

Schools to Learn Modern Dances

“**D**ARK SOULS” ARE BEING cultivated at Teachers’ College, Columbia University.

That is, if you accept the thesis of the preceding article concerning the priestesses of the modern dance.

Devoted as many of our leading recitalists have become to this importation from Germany, their audiences, it seems, are much in the dark as to the meaning and purpose of their exhibitions.

As yet, says Janet Owen in the *New York Sun*, “the full houses are only dotted with people who know why they like what they see.”

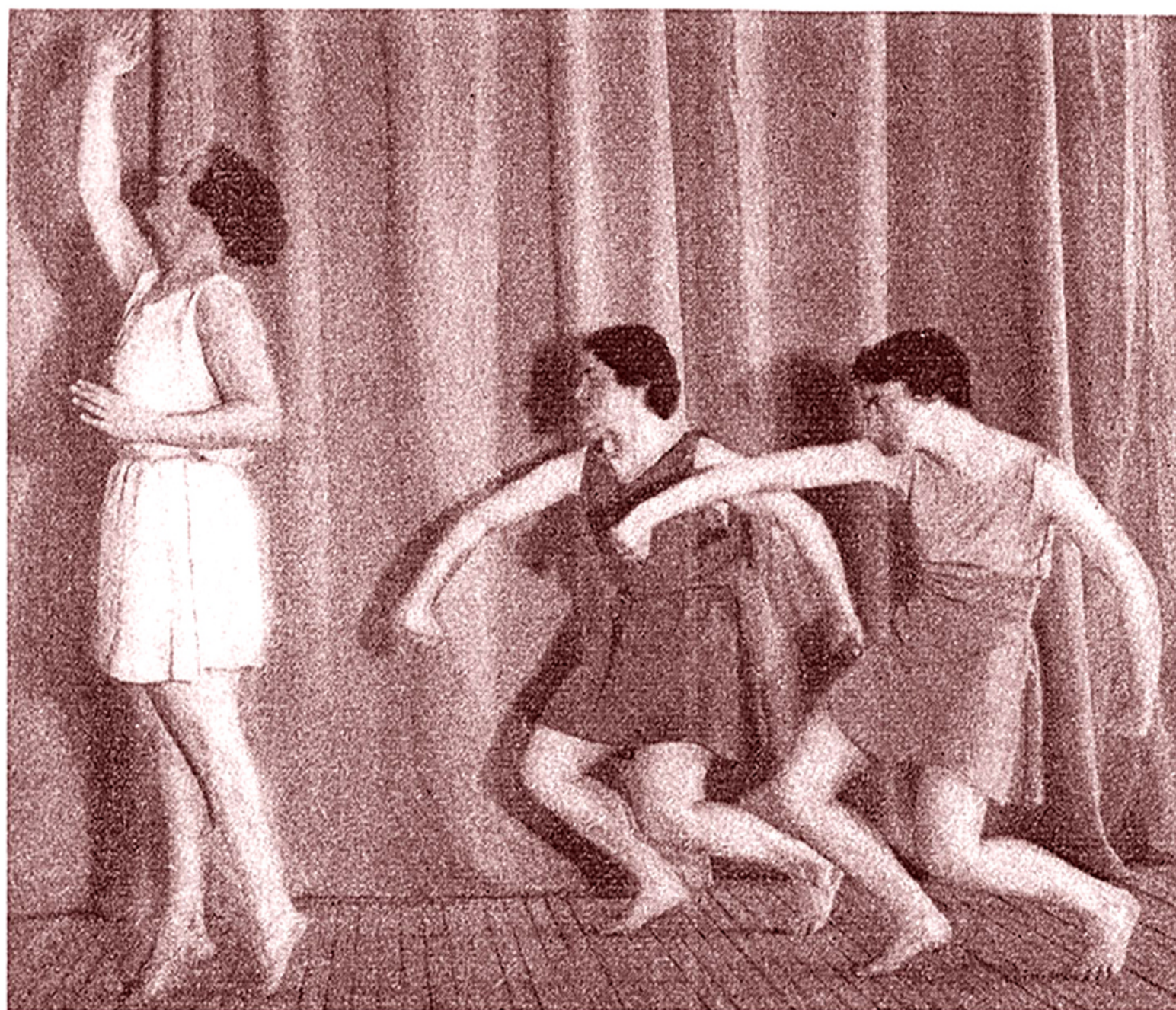
So the Teachers’ College is preparing student teachers to go into schools and colleges and spread their understanding of the dance.

Miss Mary P. O’Donnell, head of the dance department there, is authority for the statement that the dances of Isadora Duncan and the “technique of the ballet dancers of the preceding rigid classical school,” were easy enough to comprehend. But these dances are now relegated to the discard.

“Abstract concepts, emotions and moods are what the modern dancer is bent on conveying, and he conveys them through the medium of design—pure form.”

In spite of the great vogue of Isadora, of Pavlova, and the Russian ballet in recent years, the new school asserts its own confidence:

“The classic ballet and romantic forms of the dance drew limited audiences, people directly interested in the arts. To-day the strong, free movements and the universal emotions and concepts express make the dance of wider appeal. It touches



Courtesy of the New York Sun

Are They “Dark Souls”?

Students at Teachers’ College who will teach modern dances in schools and colleges.

Modern Dances

upon the emotional life of Mr. and Mrs. Everyman, whether they have an esthetic life or not.

"However, they do not yet quite know what it is all about. They do not know how to talk about it. At Teachers' College people are learning a vocabulary, and each year a new group will turn out to teach it to others."

DANCE art, under Miss O'Donnell's direction, consists of movement, accompaniment, and design:

"Body movement is the medium of dance expression, as sound is in musical expression. Under this head falls the students' practical work, the development of freedom and nicety of movement, a technique with which to convey dance ideas clearly.

"Second, they study the application of accompaniment to the dance. Up to the present time the dance has not been accepted as an art independent of music. Some dancers have attempted to gain recognition for dance unaccompanied, but their efforts have not yet been successful, since dance and music are both art forms of transitory nature, dependent upon time, and thus bound closely together by rhythm.

"The accompaniment may be by musical instruments or merely instruments of percussion. In previous epochs of the dance the movements were built upon the suggestion of the musical patterns. Now the trend is toward patterning the accompaniment upon the movements, the dance composed first and the accompaniment made to depend upon it.

"The Teachers' College students find three elements present in music which can be reproduced in dance: The primary rhythm, or beat; the secondary, or note pattern, and the arrangement of phrases.

"When they turn the process the other way, composing the dance first, they use drums, cymbals, and other percussion instruments, following with crescendo, decrescendo, tone quality, and tempo variations the changes in the movements of the dance.

"Design, the third element of the dance taken up in the classes, is the mold through which the movement is poured, the form chosen for the expression of the idea of the dance. When the students are first beginning to work with this aspect they build their designs, or sequences of changing patterns of movement, upon the rhythm and phrasing of a given piece of musical accompaniment. In more advanced work they create their own

arrangement of pattern sequence and adapt a percussion accompaniment to it."