

N I K É



The Dance in Education

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It is only recently that the dance, oldest of the arts and one of the most fundamental means whereby man has expressed himself throughout the ages, has been considered worthy of recognition in our educational system. This is an age of science and systematic learning. With this recognition, have come certain demands for concrete data concerning methods of teaching the dance and accurate means of testing progress and results. To be educationally sound any art form must have a scientific basis.

By art form, we imply more than works of the masters in galleries and concert halls. We mean art as a form of emotional expression with an understanding of the science and technique of the medium in which one has chosen to work. Art in this sense should be within the scope of every intelligent human being. It is this opportunity of opening the joys of creative art to the average student through satisfying a fundamental urge for rhythmic movement that prominent educators have accepted the dance as real value in the field of education.

Necessarily, as all other arts, the dance has really two important aspects. Dance as an art which in its fullest meaning is the spirit of creative expression related to and underlying all arts. The second is the art of dancing, which might be distinguished as a craft. No art ever reaches its finest possibilities if it is not based on a sound mastery and understanding of its craft. It is with an appreciation for these essential factors that we undertake the training of students to attain a certain skill in controlling body movement in the class room. We hope to stimulate a desire and possibility for expression by giving the person a means whereby each may fulfill that desire.

There is a yearning in man for the beautiful. The fact that crystalized forms of man's love for beauty in the past ages have been preserved for us is a proof of that fundamental need. To combine a mastery of the known truths and an intelligent approach to this desire for creation of the beautiful is to encourage in all students the development of the finest self within each. As Lorraine Maytum has said in a little poem she has called "Why Dance?"—

"To bring much nearer the divine
We dance."



"'Tis to create and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow with form
Our fancy, gaining as we give
The Life we image."

Tests Used in Dancing

Marian Van Tuyl, '28

The dance is an art, and, if it is to rank with the other fine arts, it must be the sincere expression of the innermost being, or one might say, soul of the individual. Obviously, we are not capable of testing and measuring this vital part of man. I don't believe we would want to if we could, for it is such a personal thing. However, it is the art of dancing, which is the technical skill in execution, that we can test. Good art must always have a sound technique for a foundation, but must not rest there. Form alone is never true art. This is true in all forms of art, painting, sculpture, music and the rest.

Tests in the technique of the dance must be given in the language in which the thing itself speaks. If we work on the basis of the fundamental body movements of flexion, extension,, rotation, and progression, the tests will be based on these factors. The much talked of complete relaxation as the secret of so-called natural dancing, is a false notion, as one can readily see. It is, rather, an application of power in a certain part of the body, and the follow-through of the movement in this part until it is finished, then allowing the movement to flow through the rest of the body. This relaxation and control has been spoken of as "team work among the muscles." Miss H'Doubler has called it the "conservation of energy, because it promotes the rhythmic flow of energy through a body which is not inhibited."

The organization of giving tests in dancing technique is really up to the individual instructor. There does not seem to me to be any necessity for standardization here. The method which she uses should be worked out to carry out best the aims and ideals of the work. It cannot be overemphasized that such tests as these must be given by one who is thoroughly trained in the work, and has a good fund of ingenuity and adaptability to conditions in which one finds oneself. Assuming that the teacher has a broad background and understanding of the fundamental principles of the work, and some originality, she will be capable of working out such problems as occur in organization and other details.

Another requirement of a good test is that of scientific consideration. The technique of dancing is based absolutely on the laws of anatomy, kinesiology, and physics. It seems to me that nothing could be more firmly founded in science. It is the body with which we work, and we must recognize its possibilities and limitations. The teacher, therefore, in order to understand and teach dancing, must have a thorough knowledge of the sciences upon which the subject is based. And the laws of anatomy and kinesiology must be intelligently applied if any sort of test is to be given or any real progress made.

The A, B, and C tests in dancing most certainly measure a specific factor—that of bodily control in movement. It is an accurate measurement, because one either does it or they don't. It is just as simple for the trained person to decide the success or failure of the student in a particular movement, as to judge Brace's Motor Ability Tests.

From the Progress sheet the following tests have been evolved.

C Test.

First roll—taken with all leads

Folding and Unfolding

Isolated back movement

Isolated back movement carried over into elementary crawl forward

Rhythm—sensing beat, accent, etc.

This test deals primarily with the body as a whole.

B. Test.

All of C. test

Second roll

Elementary crawl

Isolated arm movements

More advanced rhythm

Dramatization of Fundamentals

This test deals with parts of the body.

A. Test

All B and C

Third Roll

Complete crawl forward and backward

Appreciation of the dramatic and lyrical in movement

Knowledge of the laws of good artistic form

Carry over of the entire thing into the dance

We may conclude that tests can be of worth in the measurement of skill in execution, but that we cannot expect to measure, except in a subjective way, the dance itself. We are seeking for truth in dancing as an art, and in so doing should ask two questions of every dance composition. Does it create a distinct, unique, emotional mood? If the answer to this is in the affirmative we may ask, how good a form or design has it? It is to help answer the last question satisfactorily that we should give tests in the technique of the dance. If we profit by what the results of such tests indicate, they, by aiding in the development of perfection of form, will help us in our quest for true art. But it must be remembered that we cannot reach the dance by technique or form alone.