

The Chicago Sunday Tribune.

PART FIVE.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER

COLOR SECTION.

MARCH 22, 1914

ALL THE WORLD DANCE CRAZY



FEDEROVA IN A SCENE FROM THE BALLET OF CLEOPATRA

THE world is dance mad. It's hopping mad. A brand new bug is in the air and everybody's got it. The modern man does not ride a hobby; instead he walks Castle. The modern maid who hesitates is found, not lost. Tango and the world tangoes with you; sit it out and you sit it out. Lona.

The terpsichorean fury of the whirling dervish has become a commonplace. The fabled dance of the seasons has not mustered enough to satisfy the fancy. The dance of the stars of lore poetic is pale in popular imagination beside that of Gaby or of Gertrude.

If any one had foretold ten years ago that in this year of grace—more or less—people of all social classes would seek to act like penguins on a weird antarctic spree, we would have scorned the folly of it. Who could have foreseen that the way of a maid with a man would have become the way of a serpent on a rock or that lovely woman, candidate for office of city father, would dance the nerve strain of such candidacy off on rubber heels? Who would have dared foretell that without age limit young and old would cast themselves upon the music's tide with an abandon that defies pedestrian description.

How came it all about? What lure lurks in the fashionable antics? What curious fascination does the grapevine exercise upon the human mind? Why should my lord of creation, formerly conceited and vainglorious, desire to perpetuate a parody of himself conspicuously on a ballroom floor?

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The Leaven of Unrest Was Busy.

The old school said sedately: "The dance should teach deportment." It made one start with the feet right in the first position, hold white gloved hands just so, and take one's steps as one was taught to take them. It was like a spoken language without slang—polite, but not expressive. There was no room in it for pagan gladness. Society was bored to death and didn't know it.

Then suddenly upon the listless gaze of weary western humans there flashed a spectacle which proved a general inspiration. The stage took up a kind of dancing which appealed to the youth in us and to laughter. From the first as we watched we knew that we ourselves could do



KARSAVINA AS THE FIRE BIRD

it—just as in our childhood we were certain that we could walk the tight rope if we tried. True, the dance before us was endowed with magic of fluttering steps, of fitful flashes, of arch retreats, and gay pursuits. It was like a dance of nymphs and shepherds, pastoral and primitive; it did not look too hard except in certain places.

The public was swift in getting up its courage. For long it still went whirling round and round in waltz and two-step. But the leaven of unrest was busy with its silent chemistry.

We'd thought the masters of the dance were dead—Taglioni, Vestris, and Camargo. We believed the niceties of the art they taught were buried with them. In ordinary walks of life children learned dancing perfunctorily, as a means of gaining ease of movement. Little boys had to be driven to dancing school, and little girls beguiled thither with enticement of party dresses. Grownups danced occasionally evenings with a view to killing time. The only real dancing left in the world was the unsophisticated performance of peasant peoples.

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Real Origin Found in Early Times.

Meanwhile in Russia, remote and isolated from the life of western Europe, the tradition of the dance as a natural expression of virile life burned like a flame in the hearts of a vigorous race. The school of ballet supported by the state taught that the dance might be a beautiful vehicle of artistic expression. For the real origin of the theatrical ballet is to be found in the customs of early times and primitive peoples. The simplest form of it, concerted movements on the part of a number of dancers, was a feature of religious ceremonials, as appears



ADOLF BOHN DOING A TARTAR TWINKLE

from the evolutions of the Greek choruses and the religious dances of Egyptians, Assyrians, Phoenicians.

From Russia fluttered dances to the stage of Europe. Not only in the pas seul of première, but in lighter measures of revue and music hall artists. Enchanted audiences revealed, watching the lusty vigor of agile bounds, the stamp of feet, jerky little jokes of dance steps. While the old-time social dances lingered moribund in high society the thoughts of theatergoers were reeling with shining dreams of the joy that there might be in leaping, swaying, rocking in excitement seething.

And then at last some daring spirits tried it, striving experimentally to move their limbs with easy grace and rhythm. With red and pulsing blood spurting them on they tried it.

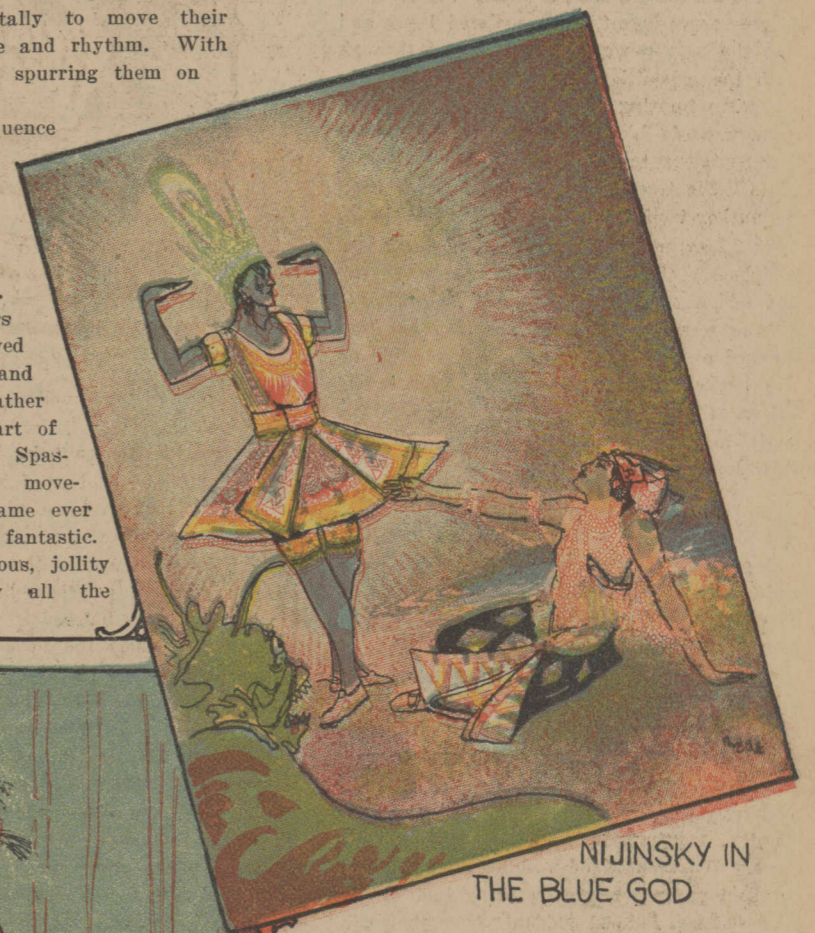
The immediate consequence was most preposterous behavior, the bunny hug, the grizzly bear, the Texas tommy, and the Gaby glide. Laughing onlookers ceased scoffing, essayed a few wild steps, and finding that they rather liked it, became a part of the hilarious throng. Spasmodic, inconclusive movements of novice became ever more freakish and fantastic. Example was contagious, jollity infectious. Presently all the

blithe Four Hundred fell ajigging, nimbly captivated. Parlor dancing gained the swing of carnival, the zest of youth, careless abandon to the joy of life.

Actually the Russians did it, although the tango comes from Argentina. For they were the ones who in the dark ages of the dance kept the flame burning from which the modern dancers light their torches.

Karsavina in the Fire Bird, Fedorova in Cleopatra, Nijinsky in the Carnival, Adolf Bohn in Prince Igor, or Pavlova in the Swan dance offer a revelation of what the dancer's art can compass.

The vampire dance had its prototype in



NIJINSKY IN THE BLUE GOD

Russia in the classic dance of Tamar, a swift fierce drama from the distant Caucasus. In several dances we find the brutal lust of the Apache dance. The fire bird anticipates the airy postures of the tango. In the Polovtsian dances in the performance of Prince Igor we behold a Tartar twinkle. Our simpler steps and figures all appear on the Russian ballet stage in exquisite elaboration.

On with the dance! Of course you cannot hope to dance like Tartars. But you can walk as if you had money—that's the proper way to castle. You can back around the room mechanically, as if moved by hidden clock work. You can vacillate artistically—backward, forward, right and left. You can lame duck. You can keep on doing something to the music, dancing fervently until your eyes are smudged against a sunset glow. You don't know just exactly why, except you like it. Possibly the spots on the sun are actually to blame, and you are moving to their spell's dictation. Perhaps your Puritan blood has grown rebellious. Maybe it's because the pipes of Pan are playing.



THAMAR A RUSSIAN VAMPIRE DANCE



A HAREM DANCE AS RUSSIA SEES IT