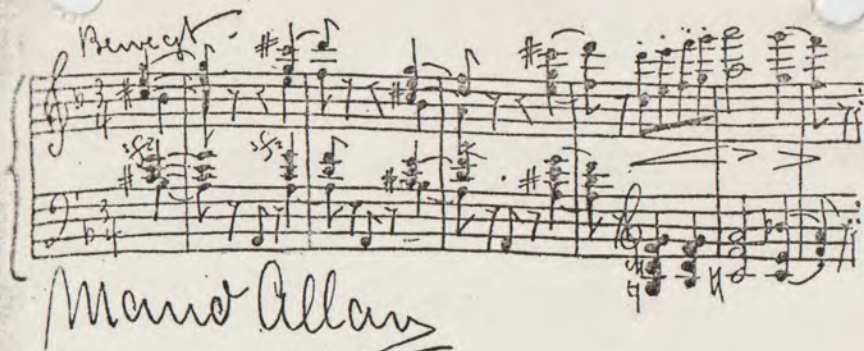




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A musical autograph from Schumann's "Papillons."

MAUD ALLAN AND HER DANCES.

BY GRACE HODSDON-BOUTELLE.

THE human body in its beauty, as the highest potency of all the beauty of material objects, seemed not then to be matter no longer, but, having taken celestial fire, to assert itself as indeed the true, though visible soul or spirit in things . . . ideal, in all the pure brilliancy, and, as it were, in the happy light, of youth and mourning and the springtide."

Pater had said this years before, but as we saw Maud Allan dance, the words became our own. It was as though through us the most graceful of formal classicists paid homage to this young creature, who is the inspired exponent of classic grace of form in orchestric pose and motion.

For it is not only the voice of that people of ancient Greece that she has heard and answered, but the gods of Greece, the nymphs, the hamadryads, have called to her through the music of Chopin and of Bach, and of Rubinstein, and she has found the spell to set them free. She has awakened the Tanagra figures from their two-thousand-year-long repose, and has beckoned so blithely to the piping fauns and the dancing maidens, and the stately priestesses who circle in wondrous processional around Greek vases and Etruscan jars, that they have hastened down the centuries to meet

her, bringing rare gifts to lay within her slender hands.

The dry formulæ of classic gesture, whether ritualistic or symbolic, the movements of ordinary action, the concrete gestures of either class divested of their original meaning to form a third class of purely decorative significance,—these have quickened for her into fresh and pliant loveliness as marvellously as the kernels of wheat hidden away in Egyptian sarcophagi, when we find and plant them in living soil. There are glimpses and echoes of the dances of festal ceremonial, of the funereal dances, and of the dances that the people knew and loved. But these she evokes through the spell of such music as was unknown even to beauty-loving Greece, and they are blended into a new enchantment illumined by her own inspiration.

Dancing was to the Greeks as adequate an expression of all emotions and experiences as poetry or music—more adequate than their music, it would seem, from the little we have been able to discover concerning it. A few of the characteristic rhythms we know, but either nothing is left to us, or nothing ever existed which approached the polyphonic eloquence of the music written by the great composers of our later age. After all, the inadequacy of their music was

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only a quest for immaturity. The whole world was so young to produce such music as we hear and know. Our perversion of the true significance of dancing has had less excuse. It has been a lost art with us, not an undiscovered one. And this means that gradually, through the centuries, we have allowed an exquisite perception to become atrophied, and a nobly flexible medium of expression to be debased.

The Greek Love of the Dance.

But to the Greeks, dancing was a language as richly varied as complete. The earliest example of Greek writing that we have found appears on an Attic jar of the seventh century B.C.—an inscription saying that the jar shall be given as a prize to that dancer who expresses joyousness more vividly

than all the rest. On the archaic vases of Dipylon and Corinth we find crude and violent gestures of grief that are gradually modified century by century, losing their frenzied spontaneity, and gaining in symbolic dignity, unto which is added at length a studied decorative value. And some of these poses and move-

ments of the finest period of Greek art we may see reproduced or rather strikingly paraphrased in Maud Allan's dancing of the Marche Funèbre of Chopin—gestures of the endymata and the epiblemata—the clinging chiton and enfolding veil. And we understand how the raising of the arm to cover the head lost somewhere among the early centuries its archaic significance as an action of warlike defence, to become the expression of the inertia of utter exhaustion, or an involuntary attempt at defence against an agony of despair.

And in sheer lyric joyousness of motion, this young girl of our modern day, born in Toronto, growing up in the wondrous un-Hellenic atmosphere of San Francisco, has infused through the Greek tradition a very rare and distinctive quality of beauty.

For it is always her own creative inspiration that she is expressing in the exquisite language of the virginal dances of Greece. She has studied, but never copied these. It is their spirit that she interprets for us, because their spirit is within her own.

After seeing her, we know as we never knew before how the slender white-

limbed girls of Lacedæmonia drifted, light as thistledown, through the measures of the Caryates, composed by Castor and Pollux in honour of Diana, and how the Spartan youths and maidens danced the Hormos, also in honour of Diana, glimmering through the streets of the city, luminously chaste as moonbeams on the ripples of the sea. And we hear the flute notes clear as a forest thrush, shaping to their rhythmic charm the dances called the Hygra, Kalabis and Oklasma. Most of us read of these as mere historical data when we diligently study the "manners and customs of the Greeks." But she has restored them to living loveliness. There thing more ethereal still.



Miss Allan in her "Spring Song, by Mendelssohn."

"After seeing her, we know, as we never knew before, how the slender white-limbed girls of Lacedæmonia drifted, light as thistledown, through the measures of the Caryates . . . in honour of Diana."



Photo by Fosham and Banfield.

"The Vision of Salome."

"It took me rather a long time to find just the stones I wanted for the Salome, and I made a coloured design showing just where each one was to go."

But she has restored them to living loveliness. There thing more ethereal still.

is all the difference that exists between the treatment of the same theme by a philologist and a poet.

In one of her dances she wears the short chiton used often by the young Grecian girls for dancing and running races, of such delicate translucent texture as they chose for the dance composed by Dedalus for Ariadne. For the Chopin Valse in A minor, and for Mendelssohn's Spring Song, the little chiton is of smoke-coloured chiffon, the full puff of the kolpos light as a floating cloud. And while she is dancing, one forgets the Grecian maidens—and even the dryads, for she seems an expression of some—She is the



A characteristic pose.

"To the Greeks, dancing was a language as richly varied as complete."

visible swift gladness of a clear spring wind.

The Evolution of an Art.

Yet people are continually asking, "Who taught her these steps?" It does not occur to them that they might as well have asked Chopin, after he had played one of his ballades, "Who taught you those phrases?"

For this young artist has never "taken a lesson" in stage dancing or any sort of dramatic expression in her life. She has studied with one teacher only, and that one, Genius. And as to the other question people ask, "From whom does she inherit this gift?" the answer is again "Genius." None of her ancestors have been upon the stage. The family talent has developed along quite different lines.

Miss Allan's father and mother are both eye specialists, her brother is a doctor, and an uncle of hers was a surgeon of distinguished ability. None the less, the family calling may have helped to fit her for her wholly unexpected vocation all unconsciously, through the carefully hygienic ruling of her daily life. There, in the midst of the insistent bustle and sophistication of San Francisco, her bringing up was like that of a young Greek girl of classic days, in its out-of-door freedom and healthful simplicity. Her natural litheness has never been checked or hampered by the wearing of a corset; so when she began to dance she had no cramped motions of body or limbs to unlearn; and her slender white feet had never been taught to grow ugly and immobile in tight shoes with high heels. It is said that the hand of a Greek dancer was never for a moment inexpressive—that even the fingers were unceasingly eloquent interpreters of the complex orchestric language. With Maud Allan, hands

and feet are alike inspired.

The only disciplined training her fingers have received was in another art. She had intended to be a concert pianist, had played in public at San Francisco as a very young girl, and afterwards studied five years at the Royal High School of Music at Berlin. And long before she dreamed of dancing, her talent for music had awakened the interest of such artists as Busoni—whose pupil she was for a year, César Thomson, Joachim, Ysaye, and Marcel Remy, who wrote for her the music of "Salome."

Music and Joachim.

Nevertheless, she had not yet found her *métier*. Playing was a delight, but it was not her most complete expression of

music as she interpreted it. To sit still the piano made her feel prisoned at times. And when any one else played, to listen passively was not enough. Her instinct was to reflect the music in motion. One day she followed the impulse as a friend of hers was playing; and as sometimes one hears a familiar melody and begins to hum it half unconsciously, so she began to dance. It was impossible that a musician should see such dancing and not recognise pure creative inspiration. And so it all began.

And now there was the treasure-house of music that she had known and loved for years, ready for her to enter by this just-discovered door. That is how her repertoire is so varied and ever-changing,

—there is always some unfinished dance gradually shaping itself into complete beauty in her mind. Partly through the friendships she had already made with people of true artistic discrimination, partly because her exquisite art would have compelled the recognition of such people in any case, appreciation of a rare quality was immediately forthcoming. So that her public appearances have been for the most part "under distinguished patronage" in a refreshingly genuine sense of the phrase, and in theatres where only plays or recitals of especial distinction are allowed to be given.

Among these was her own Royal High School of Music at Berlin. "It was so strange and exciting," she has told me, "to go back to Berlin the second time on purpose to dance at my old school. Professor Joachim seemed so glad to see me, and so interested to hear about my dancing; but he said, with the quaintest whimsical earnestness, patting me on the head as if I were a small child, 'Yes, my little girl, you may dance anything that comes into your little head—only *please* don't dance my Beethoven!' So that day I crossed the Moonlight Sonata from my programme."

"The Vision of Salome."

It was in Vienna that she planned and completed "The Vision of Salome," two years after Marcel Remy had written the music for

her. To this Belgian composer and *servant* she owes more in way of helpful research and suggestion than to any other person, and I have never heard her speak of him without the most grateful recognition of his never-failing sympathy. The last years of his life he withdrew himself more and more from his friends, for his increasing deafness made him sensitive and gloomy. But he always had interest and to spare in the career of this young artist friend of his, whose possibilities he recognised with such fine appreciation.

As to the Salome itself few people who have ever heard that curious haunting music will ever forget it wholly—and certainly not the vision of the dance



An appeal.

"Some of the poses and movements of the best period of Greek art we may see reproduced in Maud Allan's dancing."

itself. It is the daughter of kings that we see, superbly, fiercely, dazzlingly proud—this Salome, granddaughter of Herod the Great and lineal descendant of the Maccabees. Watching her, we feel that Hebrew ancestors of hers have taken part in the sacred dances borrowed and adapted from the priestly ceremonies of Egypt. And we see how the Greek flower-dances have changed in character since being brought to Rome, growing more decorative, more sensuous, and far less clear in spirit. The criticisms one has heard are just as valid, and no more, as the objections expressed by a very querulous princess in one city where it was proposed that Miss Allan should appear publicly at the Opera, where she had already given a private performance. The princess was a very important patron of the Opera House, and announced with stern finality that she should never enter their doors again if "a young person with naked feet" was permitted to dance there. Many times since then have urgent messages been sent to Miss Allan to appear in this very House, but the management have been given to understand that their choice of the princess was final, and that they must abide by it.

In another city Salome was forbidden, not by the censor, but through the bid for votes of a member of the Government who held a vetoing power. He burned to denounce something or somebody, to establish a general appreciation of his own righteousness and striking eligibility for re-election, so without even seeing the dance he spoke of it in good set terms, and pompously dilated upon its contaminating power.

Whereupon the press of several kingdoms cleared the air by laughing at him right heartily—which was not at all the method of purifying the atmosphere that he had intended. And Otto Julius Birbaum promptly wrote a feuilleton for the Berlin *Tageblatt*, saying that "one could not be grateful enough to this young and really great artist"—that it "would not be too much if we should go down on our knees to her and thank her for the beauty she has brought into our lives."

Of this new Salome may be said what was written of the real Salome—that "she danced like the Indian priestesses, like Nubians of the Cataracts, like the Bacchantes of Lydia, like a flower swaying in the wind," and that "sparks flew

from her arms, her feet, and her garments."

Even more remarkable than the intensity of public enthusiasm over her dancing is the quality of the audience she attracts. It is not so much its social brilliance I speak of now—that is an obvious element of all her audiences—as its widely representative character. Men and women who stand for the best thought and work of England go to see her, not once, but again and again, for they recognise that the gracious presence of genius is here.

Home and an Earthquake.

Meantime the young artist they flock to see is living very quietly here in London with her father and mother. It is only a temporary abode, to be sure, for it is in Berlin that she is establishing her permanent atelier. But plenty of flowers, and all the sunshine that London deigns to offer, give it a genuine and restful homeliness, and one finds there something very closely akin to the atmosphere of family life in New England—that quiet sort of understanding comradeship that has no need to be expressed in words. It is a spirit that is sometimes misunderstood by the more demonstrative Continentals, this Anglo-Saxon reserve of ours. At the time of the earthquake at San Francisco, Miss Allan was in Berlin, and for ten days she had no news from her father and mother. She was at that time resting, and in pension, and many of the pension *habitues* extracted an agreeable excitement from watching her with lynx eyes to see whether she "showed any real feeling." And as she neither went into hysterics nor wept confidently on any dowager's shoulder, they decided that she was a very hard and unnatural person. At the end of what seemed to her these endless ten days, a telegram reached her, and was given to her when she was passing through the hall, where instantly they all crowded around her and bombarded her with questions. She read the telegram, folded it up again with a deliberate exactness that should have told them something of her benumbed state, made her stiff lips form the words "They are safe," and went quietly to her room, while they whispered loudly that it was very strange that she could receive such news without

fainting. And they were so aggrieved at being cheated out of this agreeable break in the usual monotony of their lives, that they never quite forgave her, and believed most firmly thenceforth that she was a person utterly devoid of natural affection!

Yesterday her father was telling me something of another talent she has—several, in fact, for those eloquent fingers of hers are gifted in a hundred different ways. He spoke with hearty pride of the clever things she had done in the way of modelling, and told me that he had just brought overseas a cabinet that she had carved at home, to be installed now in her Berlin studio.

Something of "Fidi."

Out of the many invitations that come to her, Miss Allan accepts comparatively

quietly amused. "Oh, I made that myself," she said. "It was the simplest



Miss Allan at home.

Specially taken for the PALL MALL MAGAZINE.

few, keeping certain hours clear for rest and for study—hours that are occasionally encroached upon when we fall to talking of music and books. (She not only interprets music, but composes it, and has written some charming songs.) But if the conversation lasts too long, Fidi takes it upon herself to remind us. Fidi is a white kitten, whose ears are engagingly pink. She has diverse ingenious ways of reminding us that she wishes to be amused. The other night we were very literally talking chiffons. I was wondering who could have fashioned Miss Allan's little smoke-grey chiton—since the Greek spirit abides not pure and untrammelled in the modern modiste. She looked

way. Of course I knew just what I wanted, as no one else could, and even when I drew the most careful designs, I couldn't make other people understand how the folds should go. I make the designs for all my costumes. It took me rather a long time to find just the tones I wanted for the Salome, and I made a coloured design showing just where each one was to go."

While we were busily discussing the matter of classic costume, Fidi, who had been investigating a basket of cyclamens with great interest, neatly scooped out a pawful of moss, and rushing over to us on three legs, offered the moss for our inspection as a trophy of great worth. And as this did not wholly distract our attention, she jumped up on the table, where a vase

of white violets stood, and dabbed at three or four of the blossoms until they fell out without overturning the vase, — *mirabile dictu!* — brought them to us, and patted our hands sharply with her paws to make us pay attention. And

when she was chidden in German for spoiling the flowers, she leapt about in impenitent joy because she had made us notice her. Fidi hath a strange, not uncanny intelligence that I have never

known equalled in any other real or imaginary cat. And her love of flowers is inordinate.

But the daily supply of flowers here is enough to satisfy even Fidi. And it has been steadily increasing ever since Miss Allan came to London. Last night the little sitting room was like a hanging garden, all aglow with a June splendour of roses. There were tall lilies, too, and passion-flowers, fragile clematises waving above a snow-drift of anemones, and sprays of lilac white as sea-foam.

Flowers and their Influence.

Presently she came in, she came in, this grave-eyed, slender girl with the brow of a student and soft brown waving hair, for whom all this blossoming loveliness had been evoked, and her arms were full of wild daffodils. "See, these have just come from



The Dancing Girl.

A famous Greek statue in the British Museum.



A parting glimpse.

"This grave-eyed, slender girl with the brow of a student and soft brown waving hair. . . . The little sitting-room was like a hanging garden, all aglow with a June splendour of roses."

(Photograph specially taken for the PALL MALL MAGAZINE.)

Wales," she said. "People always asking who taught me to dance. I wonder if they ever saw these growing, with the morning sunlight on them, when a spring wind blows."

a 'thorough course' in something, and holds certificates and diplomas for his attainments in particular periods." And for a moment or two we fell into rather sober thought



The Marche Funèbre of Chopin, as Miss Allan interprets it.
"It is all music—and the echo is dancing."

"They would be sure to ask you why you wondered anything so very irrelevant," I said. "There is only one kind of teacher, as you know full well—an energetic human being who has taken

But in a hanging garden, academic rigidities slip out of one's mind very quickly. "Did you lie in the grass for hours when you were a little girl, just watching

and feel the rhythm of things?" she asked me. I nodded, and she went on. "Of course we do it now, whenever the hours will let us; but there is never such golden leisure any more when one gets up. But even now it is so good to get away like that, and rest—and learn things—to watch the ferns and the feathery grasses and the swaying branches of the trees. You see themes of motion developed into all the complexity of a Bach fugue, and resolved into clear simplicity again through obeying just as definite a law as the one Bach recognised. But it is stupid to try to talk about it; I can't find the words I want—only it is all music to me, the April smell of the earth, and the springing uplift of growing things, and a sudden glimpse of blue in the sky, and the swift outlining of a white cloud in living silver by a flash of the sun. It is all music—and the echo is dancing."
Perhaps this is part of the reason why I have so often heard people whisper to each other, as they watched Miss Allan dance, "It is so different, isn't it?"
It is different—very.
This is not an age in which we hold dancing in such honour as to name our

very magistrates "pro-orchestres," "dance leaders," as in ancient Thessaly. Neither do our statesmen dance around the spoils of war, as Sophocles around the trophies taken at Salamis. Poets do not dance as they chant their verses; and I fear that neither Mr. Bernard Shaw nor Mr. Barrie would receive with enthusiasm the suggestion that they should acquit themselves as dancers in their own plays, after the manner of Æschylus and Aristophanes. In fact, I think that Mr. Chesterton is the only modern person who would find an intrinsic dignity in the idea. For our sense of humour is amazingly crude and persistently occupied with superficial aspects. And we most certainly should never have the moral courage to erect a statue to the most illustrious dancer of the State, for the essentially Anglo-Saxon reason that "it is not done."
And yet, there is a hope that our purblind eyes may begin to see a little clearer, to recognise that dancing—not the mathematically prescribed caracoling of the ballet—but dancing such as Maud Allan has re-created, is a noble and inspired art of expression that has been too long forgotten.



The expression of the inertia of utter exhaustion.

The six photographs of Miss Allan in the act of dancing are by Foulsham and Banfield; the others were taken specially for the PALL MALL MAGAZINE by Reginald Haines.