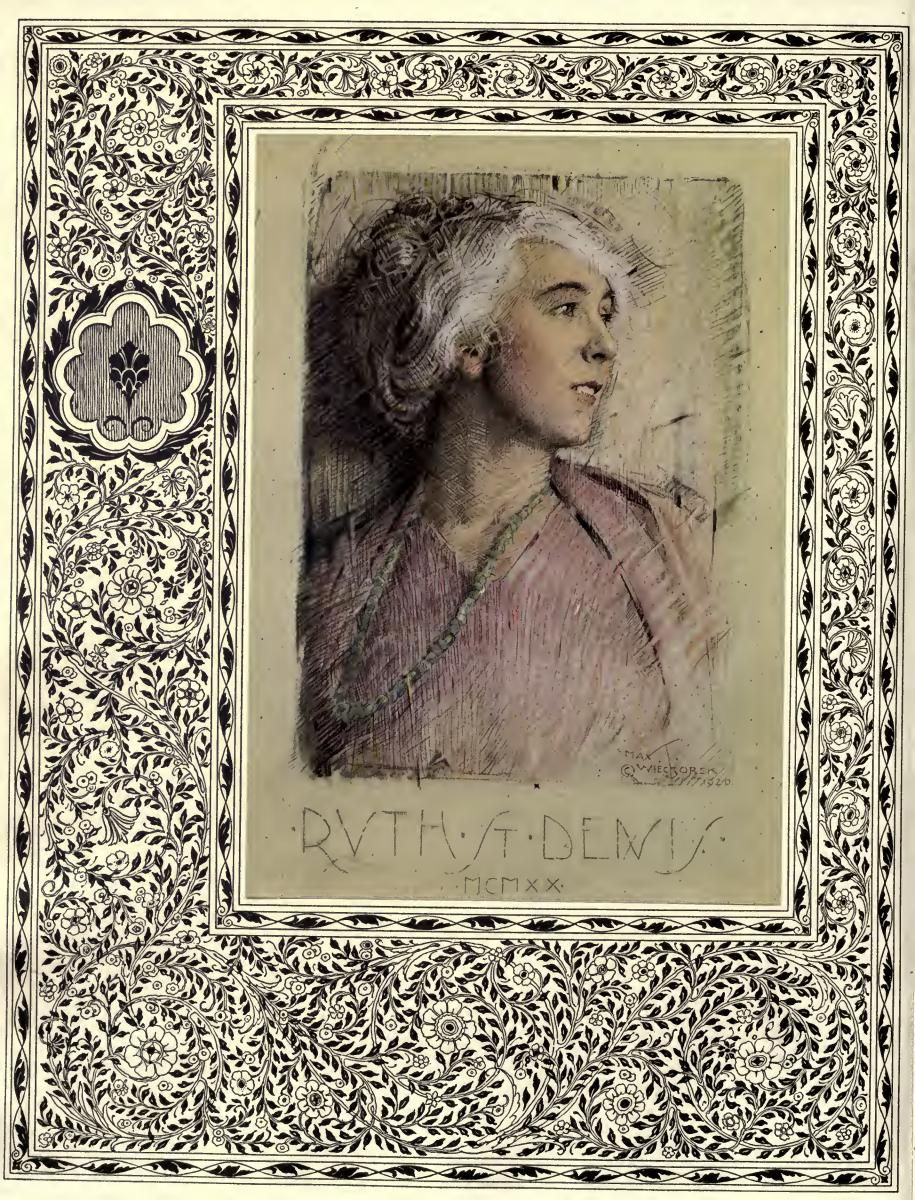
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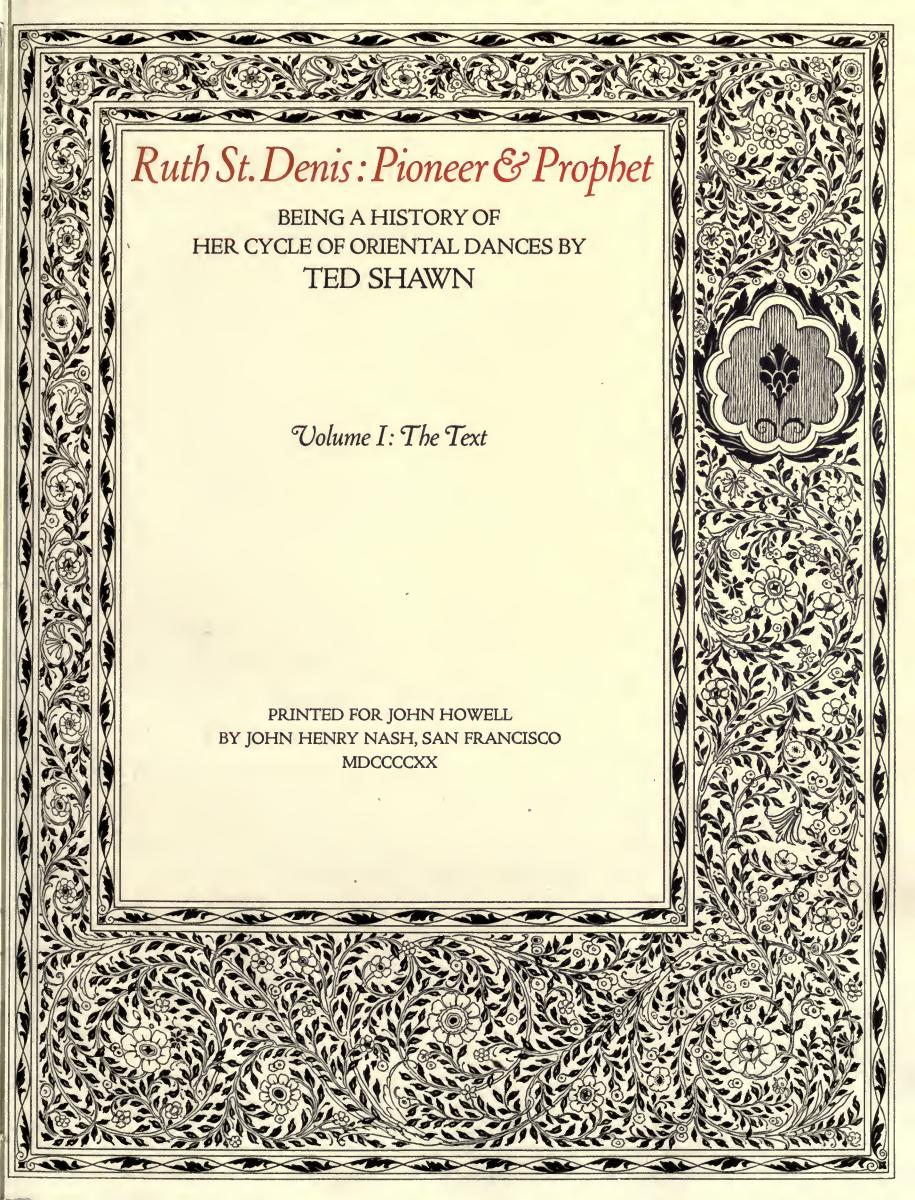
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SomeReasons for the Making of this Book



of Oriental dances and is looking forward to a completely new medium of expression for her deep spiritual feeling. And I, because of my love for her and my intense admiration for her creative genius, feel that there should be some record made of this particular contribution which she has made to art.

When Ruth St. Denis offered her Radha to the world, Oriental dancing was associated in the minds of everyone with the "Streets of Cairo" and the danse du ventre. It was inconceivable to us,

therefore, that we should come to consider the performance of an Oriental dance by a dancer clad only in chains of jeweled metal plaques not only as without offense but even as the vehicle of a lofty religious and spiritual message. But so intense in her consecration was Ruth St. Denis that she banished prudery from the mind of the beholder and he left the theatre conscious only of a revelation of great beauty and harmonious art, a pure intense fervor, and a profound peace.

Ruth St. Denis completely changed the notion in the American and European mind of Oriental dancing. It was she who rescued this art from the shocking and suggestive, she who gave it great vogue, and now after thirteen

years she draws in her train a myriad of disciples and imitators.

This, however, is one of the reasons why Ruth St. Denis feels that she is done with the Oriental dance for further creative use. She began with a deep conviction of the spiritual possibilities of this form of expression; she steeped herself in the learning of India and Egypt and the other countries she sought to bring to her audiences; she was in complete harmony with the art and religions of the Orient; and always her dances were born of the desire to express

Some Reasons a constructive message. Today hundreds of young dancers have copied the for the Making of externals of her art: the music, the scenery, the costuming, the cobra-eye rings this Book on her hands, the rippling motions of her arms, the very dances themselves. But the result is merely a collection of unresolved elements. Ruth St. Denis was always intelligible because she used all these accessories as means to one clearly conceived end. Her imitators are almost never intelligible because they themselves do not know what it is all about, because they have dealt with effects, not causes.

> Ruth St. Denis has never sacrificed art to antics. She has upheld her own high standard against pressure of all sorts. For many years she accepted poor box office returns and even actual losses rather than descend to the popular level; and even upon the vaudeville stage the quality of her performances was maintained despite continued lack of response from the vaudeville audiences. Everything in her private life—money, time, pleasure—has been sacrificed to achieving the perfection which today makes her the "artists' artist." I say "artists' artist," for it is those who have labored and struggled, with

consecration, who most realize her greatness.

She is more than a great dancer; the dance is but one of the many facets which reflect the dazzling light of her genius. She conceived a whole new system of movement, a revolutionary school of dance; she performed these dances with indescribable beauty and dramatic power; she originated costume, scene, lighting, music, story, and movement, all blended with consummate art into one unified whole. She was the Belasco of the dance, inasmuch as she incorporated into her productions wealth of detail, but also the Gordon Craig, because she achieved the utmost simplicity of effect. Not only does she afford delight to those who, running, read, but also inexhaustible interest to those who study her deeply. And I believe that what she has done in the past is but the mere presage of what she will do in the future. I remember writing after I first met Ruth St. Denis, "I have always worshiped Ruth St. Denis as an artist but I find she is even greater as a woman." And now

that I have lived with her for over five years I am more truly at her feet Some Reasons than ever.

Some Reasons for the Making of this Book

In these years I have been continually amazed at the prolific creativeness of this Book this great woman. The world is well acquainted with the artist of one idea—the writer of one book, the composer of one symphony—who never again creates superlatively. But Ruth St. Denis has never rested on her laurels, and even to her financial disadvantage has produced new creations when profit would have accrued from repetition of the old. During all these years, the power of mind and spirit which enabled her to triumph over every obstacle in the presenting of her first great creations has grown in strength, her art has mellowed, her physical technique has improved, and even her face and her body have lost not one single element of their youth and beauty.

It is true that great art has been produced by men and women whose personal lives were decadent, crumbling, and chaotic. It does not follow, however, that the obverse side of the coin of art must of necessity be tragedy. How much more stimulating and encouraging it is to find that a woman who has placed herself among the great artists of all time can yet in her personal life bear the closest scrutiny. Both in art and in life Ruth St. Denis is vital, growing. Constantly putting forth forms of beauty, like radium she perpetually

emits energy yet suffers no depletion.

And so Ruth St. Denis, the woman, because of her sweetness and light, the high principles of love and truth which dominate her life, the profound depths of her spirit, makes me know that we have not yet heard her greatest message. She is wholesome and sound morally, keen, analytic, and profound mentally, clear-visioned and consecrated spiritually. Verily, I say, this is one of the world's illumined!



Ruth St. Denis: Pioneer & Prophet





CHAPTER I № THE BEGINNINGS №

This volume does not seek to tell the life story of Ruth St. Denis, but rather to present the history of the cycle of her Oriental dances, of how they came into being, how they developed, flowered, and multiplied.

In 1904 Ruth St. Denis was beginning her third year under David Belasco, playing small parts in *Du Barry* with the famous Mrs. Leslie Carter. The Bernhardt type of heroine then dominated the stage. It was assumed that a heroine to be interesting must be bad, so the theatre was deluged with such plays as *Camille, Sappho, Zaza, Du Barry*, and others—all dealing with consumptive and hysterical ladies, passion-driven and intriguing women, courtesans,—the dregs of life dramatized. The mind and heart of Ruth St. Denis revolted against this entire system.

One day in Buffalo, New York, while looking with Honoria Donner, a young actress in the *Du Barry* company, for a boarding-house, she passed a drug store and saw in the window a cigarette poster depicting the Egyptian goddess Isis sitting in a niche in the temple. Something which had been growing unconsciously in Ruth St. Denis through these years of revolt waked in her mind at the sight of the picture. After walking a block, she sent "Patsey," as she called Miss Donner, back to beg this poster for her.

Ruth St. Denis
Pioneer & Prophet

Ruth St. Denis

All the following week she gazed upon it. "That," she declared, "is Pioneer & Prophet "what I want to be. Not a biting, scratching, petty, evil-motived female, "but a peaceful, powerful goddess, a symbol of infinity, the soul of a "people. I want to be - Egypt; not just an Egyptian woman with human "emotions and frailties, but Egypt herself!"

> From this moment her whole life was changed. That year while touring the United States in the Du Barry company she devoted all her spare time to reading and to searching libraries and museums in every city they visited. When they reached San Francisco she had devised an inexpensive costume and had her photograph made by a Japanese photographer there—the first visible evidence of what was eventually to revolutionize the art of dancing.

> When she returned home at the end of that tour, she enthusiastically outlined the plan of *Egypta* to her mother. But at a conservative estimate the cost of producing it would be three or four thousand dollars - as prohibitive, apparently, as if it had been a million. It is interesting in this connection to note that over three thousand dollars was spent to bring Radha to its first public performance, and had Ruth St. Denis had faith, Egypta could just as well have been produced first.

> So, appalled by the apparently impossible cost of production, she planned to take a small dance from Egypta, add an East Indian and a Japanese dance, and take them into vaudeville and earn money to produce Egypta.

> There was at Coney Island that summer an attraction called *The* Streets of Delhi. The actors were a really fine troupe of native East Indians; there were fakirs, snake-charmers and their cobras—in brief, the whole atmosphere of bazaar life cleverly reproduced. It was while she was watching the snake-charmers that the idea of the cobra dance took shape in her mind. Her next step was to delve in the Astor Li

brary, where she eagerly read everything concerning India which the Ruth St. Denis shelves afforded.

From these two sources she evolved a story which was to be the East Indian number in this proposed vaudeville act. In this she was to dance before an idol in a temple—a dance which had in it the beginnings of The Cobras and The Incense and The Nautch all mixed together. Then, reverting to her first inspiration on seeing the poster, she thought,"Why not be the idol, myself, instead of dancing before it?" This changed the whole conception. Again to the Astor Library for a name. After days of searching she suddenly saw the name Radha and knew it for her own. Radha is, of course, the symbol of the human soul ever seeking the divine; the passive principle, even as Krishna represents the active. But, being a woman, she presented the teachings of Krishna through an idol of Radha.

And in the Bhagavad Gîta she found this passage which seemed to hold the essence of Indian religious thought: "The mind that "gives itself to follow shows of sense drives to wreck and death. But "who shakes off the yoke of flesh, lives, Lord. Such a man comes to "tranquillity, and out of that tranquillity shall rise the end and healing "of this earthly pain."

From this time on she read incessantly. She haunted the Oriental quarter of New York, became acquainted with Hindus, talked with them, all the time absorbing information about the temple ceremonies of India.

The plan of the vaudeville act of three dances was by now completely discarded, and Radha had become an entity. Everything in her life was bent to the service of this compelling idea. Her father lent her what money he could; his employer became interested in this apparently wild scheme and advanced two hundred dollars. These sums were used up at once, and so her mother rented the one large

Ruth St. Denis room in their flat, and Ruth had to practice in a small and dingy Pioneer & Prophet dining-room. In addition, a regular income was necessary, so she became a chorus girl in Henry W. Savage's Woodland for about a two months' run in New York. When it went on the road she stayed behind, as Radha could not now be deserted.

> At this time Ruth St. Denis made the acquaintance of Mr. Edmund Russell, who had traveled extensively in India and was an authority on matters East Indian. He was most helpful in supplying information and in suggesting where Radha could be bettered. Particularly he gave her valuable hints as to the correct way of wearing the garb of an East Indian woman. She discovered a wonderful Oriental store where Indian stuffs, furniture, and brasses could be found. The proprietors, the Bhumgaras, were very friendly to the American girl who loved India, and at the opening of their new store Ruth St. Denis danced The Cobras for the first time in public.

> Radha was now costumed, the music for it entirely arranged—and here her old friend of Belasco days, Honoria Donner, was a great help to her,—a decorative screen acquired for a background, and a

throne for the goddess.

Then Mrs. Kate Dalliba had Radha given as a private performance in her home for a number of guests, and was so delighted with it at this stage that the next day she sent a check which made it possible to begin the complete stage setting for the temple scene. When this had been completed and native Hindus costumed as priests, flashlight pictures were taken; then came the long and painful "peddling" of the act to the agents and managers of Broadway. For six months not one of them would even give Radha a try-out. But several private performances kept the pot boiling-one for Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, one in the studio of Mr.R.H.Perry, and one for Dr. Holbrook Curtiss, who later, when Ruth St. Denis went abroad, gave her a

letter to the Duchess of Manchester. Finally a morning try-out in a Ruth St. Denis dark theatre was secured at Keith's. At its conclusion, the manage- Pioneer & Prophet ment had not the grace to ask her name and address, a usual courtesy even when there is no hope. Gloom again! In this difficult hour her mother was a source of spiritual strength, and this passage from Habakkuk her "refuge in time of storm":

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the "vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat; the "flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the "stalls:

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

"The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds'

"feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places."

As Ruth St. Denis pondered over the situation, it seemed that the only way to launch Radha was to rent a theatre for a private performance and invite the managers to see it under the best circumstances. So she went to Henry B. Harris with the proposition. And he—the first manager in all New York to offer one word of encouragement said, "Before we talk about renting, tell me all about it." So Ruth showed the pictures and told the whole story of Radha. Then Mr. Harris said, "I will give a matinée in my theatre [The Hudson] at my own expense, and I will invite all the managers to see it." This he did. Early in January, 1906, at the Hudson Theatre, Ruth St. Denis performed Radha, a Hindu Temple Dance for seven of New York's leading vaudeville managers: Oscar Hammerstein, Percy Williams, Werber, and four others.

At the conclusion of the performance these men gathered together in the lobby and talked it over. Hammerstein was quite sure that it was just the thing for Percy Williams's theatre, and Percy Williams was equally sure that it would be great for Hammerstein's. The upRuth St. Denis Pioneer & Prophet shot of it was that they all departed, offering no engagement. Afterwards, however, Werber offered one performance at a "smoking concert" at the New York Theatre Roof for Sunday night, January 27. Every idea of truth is born in a manger, and that Sunday night concert was the manger for *Radha*.

When the curtain rose and the Hindus came forward to perform the ceremonies of the temple before the goddess Radha in her shrine, there was much laughter and pseudo-humorous comment. But when the blue lights changed to amber, and the goddess stepped from her shrine—silence reigned until the curtain fell, when sincere and heavy applause broke forth.

And so, even in the face of the most difficult obstacles and before the most unsympathetic audience that could have been found, *Radha* triumphed completely in this, the first of over fifteen hundred performances of a production which marked an epoch in the world of the dance, a work of art which is immortal.



CHAPTER II THE HISTORY OF THIRTEEN YEARS ?

Pioneer & Prophet

Radha, because of its unexpected success on this first night, was repeated the following Sunday night, and was then booked for a week at Proctor's for two hundred and fifty dollars. This week was extended to three weeks, during which time manythings happened. Here let me quote from Dancing and Dancers of Today, by Caroline and Charles Caffin:

" Not that the vaudeville audience, as a whole, comprehended her "aspirations. At first there was a distinct gasp of amazement; wonder-"ment whether to disapprove of the audacity or to resent the lofty aloof-"ness of the conception. But in each audience were a few who responded "unreservedly to the beauty of the appeal and went out and told others " of the rare vision they had seen. These, in turn, spread the good news, "until the manager was surprised to find at each performance a stream " of people of a type not usually seen at a vaudeville performance, who "came just before Radha's appearance and hurried away as soon as "her curtain fell, and who came again and yet again. Truly the people "who came and saw and were conquered were a cause of some sur-"prise to others than the manager.

"The American public is very prudish. Yet here, a beautiful body "was displayed with no casings to interrupt the play of light on the

Ruth St. Denis

Ruth St. Denis "bronze skin or hide the play of muscles of the lithe limbs. But the Pioneer & Prophet" crystal purity of the dancer's intent seemed to have reflected itself in

"the minds of her audience and banished every thought of prejudice." One of those "who came again and yet again" was Mrs. Orlando Rouland. She appreciated the beauty of *Radha* and realized that vaudeville was not its right environment. She interested Mrs. Howard Mansfield and twenty-four other women of New York and among them they rented the Hudson Theatre and extended the following invitation to their friends:

"The following ladies, appreciating the beauty of the Oriental dances of *Radha*, will unite in giving a matinée for the pleasure of their friends at the Hudson Theatre on Thursday afternoon, March 22nd, at half past three o'clock: Mrs. William Allen, Mrs. Karl Bitter, Mrs. Edwin H. Blashfield, Mrs. Francke H. Bosworth, Mrs. Arthur Davies, Mrs. Harry Harkness Flagler, Mrs. Paul Leicester Ford, Mrs. Richard Watson Gilder, Mrs. Ben Ali Haggin, Mrs. Henry W. Jardon, Mrs. Imanishi, Mrs. Adrian H. Joline, Mrs. Otto H. Kahn, Mrs. George A. Meyer, Mrs. Howard Mansfield, Mrs. Richard Mansfield, Mrs. George L. Nichols, Mrs. Eliot Norton, Mrs. Orlando Rouland, Mrs. Philip Conway Sawyer, Mrs. Howard Taylor, Mrs. Alexander Tison, Mrs. James M. Townsend, Mrs. Allen Tucker, Mrs. J. Alden Weir, Mrs. Charles C. Worthington. Tea will be served in the foyer at five o'clock."

But now a new dilemma arose. For an entire performance Radha alonewas not sufficient. So The Cobras and The Incense, discarded during the evolution of Radha, were each made into a separate dance, and this matinée at the Hudson Theatre, March 22,1906, consisted of these three, with interludes of Oriental music composed by Harvey Worthington Loomis. It was a hugh success. Radha became the talk of the town. The newspapers flamed with it; the magazines featured it; Alan

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Dale seized upon it as a trapeze on which to perform some of his critical acrobatics.

Henry B. Harris now came forward again, and Radha, instead of going back to vaudeville, was given in a series of matinées the following week at the Hudson Theatre—all received by packed houses and with great enthusiasm. One matinée in Washington under the patronage of Mrs. Alice Barney, now Mrs. Christian Hemmick, a joint matinée with Henry C. Burleigh in Orange, New Jersey, one in Boston under the patronage of Mrs. Jack Gardner, and one at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on the program with the People's Symphony Orchestra, followed these performances at the Hudson. Then, as the New York season was drawing near its close, it seemed best to Mr. Harris to send Ruth St. Denis to London. He arranged with Charles Frohman to present her at the Aldwych Theatre there.

So, accompanied by her mother, her brother, and Honoria Donner, she crossed to England and gave three matinées at the Aldwych Theatre on July 5, 10, and 12, 1906. She was well received, but London had not yet waked up to the dance, and her greatest London successes came later on her return. However, many of the intelligent and artistic people of London, among whom were the Maharajah of Kapurthala and Mrs. Pat Campbell, came to these matinées and recognized the

great significance of her art.

After the engagement at the Aldwych, she danced three times for the Earl of Lonsdale, and twice for the Duchess of Manchester. The late King Edward was present on one of these latter occasions and per-

sonally proffered his appreciation of her dancing.

Many agents and managers came to the matinées at the Aldwych and offered engagements. A certain well-known international agent—the manager of the Olympia Theatre in Paris—came and offered a vaudeville engagement in Paris, but at such a price that she could not

Ruth St. Denis Pioneer & Prophet

even have cleared expenses. He maintained that he controlled all the vaudeville houses in Paris, and that she could never play there except through him. There came also another impresario, Mr. A. Braff, who was to hold an important place in her career for some years. Mr. Braff declared that he could place her in Paris despite this other agency and did so, securing contracts for a month's engagement at the Marigny Theatre.

She went over to Paris to see this theatre, and in her diary, kept in a somewhat desultory manner that year, I read: "July 28: Mr. Braff and I went to the Marigny Theatre, the place where I am to dance. God help me." This was her first experience in the back-stage of a Parisian *Variété*.

As the opening was not to be until September 1, she and the family went to Vimereux for a few weeks' rest. They returned on August 16 to rehearse and prepare for the engagement at the Marigny. Posted all over Paris were bills announcing that "Madame Radha, the original Hindu Temple Dancer," would open at the Olympia Theatre on the following night. This was a terrible blow! Some one in London, having seen Ruth St. Denis in *Radha* there, had duplicated the dances, costumes, and scenery as nearly as possible and through some malign influence had opened in Paris first.

On the night of the opening they went to the Olympia to see the counterfeit Radha—a coarse woman who, copying the externals of the art of Ruth St. Denis, was incapable of expressing its purity and beauty even if she could have perceived it. It was a disgusting performance. And the managers of the Marigny Theatre, who also saw the imposture, said, "If this is Radha, we do not want it." Accordingly, they tried to break their contract with Ruth St. Denis, and, failing in this, sought to discourage her by putting every possible obstacle in her way—such as refusing time and place for rehearsals. To complicate matters fur-

ther, it was found that the ballet music of Lakme, which had been Ruth St. Denis arranged for Radha, could not be used in Paris. But in the meantime Pioneer & Prophet the imitator of Radha had been repeatedly hissed off the stage, and at the end of four days her engagement was closed. I find in Ruth's diary the line, "And peace, unweaponed, conquers every wrong."

Rehearsals were granted and things began to open up. Through all, the old verse from Habakkuk sustained them. She writes: "This "whole experience has been a severe test and trial of our faith in every "way. It seemed as if all the error in the world, or Paris, rather, rose "up to block our path. Probably we have fought too much ourselves "and have not left enough for the Divine Mind to do for us. Never-"theless our larger faith will triumph. I only pray that we may use our "relationship to God more - oftener and stronger than we have. Still "I am very thankful that in this awful city and theatre we have been "able to bore through the darkness."

On Friday, August 31, 1906, she gave the "press performance" at the Marigny and on September 1 the first public performance. And the pendulum of Fortune, having swung to one extreme, now swung to the other. The real Radha created a furore which should have satisfied anybody. Mobs waited outside the theatre to see St. Denis come out. The press eulogized. Artists wanted to paint her; Rodin came to sketch her arms. The Baron and Baroness Rothschild came to her dressing-room and invited her to their home. And the engagement, instead of closing at the end of four weeks, was extended to six, keeping the Marigny Theatre open two weeks after the date of its regular closing for the first time in history!

Mr. Braff had meantime gone to Germany to arrange dates there. Ruth St. Denis arrived in Berlin on the morning of October 16 and three days later gave her press performance at the Komische Oper, where she danced in the street scene of Lakme, then being given its

Ruth St. Denis Pioneer & Prophet

première in Berlin. The first complete performance of her own dances was given October 27 at the same theatre. The successes in New York, London, and Paris had all been but leading up to the great sensation she made in Berlin, and subsequently all over Germany. Perhaps no singer, artist, actor, or dancer has so completely captured the German people as did Ruth St. Denis. For two years without a week's rest she danced, while success, honors, and fame were heaped upon her, and she could have remained indefinitely had she not hungered for her own country. A theatre bearing her name would have been built for her, if she would have agreed to remain five years more.

During the first engagement at the Komische Oper, a special matinée was arranged at Charlottenberg; preceding this was a luncheon at which Hauptman, Wedekind, Hofmansthal, Graf Kessler, Richter, Hofman, and others paid tribute to this dancer who revealed to them such unparalled beauty.

After the Komische Oper engagement, Ruth St. Denis went to the Winter Garten for about two months and then began a tour of Germany, Austria, and Hungary, which lasted for a year and a half, including several return engagements at the Komische Oper and the Winter Garten in Berlin. In Vienna, while dancing at the Ronacher, she received an invitation to dance at the Royal Opera. It was the first time this invitation had been extended to an outsider, and no higher honor could have come to her in that country. However, contracts previously made which could not be changed rendered acceptance impossible. The framed invitation is one of Mr. Braff's proud possessions. In Vienna both *The Nautch* and *The Yogi* were added to her repertoire, making five dances in the Indian series.

This tour was interrupted by a month's engagement in Brussels at the Palais d'Eté, and by another of two weeks at Monte Carlo.

In October, 1908, she returned to London. There she had a season

of six weeks at the Scala Theatre, where she occupied the entire eve- Ruth St. Denis ning with the series of Indian dances. She is the only dancer ever to *Pioneer & Prophet* have given a season of solo performances. It is a tribute unequaled that the London public filled her theatre for seven weeks for an evening's entertainment consisting entirely of the dancing of one woman. At the end of this season she gave a gala performance to the elect of London, in which she presented her first Japanese dance.

Then back to Germany until April, 1909, when she returned again to London and played ten weeks at the Coliseum, receiving five hundred pounds a week - nearly ten times as much as for the same dance at Proctor's less than three years before.

After the Coliseum engagement, she started on a tour of the English provinces, but the lack of response was so violent a contrast to three years of unbroken success that she soon canceled her contracts. An incident in Edinburgh may give some explanation of her lack of desire to continue the provincial tour. The curtain rose on Radha; the priests were performing their ceremonial duties. This opening pantomime is very serious, very slow, and, to the uninitiated, very baffling. Suddenly through the silence the heavy voice of a spectator in the "thrippenny gallery" boomed out across the house to a friend of his, "I sy, Bill, wot's it all abaht?"

Ruth St. Denis returned to America, and in November, 1909, resumed her matinées at the Hudson Theatre. These were so tremendously patronized now that all Europe had shown its approval of the American dancer that in December she began to give evening performances—the only time that a solo dancer has given evening performances in New York.

During these years of success, life had become much more complicated for Ruth St. Denis than when she was playing small parts under David Belasco for thirty-five dollars a week. She had to deal with imi-

Ruth St. Denis tators by the score, none of whom, however, seemed so important as Pioneer & Prophet that first counterfeit Radha in Paris. A girl in Danzig, during Ruth St. Denis's success in Germany, called herself St. Donis and bloomed her short season, then faded away. Gertrude Hoffman prepared to present Radha while Ruth St. Denis was abroad, but was restrained by injunction, inasmuch as Radha had been copyrighted in 1905 under the classification of a play without words. An unscrupulous London agent brought suit for ten thousand dollars for some alleged breach of contract and got judgment in the English courts through Ruth St. Denis's failure to appear — she was then in America — or to have defense at the trial. Again, a Hindu brought suit, claiming that he had taught Miss St. Denis the Radha dances. After an annoying period in court, she of course easily proved this ridiculous, and the case was thrown out. As late as two years ago an assistant property man sued, claiming to have produced The Garden of Kama.

> Early in 1910 Ruth St. Denis took her Indian dances to Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and a few other Eastern cities. She had now added to this series, making six in all, a dance with the scene laid in a

garden in Cashmere, which she called *The Lotus Pond*.

In the fall of 1910 Henry B. Harris, who knew of her original inspiration, Egypta, gave orders that it be produced. In contrast to the long time given to the preparation of Radha, Ruth St. Denis had only six weeks in which to prepare the program of Egyptian dances. True, the ideas of these had been in her consciousness for some years, and while in London and on the Continent she had spent days and days in the British Museum and in every other place where she could acquaint herself with Egyptian things. She had also been acquiring a library of books on Egypt-Wilkinson, Budge, Ebers, Breasted, Mizraim, and the colorful and beautiful work by Hichens. Yet, for all this study, it was a tremendous task to produce five dances with

scenes, costumes, supporting cast, and music, in only six weeks. The production opened at the Amsterdam Theatre in matinées in December, 1910. After three weeks it went to Boston, and then returned for another short run in New York.

Under Mr. Harris's management, Miss St. Denis now started on a coast to coast tour of week stands, taking three numbers of the Egyptian production: The Dance of Day, The Palace of Pharaoh, and The Veil of Isis, together with the five original dances of the Indian series. This tour ended in Los Angeles late in the spring of 1912. While in Los Angeles Miss St. Denis renewed her interest in things Japanese. She studied Japanese dancing with an ex-geisha teacher every day for six weeks. It happened also that there was a very fine company of Japanese actors giving a repertoire of classic Japanese dramas and Nō dances, which she went often to see. She also at this time met Mr. Clarence McGhee, who had lived in Japan and whose enthusiasm for things Japanese, which he had studied exhaustively, was added fuel to her rekindling interest in Japanese dance-drama.

On her return to New York it became necessary to reenter vaudeville with *Radha* and *The Nautch*, as Harris had lost money on the coast tour. For twelve weeks she played in and around New York and in some measure redeemed the loss.

All this time Ruth St. Denis was costuming her Japanese production, and it was agreed with Harris that this should be produced in the spring. She had acquired a Japanese dressmaker, a Japanese scene-painter, and she had Mr. McGhee come on from Los Angeles to assist with information on points of authenticity.

Just as the production began to take shape, Harris went to Europe, and on his return trip went down with the *Titanic*. This was a great loss to Ruth St. Denis, not only professionally, but personally, as Harris had always been most kind, encouraging, and helpful in every

way, and she entertained a deep and lasting regard for him. The Harris estate was in a chaotic condition and could render her no assistance. But the Japanese production was now nearing completion and must be carried on. Ruth St. Denis spent all of her own money on its production and went into debt besides to the extent of seven thousand dollars. Only about three hundred dollars could be spent on advertising—which, in New York, might as well have been nothing. And so what was one of the greatest artistic achievements of her career was also the greatest financial failure. *O-mika*, beginning March 11, 1913, at the Fulton Theatre, ran but two weeks. In debt seven thousand dollars, no manager, and with a failure which prevented any possible manager from wanting to handle her!

At this time the Palace vaudeville theatre was just opening and the management came to her for a week's engagement. She hurriedly rearranged the Japanese dances for vaudeville, for which they were, and proved themselves to be, utterly unsuited. She also appeared for one week in Cincinnati. Then nothing more could be obtained until the summer when she went to Ravinia Park, just out of Chicago, appearing on the same program with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

At Ravinia she drew immense crowds, hitherto unheard of there, breaking every record of attendance and of financial receipts since the Park came into existence. On the first night she gave as encore an impromptu cake-walk to Victor Herbert's *Al Fresco*, and she says: "It was the cake-walk, not High Art, that filled Ravinia Park."

Through all that winter Ruth St. Denis managed to keep the wolf from the door only by taking an occasional private engagement. In the spring of 1914 she secured an advance man and press agent, Harry Bell, and with her brother as manager gathered together a small company to tour the South, a part of the country which had not yet seen her. It was at this time that I joined the company as her dancing partner.

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This tour lasted some three or four months and then, in the summer Ruth St. Denis of 1914, she returned to Ravinia Park, where I accompanied her together with Miss Hilda Beyer, who had been with us on the southern tour.

Shortly after this engagement at Ravinia Park we went to New York, and there, August 13, 1914, we were married. Nine days later, with a miscellaneous program, we began a tour of one night stands which lasted seven months—a long and tedious tour, but it enabled Ruth St. Denis to pay back every cent of the debt incurred in the Japanese production. Other great dancers who have had staggering financial failures, have gone into bankruptcy, and have paid only a few cents on the dollar. But Ruth St. Denis refused this easy way out; always scrupulously conscientious in financial matters, her credit in the profession as an individual producer is unsurpassed.

This tour ended in California. I had already had a school in Los Angeles, and the idea of a school had for years been in Ruth St. Denis's mind. It now took shape again, and at Los Angeles, in the summer of 1915, we founded Denishawn.

In the fall we organized a larger company and started on a tour again, playing but one to four performances in a city. In New York we gave three weeks of matinées at the Hudson and the Candler Theatres and then accepted a vaudeville engagement at the Palace Theatre in January, 1916. This engagement was really the first in which Ruth St. Denis had won the "man on the street"; always before it had been the artistic, the intelligent only, but now the crowd responded and in that first week five thousand people were turned away and as many the second week.

After sixteen weeks in vaudeville we returned to Denishawn, which had in the meantime gained fame rapidly. The second summer of the school was an even greater success than the first.

It was during this summer that Ruth St. Denis was invited to give a performance at the Greek Theatre of the University of California, in Berkeley. This was the first time that a dancer had been given this honor, though many of the greatest dancers of the day had sought it. On July 29,1916, was given ADance Pageant of Egypt, Greece, and India, with a symphony orchestra, a ballet of over one hundred dancers, and thirty trained soloists from Denishawn. For sheer beauty, it is said, this performance has never been equaled at the Greek Theatre. But it was characteristic of Ruth St. Denis from first to last that so greatly did her artistry outweigh her financial judgment that, although there was an audience of over ten thousand at two dollars top prices, the production cost more than was taken in.

The vaudeville tour which had been discontinued for the summer season of our school was renewed in the fall of 1916 with a condensed version of the pageant, performed in a scene which was a replica of the Greek Theatre. This lasted thirty-six unbroken weeks and brought us again to Denishawn in the summer of 1917. It had now grown so that it had to be moved into rented quarters three times as large, comprising four buildings and an open-air studio and dance-theatre.

Ruth St. Denis was intending to take a year's rest, which she had thoroughly earned. But America was in the Great War, so I enlisted in the army and Ruth enlisted in vaudeville, which she had hoped she had left behind forever. But to do her bit she took the drudgery of the "two-a-day" and devoted her entire income to war work.

She became the godmother of the 158th Ambulance Company at Camp Kearny, California, in which company I was a private. Before going on tour she gave with me and some of our pupils the first three entertainments ever presented in that camp. Her godsons were well looked after, and they were particularly grateful for the weekly breakfast she provided for them all the time they were there.

Her vaudeville tour, ending in the summer of 1918, was entirely in Ruth St. Denis the West; she was assisted by her pupil, Miss Margaret Loomis, who Pioneer & Prophet had returned to the Denishawn fold after starring with Sessue Hayakawa in motion pictures, and by her musical director, Mr. Louis Horst. On this tour she gave a program consisting of The Moon of Love—a lyric dance of my composition,—The Japanese Flower-Arrangement, The Peacock, and her famous Egyptian Palace Dance.

When this tour closed, she came again to Camp Kearny where I was now in the Officers' Training School, bringing with her Carrie Jacobs Bond, Elizabeth Murray, and others, and gave an entertainment for the entire school. This was repeated the following evening in the Knights of Columbus's open-air shell before twenty thousand of the camp. On the third night she was given a farewell banquet by her godsons of the 158th Ambulance Company. It was attended by General Strong, commanding officer of the 40th Division, and staff officers. About one month later this entire division went to France.

Beginning June 29, 1918, she appeared twice weekly for five weeks in the open-air performance of The Light of Asia, described elsewhere. On July 27 she appeared at the Greek Theatre in Gluck's opera Orpheus. It was repeated at the Tivoli Opera House in San Francisco, August 11. August 23 the newly commissioned officers from the Officers' Training School at Camp Fremont gave a celebration banquet at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. As I was one of these, Ruth St. Denis made a special journey from Los Angeles to dance for the affair. She performed her old famous dance, The Nautch, and, with me, the duet from the Egyptian Ballet.

Through all these activities she bore alone the heavy burden of directing the work of the ever-growing Denishawn School.

In the fall of 1918 she gave up her entire time to the selling of liberty bonds. From early morning until late at night she worked at her

Ruth St. Denis station in the Alexandria Hotel making speeches and selling bonds. Pioneer & Prophet She sold nearly one hundred thousand dollars' worth and subscribed for so many herself that she had to accept still another vaudeville engagement to pay for them.

> By this time the influenza epidemic had spread over the country, and I, now a lieutenant with the 32nd Infantry, was quarantined in Camp Kearny. For seven weeks no one went into or out of the camp. All places of amusement within it were closed, and officers and men pined for entertainment. Braving the quarantine, Ruth St. Denis came to Camp Kearny, lived for eight days in a tent on the outskirts, and nightly gave open-air performances to a ghostly-looking host of soldiers whose faces were covered with white "flu-masks."

> The signing of the armistice found her just starting on her last vaudeville tour, booked when no end of the war was in sight and liberty bonds and other war donations were still to be paid for. On this tour she carried her musical director, Mr. Horst, her manager and personal representative, June Hamilton Rhodes, and four dancers— Doris Humphrey, Edna Malone, Betty Horst, and Pearl Wheeler. Her program comprised a Byzantine number, The Dance of Theodora, The Royal Siamese Ballet, and The Spirit of Democracy. The scenes were all designed by Maxwell Armfield. Later, as war themes proved unpopular, The Spirit of Democracy was replaced by an Algerian scene, The Street of the Dancers, in which Ruth St. Denis appeared as an Ouled Naïl. This tour extended over a period of thirty weeks of actual engagements.

> During this time I had received my discharge from the army and had returned to Los Angeles to make preparations for the closing of Denishawn—now grown to unwieldly size—for the purpose of reestablishing the school on land and in buildings owned by ourselves.

On August 1 and 2, 1919, Ruth St. Denis made her début as an

emotional actress—her first speaking part since the Belasco days—in Ruth St. Denis Miriam, Sister of Moses, a play by Constance Smedley and Maxwell Pioneer & Prophet Armfield, at the Berkeley Greek Theatre. This performance is fully described in chapter fifteen.

The school now being closed, we went to live in our country place in Eagle Rock, a suburb of Los Angeles. I was engaged in producing a vaudeville act of Denishawn pupils, Julnar of the Sea — which is now on tour,—and Ruth St. Denis in training a group of dancers who, with Ellis Rhodes, tenor, and Everett Olive, pianist, are now beginning a concert tour. Six days after the opening of Julnar, on November 9, 1919, our home, Tedruth, was burned to the ground. The Denishawn library, said to be the most complete collection in existence of books dealing with dance and costume was totally destroyed, as well as Oriental draperies, bronzes, pictures, all our costumes, scenery, properties, and orchestrations accumulated for over ten years. Had the manuscript of this book, which I had completed in the late summer of 1919, not been in my business office in Los Angeles, no complete record of the career of Ruth St. Denis could have been made, as all her writings, diaries, and trunks full of programs and souvenirs were burned.

But this experience, like all others, has only been another proof of the inherent greatness of this wonderful woman's soul. Her whole philosophy was expressed in one sentence: "Material loss can only be spiritual gain."

Now at last, nearing the end of the year 1919, we face peace, rest, and an opportunity to do greater and better things. This will be Ruth St. Denis's first rest in fifteen years.

Let it be said that through all these years Ruth St. Denis had the love and devotion of her mother and brother working toward her success. Her brother went to Europe with her in 1906, and all through

England and on the Continent was a constant source of help and companionship. Under her training he soon developed into a capable stage manager; much of the credit for the efficient operation of lighting effects is his. After the death of Henry B. Harris, her brother also became business manager, and in these offices he continued until a few years ago, when he formed a dancing company of his own.

Too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the influence of Miss Honoria Donner in the early and conceptive stages of Ruth St. Denis's career. As they traveled together in the *Du Barry* company, it was "Patsey" Donner who listened sympathetically and constructively to all her dreams and aspirations and who later was of real, practical help through the two hard years before *Radha* finally came to recognition. It is interesting to note that Miss Donner has developed into an emotional actress and *diseuse* of some renown. While she has not met with great popular success at any time, the connoisseurs and the intelligently appreciative people of New York consider her as one of the greatest tragic actresses of the day.

A separate book should be written about Mother—only so could she be dealt with adequately. As in the case of most geniuses, Ruth achieved what her mother had all her life yearned to achieve; so, vicariously, the mother triumphed in her daughter. She has had no other thought or interest in her life than Ruth's success. Yet she was far from being the doting mother who sees nothing to criticise in her child; she erred rather on the side of being too stern a critic. When the audience thrilled to some new dance of Ruth's, and her friends went into ecstasies, her mother would come behind the scenes and say, "Well, it was about eighty per cent." And that twenty per cent needed for perfection was achieved before her mother rested or allowed her to rest. And when on rare occasions her mother was satisfied with a dance, there was no public Ruth feared to have see it.

Untiring in her ceaseless work, unrelenting in her keen but protect- Ruth St. Denis ing criticisms, she was ever a source of great spiritual strength to her Pioneer & Prophet daughter, and gave withal a wealth of affection. It is rare to find genius without a background of a potentially great mother.

And yet when I reread this chronicle and consider the events of those years, I wonder that Ruth St. Denis lives. For not only was there the stress and confusion attendant upon any great career, but, in addition, all the difficulties of a pioneer's task. The opera singer has a score, traditions, an established organization to guide her, but Ruth St. Denis created her own art and interpreted it; practically alone, she presented it to the world and by unflagging zeal forced recognition of its greatness. This she did with no financial backing save the few hundred dollars borrowed in the early days and paid back, and the kind assistance of Henry B. Harris, whose tragic death prevented complete repayment. Except for this, she has been her own "angel," manager, and producer, as well as the creator, the artist, the interpreter.

I quote again from the Caffins:

" The art of Ruth St. Denis was peculiarly fitted to make the first seri-"ous assault on the American appreciation, because it has that appeal to "the intellect, that literary quality, which is the one to which our training "and ideals have made us more susceptible. We all knew, or thought "we knew, something about Temple dances. But we did not know " enough to take them too literally. Our knowledge was highly fraught "with indistinctness, so that the appeal through our intellects to our im-"agination was very happy. The motive was never too subtle or intan-"gible but that we might gather something which we would translate "into our own language. For the writer there was something else than "emotional adjectives; for the painter and photographer, direct inspira-"tion; for the musician, rhythmic harmonies of movement which sug-"gested music. For each of us something that we could understand.

Ruth St. Denis " Thus it arrested the attention of the public, as a merely esthetic ap-Pioneer & Prophet "peal might not have done at that time, and forced them to take the "art of Ruth St. Denis seriously. And this is just what they had never "done before with the art of dancing. Pretty, amusing, even charming "it might have been; but never before had they met in the dance this "high seriousness of purpose, which compelled a like seriousness of "consideration. And so this first appearance was really a matter of "much significance and had its effect in the consideration shown to "other dancers who have followed through succeeding years."

And in *The Dance* by the Kinneys we find:

" One of the most prominent and successful managers in America "said: 'There are two ways to succeed with dancers. If they have a "sensational acrobatic novelty that has never been seen before, that "will make money. Otherwise, you've got to take their clothes off if "you want anybody to look at 'em. Duncan? St. Denis? What does "the American public care about art? They have succeeded because "they took their clothes off."

" Any refutation of the above cynicism as affecting Miss Duncan "and Miss St. Denis is superfluous. Their work has at all times been "charged with a big romantic or mystic meaning. Imitators basing "their activities on the manager's creed above quoted, have furnished "an illuminating experiment to determine exactly what interest the "public finds in the work of the two artists named. Invariable fail-"ure has accompanied their approximate nudity, despite the fact that "many of them are pretty in face and figure.

" Great dancers have come, been seen, but—until the coming of the

"Russians—have achieved few victories of lasting value.

"Genée is an exception; to delight in her work is to be added a "real influence in favour of real art. Carmencita, Otero, and Rosario "Guerero, all great artists of expression conveyed through the medium "of the dances of Spain, have had good seasons in this country. Even Ruth St. Denis

"though their influence on taste did not seem far reaching, it must be Pioneer & Prophet

"believed that they helped prepare the way for great things that were

"to come.

" But the real force of the coming change, the change that was to "take its place among the important revolutions in the history of all "art was quietly preparing itself in an American village."



Ruth St. Denis

CHAPTER III RADHA FIRST DANCE IN THE Pioneer & Prophet EAST INDIAN SERIES (THE TEMPLE)

If a Hindu be asked what is the ultimate good that he is striving to reach through religious rites, he will answer, "Liberation"; whether he be peasant or pundit, his reply will be the same. He must free his soul, the divine particle, from the bondage of the senses.—A. R. Lyall: Great Religions of the World.

A vast gloomy temple is revealed, spotted here and there with flick-"ering lights, Indian ornament, and pillars encrusted with gold, dulled "by centuries of time and incense smoke. Strange figures, supporting "the dome roof, and on the ground, wrapt in meditation; the squatting "bronze forms of almost nude devotees, their white turbans and loin-"cloths catching a gleam of the faint light which pierces the fretted door " of the shrine. An atmosphere of mystery and devotion, belonging to "another civilization and another age. Then wailing music, as the wor-"shipers, offering their gifts, prostrate themselves before the shrine."

" Presently through the incense smoke we are conscious that the "doors are opened and the impassive form of the goddess, wrapt in "contemplation, is revealed.

" The music becomes more poignant, fresh spires of smoke wreathe "up before her, her limbs become animate. Or is it the flickering of the "lights? No, slowly the throb of life creeps into the face. The eyes are "half open; the head is slightly raised; the bosom heaves; the head "turns slowly. Radha has awakened from her long repose and gazes Ruth St. Denis "curiously at her worshipers."

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"Then, slowly slipping from her throne, she pauses to enjoy the pulsa-"tion of life, the warm breath of the air, and the luxury of the moment. "By degrees, as her dazzled worshipers bend their heads, she tastes the "joys and sensations with which she has endowed mortals, and glides "into the Dance of the Five Senses.

Sight is awakened by the sheen and hues of the jewels which be-"deck her body and reflect the quivering lights; Hearing, by the little "silver bells that tinkle, as she bends to catch their varied detonation, "her whole body alert to note their differences; Smell, by the garlands "of flowers in which she wreathes herself, drawing them luxuriously "around her, crushing them against her shimmering flesh as though... "all parts of her would partake of their fragrance; Touch, by the satin-"petaled lotus, laid in turn to her cheek, her arm, her lips; while the "smooth ripple of muscles under her glossy skin responds with shivers " of sensitive sympathy to the caressing pressure of her foot upon the "ground. Every nerve is sensitive and in turn conveys the message. "Then, most human of all, Taste.

" She drinks, and for one brief moment the goddess is intoxicated "with human sensation and, flinging away the bowl, abandons herself "to the passion of life. In time the spell is over and she sinks to the "ground. Then, slowly gathering the self-control of ages, she rises, "steps past the prostrate worshipers and the glowing flames of the "sacrificial fires, back to the aloofness and solitude of her godhead. "The limbs are folded; the hands rest upon the knees; animation dies "down—down, till again there is only stillness, a supreme patience. The "lights flicker out, the gates of the shrine are closed."

This is as the Caffins saw Radha, and I could not paint the picture better.

Ruth St. Denis

The following is reproduced from a little booklet printed in 1905 Pioneer & Prophet when Radha was copyrighted:

" Radha. Scene: Interior of a Hindu temple. At center back is a large "niche and shrine in which is seated the image of Radha, cross-legged "in the attitude of Buddha, before which incense is rising. At one side, "temple care-taker kneels in prayer. Curtain.

" Enter first high priest at lower right entrance; he advances toward "idol carrying incense, which he renews before the shrine; he kneels "in worship; then, rising, rings bell at the side.

" Enter first temple servant, bearing a tray of garlands of flowers, "which high priest takes and hangs around the neck of the idol, then "rises and strikes a gong suspended from an arch.

" Enter second temple servant, bearing loose flowers on a tray, which "the high priest receives, scattering some over the idol, pouring the "rest into a small dish at the foot of the shrine. He strikes the gong "again.

" Enter pilgrim with offering of cocoanuts, which the priest receives." "Then, dipping his finger into the sacrificial paste, he marks the fore-"heads of the worshipers with the sacred symbol. At this point all "the bells and gongs are loudly struck. All the servants, pilgrims, and "priests advance slowly up stage and kneel in front of the shrine, form-"ing a semicircle before the goddess.

" After a short interval, Radha, partly hidden from view by the heavy "clouds of rising incense, descends from her pedestal and, standing at "the foot of it, gazes with benign countenance on the worshipers who "draw back and prostrate themselves before her.

" Radha then signifies that she has taken this form for a short time in "order to give them a message. She bids them rise and receive this, "which she then conveys through a mystic dance, the meaning of which "is that they must not seek for permanent happiness in an imperma-

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"nent world; that the quest for pleasure through the five senses always Ruth St. Denis "ends in unfulfilment; that peace is only to be found within.

The dance is comprised of three figures, the first being performed in "five circles one within the other, each circle representing one of the five "senses. Each of the first four is symbolized by different objects: jewels "for sight, bells for hearing, garlands for smell, a bowl of wine for taste, "and for touch she kisses her own hands.

" The second figure is danced on a square representing according to "Buddhistic theology the fourfold miseries of life, and is done with "writhings and twistings of the body to portray the despair of unful-"filment. At the end of this figure Radha sinks to the ground in dark-"ness.

After a short interval a faint light discloses her in an attitude of "prayer and meditation. This light, coming from a hanging lamp of "lotus design, is first concentrated on her figure, then diffused with in-"creasing power over the entire stage. Radha now rises from a kneeling "posture, her face illumined with the light of joy within, and, holding "a lotus flower, begins the third figure of the dance, which follows the "lines of an open lotus flower, the steps leading from the center of the "flower to the point of each petal. She dances on the balls of the feet, thus "typifying the ecstasy and joy which follow renunciation of the senses "and freedom from their illusion. At the close of this figure, which fin-"ishes the message, Radha, holding aloft the lotus flower, slowly dances "backward to the shrine, followed by the priests, the curtain meanwhile "gradually descending.

"When the curtain rises, the image of Radha is seen seated once more "in the shrine, her spirit having attained Samadhi. The worship is over, "the lights are out, the priests are gone, leaving the idol, alone once "more, to the shadows and the silence of the temple."

The music of Radha was arranged from the ballet music of Lakme.

Ruth St. Denis In the early days, of course, it was beyond Miss St. Denis's means to Pioneer & Prophet pay for specially composed music, but nothing could have served the purpose better than this.

> The costume came to perfection through a long process of evolution. The first jewels were acquired here and there, and sewed together by her own hands into chains and girdles and head-dress. Many experiments were necessary before she finally developed the wonderful clothof-gold circular skirt. At one time she wore tight, ankle-length East Indian trousers into which she had to be sewed for each performance. The costume which she finally adopted was made in London from her own design. It consisted largely of chains of jewel-studded gold plaques, representing as nearly as possible the ornamentation of the Hindu idols. There were large ornaments for the upper and forearms as well as for the legs just above the ankle. A pointed jeweled crown with large pendant earrings made the head-dress. The body, at first sight, appeared to be entirely nude, except for the jeweled chains. It was stained a light brown and about the loins was an elastic band of the same color. Miss St. Denis always wore a black wig, as her own hair, which was light brown, had turned almost white while she was in her twenties.

> The stage setting was worked out according to the same gradual process of evolution as the costume. At first it consisted of no more than an Oriental screen, merely a background. Then Miss St. Denis had a reproduction made of a Jain temple in which she was seated on a lotus throne in a gold niche. Later another and better temple scene was painted and a shrine was built which entirely enclosed the idol. The seated figure, lighted from above by a concealed blue spotlight, could be seen dimly through the fretwork door.

> Ruth St. Denis danced Radha before more than fifteen hundred audiences, thus making of it a classic, for no other dance-drama has had

so great a sum total of performances. Moreover, this was the first attempt in the Occidental world to preach a religious doctrine through the medium of the dance, an attempt that was little understood, inasmuch as complacent Christianity looks on the Hindu and his worship as "heathen." This was also the first hieratic dance in modern times.

Hugo Hofmansthal, whose *Elektra* was set to music by Richard Strauss as a one-act opera, wrote as follows:

" The Incomparable Dancer. In this extraordinarily hieratic art-strange "combination of a strangely alive being with primeval tradition—every "trace of sentimentality has vanished. It is the same with her smile, and "this it is that from the first moment estranges the hearts of women and "the sensual curiosity of men, when seeing Ruth St. Denis. And it is just "this that makes her dancing incomparable. It borders on voluptuousness, "but is chaste. It is consecrated to the senses, but is a symbol of something higher. "It is wild, but bound by external laws. It could not be other than it is. "I saw her for a quarter of an hour, and there were moments—such as "falling down, kissing her own fingers, drinking from the bowl—that "have impressed themselves upon the memory as does a noble detail "from the Elgin marbles or a color of Giorgione. She will take her own "place wherever she appears. Her wonderful directness-that severe, "almost repellant directness—her sublime earnestness that is without "a touch of pedantry, all this creates about her that isolation that ever "surrounds the extraordinary."

EllaWheelerWilcox said:

" Radha is a dance and a hymn, a prayer, a picture, and an epic poem "all in one. It is better than a sermon and greater than any sacred music "ever sung or played. Here is another woman who has created a new "thing in art, and again in the realm of Terpsichore. Let her name go "into the Hall of Fame. She has elevated her art and given the world "a beautiful work."



Ruth St. Denis Pioneer & Prophet

CHAPTER IV № THE INCENSE № SECOND DANCE IN THE EAST INDIAN SERIES (THE PURDAH) №

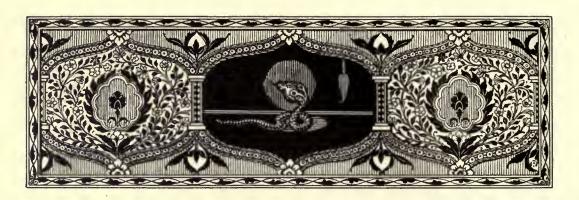
It was in the spring of 1911 in the Broadway Theatre in Denver that I first saw Ruth St. Denis dance. I had seen the Russians just a few months before, and, although I marveled, they had awakened nothing deep in me. But when I saw *The Incense* I wept, not caring that it was in a crowded theatre—and never before, or since, have I known so true a religious experience or so poignant a revelation of perfect beauty. I date my own artistic birth from that night. So I cannot help being personal when I speak of *The Incense*.

The word "purdah" means the curtain which sometimes separates the women's quarters from the rest of an East Indian household. And blue-gray curtains made the background for this dance. Two large incense burners, one at each side of the stage, and a low tabouret in the center completed the setting. Silence, and then, through the curtains, like a wraith of the smoke, she appeared, a high-caste East Indian woman in a smoke-gray sari and choli, or jacket, of seed-pearls. In her hands was a tray from which rose a spiral of incense smoke.

How can I describe the dance? Can another ever bring to you—unless you yourself have had such experience—the beauty of a sunset, or of a symphony, or make you feel the impressiveness of a cathedral service? To me, *The Incense* was all of these. Like some crystal

tone from a great singer's throat, each movement was flawless, per- Ruth St. Denis fect-"something of God." And when, having put incense on the Pioneer & Prophet flames, she became the personification of the smoke-with rippling arms rising higher and higher - then it seemed as if the soul rose out of my body, and I found myself sobbing. Then rippling again - not like arms but like trailing wisps of smoke - the arms descended, and, as quietly as she had come, she disappeared through the curtains.

Ruth St. Denis has always stood for high things—things above the petty human orbit, things cosmic and eternal. In The Incense was pictured the whole subject of worship. It expressed completely and beautifully that spirit which rises out of humanity seeking reunion with the Divine.



CHAPTER V THE COBRAS THIRD DANCE IN THE EAST INDIAN SERIES (THE STREET) 🍽

The scene is a small bazaar near the Ganges. Merchants tending shops, women haggling over purchases, a group of jugglers showing their tricks, girls carrying water in jars, a Yogi (a holy beggar) singing his mendicant's song—all this creates the atmosphere of the bazaar. Now in the distance is heard the weird, squealing flute and the tom-tom. Ruth St. Denis, with two Hindus who are playing these instruments, appears, costumed in a reddish-brown ragged dress, with sleeves down to the hands. A brown turban is on the head, and strag-

gling wisps of black hair show from beneath.

A small platform is brought out, on which she seats herself, crosslegged. Up to this time her arms have been folded, with each hand over the opposite shoulder. But now they come into play. The index and the little fingers are adorned with huge emerald rings which give the hands the appearance of two cobra heads. Then she—herself the snake-charmer; her hands, the cobras—begins her dance. The snakes coil, writhe, hiss, intertwine, and strike. One becomes fascinated to the point of believing it all real. When the dance reaches a climax with both cobras striking together, she coils them again about her shoulders and, with her attendants, slouches off, the bazaar life continuing for a few moments until the curtain.

Sometimes in later performances the street juggler did his "basket Ruth St. Denis trick." He plunged his sword through his reed basket. Out through Pioneer & Prophet a hole in the top, as if it were a cobra rising, a green-ringed hand appeared, then another hand, and finally the lid came off and Ruth St. Denis herself emerged from a basket so small it seemed unbelievable that it could have held her.

In the bazaar scene Professor Inayat Khan, one of the leading musicians of India, sang the Yogi song. Of him I shall speak more fully in the chapter on The Nautch.

There are snake dances in India. The nautch girls sometimes take a corner of their sari, wound to simulate a snake, and dance with it. But Ruth St. Denis's device was entirely original with her. The greenjeweled rings for the fingers, copied by so many dauntless imitators in the last fourteen years, are never used by the native dancers.

In later years, when I had seen *The Cobras* often enough so that I could tear my fascinated gaze from her hands, I always watched her face. This then became more wonderful to me than the snake arms. Had a moving picture been taken of the face alone, it would have held me spellbound—the entire dance was there, unaided by the arms.

The Cobras lent itself not only to imitators but also to cartoons. Hardly a cartoonist in America or Europe but had a try at it. Perhaps that of Maryas de Zayas was the most happy. The Cobras was also seriously painted and sculptured many times, the painting by Orlando Rouland and the bronze by Lachaise standing foremost.



Ruth St. Denis CHAPTER VI THE NAUTCH FOURTH DANCE Pioneer & Prophet IN THE EAST INDIAN SERIES (THE PALACE)

It was in Vienna that *The Nautch* received its première. This dance, as well as The Incense and The Cobras, had been a part of the first idea of The Temple Dance in which Ruth St. Denis was to dance before the idol.

The scene of The Nautch is the palace of a rajah while he is entertaining a distinguished guest. Two native East Indians, gorgeously appareled in authentic costumes, represent rajahs, while others appear as servants offering sherbet and betel nut, and still others as musicians. On a divan, back center, sits Ruth St. Denis as the nautch girl, a favorite. She is garbed in the voluminous skirts of the nautch and swathed in a golden veil. She dances a while, then rests a while, then dances a while. This is to suggest the all-night, tedious length of the real nautch dance.

It was asserted by Ananda Coomaraswamy in a recent magazine that New York only two seasons ago saw its first real nautch as given by Roshanara and Ratan Devi. But may I be permitted to quote from The Dance by the Kinneys:

It is to Miss St. Denis that America and western Europe owe the "greater part of their impressions of the dancing of the Far East. She "has given the subject years of study; with the object, far more com-

"prehensive than an imitation or reproduction of specific dances, of Ruth St. Denis "interpreting the Oriental spirit. To this end Miss St. Denis uses the Pioneer & Prophet "structural facts of the various dances as a basis for an embodiment of "their character in such form that it shall be comprehensible to Western "eyes and among Western surroundings. The loss inseparable from "the adaptation of such a creation to the conventions of the stage, she "compensates - perhaps more than compensates - by a concerted use " of lights, colour and music, co-operating to produce a sense of dreamy "wonder, and to unite in the expression of a certain significance. . . . " The technical character with which Miss St. Denis invests the In-"dian representations is, first, the elimination of any movement that "might detract from a feeling of continuity. Every action proceeds in "waves; a ripple slowly undulates down the body, and even seems to "continue on its way into the earth; like a wave running the length of "a cord, a ripple glides from the body through the extended arms and "fingers, to go on indefinitely through the air. Rapid movements are "employed only enough to meet the demands of variety. Long gesture, "long line, deliberate action, and even colour quality are held in an in-"describable rapport with the insistent tempo with which the whole "is bound together; there is no escape from the acceptance of the re-"sultant multiple rhythm; it is inevitable. A simple, rapid movement, "therefore, introduced with due consideration of all the parts of the "complex, magic mechanism, has the dramatic power literally to startle. " The success of the composition as a whole, in its purpose of con-"veying an impression of the very essence of an aspect of India, is as-"serted most emphatically by those to whom that mysterious land is "best known. To regard the production as an exposition of Indian "dancing would be quite beside the point. The dances, though wholly "consistent with their originals in point of character, are only a part "of a whole. Nor do they pretend to exploit the complete range of

Ruth St. Denis "Indian choreography; Miss St. Denis herself would be the first to Pioneer & Prophet" disclaim any such intention. As she explains her work, she uses the

"dancing of a people as a basis on which to compose a translation of

"that people's point of view and habit of thought."

And a further interesting comment I quote from the London Sporting Times, written by a retired English army officer who had seen much service in India:

"Miss St. Denis gives us very nearly the real thing in her dances—or "rather, let me put it thus: she gives us the real thing, refined and im-"proved. The nautch she takes part in, with Indian musicians to play and chant, and a rajah looking on and applauding, is far more in-"teresting than any nautch I ever saw in India. The, to Europeans, meaningless stamping and wriggling which goes on for a quarter of an hour at a time, is eliminated, and Miss St. Denis, with rings on her fingers and bells on her slim brown ankles, does just the nautch steps which a European audience can understand and appreciate."

The Maharajah of Kuch-Behar, the Maharajah of Kapurthala, and the Gaekwar of Baroda, men who in India have given many a nautch of their own, saw Miss St. Denis, and have expressed their intense admiration of her nautch dancing. The following is part of a letter

from J. Basu, B. A., a Hindu law student of Calcutta:

"We appreciate your refined taste, thoughtfulness, and the amount of labor which you have given to studying the spirit and meaning of Indian dancing in its highest and noblest form. The unparalleled success which you have rightly gained by your wonderful dances, which are poetry, music, and religion combined, has given me great satisfaction and pleasure. You have caught the true spirit of the East, its mysticism, its ceaseless longing for the infinite, its passionate admiration for the energy or 'Shakti' side of Nature,—a feat which I thought was impossible for any Western artist—you have not only

"caught, you have also interpreted it. You are doing a great service not Ruth St. Denis "only to India but to the world at large."

The literal copying of actuality is not the realm of the artist. Even a photographer, when he is an artist, manipulates camera, plate, and print to present you a vision from his own soul, rather than a careful portrayal of each mole and wrinkle on the face of his subject. So the achievement of Miss St. Denis was not the mere transplanting of a nautch dance from Bombay to New York but the presentation, without the sacrifice of any vital quality of the original, of the essence of the nautch in a form which every Occidental could know and love. Miss St. Denis was acquainted with the traditions of East Indian dancing—knew the story of Rhadika and Krishna and the Gopis which runs as a motif through all nautch dancing — but she was dealing with a public which knew little of East Indian thought, art, or religion. Thus pioneering, she has created an understanding and appreciation of the beauty of India which has opened up fertile fields for later comers to till and reap.

Through the production of *The Nautch*, also, it was Miss St. Denis's privilege to introduce in America the first real East Indian music. Professor Inayat Khan, one of the greatest musicians of India, and his native orchestra of seven, playing native music on native instruments, accompanied her in her nautch for an entire tour of the United States. In the street scene of The Cobras, Professor Khan, as a Yogi, sang the old classic ragas of India. He also lectured during this tour at many universities and colleges, from Columbia in New York to the University of California, and his advent initiated the recent vogue of East Indian music in New York.

The original nautch costume was green. After returning to America, Miss St. Denis replaced this with a costume of white and silver, which had one hundred and twenty-five yards of Liberty silk in the

skirt and twice as many yards of silver braid. Her head-dress and ornaments were all real, having actually been worn by nautch girls in India. For the pageant at Berkeley her nautch costume was of black and gold, and this she wore in her vaudeville season of 1916-1917.

The painting of *The Nautch* by Kaulbach, Germany's foremost painter, which was exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum some years ago, and was hung in the National Gallery at Berlin, is now in the collection of the Eben Jordan estate in Boston.

In the summer of 1917, at the Denishawn Dance Theatre in Los Angeles, Miss St. Denis produced a nautch which lasted an entire evening and incorporated much material which before had been impracticable of inclusion when *The Nautch* was only one dance in a group of from five to eight numbers. The program of this nautch was as follows:

"An East Indian Nautch, Being the Dancing Entertainment provided by a Rajah for Distinguished Guests. The entrance of the Rajah and his retinue. The arrival of the ruler of a nearby province. The favored dancer (Miss St. Denis) mounts upon her dais. The Dance of Krishna (Mr. Shawn) and the Gopis. (Nautch dancing is always based on the most profound themes. The Gopis typify humanity which must be stripped of its materiality before it can approach the splendor of the divine presence.) The Dance of Krishna and Rhadika. (Krishna symbolizes the divine, and Rhadika the human, soul. Almost every nautch dance consists of episodes of Krishna and Rhadika.) The Rasmandalay. The Ranee and the holy man. A devidasi. The serving of sweetmeats, betel nut, and sherbet. Secular dances: Egg Dance; Dance with two drums. The Dance of Parvati, the favorite. Ensemble and finale."

In the Berkeley pageant, forty street nautch girls performed in the bazaar scene.

Just as when you hear "Camille," you immediately think "Bern- Ruth St. Denis hardt," so the American and European public will always associate Pioneer & Prophet "nautch" and "St. Denis," for it was she who brought the nautch dances to them in the manner of the artist.



CHAPTER VII № THE YOGI № FIFTH DANCE IN THE EAST INDIAN SERIES (THE FOREST) №

Like The Nautch, The Yogi also was born in Vienna. This dance marks the highest spiritual achievement of Ruth St. Denis. For in this dance, with the least movement or material aid, almost solely by sheer projected personality, she brought about in the mind of the beholder a consciousness of infinite peace and attainment.

In the center of the forest is a clearing where the young Yogi has come to meditate; he has learned the postures of Yoga from his Guru, or spiritual teacher. These he performs; but there comes dissatisfaction with the old ritual, and he yearns and searches for peace everywhere. Finding none, he sinks into despair and dejection. Then from within comes the message, "I am Peace," and slowly he rises into Samadhi, or the perfect consciousness. This was a daring thing to put into a dance, and to expect the materially-minded public to accept. But so powerful was her concentration that by her mere "being there" she held the audience in breathless silence.

Her costume was the conventional one of the Hindu pilgrim—a dhoti, or loose loin cloth, the three strings of black beads, soft curly hair to the shoulders, and a begging-bowl. She sat on a tiger skin, and was lighted from above as by a shaft of sunlight finding its way through a tangled and all but impenetrable forest.

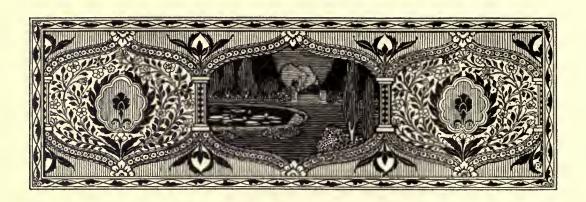
The Vienna Tageblatt of February, 1908, reviewed the dance thus: Ruth St. Denis " Like a being from another world she worships Nature, and what we Pioneer & Prophet "see her doing is highest art. We see movements and gestures that are "strangely touching. Their effect is indescribable, even as, for instance, "one cannot describe the way Duse walks. Through her mere 'being "there' Ruth St. Denis fascinates her audience; each dance is nothing "but a variation of her personality. So in this comparatively simple and "quiet scene she proved that first of all she is quite a singular and ex-"ceptional personality and only secondarily a dancer."

And the Dresden Daily Record:

The bending attitudes and expressive looks, the indescribably elo-"quent arm-gestures are so dignified, even sublime, that all idea of a "spectacle is excluded. The numerous audience was so impressed that "a spell of silence ensued before the applause broke out."

The music of Walter Meyerowitz was exquisite in conception and original in execution. The scene opened with a voice off-stage singing the poignant song of the Yogi, the wailing, mournful cadenzas becoming somewhat more distinct as the Yogi entered. The main movements were played by the orchestra, while a cellist, concealed on the stage, played a solo part during the moments of complete meditation.

This was a dance which one would no more think of applauding than one would the High Requiem Mass of the Catholic Church a dance which takes its place in the great sacerdotal art of the world.



Ruth St. Denis

CHAPTER VIII THE LOTUS POND SIXTH DANCE Pioneer & Prophet IN THE EAST INDIAN SERIES (THE GARDEN)

The Lotus Pond was added to the original East Indian series after Ruth St. Denis returned to America, and was first performed in Boston, with music especially composed by Walter Meyerowitz. The description given in the Boston Transcript, January 7, 1910, in a review of its première is so complete that I shall use it:

In some old-world garden, half-forgotten, in Cashmere, fringed with "high-trunked sandalwood, where the film of a sultry lotus pond mois-"tens the bank, lies Rani. You can hear the drone of many winged in-"sects, feel the lazy warmth of summer idleness, smell the heavy odors " of fragrant flowers. She pulls the white lotus from the mire, reaching "in indolent content, until her lap is filled with them. Then in sudden "caprice, perhaps impelled by the vision the water reflects, she dances "about the garden with a free, untrammeled motion. Her green veil "floats upon the slow breeze, the slanting sun-rays awake answering "lights in her yellow garments. Her slender, slippered feet move to "dreamy oriental cadence in image of her dreaming thoughts. As she "bends over the banks again, a bee flies from the heart of a lotus flow-"er, and becomes fast entangled in the meshes of her veil. At once the "tranquil mood vanishes. The music stings and buzzes in breathless "rhythms-the garden wakes to quick-voiced life as Rani encircles it

"with eluding tremor and fitful flight. Then, away in the distance, by Ruth St. Denis "some moss-grown gate or mouldering palace wall, she sees her belov- Pioneer & Prophet "ed. Love-joy transfixes her. She dances, twining the lotus in her hair "for sheer joy of his coming. And as the purple shadows of the dusk "gather, and the last gold shines full upon her, he comes to her, all un-"worthy of this glory that she would bestow. Such is the Indian garden "in Cashmere, where Rani lived.

" This dance lacks, on its first presentation, none of the artistry, the "rich imagination, and faultless technique, which distinguish Miss St. "Denis and her dancing. She sinks her identity in that of the dancer "and the dance. She is too great an artist, she has too much respect for "her art, to intrude upon us petites causeries or ill-timed personalities, "and the audience thereby finds greater pleasure in what she gives."



CHAPTER IX № THE EGYPTIAN SERIES №

Miss St. Denis's original *Egypta*, conceived in 1904, was, as has been said in chapter two, laid aside both because of supposed prohibitive cost of production and of her increasing preoccupation with *Radha*, and thus it was that the East Indian dances reached the public first.

When Henry B. Harris asked a new production of Ruth St. Denis it was to *Egypta* that she reverted. By this time she had spent years of study on Egyptology, pursuing the subject especially in London, at the British Museum, and with some of the famous Egyptologists she had met. That the production did not rank with her East Indian dances was due to the fact that Mr. Harris allowed her only six weeks to put on these five dances, each as elaborate as a scene for opera.

These were the first ancient Egyptian dances ever seen in America, and Ruth St. Denis is the dancer who originated the hieroglyphic type of movement—that is, dancing imitating the postures of the figures carved on Egyptian temples and tombs. This style has been taken up by many lesser dancers, almost every one of whom claims to have originated it.

The five dances in the Egyptian series were The Invocation to the Nile, The Palace Dance, The Veil of Isis, The Dance of Day, and The Dance of Night.

The Invocation to the Nile: The scene is the large pylon of a temple,

with steps leading down to the river. At the foot of the steps are clus- Ruth St. Denis ters of bulrush, lotus, and papyrus. It is dawn. Presently comes the Pioneer & Prophet sound of temple girls singing; they appear, bearing offerings in celebration of the inundation of the Nile. Down the steps, between the two rows of singing girls, slowly dances the priestess, carrying two long garlands of lotus blossoms. She kneels at the river's edge, makes her obeisance to the rising sun, and then, after a brief prayer, takes from the priestesses the offerings, consisting of ducks, fruits, and other gifts of the Nile, and casts them into the waters. Then, kneeling low with her face almost touching the water, with arms outstretched, she begins the dance of the Nile, imitating the rippling, rising motion of the inundating river. When she reaches her full height, she turns and, accompanied by the renewed singing of the priestesses, with arms fully extended, she slowly mounts the steps, signifying thus that she brings the fertility of the Nile at its flood into the temple.

The Palace Dance: The scene is a banquet room in the palace of Pharaoh; the king and his wife, attended by about thirty notables of the court, are seated on the left, various distinguished guests on the right. The feast is in process; Nubian slaves run about, bearing wine, fruits, and other viands. A ballet of eight appears and dances in the quaint, hieratic attitudes of Egyptian wall carvings. In the midst of the festivities appears the high priest of the temple, descanting on the brevity of life and urging all to be merry while they may, as the sarcophagus or the tomb awaits each one. He is followed by a huge Nubian slave who drags on a gaily painted sled a mummy, to which the high priest frequently points. As this strange procession disappears, the laughter and chatter of the feast is renewed. And then come running into the center of the room four little musicians bearing harp, double pipe, lyre, and double tambourine. These instruments they proceed to tune and, seating themselves in correctly hieroglyphic atti-

tudes, they await the entrance of the dancer. Then, before the two long Egyptian curtains hung at the back of the stage, appears the chief dancer of Pharaoh's court, who dances what later became known as *The Palace*.

This dance was of varying moods, but largely of quick movements—much more vigorous than those of any of the East Indian series. The action, while natural and human and graceful in the extreme, constantly fell into the hieroglyphic attitudes of the figures in Egyptian tomb paintings. The dance was a complete refutation of the critics who carped at the East Indian series—the criticism that Ruth St. Denis did not dance, she merely posed. Here was action enough to satisfy anyone.

The costume worn in *The Palace* had the elaborate Egyptian collar, arm-bands, jeweled girdle, and anklets. These, according to the paintings, constituted the complete costume of court dancers, but such scantiness of apparel not yet being permissible, Ruth St. Denis added a full transparent skirt of Egyptian blue. She wore a brilliant red wig, braided into innumerable little braids, each ending in a gold bead. Over this, held by a jeweled band which played about her head as she danced, hung a fringe of gold, five inches wide.

The Veil of Isis: As the curtain rises, one beholds the enormous pillars of a temple such as Karnak. These pillars, very wide toward the front of the stage, narrow one behind the other to the center back, where the throne of Isis stands in the gloom. On this throne sits the image of Isis covered by a long glistening veil. Two lights burn faintly at her feet. For the first few seconds complete silence, then the faint clink of the sistrum, and there enter six acolytes keeping measured step with the sistrum beat. They emerge from the shadows of the huge pillars, advance to the altar, leave an offering of lights, and softly depart. Silence once more. Then the voice of the young high priest is heard chanting the praises of Isis. He has come to remind the serene god-

dess of the devotion of her worshipers and to burn incense before her in the long-handled incense cup. As he prostrates himself at her feet, a faint quiver of life goes through her body, and her chest heaves with a sigh. Lifting her right hand in hieratic gesture, she signifies her gracious willingness to present herself to the people. The music changes, a soft beam of moonlight strikes her upturned face, and one catches a glimpse of her long, heavy-lashed eyes slowly opening beneath the shimmer of her golden veil.

She steps from her throne and begins to dance. And her dance signifies that to him of receptive heart she will raise the veil of her mystery that he may see that she is benign and beautiful in her intentions toward all creatures. She advances down stage swaying slightly as, with both hands, she slowly raises the long veil above her head and throws it back, still attached to her high crown. The costume that is now revealed is the straightslip of the ancient Egyptians, covered with bugles of green, blue, and gold. This hangs straight from shoulder to ankle and glistens like a great mystery. An elaborate collar of heavy gold beads lies on her shoulders, and rich arm-bands encircle her arms. Her body is wound with crossing gold bands, heavily jeweled. On her head is the tall crown of Isis with the moon disc set in the front, and from her brows rise the cow-horns of Hathor. As she advances, she slowly spreads from underneath her long veil the gold and black wings of Horus, the rising sun, symbolizing the promise and protection of the sun. For a brief moment the poignant recollection of her wanderings in search of the body of Osiris overcomes her. As she recovers from this, she gives her last benediction to the people and, drawing her veil of mystery about her, slowly retires to the altar.

The Dance of Day, or The Plains of Ra: This dance carried out Ruth St. Denis's original inspiration. In it Egypta—the embodied spirit of Egypt—depicted the history and the religious beliefs of that country.

Ruth St. Denis In The Book of the Dead among the hymns to the Sun is a most re-Pioneer & Prophet "markable one describing the beneficence of the sun and its power "to raise men upon their feet, cause the grasses and the food to grow, "and the animals to run about." This was the inspiration for much of The Dance of Day since, according to Egyptian tradition, the great father Ra, the Sun God, created the life and molded the history of Egypt.

> The scene is the Plains of Ra; the peculiar blue of the Egyptian sky melts into the horizon which is vaguely defined by a series of rock profiles slightly higher on the sides but nowhere high enough to destroy

the sense of unending space which pervades the scene.

It is before dawn; all is gray, and the soft costumes of the opening ballet symbolize the weaving mists of the Nile. In the dimness the dancers move to and fro with monotonous swaying step; some circling aimlessly, others dropping for a moment in groups where the mist is thickest. Presently from the east faint morning rays imperceptibly lighten the scene, and the faces of the dancers are discerned for the first time as they raise the gray mist veils and disclose in their costumes the answering colors of the dawn. As the sun's light increases, the mists melt and disappear, revealing at the extreme back of the stage a stone slab on which lies the sleeping figure of Egypt. As the first direct ray of the sun strikes the reclining figure, movement begins, signifying the life-giving quality of the sun; and then the figure of Egypta arises and facing the sun makes obeisance to its creator. In the dance that follows, the actions express the earliest known history of the Egyptians-first, the primitive industries: the plowing and cultivating of the soil, the care of sheep, the spearing of fish, the weaving of cloth; then come priestly ceremony, military discipline, and the establishment of the kingship; then the arts: architecture, dancing, music, painting, and sculpture. This latter period is broken into by invasion

Pioneer & Prophet

and the bringing of Egypt under the yoke; then comes an interlude Ruth St. Denis of hope and, finally, complete downfall and destruction.

The lighting of the stage was symbolical of the periods of Egypt's day, noontide coinciding with her greatest glory, and night finding her again supine on the slab while the mists once more shift back and forth.

The costume, designed to be the simplest possible garb which would symbolize Egyptian dress, consisted of a white plaited robe and a black wig of traditional Egyptian cut, with band around the forehead.

The Dance of Night, or The Hall of Judgment: It was a belief of the ancient Egyptians that every soul after death had to pass through the Judgment Hall and endure trial before the forty-two judges of the dead. If the soul justified itself before Osiris and the judges, it was permitted to enter the boat of Ra and was conveyed to the Abode of the Blessed, there to live with Ra in everlasting happiness. If the soul was found wanting, the Crocodile God lying in wait beside the judgment seat devoured the unworthy heart.

The scene is the Judgment Hall of Osiris in the underworld, that region which was said to lie under the western horizon. The coloring is dull greenish-gray. The huge seated figure of Osiris is depicted center-back, and the forty-two judges, painted in profile, are ranged on either side. The whole gives a sense of great solemnity. The characters in the dance-drama are Horus, who introduces the Soul; I hoth, the scribe; Anubis, who weighs the heart; and Sebek, the Crocodile God. Into this hall Horus ushers the Soul of Egypt. She wears a white wig and greenish-white, ghostly garments, and carries her red heart enclosed in a jar. She advances and prostrates herself at the feet of Osiris, giving her heart into the keeping of Horus, who in turn places it upon the scales. Before the ceremony of weighing, the Soul

Ruth St. Denis makes what was known as a negative confession—that is, a declaration Pioneer & Prophet that it had not in life committed various specified sins. This ended, the Soul turns and anxiously watches the just weighing of the heart against the Feather of Truth. The attention of the entire assemblage, the stern regard of the forty-two judges, and the benign interest of Osiris is given to this operation. When the heart slowly rights itself upon being set free, and the scale balances, the Soul throws herself in gratitude at the feet of Osiris. When she rises, the scene behind the figure of Osiris - a transparency - is brilliantly lighted and shows the red boat of Ra against the enormous orange disc of the sun. The Soul, seeing this vision, passes through a small passage between the knees of the colossal statue of Amen-Ra and, ascending a few steps, takes her place triumphantly in the boat of Ra by whom she presently will be conveyed to the Realm of the Justified.

> In the coast to coast tour which followed this production, Ruth St. Denis used The Palace Dance, The Dance of Day, and sometimes The Veil of Isis, in connection with the East Indian series. The entire Egyptian section of the Berkeley pageant was elaborated from the original

plan of The Dance of Day and The Hall of Judgment.

After I had joined her company, Ruth St. Denis, having now for the first time a dancing partner, put into execution an idea she had long entertained for a dance of Isis and Osiris, through which ran as a motif the attitude of the Rebirth, as depicted in The Book of the Dead. Added to this new feature was a ballet of my composition designed for eight girls with the square tambourines and later with the scarabeus wings. This we used for three tours and in the pageant at the Berkeley Greek Theatre.

The music for the Egyptian series, also, was composed especially by Walter Meyerowitz, who composed the music for The Nautch, The Lotus Pond, and several other dances. Walter Meyerowitz was first engaged by Miss St. Denis as orchestra conductor and director of her Ruth St. Denis music during her first year in Germany and remained with her for Pioneer & Prophet over four years. During that time he was a tremendous help to her in all that concerned the musical background of her dancing.



CHAPTER X № O-MIKA № A JAPANESE DANCE-PLAY №

The Japanese dance-play *O-mika* was founded upon one of Lafcadio Hearn's writings entitled *A Legend of Fugen-Bosatsu*. It is found in the volume *Shadowings*. For Miss St. Denis's purposes the story was put into condensed form, as indicated in the program which follows:

"O-mika, A Japanese Legend of the Buddha, in three scenes. The story of a celebrated courtesan who became an incarnation of Fugen-Bosatsu.

" In this Japanese legend Miss St. Denis will introduce The Dance of the Flower-Arrangement, The Chrysanthemum Dance, The Dance of the Thirteenth Century Poetess, The Samurai Dance, The Dance of Fugen-"Bosatsu.

"Cast: Shoku Shonin, Bunlaku Tokunaga; Kimura Hayato, Roi "Kojima; Nakamura Yosake, Momotaro Toyama; O-Yone, Hana Ya-"mada; Samisen Player, S. O. Hashi; Kamura, Theodora De Combe "and Regina Cipriano; Sake Girls, Elena Perry and Ruth Averill; "Coolies, O. Hashi and A. Oki; Samurai Sword Dancer, B. St. Denis; "O-mika, Ruth St. Denis.

" Music by Robert Hood Bowers.

"Scene I. The Vision of Shoku Shonin. Scene II. Within the Gates of the Yoshiwara. Scene III. The Yoshino-Ro (rooms of O-mika).

" Argument: A very pious and learned priest named Shoku Shonin Ruth St. Denis "lived in the province of Harima. For many years he meditated daily Pioneer & Prophet "upon the lotos of the Good Law, and desired to see Fugen-Bosatsu "as a living presence. One evening while he was reciting the Sutra, "he fell asleep and in his dream a voice told him that in order to see "Fugen-Bosatsu he must go to the house of a certain courtesan known "as O-mika, who lived in the town of Kanzaki. Upon awakening, he "resolved to go at once to Kanzaki, and he reached the town the eve-"ning of the next day.

" When he entered the house of the courtesan, he found there two "Samurai, young men of the capital, who had been attracted to Kan-"zaki by the fame of the woman's beauty. They were feasting and "drinking, and O-mika was dancing for their entertainment. At the "end of the evening O-mika, about to offer her red lacquer saki cup "to her favored suitor, meets the eye of the priest whom she sees for "the first time. Immediately a change comes over the spirit of O-mika, "her outer robes, symbols of her gay life, drop from her, and she is "revealed as the living presence of Fugen-Bosatsu."

The Japan Society of New York, soon after Miss St. Denis's engagement at the Fulton Theatre, requested a special performance to be given exclusively to the members of their society. This took place in the Astor Hotel and the Japan Society officially proclaimed it the most artistic presentation of Japanese themes America had ever been privileged to see, and expressed a wish that Miss St. Denis might go to Japan to inspire the Japanese girls to return to the classic dance of their own country instead of taking up the tango.

The Japanese Times in its review of the performance said:

" We have nothing but praise and admiration for the part this fa-"mous actress played. The grace of her movement, the delicacy of her "touch, the consummate skill she showed in mimicking different types

Ruth St. Denis "of Japanese womankind, and the refined taste she displayed throughPioneer & Prophet" out the performance—all enforced by the inborn beauty of the ac"tress—leave no room for her critic to venture any unfavorable com"ment."

The costuming, scenic effects, and properties of this production were extravagantly but correctly splendid. The appointments of all three scenes were absolutely authentic, and in many cases the articles used were not merely stage properties but genuinely Japanese. Because Miss St. Denis is "uncommon tall," it was necessary to have a Japanese dressmaker make her kimonos to order of imported materials.

Once when The Dance of the Flower-Arrangement was being given at Ravinia, a Japanese man-servant who was brought by his mistress to the performance, insisted that it could not be other than a Japanese woman who was dancing. Truly, her make-up was marvelous. The wig of the courtesan, with its ray of fourteen gorgeous hairpins, the dead-white face of mask-like quality, the lips so red, and glistening with powdered gold; last and especially, the exquisitely facile hands made her more truly the epitome of Japanese beauty than any real Japanese woman I have ever seen. She was Japanese, not in the grand opera manner of Madam Butterfly, but of the quality in an Utamaro print.

Charles Darnton said:

"Her personality is as distinctive as it is elusive. Other stage ladies "may paint themselves black in the face without catching a trace of it. "It doesn't come by the box. Miss St. Denis may be equally proud "of her Japanese costumes, robes gorgeous beyond description and so "much a part of her that you readily conclude she must have dreamed "them. The most matter-of-fact spectator would be willing to swear "that this darling of the gods could have had nothing to do with a "dressmaker."

Later, in concert tours, she performed a single Japanese dance called

A Lady of the Genroko Period in which she appeared as a Japanese woman at her toilette, and danced with two fans.

It is interesting to note that the same season in New York which saw the first production of *O-mika* saw also the first production of *The Yellow Jacket*. The latter was to Chinese drama what *O-mika* was to the Japanese. Like Ruth St. Denis's enterprise this failed financially, went for some years abroad and on tour, and like hers, too, later

returned to New York to meet with great success.

Pioneering in the Japanese even as she had pioneered in the East Indian and Egyptian dances, Ruth St. Denis brought to America our first authentic interpretation of Japanese art. And by the worth-while people of New York *O-mika* was hailed as the season's highest artistic achievement; from the standpoint of popular response it failed, for Ruth St. Denis in the world of the theatre holds very much the same place as Lafcadio Hearn in the world of books—his works are always the delight of the discriminating and the lovers of the beautiful, but never among the best sellers. She has marked out many roads which others have followed, and a native Japanese dancer, Michio Ito, a few seasons ago found a readier response to his beautiful dancing because she had pioneered and made the path easier before him.

Caroline Caffin in her book Vaudeville writes:

" When first I heard that the subject of her latest series was to be "Japanese, I was a little dubious. Had not the Japanese motive been "somewhat overdone? But when I saw its presentation I realized that "as yet we have but touched the border of poetic suggestion to be gath-"ered from that land of poetry and flowers.

"Her appearance in the street scene is not at all that of the conven-"tional 'lady on the fan,' but had the boldly patterned refinement of "the old Japanese prints, with their flowing lines and richly sombre

"coloring.

Ruth St. Denis" How dashing and vigorous, with its free lithe strides and well poised Pioneer & Prophet" arms, was the spear exercise of the Samurai maiden, and how widely "different from the usual conception of the Japanese woman. Here "was no timidity or restraint, but breezy joyous exercise of boldness "and muscle—woman's deftness and agility were matched with man's "strength and skill, and that without fear or favor. Do you think the "Japanese woman is a pretty, submissive toy? Here is a refutation of "our theories, for this maiden will be able to take her own part if phys-"ical bravery is ever demanded of her.

And the picture of The Poetess of the Thirteenth Century—what a "true translation of the spirit of poetry and what a vision of other-"worldliness it was."



CHAPTER XI № BAKAWALI № A HINDU LOVE TALE №

Ruth St. Denis
Pioneer & Prophet

Bakawali also was taken from the writings of Lafcadio Hearn. It is an adaptation of a story by that name found in Stray Leaves from Strange Literature. The program explains the action:

" Bakawali. A Hindu Love Tale of Indra's Heavenly Court. In three scenes.

" Dance of the Gold and Black Sari, Dance of the Blue Flame, Jewel Dance "Before the God of Heaven, Dance in the Forest of Ceylon.

"Cast: Yogi, Mogul Khan; Amaraou, Theodora De Combe; Ap-"sarases, Elena Perry, Ruth Averill, and Regina Cipriano; Devas, D. "Crary, C. Dougallas, and C. Mado; Indra, Rex Tiffany; Taj Ulmuluk, "Oswell Jackson; Bakawali, Ruth St. Denis.

" Music by Arthur Nevin.

"Scene I. A room in the palace of Prince Taj Ulmuluk. Scene II. "Indra's Heavenly Court. Scene III. The Forest of Ceylon. (Twelve "years elapse between Scenes II and III.)

"Argument: Bakawali, the favorite dancer of heaven, falls in love with a mortal youth. Leaving Indra's court, she descends to earth to remain with her lover. Indra, missing his favorite, sends his wind chariot to bring her back. Bakawali obeys the summons and leaves her lover, believing him asleep, but he, startled by her sudden depar-

Ruth St. Denis" ture, hurries after her, clings to her chariot, and upon arriving at In-Pioneer & Prophet" dra's court, secretes himself behind a jeweled column.

"Bakawali timidly approaches Indra, hoping for his forgiveness, but "he sternly waves her back and commands that she be purified by "fire, for 'she has the odor of mortality about her.' The Devas drag "her to the fiery furnace, into which she is forced to descend. Emerging "from the furnace, she performs a dance before the court, at the end of which she discovers her lover. Terrified by his presence, she begs him to keep concealed until by another dance she can win Indra's permission for them to depart to earth. Indra is charmed by the grace of her dancing and promises her unlimited pardon and favor. Bakawali "then leads her lover to the foot of the throne and begs permission to depart with him. Indra, surprised and angered, replies that for his oath's sake he grants her wish, but he pronounces this curse: 'For "twelve years she shall be from waist to feet, of stone.'

" During these weary years Bakawali's lover feeds her upon the fruits "of the forest; at the end of this time she is released from the bondage "of the curse, and in an eloquent dance expresses her delight in being "once more restored to the joys of life."

The scene of Indra's Heavenly Court was truly remarkable. It was a huge blue canvas cyclorama with an inner one of blue gauze, all lighted from below. Four huge jeweled pillars and Indra's throne rested upon a blue floor. The whole effect was of action taking place in the heavens.

Spoken words as well as dance and music were used to tell the story in both *Bakawali* and *O-mika*; in the latter Miss St. Denis learned to speak her lines in Japanese. Much of Nevin's music for *Bakawali* was used for the East Indian dances in the pageant at Berkeley, and the *Dance of the Blue Flame* from *Bakawali* has many times been given separately.



CHAPTER XII THE GARDEN OF KAMA

From a theme in the poems of Lawrence Hope, Ruth St. Denis created an East Indian dance-drama under the name of *The Garden of Kama*. Kama is the Indian Eros.

The scene is the compound of a high caste East Indian dwelling. Walls of pierced and patterned marble open in the middle to show the roadway, beyond which glimmers the salt lagoon. In the garden is a well surrounded by grille-work walls, overhung by a blossoming tree; at the right of the well is a sort of thatched summer-house within which is a divan. At the left is the doorway of the dwelling.

The scene opens at dawn; a house servant is sleeping in the doorway. Various women begin to arrive, coming to the well for water. A milk seller comes and wakes the servant. The village girls have tokens of love—a flower, a note—which they compare. Then comes the Daughter of the House (Ruth St. Denis) with offerings for the shrine of Kama. She sees the village girls and becomes sad when she realizes that she has no message of love. Then she dances to invoke the God of Love.

Kama appears and sees first the village girls whom he inflames. He divests them of their saris, and, garbed in a reflection of his own costume, they dance at his bidding. In the midst of the dancing he sees the Daughter of the House who has been hiding, for now that Kama

Ruth St. Denis Pioneer & Prophet

Ruth St. Denis has actually appeared she is afraid. Kama tries eagerly to make an-Pioneer & Prophet other conquest but the maiden eludes him and flies into the housenot, however, until he has shot one of his flower-tipped arrows into her heart. Then he vanishes into the air, devising a surer plan for her conquest.

> When Kama has departed the girls awake from their rose dream of love, resume their homely tasks, and journey on to the village. Now comes twilight. The Daughter of the House, finding at last that "there is no breeze to cool the heat of love,"comes into the garden, gorgeously bedecked for complete surrender.

> A group of fishermen comes down the road and she throws a scarlet ashoka flower at the feet of the youngest, who leaves his companions and lingers with her. She serves him with food, plays for him on her lute, and when a band of native musicians and dancers comes down the road they are called in and paid to amuse him. The fisherman and his love join in the dance. When dawn comes it finds them alone, and the fisherman rises and throws off the rags of his disguise. It is Kama, who never suffers defeat.

> The Garden of Kama was first produced in San Francisco where it ran for ten days at the Alcazar Theatre in the spring of 1915. The following season it was used in repertoire on the coast to coast tour.

> The scenes and costuming were greatly influenced by the illustrations of Byam Shaw in the latest edition of Lawrence Hope's Indian Love Lyrics. The whole production was a splendid example of Miss St. Denis's incomparable ability to invest a scene with atmosphere—every detail correct and the ensemble harmoniously welded together into artistic unity.



CHAPTER XIII № THE PEACOCK № THE SPIRIT OF THE SEA № KUAN-YIN № THE ARABIC SUITE № THE SCHERZO WALTZ № AND OTHER SINGLE DANCES №

Ruth St. Denis
Pioneer & Prophet

The Peacock had its beginning while Miss St. Denis was in London. The costume for it was almost finished but the dance was laid aside and did not receive its première until the summer of 1914 at Ravinia with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. It remained for over a year one of Miss St. Denis's most popular solo dances and was then amplified into an entire scene with about ten people. This dance-drama was used in vaudeville during the season of 1915-1916, after which it was restored to its original condition.

In The Peacock Miss St. Denis created one of the most artistic dances of her career and one which everybody loved. This dance, especially in its original solo form, evinced again that remarkable ability of hers to mimic the movements of animals, which was first demonstrated in The Cobras.

The dramatic story underlying the peacock dance is this: A peacock which inhabits the marble tombs of a Mohammedan cemetery was in a former incarnation a beautiful woman. She had been a poor girl in a Cashmere hill town, loved devotedly by a boy of her own caste. But the rajah, passing through with his retinue, saw her and took her to his

palace to dance for him. Urged then by ambition, she plotted to become the rajah's favorite, and by her superlative dancing she achieved this height. A ring taken from the deposed queen was given to her in a box of jewels with which she decked herself. The ring had been poisoned by the jealous queen, and her successor's joy is of short duration—convulsive death makes a sudden end to the grasping beauty. She is turned into a peacock.

The scene is the courtyard of the tombs with the peacock strutting mournfully about. Suddenly it sees a bit of tiling in the walls bearing the crest of the rajah. This recalls to the peacock its former existence and as it gazes the courtyard is transformed into the throne-room of the palace and the peacock into a woman. At the point in the story where the woman dies, the throne-room vanishes and the solitary peacock resumes its form and melancholy strut.

The music for *The Peacock* was composed by Edmund Roth; it might properly be said to have been born of the dance, for the music was composed as Ruth St. Denis executed her movements. Dance and accompaniment, each reflecting the rhythm and grace of the other, thus became a unity.

The Spirit of the Sea is more elemental than anything else that Ruth St. Denis has done. She really achieves the sense of infinity, of vastness, the changing moods and the terrible rhythm of the sea.

The costume was entirely of streaming green lengths of light silk that flowed out from her body to the extreme edges of the stage on all sides, the very handling of which was in itself a marvelous feat. Her own pure white hair suggested the foam of breakers. Her movements were uncanny in their power to give the feeling of majesty and endlessness. The music used was MacDowell's *Sea Pieces*.

Kuan-Yin (the Chinese Goddess of Mercy) is a dance which Miss St. Denis used in vaudeville in the spring of 1917. It was so exquisite

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a representation of Chinese porcelain that it must by no means be left Ruth St. Denis unmentioned. The dancewas performed against a blue and gold background, and was lighted solely by one strong spot-light suspended from above. The dancer's costume was of trailing chiffons, in cream, rose, and blue, with ornaments of Chinese yellow and jade. She held a blue lotus in her hands. The music was by Erik Satie.

The Arabic Suite of Dances was later called Ourieda, A Romance of the Desert. It was first merely a series of three dances—two solos and a duet—which Miss St. Denis and I gave at Ravinia in the summer of 1914. In the fall it was developed into a dance-drama, with two scenes.

Ourieda was a girl of a tribe located in the north of Africa, the Ouled Naïls, who raise all their girl children to be professional dancers. These children when proficient are sold to the coffee-house proprietors to entertain their patrons. Whenever a dancer pleases she is given a coin. This she sews on her costume, and when she has acquired sufficient of these she buys her freedom, returns to her own people, and spends the remainder of her days in peace.

The first scene was performed entirely in silhouette against the desert sky. I think I am not wrong when I state that we were the first dancers to perform a whole dance in silhouette. The drama occupies itself with the love affair of Ourieda and a boy of her own tribe. The love is hopeless, for Ourieda knows she is soon to be sold into the city and the lover is too young and too poor to prevent it.

The next scene is laid in the interior of an Algerian coffee-house, supposedly some years later. Arabs in white burnouses and turbans fill the café. Certain dancing girls are brought in to perform but they awaken no interest with their handkerchief dance. Then Ourieda comes, gorgeous and loaded with coins, and captivates the men who fill the room. One slave dealer bargains with the keeper of the coffeehouse and is about to buy her, when there enters the lover of her

youth, now a man. He throws a purse to the inn-keeper and dismisses him, dances a sword dance for her admiration, and then, wrapping her in his burnouse, he leads her into the night to the tents of his people.

Miss St. Denis again used the Ouled Naïl dancer as a subject in the spring of 1919 in vaudeville, this time in an entirely different set of dances depicting an Algerian scene and called *The Street of the Dancers*.

The Scherzo Waltz. Ruth St. Denis became so wearied by the wise critics who said, "Yes, beautiful, but she does not dance," that she created The Scherzo Waltz in which she dances so freely and vigorously that even the baseball reporter sent to review the performance was satisfied. It gave her a whimsical pleasure to take the technical material of her old days, when to kick the back of one's head was the admired achievement, and fashion it into a real work of art. She improvised in this mood one night while McNair Ilgenfritz was at the piano in her studio, and he, inspired, composed The Scherzo Waltz. It was very rhythmic, major, full of humoresque phrasing, and entirely delightful. Audiences which had been accustomed to the sinuous and "static" St. Denis, rose to their feet in instant response to this blithe, exquisite creature. She was costumed all in soft rose chiffon with rose satin girdle, and a turban of the same color over her snow-white hair.

The St. Denis Mazurka. During three seasons of the St. Denis company concert tours a section of modern dances was included in the repertoire. Perhaps the most popular dance among these divertissements was The St. Denis Mazurka, which Miss St. Denis and I performed to the music of La Czarine by Ganne. Miss St. Denis's costume was of purple and gold brocade trimmed with fur.

From a Grecian Vase. It was in the Greek section of the big pageant at Berkeley that Ruth St. Denis essayed her first Greek dances. With her incomparable artistry she became the very incarnation of the vase figures. The sweet womanly dignity, the formal and classic plaited garb,

added to her own matchless grace, showed that she could excel in this Ruth St. Denis field as well as in the Oriental. She danced in two styles: in the Ar- Pioneer & Prophet chaic, of the earliest Greek period, and the Lyric, of the Golden Age. The latter dance was accompanied by a Chopin *Prelude*. Both dances were taken into vaudeville.

The Impromptu was generally used as an encore to The Scherzo Waltz. It was danced to Victor Herbert's Al Fresco and had a negroid trend in the steps, which were never twice the same. She mimicked in it a young awkward girl with ambitions to be a "classic" dancer and often burlesqued the dances which her company had been doing. This dance I never missed; its infinite variety, its irresistible humor always fascinated me. The rest of the company said it was as amusing to watch me, as I watched her, as it was to view the dance itself—so absorbed was I. Ruth St. Denis could undoubtedly have been a great comédienne had her career been set in that direction. It was this dance, she affirms, and not "high art," which used to fill Ravinia. Possibly it may have been The Impromptu which reached the hearts of the spectators after they had come, but it was the years of unremitting consecration to high artistic ideals, resulting in an enviable reputation and a great name, which brought them there.

Theodora, Empress of Byzantium. The character of the circus-dancer empress made a fascinating theme in the hands of Ruth St. Denis. Theodora, descending from her ivory throne in the audience chamber with its mosaic walls, dances in incredibly gorgeous robes for her court. The Emperor Justinian arrives, is greeted, and mounts to the throne beside her.

With her usual correctness of detail Ruth St. Denis created a Theodora which might have been some mosaic of Ravenna come to life. Her great robewas of orchid-colored satin brocaded in silver and gold, heavily encrusted with jewels and further embellished with a cape-like

Ruth St. Denis collar of solid pearls. The dancing dress was of cardinal red with panels Pioneer & Prophet front and back of jeweled gold. The scene was designed by Maxwell Armfield.

> The Greek Veil Plastique was composed by Ruth St. Denis especially for the production of Gluck's opera Orpheus given at the Berkeley Greek Theatre in the summer of 1918. The costume was of white, stenciled in black, and there was a voluminous circular veil, also of white, patterned in black. The music of this dance is the flute solo selection so well known, and the dance—though it was described by a layman as "just walking around"—was considered by dancers, artists, and critics as a triumph. Only the greatest can achieve complete simplicity convincingly.

> The Royal Siamese Ballet. While in Paris years ago, Ruth St. Denis saw the original Royal Siamese Ballet sent by the Sultan of Siam as a courtesy to the French government. In the spring of 1918 she presented a solo Siamese dance and by the following year had developed it into a complete ballet. The story underlying all Siamese dancing is the great epic story of the Ramayana—the abduction of Sita by Ravan and her rescue by Rama and his cohorts, assisted by Hanuman, the Monkey God. This ballet was one of the finest pieces of dance-writing Ruth St. Denis has achieved.



CHAPTER XIV № A DANCE PAGEANT OF EGYPT, GREECE, AND INDIA №

Early in the summer of 1916 the University of California issued the following announcement:

"For the first time in its history, a dancer has been invited to give a "performance in the Greek Theatre, and the comments of the press of

"the country indicate that the honor was fittingly bestowed on Miss "Ruth St. Denis, for she is generally recognized not only as a dancer

"of marked individuality and ability, but as a creative artist, who has

"marked out many roads that others have followed."

In this country where money can do so much, this was indeed a great honor, for the Greek Theatre of the University of California, at Berkeley, cannot be bought. Even the Metropolitan Opera House is at the disposal of anyone who can pay the rental price. But the Greek Theatre remains an institution of great dignity in the theatrical world, and the official stamp of its approval has been placed only on Sarah Bernhardt, Maude Adams, Margaret Anglin, and a very few others of the superlatively great. On July 29, 1916, accordingly, Miss Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and a company of one hundred dancers presented A Dance Pageant of Egypt, Greece, and India.

The action of the pageant was divided into three main episodes, a scene for each of the three different peoples portrayed. Each episode

Ruth St. Denis
Pioneer & Prophet

Ruth St. Denis had two sections, one devoted to the pursuits and customs during life, Pioneer & Prophet and the other to the beliefs concerning an after life.

The synopsis of the pageant read:

" I. EGYPT.

"The inundation of the Nile created a fertile land for the primitive people to till. Then came the shepherds, and from wool women wove garments. The men speared fish for food. Religion was developed, a priesthood organized, and a theology introduced. Growing in power, Egypt raised great armies. The Pharaoh of the Lower Land appears in an Osirian ceremonial. The Queen of the Upper Land, Ethiopia, arrives with her retinue, bearing gifts, and dances before him; and he seats her on the throne by his side. The United Egypt is now at the zenith of its power and glory. Musicians and dancers amuse the court. Then comes the invasion, personified by Set, the God of Evil. Pharaoh is slain by Set, and the army put to rout. The Queen, depicting Egypt in bondage, staggers under the yoke placed upon her by Set. The country mourns. There is one flash of hope but it dies out, and magnificent old Egypt crumbles away.

"The Soul of Egypt wends its way to the Hall of Judgment to appear before the judges of the dead. Horus challenges the Soul, who makes the Negative Confession. Horus places the jug containing the heart upon the scale, and Anubis weighs it against the Feather of Truth. "The scribe stands by to record the result. Were the Soul found wanting, the Crocodile God awaits to devour the heart. The portals open and the Great Triad—Isis, Osiris, and Nephthys—are seen. Osiris accepts the Soul, who arises into the Realm of the Justified. The ceremonial dance of the Rebirth follows.

" II. GREECE.

"On one side is a lady with her maids at toilette; on the other, a group of youths studying philosophy; in the center a group of dancers with

"musical instruments. The girls dance; the lady arranges her veil and Ruth St. Denis "departs. Then youths training for the Olympic games dance The Pyr-Pioneer & Prophet "rhic Dance.

" A feast, an offering to Bacchus, follows. The guests are served with "wine and food. The host and his favorite hetaira dance. The hetaira "crowns the host with ivy, and he is hailed as an incarnation of Bac-"chus. The feast degenerates into a wild orgy and ends in complete "abasement.

" In gloomy Hades, Pluto sits brooding on his sable throne. Eurydice "crouches at his feet while the shades move in helpless yearning. Or-"pheus plays his lyre so winningly that Pluto consents to the return of "his love, Eurydice, to the Upper World, under the guidance of Her-"mes. Orpheus precedes them. He has been ordered not to look back, "but his love and fear get the better of him and he disobeys. At once "Eurydice is whisked back to Pluto, and all is as before. Persephone "and her maidens of Springtime and Fertility visit Hades, bringing "light, color, and revelry. But soon she rushes with her companions "back to the Upper World and gloom reigns again.

" III. INDIA.

" On the banks of the Ganges early in the morning are seen the burn-"ing ghat and its tender. The women of the village come to fill their "lotahs and wash their saris. A Hindu woman enters with her husband, "who is on his way to the hunt. His companions arrive and together "they dance a hunting dance before departing. She performs ablu-"tions and attends to her household duties. When the day has passed "through the hot siesta period, two of her friends appear with bad tid-"ings: her husband has been killed while saving one of his compan-"ions from a tiger. His fellows appear bearing his body which is placed "on the pyre. As the fire mounts, the widow ascends the pyre and per-"forms the ancient rite of suttee.

Ruth St. Denis " In India they believe in many lives on this earth before the final Pioneer & Prophet "merging into Nirvana. The scene in which the man and woman of "the first episode appear again, in their next incarnation, is a bazaar "with merchants selling their wares, and fakirs, fortune tellers, and jug-"glers going about among the squabbling, chattering women. A snake-"charmer appears with his baskets of cobras and entertains the crowd. "Nautch girls dance and beg for coins. AYogi appears with his chela, "seats himself on a tiger skin, and is soon lost in deep meditation. The "priests enter from the temple; incense bearers dance before the re-"vealed figure of Siva, and are followed by the Devidassis, or temple "maidens. A famous beauty, who has had many conquests but longs for "something higher, appears with her retinue. Having made her puja, "she sees the Yogi. She tries to tempt him by her dancing, but so pro-"found is his abstraction that he does not notice her until she falls at "his feet. Then he recognizes in her the wife of his former incarnation, "and sees the yearning for real peace beneath her frivolous exterior." "He commands her to renounce all her possessions. She dismisses her "retinue, bids the crowds disperse, and soon they are alone. Stripped of "her gaudy finery, she prostrates herself in the agony of the Spirit war-"ring with the Flesh. Then comes the Yogi's song of peace, and around "her neck he places the black beads of Yoga. As she arises he points "upward, and there comes to her a vision of the peace and beauty of "the Himalayas - typifying the attainment of Samadhi."

> An orchestra of sixty pieces was conducted by Mr. Louis Horst. The costumes, properties, and effects for the entire pageant were worked out at Denishawn by the students from designs made by Miss St.

Denis or myself.

One of the most interesting reviews of the performance appeared in the Argonaut, a San Francisco magazine:

" The stage of the Greek Theatre always seems to put itself in com-

"plete harmony with whatever is presented there that is tasteful and Ruth St. Denis "beautiful. Its massive yet graceful simplicity made of it a most sug- Pioneer & Prophet "gestive and beautiful background to the calm reposefulness of the "Egyptian idea, to the lavish, Oriental decorativeness of the picture of "India, and to both the scene representing a Bacchanalian orgy and "the one depicting the region of the Plutonian shades visited by the "Greeks. The stage pictures presented were so lavish in appointment, "so tasteful and beautiful both in detail and general effect, that it was "very plain that the inception and the working out of the whole scheme "was a labor of love. A labor it was and an expense, for there was an "enormous number of props, scores of beautiful costumes, rugs, drap-"eries, vases, vessels, and armor; so indicative was the whole affair of "an expenditure of time, labor, and money, that one felt that Miss St. "Denis had been worked up to a high degree of artistic enthusiasm, "and in the matter of expense had cried, Begone, dull Care."

" In an entertainment so prodigal in splendor it is difficult to select "parts for special praise. Perhaps one of the most imposing stage pic-"tures was that of the Egyptian Hall of Judgment, with the trio of "Gods seen in the illuminated shrine to which led the great central "door. A peculiarly beautiful effect was attained by placing the blue "clad figures of certain personages in the scene, presumably the judges "of the dead, upon the ledge of the lower cornice, their black and yel-"low wings extending against the stone background, giving a strongly "Egyptian suggestion reminiscent of countless pictures illustrative of "ancient Egyptian art. And yet, in all the multiplicity of richly diver-"sified tableaux, one of the strongest impressions left upon the mind "was that of the simplest picture typical of pastoral Egypt, in which "Miss St. Denis and Mr. Shawn represented a primitive pair of Egyp-"tian mates laboriously tilling the soil for a bare sustenance.

" Miss St. Denis and Mr. Shawn gave many beautiful dances dig-

Ruth St. Denis" nified by historic idea and deeply stamped with poetic and æsthetic Pioneer & Prophet" suggestion. The pupils of Denishawn distinguished themselves by

"agility, precision, and grace. Freedom of movement and a graceful

"unconsciousness of the body have apparently been sedulously incul-

"cated, and the results are particularly marked in the young men, who,

"renouncing the usual masculine insensibility to self-culture, have ap-

"parently entered with enthusiasm into this revived cult of the body's grace. Their success was particularly evident in *The Pyrrhic Dance*

"which earned a special acknowledgment from the audience.

"One of the most admired features was *The Dance of Persephone and* "her Maidens with Ruth St. Denis fluttering in gauzy rose color as the "inspired center of the dance.

"And each of the three presentations closed with a depiction of the "religious idea, thus blending in each, national character, national pur-"suits, and national religion."

Harrison Danforth in the Oakland *Tribune* makes a pertinent remark at the close of his long eulogy of the pageant:

"Why for so many years dancing has been kept apart from the Greek "Theatre cannot be understood from last night's success. Yet it is "simple to cry hail to achievement. There was more bravery before the "fact, and its credit has been roundly deserved by Ruth St. Denis, Ted "Shawn, and Professor William Dallam Armes of the theatre man"agement who was the first to devise the adventure. The Greek The"atre has evolved sufferances and taboos which are not always easy to "explain. It is gratifying now to have the dance transferred from the "latter to the former class."

Indeed the pageant was made possible by Professor Armes, director of the Greek Theatre at Berkeley, through whom the invitation came.

His constant thought and assistance through the whole period of preparation and rehearsing had a great deal to do with the ultimate

success of the pageant. As Professor Armes was a keen critic in mat- Ruth St. Denis ters pertaining to the stage and its people, to be an object of his choice Pioneer & Prophet was of itself an achievement, even without the approval of the University of California which lay behind him.

The pageant was repeated August 5 at the San Diego Exposition, and so great was the demand for seats that even the huge Organ Pavilion which was used as a setting for the dances was not large enough to accommodate the crowds and many had to be turned away. On September 15, after desperately trying to find some adequate open air space in or near Los Angeles, we were forced to give the pageant indoors, at the Shrine Auditorium, where the audience was limited to four thousand people.

C. L. Carpenter in a review in *Prometheus*, the organ of the Greeks in America, seemed to catch the very essence of the underlying principles of this production:

" One may speak of the beauty of the dancing of this gifted couple -"these true comrades in their chosen field—may enlarge upon the "wealth of scenic effects they produce — but this is not enough — nor "the truth wholly—because behind their work lies that feeling, that "power of radiation, which alone marks the work of the true artist. "There are two very notable features in the efforts of Ruth St. Denis "and Ted Shawn—the first is purity, and I use that word in its spiritual "sense—and secondly, freedom. No performer can send out to an audi-"ence the sense of spiritual purity as if the dance were a ceremony—'a "rite-unless the dancer has the spiritual sense developed within; nor "can dancers in particular move and pose in a manner that makes the "audience 'feel' that it is all the easiest thing in the world to do, unless "their minds and souls are free. No one whose mind is clogged with "material thoughts and ideas - or whose soul is heavy with the sleep " of grossness can so order the movements of the body that the impresRuth St. Denis" sion of lightness—freedom—ease and grace is true and strong. If one Pioneer & Prophet" will give a careful study to the work of these two people he will find "that he is driven back to these conclusions—that they each possess "this ideal of purity of purpose, this perfect freedom of mind and soul, "and that they put into their work that essence of themselves which "gives them the right to sanctify that which they do by the sacred name "of Art."



CHAPTER XV № SOME PERFORMANCES OF SPECIAL Ruth St. Denis INTEREST *

Pioneer & Prophet

Perhaps more than any other artist of this generation Ruth St. Denis has through her dances participated in interesting and brilliant society events. In the very beginning of her career as a dancer of Oriental themes she performed at the entertainments of Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish in New York, for Mrs. Alice Barney in Washington, and for Mrs. Jack Gardner in Boston.

On July 20, 1906, she danced before Edward VII when that king with an exclusive party was being entertained by the Duchess of Manchester. She danced also in the studio of Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema.

In the following year while in Germany Miss St. Denis received a command to dance at a performance given for the Duke of Saxe-Coburg which was attended entirely by royalty. In Vienna a similar performance for the Princess Kinsky gathered together the nobility of the Austrian capital.

On November 24, 1907, Mariano Fortuny opened his studio in Berlin and displayed the marvelous hand-wrought veils from the Cretan city of Knossos. Ruth St. Denis danced in these veils and received two of them signed by Fortuny as a tribute.

On November 26, 1908, near the close of her season at the Scala in London, Ruth St. Denis gave a midnight gala performance arranged

Ruth St. Denis chiefly for the many artists of the theatre who had wanted to see her Pioneer & Prophet dance and had been prevented by their theatrical duties. In addition to the East Indian series, she presented for the first time on any American or European stage, an esthetic Japanese dance. She called this added feature A Shirabyoshi; the program follows:

A SHIRABYOSHI.

An episode taken from a story by Lafcadio Hearn of a shirabyoshi,

"a dancing girl of ancient times.

It is one of the beliefs of the Japanese that the spirits of the dead are "ever present, and that their hearts are gladdened by offerings of love "and worship which are laid before the ihai, or mortuary tablet, which "keeps in memory the honored dead.

"This shirabyoshi brought offerings and danced before the tablet "of her dead lover in the room where it had once been his greatest

"pleasure to see her dance.

"The sudden brightening of the little lamp before the tablet is taken "by her as a sign that his spirit is satisfied with her devotion."

One of the most brilliant of audiences attended this performance, a few among the many distinguished spectators being Prince Francis of Teck, the Duchess of Manchester, Sir Laurence and Lady Alma-Tadema, Auguste Rodin, Baron and Baroness de Meyer, Sir Beerbohm Tree, Marie Tempest, Forbes-Robertson, Walter Crane, James M. Barrie, the Maharajah of Kuch Behar, the Earl of Craven, George Bernard Shaw, Sir Charles Wyndham, and the Earl of Dunraven.

On May 30, 1909, in the garden of Dr. Ludwig Mond in St. John's Wood, London, three dances were given by Ruth St. Denis which she had created for that occasion: The Dance of Jephthah's Daughter, In a Greek Grove, and An American Cake Walk. Dr. Mond was entertaining some of the famous scientists of the world then attending the Seventh International Congress of Applied Chemistry.

A few months after returning to America Ruth St. Denis went to Chicago where she was the special feature at the most brilliant ball in Chicago's social history, the charity ball given December 15, 1909, with Mrs. Potter Palmer as the leading patroness. Also the same season Mrs. Marshall Field entertained the French and Russian ambassadors and their wives at Washington with Miss St. Denis's dancing, and one of the most talked-of affairs in Philadelphia was the occasion when she danced for the Wideners.

Toward the end of the long coast to coast tour, on April 7, 1911, Miss St. Denis appeared at the housewarming of the wonderful East Indian home of Mrs. Frank C. Havens in Piedmont, California. A niche built into one end of a huge room was just the right size for the temple scene and was used for the goddess in the performance of *Radha*.

In December, 1912, at the Waldorf in New York, in a Saxon fête given by the MacDowell Club, Miss St. Denis created a Norse dance, *The Vision of Odin*.

When Mrs. Philip Lydig gave the marvelous performance of *Judith* at her home in New York, with Madame Yorska as Judith and M. de Max as Holofernes, it was Ruth St. Denis who was "the dancer."

The following month a ball was given which ranks in the annals of Gotham society with the famous Bradley-Martin ball of thirty odd years ago. This was the Egyptian fête in the studios of Louis Tiffany. During the pageant in this ball, so marvelously produced by Joseph Lindon Smith, Hedwig Reicher playing Cleopatra to Pedro de Cordoba's Antony, Ruth St. Denis was carried inside a rug by four stalwart Nubians to dance for the Nile Queen. She gave her famous Palace Dance in a flesh-brown, tight net slip and wore a short, squarecut Egyptian wig.

March 26, 1913, the Japan Society made a special occasion by tak-

ing the ballroom of the Astor Hotel and having Miss St. Denis present *O-mika*, her Japanese play which had just opened at the Fulton Theatre. The entire membership of the Japan Society was present.

In November, 1913, Miss St. Denis was requested to come to St. Louis and give a special performance with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. About this time when Dr. Anna Howard Shaw was confined to her room at the McAlpin, many of the leading progressive women of New York joined together to present for her entertainment an impromptu vaudeville performance. Dr. Shaw spoke with particular praise of the dancing of Miss St. Denis. Indeed, she so appreciated it that a year later, when making a whirlwind suffrage campaign tour, she nearly missed a train in Omaha—where she was speaking and Miss St. Denis was dancing—because she visited the latter's dressing-room.

During the summers of 1913 and 1914 Ruth St. Denis gave several open air performances in the Greek theatre of Marcia Leonard at Mt. Kisco, New York; at Bar Harbor, Maine, where she was accompanied by Ethel Leginska; and at the Schenley lawn in Pittsburg with the Pittsburg Festival Orchestra.

Among other interesting things which Miss St. Denis did at Mt. Kisco the second summer was to translate Tagore's *Chitra* into a series of delightful dances.

In the spring of 1916 at the Century Opera House in New York, when the foremost representatives of the American stage were called upon to contribute to the William Winter Testimonial, Ruth St. Denis, as the greatest American dancer, performed Radha—almost ten years to the very day since she had first presented it in the face of so many difficulties.

At the Krotona Theosophical Institute in Hollywood, California, was presented a dramatization of *The Light of Asia*. It was produced

in the open air with a beautiful house of Tunisian architecture as a Ruth St. Denis background. The production ran for five weeks, commencing June Pioneer & Prophet 29, 1918, and was counted so great a success that a permanent organization, the Theatre Arts Alliance, has grown out of it. The Light of Asia was produced by Mrs. Yorke Stevenson of Philadelphia, with Walter Hampden as the Buddha. Ruth St. Denis herself danced The Vision of Yashodara and with the Denishawn dancers presented the Temptation Scene. It was a production of unforgettable beauty.

As Ruth St. Denis appeared in The Light of Asia only two nights a week, she was able during that time to journey to Berkeley to participate in Steindorff's production of Gluck's opera Orpheus at the Greek Theatre on July 27. The Christian Science Monitor in its review

of this performance said:

" Her dance was a series of plastic postures, conceived in a beautifully "chaste spirit and executed with exquisite grace — a disembodied dance "it was, that carried the idea of a rite in its noble measures."

The performance was repeated August 11 at the Tivoli Opera House in San Francisco.

Her latest and most remarkable achievement is to score as great a success in emotional acting as she always did in dancing. The play Miriam, Sister of Moses, was written especially for Ruth St. Denis by Constance Smedley and Maxwell Armfield. It was produced by Samuel J. Hume on the nights of August 1 and 2 of 1919. The play dealt with the epic story of the leading of the Children of Israel out of Egypt, with Miriam's jealousy of the Midianitish wife of Moses, her leprosy and its healing. The drama was as heroic in scope as a Greek tragedy and the part of Miriam was one which even a Bernhardt would find difficult. I, against my wishes, was cast in the part of Moses, in which I proved unsatisfactory, but as I also created the dances and trained the ballets I was somewhat recompensed by the success of

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Ruth St. Denis this element of the production. As to the sensational revelation of dramatic power on the part of Miss St. Denis, let me quote from the Christian Science Monitor of August 12, 1919:

" For two nights Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and their company "have brought to the Greek Theatre interested multitudes to see them "in the Biblical play, Miriam, Sister of Moses.

Miss St. Denis proved herself an artist, an actress as interesting, "perhaps, as any who have appeared on the classic stage of Berkeley's "outdoor theatre. She is gifted with a voice of unusual quality and a "superblyresponsive physique. The present writer, watching her, could "not remember having seen half a dozen of the leading actresses of "America or indeed of Europe who could surpass her in natural grace "or individual appeal. Her performance was a revelation. It had been "said that Miss St. Denis was too ambitious—that the Greek Theatre "demanded more than simply a dancer, no matter how great, could "give. But now the question is, What next? There is unlimited mate-"rial for her powers and we hope to see her soon in other vehicles for "her talents."

Also Frederic McConnell, assistant director of the Greek Theatre, in *The Drama* of December, 1919, writes:

Popular interest had been aroused in the fact that Miss St. Denis, "in playing the part of Miriam, was assuming an acting rôle of major "proportions for the first time in many years. Curiosity was dispelled "by admiration for a brilliant and accomplished performance. Stu-"dents of acting had much to learn from Miss St. Denis. Acting as an "art had much to gain from dancing as an art. For many people Miss "St. Denis exhibited for the first time the subtle synthesis which exists "between acting and dancing. Upon her work as an actress she brought "to bear the pressure of her dancing technique. In countless places "throughout a long and tedious part she fused a fine rhythmic sense, "expressing herself through an exquisite movement of body, where Ruth St. Denis "she could summon neither words nor music. Sheer beauty was fused Pioneer & Prophet "into speech because of the grace of movement that accompanied it. "Emotion found translation not in pantomime, but in a vast rhythmic "understanding of human feeling. Miss St. Denis can remain still and "recite and yet not be static. The pulse within her is a true and regular "force, operating with or without the guidance of the music beat. More-"over, she has a voice of intrinsic merit, and diction that is clear. These "qualities, together with the attribute of intelligence, open up to her "the field of acting and give assurance of success therein."



CHAPTER XVI DENISHAWN, THE RUTH ST.DENIS AND TED SHAWN SCHOOL OF DANCING AND RELATED ARTS

The words "classic" and "interpretive" have been so indiscriminately applied for the last ten years to every chiffon-clad, bare-footed dancer, regardless of the fact that many of these dancers manifestly were neither "classic" nor "interpretive," that the words seem to have lost somewhat of their original value. Many personalities have turned the light on various sides of this modern movement; yet all these dance expressions of the past decade have been part of one great wave, which plainly demands to be more adequately named. Personally, I think we should call this school of free individual dancing which has grown up among us "The American Dance," regardless of the personal sources from which it has developed.

The spirit of the aspiring youth of America is not amenable to the arduous and irksome requirements of the classic ballet, the old school of the dance as evolved in Italy and France and developed in Russia. Nor is the American artist satisfied with the result of such training, for it dictates that achievement shall be patterned after the triumphs of the past and is therefore felt as stifling to individual expression.

It was in answer to the need for a freer and more flexible method of instruction in the dance that we founded Denishawn at Los An-

geles, California, nearly five years ago. That there existed a great need Ruth St. Denis for such a school of the dance is proved by the number of young Pioneer & Prophet dancers who flocked to us, and many of the prominent members of the younger generation of dancers received their training either at Denishawn or in the Ruth St. Denis company.

The original Denishawn building where we opened our school in 1915 was located in the heart of Los Angeles but was situated on the top of a hill so completely surrounded by tall eucalyptus trees that once you were within the grounds you had a sense of complete isolation. It was formerly the home of a southern California architect, was built in modified Spanish style, and had about half a block of grounds. There was a large outdoor swimming pool, and a number of beautiful peacocks. The big classroom was out under the trees, and by far the greater part of the work took place in the open air on a smooth floor which could be protected by canopies when necessary. It was equipped with mirrors to aid in practice and had at one side an arbor for the musicians.

In two seasons we outgrew this place and moved into larger quarters, comprising four buildings: dormitories, studios, practice rooms, craft shop, and an open air classroom and dance-theatre. In this theatre work of pupils was presented and we tried out our own new ideas.

The girls of Denishawn wore as a uniform during all classes a one piece bathing suit of khaki color, and were subjected to a routine of technical training as severe as any military discipline. In private lessons individuality of costume and dance was developed.

In spite of the war which was disastrous to so many artistic enterprises the school grew, and after two more years even the larger quarters were found inadequate. To go on enlarging in rented buildings and erecting temporary structures on rented groundwas too expensive and too unsatisfactory a plan for us to pursue further. Also we had

attained in the four years of running a school a clearer conception of what we really wanted Denishawn to be. So we closed the school completely in order to give ourselves time and opportunity to refound a greater Denishawn on a lasting foundation—both material and ideal. The plans of this new organization and the choosing of the land upon which the buildings will be built are now occupying our time and attention.

The system of training at Denishawn is, paradoxically speaking, to have no system. We believe that to be one's best self is better than to achieve the cleverest imitation of some one else, and on this simple basis Denishawn rests. The development of the individual is placed first and foremost. It is no part of our ambition to turn out many pupils all of whom are immediately distinguishable as products of the same system. We seek rather to discover by every possible means the nature of the talent of each individual, the kind of dancing which each one does best and to which the whole personality of the pupil is best suited.

In the curriculum at Denishawn all schools of the dance are represented: the purely classic ballet of the Italian, French, and Russian schools, national dancing of various sorts, the Greek dancing which was first given to this generation by Isadora Duncan, and finally the entire gamut of East Indian, Egyptian, Japanese, and other Oriental dances which Miss St. Denis has developed.

The first step in this "individuality system" of training is a "diagnosis lesson" in which we study the new pupil. She is allowed to dance whatever she chooses. It may be something she has learned previous to coming to Denishawn or something she herself has created out of her love for dancing. She is given various fabrics with which to costume herself, and is asked to improvise to various rhythms and tempos of music. After working thus with her through this first les-

son, the teacher makes out a "prescription." This prescription lays Ruth St. Denis down a definite course of training comprising technical exercises and *Pioneer & Prophet* the learning of such dances as are best suited to the student's personality. Having mastered this task, she returns and performs before us the dances she has learned.

After a certain period of studying the pupil, dances are created for her, movements planned, music chosen, colors and fabrics of costumes worked out, all to accentuate the personality of the pupil and to place the emphasis on those things in which she is, by temperament and physical build, best fitted to excel. The result of this is an individual product, perhaps contrary to many traditions as to art form, but more nearly expressing the pupil's personality than anything to be achieved through a fixed system of dance. By this system we have developed a number of dancers who have gone on the stage with a unique style of dancing to offer the public.

One of the best examples of our training is Ada Forman, who is now appearing in New York. To be quite candid, Miss Forman was not a tremendously promising young woman when she first appeared at Denishawn and not at all the type most people would select at sight as the dancer. After her diagnosis lesson, we saw that she had remarkable feet, unusual in shape, and that she used them remarkably; she had a fine precision in the movement of her body, and supple arms with curiously shaped elbows. On this material we set to work, training and developing the points of advantage which our analysis had made evident. I created for her three Javanese dances, one of which she gave in New York for five weeks at the Hudson, the Candler, and the Palace theatres. Miss Forman then starred with these dances at the Palais Royal, New York, and is now being featured in them in The Greenwich Village Follies. Miss Forman by herself has little creative ability, nor is she a particularly quick stu-

dent, yet through her Denishawn training she has developed and perfected a unique set of dances to which the public pays ready honor.

This emphasis on the individual qualities is also part of the training in the Ruth St. Denis company. Lubovska never attended the school, but had her first legitimate stage appearance in the Ruth St. Denis company, and received her training from us along the lines of the Denishawn system. At the time we engaged her, she was dancing with her brother in a Los Angeles hotel grill modern dances for which she was obviously unfitted. Both she and her brother were engaged for the company, in which she appeared under the name of Mlle. Psychema. I taught her a *Danse Egyptienne* which suited perfectly her long lean lines, her sharp angles, and her rather exotic manner. In this dance she won great success, and the following season made a tour of the Orpheum and Keith theatres as a leading dancer, with this dance as her principal offering, and later appeared at the New York Hippodrome.

Evan Burrowes-Fontaine, likewise, had her first appearance on the legitimate stage with the Ruth St. Denis company and was taught a Danse Egyptienne which she used afterwards with great success. She was not so good in this type, however, as Lubovska, and has this season featured an East Indian dance, after the manner of Ruth St. Denis's earlier Oriental dances. Vanda Hoff is a San Francisco girl whom we first saw dancing at a charity ball given at the St. Francis Hotel. She is a most delightful natural dancer, but is without initiative or creative ability to any marked degree. Miss Hoff toured two seasons in vaudeville, appearing in the dance-drama The Dancing Girl of Delhi, in which her principal solo dance was one Ruth St. Denis had taught her. Betalo Rubino who appeared in The Dancing Girl of Delhi also made her début under Ruth St. Denis's supervision.

One of the most interesting results of the Denishawn training is Ruth St. Denis Margaret Loomis, who is now playing leading parts in moving picture Pioneer & Prophet productions. Miss Loomis was with us all of the season of 1915-1916, and has also spent two summers at the school. She is a girl from Los Angeles who had wished for real self-expression, but because of her social position and the lack of necessity for working had never been allowed anything but social activity. She became self-repressed and, because of her deep and intense nature, almost morbidly introspective. The Denishawn training helped her to swing the pendulum the other way and let her emotions find vent in satisfying expression. However, she was not a facile pupil in responding quickly or well to steps or technique. Her talent lay along the lines of the dramatic, and she had a Chinese or Japanese quality in appearance and manner. The dance which was created for her as a solo, and which she did on tour with us, was Chinese, following a delicately dramatic theme, and was called The Lady Picking Mulberries. It was while she was doing this dance that a motion picture director saw her and found in her a new creator of leading rôles for the film. After playing as leading lady with Sessue Hayakawa in five pictures she later toured as Miss St. Denis's sole support one season while I was in the army, but has returned to the "movies" with increased success.

Florence O'Denishawn, who is now opening her third season as the featured dancer of Raymond Hitchcock's Hitchy Koo, studied at Denishawn during its first summer, went on tour the following season with the St. Denis company, studied again the following summer, and toured one more complete season with us. I then prepared for her a repertoire of dances, costumed them, and secured her a fifteen weeks' engagement at the Edelweiss Gardens in Chicago, followed by six weeks at the Hotel Winton in Cleveland. Here Raymond Hitchcock saw her dance, offered her a position with him, and when the

new production opened, her solo Denishawn Egyptian dance—in theatrical parlance—"stopped the show." Her real name, by the way, is Florence Andrews; I had given her as a stage name "Florence of Denishawn," but a printer's error changed this to "Florence O'Denishawn," which she has kept. She will undoubtedly take her place as one of the foremost dancers of this generation, and this will be due as much to her fine character as to her talent.

The Denishawn training does not stop with the teaching of dance steps and dances. On the contrary, we try to give each pupil, in addition to the specific, technical dance training, a comprehensive practical education in all matters even indirectly related to this art: costume, scene, lighting, music, all those elements with which a creative artist may have to deal during the progress of his dance from the original conception of it to the finished production. For example, a course of lectures teaches the relation of music to the dance. There are teachers of the Jacques-Dalcroze eurhythmics trained in the Dalcroze Institute in Dresden. There is a craft department where pupils are taught the designing of costumes and the study of decorative backgrounds as well as the actual making of many of those accessories to costume which it is impossible to purchase. The costume department was for one season under the direction of Miss Grace Ripley, director of the Boylston Studio of Costume and Design in Boston.

Another means of practical education is found in the productions given by the school. Pupils attend all the rehearsals and are thus enabled to obtain a working knowledge of lighting effects and stage mechanics.

Denishawn in its four years of existence can be said to have achieved world-wide fame. Our dormitory pupils represented every state in the United States, as well as Canada, Cuba, and Hawaii. Magazines in London, Mexico, South America, Spain, Italy, and Japan published

pictures and articles dealing with this American university of the dance.

Ruth St. Denis
Pioneer & Prophet

The influence of Denishawn has been felt in many aspects of American life. Almost every worth-while picture made in California, in which dancers appeared, used the students of Denishawn, and over twenty leading players of the film world have taken private lessons with us. The Denishawn dancers in vaudeville and on the legitimate stage have given a new standard of dancing to the public in America and the Orient. Even to the smaller places of the country the message of the school has penetrated; teachers who have studied at Denishawn have gone back to their home towns preaching the gospel of the dance glorified.

As to the future Denishawn and what it is to be, I refer the reader to the last chapter of this book, The Prophecy—by the Pioneer.



CHAPTER XVII № BRINGING THIS CHRONICLE TO A CLOSE №

In rereading what I have written up to this point, I feel called upon to address the Gentle Reader and ask him in his criticism to remember that I offer this book in no sense as a literary achievement. It is simply a story that interests me intensely, and I have told it as directly as I could. If I have seemed over enthusiastic at times, let me assure you that in reality I have used great restraint, and that what I have given utterance to is temperate and subdued in comparison to the enthusiasm I feel. And let me state—lest you think my heart has run away with my head—that this worshiping at the shrine of Ruth St. Denis, the artist, antedates by some years my personal acquaintance with Ruth St. Denis, the woman. The old adage has it that familiarity breeds contempt, but familiarity with Ruth St. Denis has only fed the flames of my devotion to her great genius.

There has been considerable demand for some such book as this about the art of Ruth St. Denis, and it seemed as if I were the person to write it—not because of any skill in writing, but because of my being the one most able to assemble the necessary material, and because to me the book is a work of love. Most fortunate it is that I used this material when I did, since much that can never be replaced was destroyed in the fire at Tedruth in November, 1919. I believe that this

book will be valuable to the younger generation, and to future gen- Ruth St. Denis erations of dancers and dance devotees, giving, as it does, the stage Pioneer & Prophet pictures, pictures of costumes, description of action, and information about music and other matters related to the St. Denis productions. Certainly many of us have ardently wished that there had been such a book written by a contemporary about the great dancers of the past-Taglioni, Guimard, Cerrito, and many others of whose work we have only meagre accounts.

I have purposely refrained from any comparative criticism of Ruth St. Denis and her contemporaries. Each of the truly greatholds a place which is unique and unassailable. However, I hope to be forgiven for quoting the following by Caroline Caffin in her book called Vaudeville:

" The modern revival of the love of dancing may be said to have "shown its first tentative blossoming in this country when, to the won-"der and delight of all lovers of the beautiful, Ruth St. Denis made "her first appearance on the vaudeville stage in her temple dance of "Radha. She crept in, unheralded, unknown, and it was only by degrees "that it was rumored that something new in the world was being re-"vealed. For so entirely was her conception that of an artist, so thor-"oughly had she absorbed the mystical atmosphere of Oriental lore "and saturated her presentation in it, moreover, so impersonal and ab-"stract was her performance that it became something more than mere "amusement and claimed a place in the category of art.

" Not, however, that there was ever any lack of dancers on the vaude-"ville stage, but the interest in their work was not very vital, except "on such occasions when the appearance of such stars as Carmencita "fanned to a brief glow the flame of popular enthusiasm. The right of "the waltz, as demonstrated by Letty Lind and Sylvia Grey, had lan-"guished. The old fervor of the buck and wing dancers had become "mechanical and sophisticated, and the rag time syncopation of the

Ruth St. Denis "negro music had not yet inspired any more individual expression than Pioneer & Prophet "the merest imitation of negro antics, hardly worthy to be called dances.

"Such entertainers as still relied on dancing as their medium of ex-"pression received small encouragement, so that with few exceptions "they attempted little more than a display of agility and technical ac-"complishment.

" But the appearance of Ruth St. Denis, a native-born American, who "evolved her art, expressive as it is of the Orient, in her own country, "was followed by the arrival first of Isadora Duncan, an American, it "is true, but one who had developed her art in the stimulating atmos-"phere of Germany. A little later came the two companies of Russian "dancers with their finished technique of expressional interpretation, "and by this time the claims of the dance had awakened enthusiastic "response on all hands, and from the Cinderella of the arts it has be-"come the admired and fêted pride of popular approval.

" Ruth St. Denis, however, remains in a class by herself. No other "dancer is attempting to do just the same thing that she does so well. "Some of her presentations are less dances than a series of poses of "wonderful expressiveness. But the sensitive beauty of her pictorial "effects, the exquisite refinements of suggestion which she imparts to "the detail and atmosphere that she thus creates, the result of minute "and sympathetic study, have not been rivaled by any other artist "on our stage. The great Russian ballets are the refinements of one "artist on the work of another, and great masters are proud to asso-"ciate in the working out of their elaborate creation. And back of them "all is a tradition to guide not only the performers but also the audi-"ence. But Ruth St. Denis had to create her own traditions, to find "and train all her assistants, to amalgamate the work of her musicians "and scene painters and incorporate their work with hers into a whole." I think the reason why it is impossible to compare Ruth St. Denis

with any other dancer is, perhaps, that the dance is only one facet of Ruth St. Denis her genius. Her ability shows itself hardly less in her stage pictures Pioneer & Prophet than in her dancing. They are works of art worthy of any painter: she is a master of composition, always placing herself in relation to the other people on the stage and to the scene itself so as to make continually a flawless picture. And certainly no one in this generation has handled color in more masterly fashion. Mark Perugini in his book, The Art of the Ballet, says:

" There was Miss Ruth St. Denis at the Scala—a vision of all the "poetry and mystery of the East. Ruth St. Denis in an Indian market "place representing a snake-dance, making cobras of her flexible arms "and hands! Ruth St. Denis as a Buddhist acolyte in the jungle! Ruth "St. Denis in a Dance of the Senses, so significantly poetic and full of "strange allure. Always the glamour of the East, but without its men-"ace and without its vice; the East exalted and austere. Moreau him-"self might have envied her those dreams of form and color made "manifest, and all who saw her must have realized that Ruth St. Denis "danced her lovely pictures as an artist born."

In addition to her dancing ability is a marvelous dramatic power. This is not to be confused with the pantomimic acting which is the usual accompaniment of dancing which tells a story, but real acting, emotion superbly and convincingly expressed simultaneously with the movements of the dance.

Mary Fanton Roberts in The Touchstone for May, 1919, writes:

It is Ruth St. Denis's amazing gift that she is able to render so void "her own personality that only the creature she wishes to conjure up "can be realized by the audience. She is never striving to express her "own personality—that world-wish of all youth—rather she is making "of herself a vacuum which is flooded at her desire with the life of "other souls and other worlds-Egypt, India, Japan. The look of the

Ruth St. Denis" devourer of the desert pours from her eyes, the lilting motion of the Pioneer & Prophet" peacock is in her neck, the venom of the cobra in the dangerous twist "of her waist, the slow lift of the inhuman head.

"She shows the great Empress Theodora with the sense of such stu"pendous power that she moves as one stepping from mountain to
"mountain, her gesture without measure. As the Japanese dancer, she
"sways across the stage, with grace and beauty in line and costume,
"ignoring the young Samurai men as she passes near them in the trail"ing glory of her robes, and then luring them with faint slow glance
"of insolent invitation. She brings Egypt, with subtle coquetry and a
"smile that carries with it the cup of poison.

" Ruth St. Denis not only reveals the heart and soul of India, Egypt, "Siam; she is at will the fearsome god of the country or a delicate figure "on a tissue print. With such weight or fragility of substance as she "may desire she can literally make you see what she wishes to present. "She tells me that she has not been in India, yet she has the essence of "the Hindu woman in her look, dress, and motion. Equally she sinks "into the murky lover of Africa; her eyes beckon you; her mouth "mocks and woos you; her body is heavy, slow moving, glowing, every "step a seduction. She menaces all the world with beauty, with desire. " I saw her a few weeks ago do an Algerian drama with a quality "so wholly African, so vibrant, so savage, that only the soul of the Al-"gerian dancer animated her, as with the sound of the tomtoms she "swayed through a dance of seduction and rage and love. Her plat-"form was a rug, her background many people, but she never saw us, "only the jungle and the black lover and the cruel snares that tangled "her brown feet and fickle heart.

" Before the dance she came among us in costume and brought us "Oriental flowers and sweets in a huge basket, laughing at the women "and brushing the men with the fringe of her soft scarf.

"This same evening she did the most extraordinary Japanese dance, "or rather play, to music. It is in my estimation one of the greatest "achievements of her art. In this dance-drama she is a Japanese actor. "She is at the same time an American audience watching the Japanese actor with amusement but without understanding. She actually gives "you the impression of these two characterizations. We who watched "her that night were also the audience, laughing. She played the comedy with exquisite skill, absolutely from the Japanese point of view. "She talked with the rapid raucous Japanese voice. She revealed fear, "delight, annoyance; little by little she became absorbed in the greater movement of the drama—she ceased to be an audience watching her-"self and became wholly the actor, and then the tragedy began that "ended in the actor's death, and we, the real audience, found ourselves with tears in our eyes.

"Once again Ruth St. Denis had made herself a channel through which the tragedy of another world has found expression. As the little foreign actor she had made us laugh and understand and weep. "Some of those in the audience who had lived in Japan, traveled in "Algeria, sailed up the Nile, really knew little of these lands compared with Ruth St. Denis's infinite and mysterious wisdom. She does not know them physically, but she beckons them all to inhabit her body. "She possesses strange memories of things she has never seen, of lands she has never visited, and of people she has never known. It is unfathomable—this quality of being what she does not know, picturing what she has never experienced."

I know of no one acquainted with Ruth St. Denis herself who has not been struck with the fact that she is a greater person than she is an artist; and it is her personality—powerful through love and gentleness—her splendidly keen intellect, and, first and last, her spiritual quality, which make comparison with others impossible. Crawford

Pioneer & Prophet fact:

Ruth St. Denis Flitch in his Modern Dancing and Dancers catches a glimpse of this

The dancing of the East, or rather of India in particular, has found "a very skilled translator in a dancer of American origin, Miss Ruth "St. Denis. I believe it is true that Miss St. Denis has never actually "been in India, but she has mixed freely with Indians, she has studied "their art, their religions, their character; she has penetrated into the "spirit of the people as far as it is possible for a Westerner to do so. "Her dancing has for the most part a religious and symbolic charac-"ter. Miss St. Denis duly ranks as one of the most cultured dancers "of the time and, in her special sphere, certainly the most learned." And so, having to the best of my ability set forth the story of Ruth St. Denis, the Pioneer, I will bring this narrative to a close and let Ruth St. Denis, the Prophet, speak for herself.

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UTH ST. DENIS'S PROPHECY: Dancing is the divine impulse of spirit to move rhythmically, proportionately, and perpetually, but in order that the dance may attain its rightful place among the arts and may serve humanity as it should, dancers must change their emphasis from the material to the spiritual. Havelock Ellis says: "If we are indifferent to the art of dancing, we have failed to understand not merely the supreme manifestation of physical life, but also the supreme symbol of spiritual life." The dance compositions of the fu-

ture will be built on divine themes instead of on the human longings and egotism that have given birth to much of the so-called art of the world. But as yet the dance has not come to its own high place among the arts. It has been grievously retarded by Puritanic disapproval. For this divine impulse must be manifested through the human body—which has been hated and distrusted according to Christian teaching under the suppressive influence of St. Paul. Even as Byzantine art sought to divorce the spiritual from the physical, depicting the body always as meagre, unlovely, having neither form nor comeliness that might divert the beholder from preparation for the life hereafter, so religionists down to our day have assumed that the beauty and grace of the body could never be significant of the high and the ideal, but are subtle snares for the sensually minded. On the contrary, the sex-consciousness of all who study the dance seriously as a spiritual manifestation, will be purified through the destruction of false modesty and through the gaining of a concept of the purity and beauty of the body.

Considering the dance in its two aspects, as art and as play, we come to the age-old question, "What is art?" From one point of view it is play, the

most delightful, enchanting play that man knows; from another, it is work, the most serious, strenuous work that man does, perhaps the only work worthy of his perfected powers. And of all the arts, the one that partakes most of the spontaneous activity that we call play and the devoted toil that alone deserves the name of work is the dance. Its beginnings may be observed wherever there is a healthy child—or even a puppy or a kitten; its religious development may be studied among primitive people in almost all parts of the world; its artistic perfection, so well known and loved among the Greeks, can be found in a few favored spots in our own place and time.

As people grow more religious, as they think, talk, live their religion, and as the love of beauty and the manifestations of it become recognized elements in true religion, they will grow more expressive and their expressions will utilize the body as an instrument of religious consciousness among other art forms.

A new order of students will appear who, studying the dance as a great art, and following up the stream of their own art-consciousness, will arrive at the central point from which emanate all arts and the harmonies of life: namely, spiritual principle. They will find that the consideration of spiritual principle has as much relation to their dancing as to any other part of their lives.

The dance is the universal language, as the drama, depending largely on the spoken word, cannot be; and its appeal is obviously more immediate. The voice and the body have ever been the medium for direct spiritual expression, for they are the only instruments that maintain an independent and unbroken relation between spirit and matter. The body must be considered as a complete and adaptable instrument for the expression of emotions and ideas. As such, it has its capacities and limitations, even as any musical instrument, and should be viewed in the same way, though the range of the body is much greater than that of any instrument ever invented. Its capacities for expression are almost unlimited, yet so far in this period of the renaissance of the dance, we have played upon it very few melodies. The

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two branches of the study of the dance should be this instrument itself and Ruth St. Denis the compositions that may be played upon it.

The dance has its own principles and rules of expression, apart from those of correlated music. The music available today is as much a hindrance as a help to the dance. We shall not produce the music that will be more of a help than a hindrance until we study the art of the dance separately. We cannot have a perfect whole until we have two perfect halves. In past generations music has had the support and the opportunity for expression that has been denied the dance. In many cases, then, when we view a performance, consisting of a symphonic work played by an orchestra and danced by either a solo dancer or a group, we leave with an impression of having seen a wonderful piece of dance art, when in fact the music has so filled our consciousness that upon the dance has been thrown an illusion of perfection that does not really belong there. On the other hand, much of our finest dance writing and interpretation is marred and limited by the utterly inadequate or unsuitable music available.

As a remedy for this, I propose that we search for the underlying principles that govern the dance as an independent art. The principles of mathematics underlie the dance as they do music, architecture, and the other arts. The application of these principles will evolve for us a form of dance which, when tonalized, will in turn give us a form of dance music which we do not now possess, and which is absolutely necessary for the fullest development of the synthetic art of the dance.

One of the fruits of the Greater Denishawn will be an organization which Mr. Shawn and I have called to ourselves, the "Synchoric Orchestra." This will consist of from forty to sixty dancers, each one corresponding to a musical instrument in a symphony orchestra. Great symphonies of movement will be composed in which each dancer will be used in the same manner as the instruments of an orchestra would be by the conductor of an audible symphony. These symphonies of movement may or may not be accompanied

Ruth St. Denis by the symphony orchestra; in cases when they are so accompanied, the rela-Pioneer & Prophet tions between the movement of each dancer and the notes of the correspond-

ing instrument will be mathematically maintained.

Though all arts are synthetic in the sense of finding their fullest expression and meaning through the support and co-operation of the other arts, still the dance is the one primal and essential synthetic art. Everything naturally flows from it and to it. For the perfect expression of the synthetic art of the dance, all the concomitant arts should be as complete in their expression as is that of the dance, and yet in their association subservient to the dancer's conception.

The first step in the progress of the dance as an independent art to its fullest synthetic expression is the germinal idea, or theme. The next is bodily movement. The third is music, or the tonalizing of this movement. Next, the clothing of the body, the scenery, the lighting, bring us to the prime necessity of a theatre which can make possible the conditions in which this most deli-

cate and ephemeral art may be nurtured and developed.

In such a theatre the essential elements are space and light; the secondary elements are music, costuming, and stage setting. These elements in themselves are the same as those demanded by every worker in the theatre. But the theatre for the dance needs a unique arrangement of these elements in a form that does not now exist. For the dance, being both plastic and graphic, that is, sculptural and pictorial,—must have conditions under which that twofold nature can have fullest expression. Theatres have been built for drama, concert halls for music, but no theatre for the dance.

A permanent theatre should be built and endowed that may be a place of birth and of asylum for those artistic impulses that come into the world too soon or too late, and must be protected and nourished in their infancy by the mother-consciousness in art if they are to live at all. Not all these spiritual children will live, but there will from time to time appear a peculiar and beautiful idea, destined to have far-reaching effect in healing the world of

its artistic sins, which, if given protection at its birth and during its maturity, will survive.

There will be numberless people who will say that this hope of ours is too great, too idealistic, that it will never pay. Yet Truth does pay, it pays the highest of all. I know full well that there has to be a period of faith before the material rewards come. This wilderness we are eager to cross, for we both see and believe that our promised theatre will justify itself, to this generation

in refreshment of spirit, and to the younger in education.

I was born with a great love of the dance as a means of spiritual expression and though I have been burdened and confused many times in my career, the main thread running through all my work is the purpose and joy that I have had, and still do have in increasing measure, of reflecting in movement those qualities of consciousness that are true and beautiful. All these years I have been an itinerant minister of the gospel of beauty, with no resting place, no home for my message.

That there is money to be had, and help, and material, we should unconditionally declare if it were a church we had in mind, a place where the children of this world might be filled with the beauty of holiness, but the theatre is my church, the stage my pulpit, my congregation the mixed multitudes, and

there, to them, I preach the holiness of beauty.

The financial and physical conditions of the stage are hard beyond all description for all that does not directly appeal to the taste of the masses. Only those forms of entertainment that can be counted on to satisfy the appetite of a restless world are welcome, and only those artists who, backed by tremendous physical stamina, possess ideals of indestructible quality and the faith that God has not called them amiss, can survive the struggle to bring truth as well as amusement to the millions.

I am only one of a number—not too large—of those who have given their faith and strength and money to the upholding of the standard of the arts of the stage, and now after some fifteen years of constant creation and labor,

Ruth St. Denis I have come to the next plane of my obedience - a Permanent Theatre for Pioneer & Prophet the Dance and Related Arts.

> It is one thing to be trained, another, to perform; what has been true of Denishawn is true of all dancing schools in the country. They teach, but they do not provide the conditions for the flowering of that teaching. This endowed theatre would do that. Furthermore, it should be an art center for the community. It should be a combination of theatre, church, and art gallery. There should be constantly changed exhibitions of all the fine arts. The public learns from one art to appreciate another, from seeing great paintings and sculpture to judge and enjoy correct and beautiful settings and groupings on the stage. Beauty, like money, should be kept in circulation to have value. The usual art galleries are too much like tombs, far from life and its swift, strong currents. This theatre would provide for each artist the opportunity of producing his work under the best conditions. Here each year would be a four or five months season of dance, after which the finer productions which had proved their worth would be taken on tour throughout the country.

> In connection with this theatre must be a complete institution, a school which shall give students of the art of the dance a physical, technical, and spiritual training up to the moment of their debut in the theatre. Such an institution, also, would give to talent too slight for a professional career the precious opportunity for cultivation and self-expression. It must be remembered that the finest art of the Greeks grew out of the universal art expression of the people, that both general taste and artistic creation are highest not when art is manufactured and sold by a professional class, but when it is a normal and happy activity in the life of all. Are we of the twentieth century too late or too early for such art activity? It seems to me that we stand on the very threshold of an era of great self-expression and of release of spiritual power. For such self-expression and release there is no form of art so fundamental, so inspiring, as the dance. Such a theatre and school as I have indicated would have upon the younger generation in its impressionable years between eight

and fifteen an influence incalculable. Our fashions in dress, in architecture, Ruth St. Denis in all modern life would be changed for the better. This may seem an exag- Pioneer & Prophet geration, but reflect what has been done already under the influences accompanying our renaissance of the dance. The fashion of free, flowing lines in women's dress today was set by the costumes of classic dancing. The example of stenciling, of dyeing, of jewel work, of artistic handicraft of all sorts which have done much to free people from the domination of the often ugly machine-made, commercial adornment, was first given by dancers who only so could meet their need of authentic and lovely costumes.

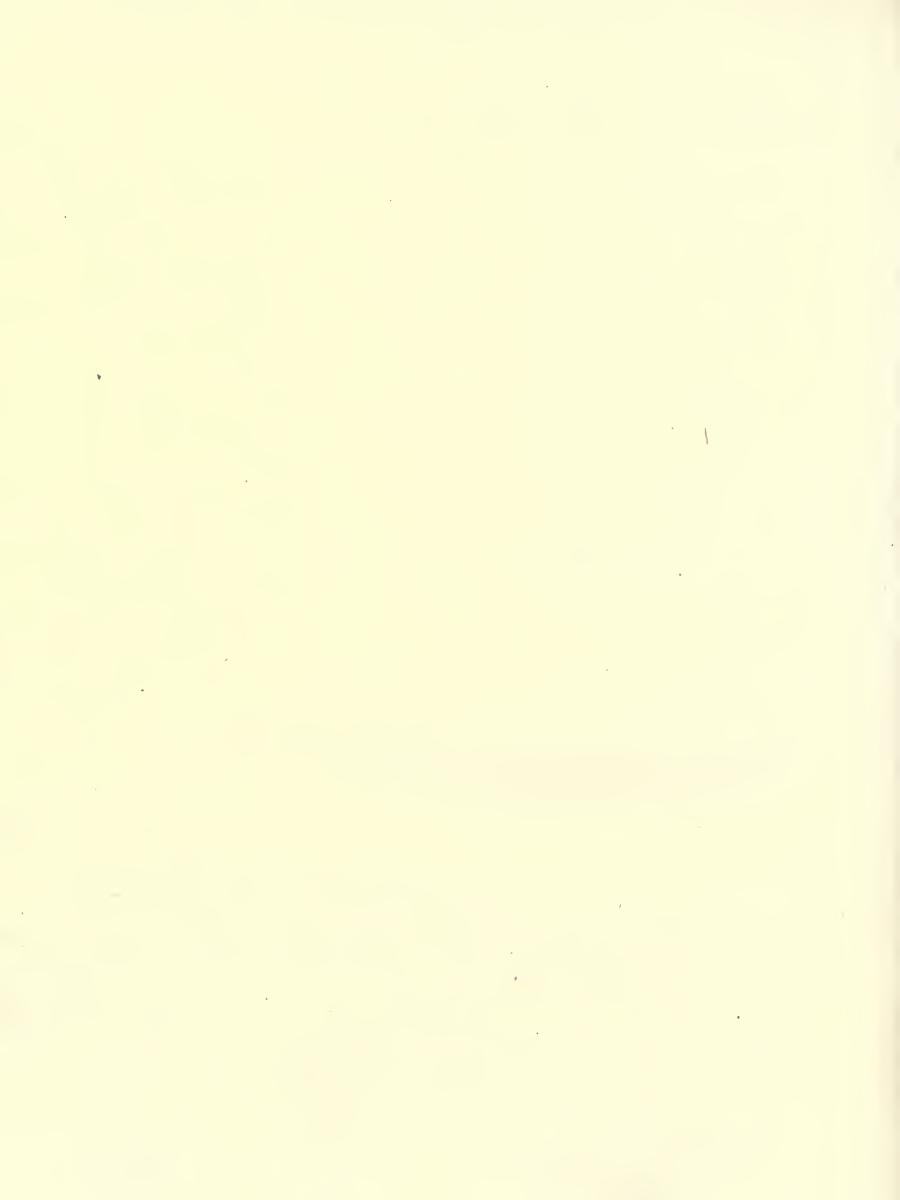
Dancing as a fine art has helped to revolutionize stage setting, abolishing meaningless elaboration for eloquent simplicity. From seeing beautiful classic dancing, thousands of children have come to see the beauty in Greek sculpture. The present love of Oriental color and design is, I think, traceable to the influence of the higher forms of Oriental dancing. And all these fashions and interests, seeming externals, are symbols of a great spiritual reality—a changed attitude toward life, a new freedom, a higher harmony, the prelude to a better understanding of the self, of our own people, of foreign peoples,

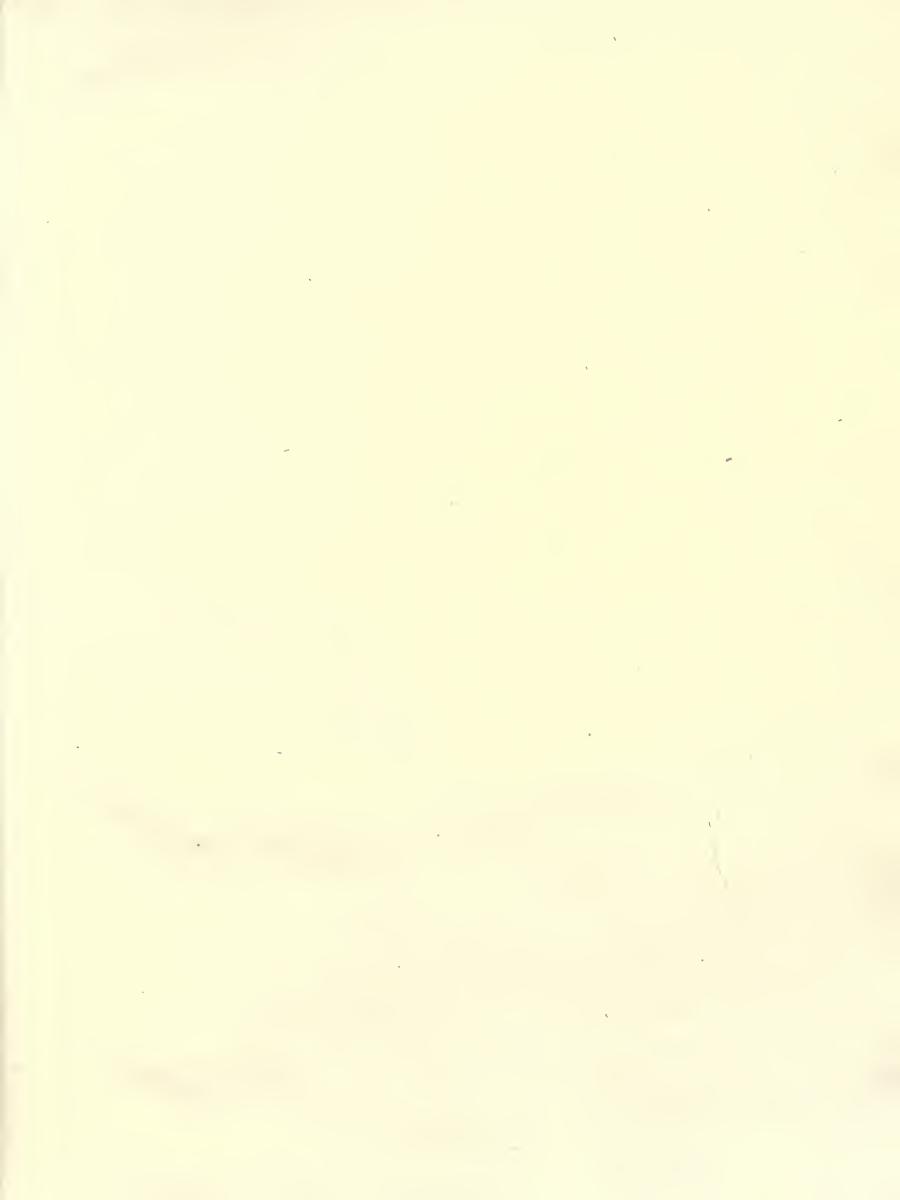
and of the immanent Divine in all.

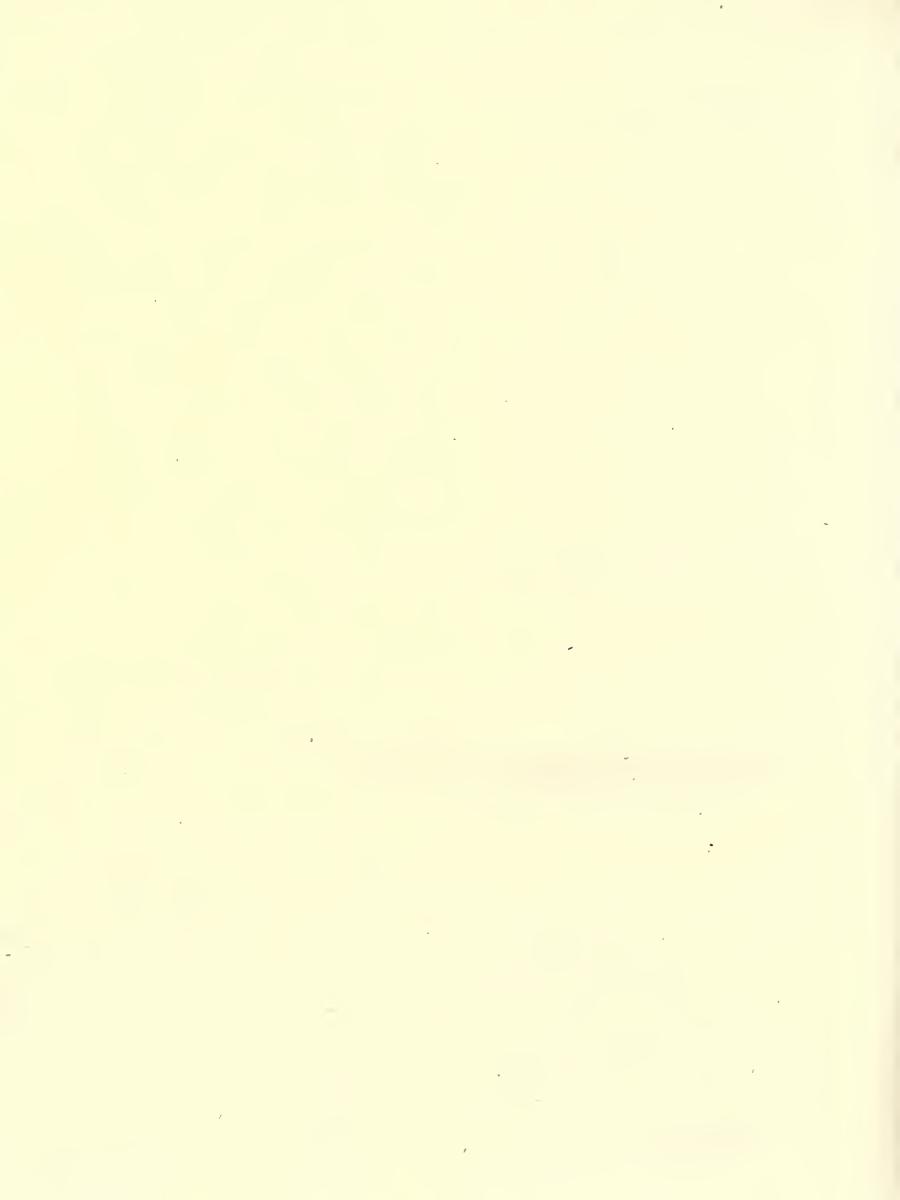
Our great reason for the urgency of my plea for permanent and adequate conditions for these personal arts of the theatre is that the projected arts have time working for them instead of against them. The poem, the musical composition, the statue, the painting, the building, are all projected works of the artist: they can go where he does not, they remain after he is gone. So if this generation has not come to realize what has been given to it, the next generation may. It is, indeed, no easier for such artists to endure neglect or hostility than for us of the stage, but there is this great difference: they have this satisfaction and hope: that while they may pass, their work remains; but for the appreciation of these works which I call the personal arts—singing, dancing, and acting—we cannot wait, for our instruments are our very selves, and as interpreters, when we go, our works go with us.













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