

WHEN VIRGINIA DANCES

DURING the past decade the play-houses have been flooded with dancers, for dancing has risen once more to a position beside the other arts. A dancer is looked upon as an artist, as in the time of the Hellenes.

Virginia Myers is a child of the century. Already, at the age of six, she is a dancer of note. Her father is Jerome Myers, whose paintings of the East Side have made him famous; her mother, Ethel Myers, is one of the most individual of our sculptors. Virginia is, therefore, an artist by heritage, and she lives rather the life of an artist than of a child. Her days are spent in a big studio at Carnegie Hall, and she knows few children. Possibly, though she can understand little of the discussions on the arts that are constantly waged in her home, she drinks in something of their spirit, and thus is gently urged along the path of self-expression. When she was four she had already danced before a fashionable audience at the Plaza and found fault with the conducting of Nahan Franko. Later, Chalif, who instructs instructors of dancing, had the little girl dance before his classes, for he believed they might learn from her some of the spontaneity that is the surest sign of genius. And if they did not learn, it was not Virginia's fault.

Since then there have been numberless dances at the Carnegie Hall studio, and these have been attended by the literary, artistic, and fashionable people of New York society. The studio eventually became too small to hold the crowds of people who requested permission to see Virginia dance, and so her parents decided upon an almost public performance. This was given by subscription at the Berkeley Theatre, and was a genuine success. The music was rendered by Alois Truka, the violinist, and Miss Florence Beckwith, the pianist. Virginia danced to selections from Bach, Beethoven, Elgar, Kreisler, Chopin, Dittersdorf, Dvorák, Sinding, Wieniawski, and Cui. Not one of the pieces was familiar to her; she had never danced on that stage before; she had not had a moment of rehearsal; yet, before the pale blue draperies which Isadora Duncan uses as a drop curtain, and which the artist's manager had lent for the occasion, Virginia danced, quite unconscious of her audience, to the musical emotions of the great composers, moving quickly from joy to sorrow, from comedy to tragedy. The tiny figure filled the stage with the pure force of her personality, moving with a daring that is rare even in experienced professionals. Indeed, it is a question if the child is not as professional in her manner as any of the dancers of the day. No unfortunate accident, and there were not a few that day, interrupted the rhythmic swing of her dancing; she was superior to numberless encores, and unabashed by gifts of flowers that would have turned any other child's head. But then Virginia, dancing, is not like any other child.



Courtesy of Edison Company

Virginia's dances have no names because she improvises them anew each time. This lovely pose is one of a series of solo dances



Not the music but her own sweet will brings the little dancer to her final pose



To the music of Chopin's "Funeral March" this tiny girl treads a strangely stately measure