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The Dance of the Alphabet

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table," "laudable," "benefactor," "aquatic," were used.)

5. Some of the following words are misspelled. Write the correct form for each word in the parentheses to the right. (Misspellings like "permenent," "seperate," "miserible" were used.)

The questions of Test No. 2 were of the following types:

1. Give one word which you think will define each of these words:

a. temporary, proximity, mortal, amicable, dormant, vulnerable, valid, prudence, hostile.

b. lively, brilliant, view, molten, grand, retort, wrath, linger, handsome, caress.

2. Tell what you think the following abbreviations and phrases mean:

a. i.e., pro tem., etc., per annum, e.g. vs., Vox Pop.

b. gov't., Wed., yr., geom., R.R.

3. Explain how each italicized word is used in its sentence:

a. They elected him *president*.

b. I came *to see* you.

c. The man offered *her* a reward.

d. I believed *him* to be the man whom I had met.

e. She is the girl *whom* I had seen.

4. Place parentheses around each subordinate clause in the following:

a. Mother asked me when we would return.

b. What he knows about astronomy is very little.

c. If it rains, where will you be?

5. Tell what you think is the real meaning of the italicized words in the following advertisement slogans, company names, etc. Do not say anything about the things advertised; simply explain what these words say about them.

a. *Bon Ami*.

b. The *Mercury* Publishing Company.

c. The *Linguaphone* Institute.

d. *Neptune* Poster Colors.

e. Remington Portable Typewriter with *Magnatype*.

In Test No. 2, parts "a" of the first and second questions tested a field of word study in which the Latin pupil might be expected to surpass the non-Latin pupil merely on the basis of his Latin vocabulary. Parts "b," however, designed to explore a testing ground common to both Latin and non-Latin pupils, bore no direct connection with any subject matter taught in the Latin class, and thus served as our basis for determining whether the study of Latin had enhanced the pupil's achievement in the unrelated field.

Test No. 1 was given to the entire ninth grade—62 pupils, of whom twelve had studied Latin for one year, while one had pursued the course for one semester. Test No. 2 was given to the entire tenth grade—44 pupils, of whom fifteen had studied Latin for two years, while one had studied Latin for one year. Both tests were

given at the end of the academic year.

Negative scores were tabulated. Half credits were given where it seemed wholly apparent that the meaning of a word or expression was understood, even though the definition was poorly given. This tended to favor the non-Latin pupils.

The results of Test No. 1 present a consistent picture, even down to the pupil who dropped Latin at the end of the first semester. The Test No. 1 scores of the Latin group range from  $-5\frac{1}{2}$  to  $-41$ ; of the non-Latin group, from  $-39$  to  $-79$ . The pupil who had dropped Latin after one semester still outscored all the non-Latin pupils except two.

The scores of Test No. 2 range from a high of  $-14$  to a low of  $-81$ . The scores of the Latin pupils range from  $-14$  to  $-41\frac{1}{2}$ ; of the non-Latin pupils, from  $-45$  to  $-81$ . One tenth-grade pupil who had dropped Latin at the end of the ninth grade scored  $-27$ . We considered this score significant in that it topped the scores of those who had never studied Latin, and yet was considerably lower than the average score of those who had completed two years of Latin.

We plotted the scores upon graphs, so that we might see at a glance the achievement of Latin pupils as compared with that of non-Latin pupils of similar I.Q. ratings. We found, for instance, that a Latin pupil with an I.Q. rating of 124 had a test score of  $-22\frac{1}{2}$ , whereas a non-Latin pupil with the same I.Q. rating had a score of  $-49\frac{1}{2}$ . The graphs were interesting in their demonstration that the achievement curve of the Latin pupils follows without exception the peaks of the I.Q. curve, whereas in the non-Latin group the achievement curve trails in the ravines of the I.Q. curve.

The results of parts "b" of Test No. 2 revealed beyond any reasonable doubt that the Latin pupil, when paired with a non-Latin pupil of equal I.Q. rating, outscored him even in a field not closely related to the work of his Latin class. Moreover, a study of the individual papers convinces me that this picture is no exaggeration of the situation. The papers of the Latin pupils are characterized by an apparently far wider grasp of vocabulary than those of the non-Latin pupils. For example, defining words given by non-Latin pupils were generally dull and drab in comparison with those given by Latin pupils. To them "vivacious" never suggested itself as a synonym of "lively," nor "magnificent" of "grand;" and yet this could not be made evident on the graph.

Only one conclusion seems evident: In this school at least, the study of Latin evidently helps the pupil to approach the peak of his ability in the use of the English language.



"Send at least one Latin student on to college Latin, somewhere, every year."

—Lillian Gay Berry.

## The Dance of the Alphabet

A Condensation of a Paper  
By LILLIAN B. LAWLER  
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IN THESE DAYS of "projects" and of "activities," of "learning by doing" and of classroom "stunts" of all kinds, the public has ceased to be surprised at anything that may go on within the walls of a school building. Largely for that reason, I suppose, modern readers have received with no apparent wonderment statements and implications in various works on the history of education to the effect that in ancient Greek schools the pupils "danced out the alphabet." Just what picture those statements call up in the mind of the average reader it would be difficult to say. How does one dance an alphabet, for instance? And how would a whole class dance it, in the constricted quarters of an ancient classroom? And why should an ancient class dance it at all?

As a matter of fact, many of the published statements to this effect, in English-speaking countries at least, go back to Kenneth J. Freeman, who in *Schools of Hellas* (Macmillan, 1908), p. 90, remarked that Callias' "dramatic presentation," with song and dance, of the alphabet and of spelling *must have impressed Athenian boys deeply*; and that Callias' methods *may have been adopted in "enterprising" (or should we say "progressive"?) schools*.

Virtually the only source for information upon Callias is Athenaeus, the chatty writer of the 2nd-3rd century of the Christian era, who in his *Deipnosophists* has left us a veritable treasure-trove of odd facts of all sorts about things Greek. Callias the Athenian, says Athenaeus (x, 453 c), came a little before the comic poet Strattis; that would place him in the last third of the fifth century B.C. He wrote (Ath. vii, 276 a; x, 448 b) a *grammatike tragoedia*—a play about the letters of the alphabet—parts of which Athenaeus quotes. This "so-called spectacle of the letters" (Ath. x, 453 c) had a "prologue" (in verse, of course) composed of the names of the letters of the Ionic alphabet. It had a chorus of women, who sang, to musical accompaniment, strophes in lyric meter which were simply exercises in syllabification, e. g., "Beta alpha, ba; beta ei, be," etc., and the answering strophe, "Gamma alpha, ga; gamma ei, ge," etc. After this choral passage there was a speech by the vowels. Athenaeus says further (x, 454 a) that Callias was the first to describe the shapes of letters in iambic verse. He gives as an example a passage, very much in the manner of Attic comedy, in which the letters psi and omega are described; whether this passage is from the *grammatike tragoedia* or not we do not know. Athenaeus also tells us that Euripides in his *Medea*, So-

phocles in his *Oedipus*, and "all the other poets," i.e., tragic poets, imitated the answering strophes and choral arrangements of Callias.

The Athenaeus passage has given rise to endless discussion. Some scholars identify the author of the play with the fifth century comic poet Callias; others think this Callias was an entirely different man. Some writers regard our play as an actual comedy, with the twenty-four letters of the Ionic alphabet forming the comic chorus of twenty-four. Others think the author wrote it for his own amusement, or as a *tour de force*, perhaps never to be produced at all; and it is true that the passage in Athenaeus comes in close proximity to a discussion of riddles, plays on words, and other verbal oddities. F. G. Welcker, in "Das ABC-buch des Callias in Form einer Tragödie" (*Rhein. Mus.* I, 1, pp. 137-157), thought that the play was an educational dramatization written for teaching purposes; and he felt that it should have a prominent place in the pedagogical literature of the world! On the other hand, the play may have been a philosophical exercise written in ridicule of the Sophists, and in particular of Hippias, who was much concerned with the significance of the letters of the alphabet. The relationship of Sophocles, Euripides, and other poets to Callias has been debated at considerable length, but apparently with no satisfactory results whatsoever. The Ionic alphabet was not formally adopted at Athens until 403 B. C., after the death of both Sophocles and Euripides; but it certainly was in common use at Athens, and there was a fair amount of public interest in it, for some time before the formal adoption. Some scholars even think that Callias wrote his *tragoedia* to encourage the adoption of the new alphabet.

An ancient play would include, as a matter of course, singing and dancing. Hence, if the play of Callias was ever produced there was certainly an alphabet dance in it. We know that in Greek schools the letters and syllables were learned by heart, and we know that rhythm was much used in teaching. Plato even advocated the use of play in learning. But that the choral dance used by Callias was transferred to Greek elementary schools for the teaching of the alphabet and of syllables is certainly open to very grave doubt.

Athenaeus in another passage (xiv, 629 f), on "amusing" (*geloiai*) dances, lists eleven dance names, one of which is *stoicheia*, "the alphabet." He does not here identify or describe the dance in any way. I have been much interested, in reading Pollux *Onom.* iv, 101, a section which closely parallels the passage in Athenaeus, to observe that Pollux omits the *stoicheia*; but just about where it would be expected to appear he substitutes an account of the *geranos* or "crane

dance," in which the dancers moved in lines (*kata stoichon*). The literature upon the *geranos* is voluminous, and we shall not attempt to enter upon a lengthy survey of it here. We should note, however, that ancient writers tell us that cranes were often called inventors of the alphabet and "birds of Palamedes" because in mass flying their lines form various letters—gamma, delta, lambda, upsilon and phi; and the birds are actually

### STABAT MATER

The great Easter hymn of which four isolated stanzas follow is usually attributed to Iacoponus (Jacopone da Todi), who died in 1306. Rossini's musical setting for the hymn is famous.

Stabat mater dolorosa  
Iuxta crucem lacrimosa  
Dum pendebat filius,  
Cuius animam gementem,  
Contristantem et dolentem  
Pertransivit gladius.

Quis est homo qui non fletet,  
Matrem Christi si videret,  
In tanto supplicio?  
Quis non posset contristari,  
Piam matrem contemplari,  
Dolentem cum filio?

Sancta mater, istud agas,  
Crucifixi fige plagas  
Cordi meo valide;  
Tui nati vulnerati,  
Tam dignati pro me pati,  
Poenas mecum divide.

Fac me cruce custodiri,  
Morte Christi praemuniri,  
Confoveri gratia.  
Quando corpus morietur,  
Fac ut animae donetur  
Paradisi gloria. Amen.

spoken of as dancers in Oppian *Hal.* 1, 621.

Following the discussion of Callias' play in Athenaeus there is mention of a related phenomenon—the description by an illiterate character in a play of the shapes of letters which he has seen and remembered, but cannot read. Athenaeus cites three instances of this device in tragedy—from the *Theseus* of Euripides, from the *Telephus* of Agathon, and from a play of Theodectes of Phaselis. Now, we know that gesture was used freely to accompany dramatic dialogue; in fact, one can hardly imagine a Greek rustic describing letters without making "pictures in the air" as he did so. But gesture was considered a form of dance; thus here again we may be dealing with one kind of alphabet dance. Oddly enough, in all three cases cited the letters described spell the name *Theseus*.

Whether this is but a coincidence, or whether one dramatist took the whole situation from another, or whether there was something in the Theseus legend to give point to the device, we do not know. In view of what we have just noted, is it too much, perhaps, to look for significance in the fact that to Theseus was attributed the invention of the dance of the crane?

Continuing with his alphabet oddities, Athenaeus says, "And Sophocles, too, did something very like this in his satyr play *Amphiaraus*, bringing in one dancing the letters." This play, extant only in the barest fragments, does not lend itself to detailed study. We know from other sources, however, that Amphiaraus was one of the Greek "heroes"—an Argive seer of the line of Melampus, and called the son of Apollo. Against his will he was persuaded by his wife to take part in the expedition of the Seven against Thebes, and he left home bidding his sons take vengeance upon their mother. On the way to Thebes he stopped at Nemea and instituted the Nemean games. In the battle before Thebes he was hard pressed; the earth forthwith opened up and swallowed him, and he was made immortal. His shrines were renowned for their games, cures by incubation, dream oracles, and prophetic responses.

It is interesting to note two things about the Amphiaraus story: It has a point of contact with Theseus, through the Seven against Thebes episode; and with it has been connected by certain scholars an extant Sophoclean fragment (779, Nauck) in which someone urges the sons of a man who is away from home to hasten to school. An alphabet dance might be associated with the play in either of these two connections.

R. J. Walker, in *The Ichnetae of Sophocles* (London, 1919), pp. 609-611, 275-279, holds to another explanation of the alphabet dance in the *Amphiaraus*. In a passage in Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* v, 674; cf. Callimachus, *Iamboi*, fr. 75, Schn.), we are told that when Branchus the seer, newly arrived at Miletus, was endeavoring to purify the Ionian Milesians of plague, he bade them sing. With one accord they chanted two lines, the preserved text of which is a little puzzling, but which evidently consisted of twenty-four letters each—the whole Ionic alphabet, with every letter used but once. Clement adds that such lines are used in schools, to teach the children. The separate words seem to be, in the first line, names of elements, and, in the second line, names of diseases and other plagues. If this legend is correct, the alphabet was used at Miletus, even before the days of Branchus, as a mystic thing, a charm to ward off calamity. We have already noted the custom of using gestures as an accompaniment to verse. It would seem, then, that one form of alphabet dance was used as a solemn rite to dispel plague and other evils. This would fit in well with the

Amphiarus legend, with its associations of prophecy and the supernatural in healing. Walker believes that in the *Amphiarus* the alphabet dance was performed by Agon, "god of Greek gatherings," to purify Nemea from the blood of Opheltes.

The alphabet charm of Miletus, with its purificatory magic, could be very ancient. Similar charms were used in Egypt as early as 1150 B.C. (cf. Franz Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, Teubner, 1922, p. 52; this book is a mine of interesting information about alphabet magic in all ages). Miletus was an old city, reputedly founded by Cario-Cretans (Pausanias vii, 2, 5). Its most sacred shrine, at Didyma, near Miletus, antedated the Ionian occupation; yet legend says that the oracle of Apollo there was founded by Branchus, a native of Delphi or of Thessaly. Scholars vary widely as to the possible date of Branchus, and place him all the way from the mythological period down to the seventh century. The antiquity of the alphabet is involved in the question, also. Recent studies tend to show that the first form of the Greek alphabet is much older than was formerly believed possible. It is intriguing to conjecture that the alphabet charm recorded by Clement may be a later version, in the Ionic alphabet, of a magic formula of high antiquity. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (*Die Ilias und Homer*, Weidmann, 1916, p. 452) thought that some of the puzzling words in the Branchus charm were Carian. We know that the Cretans excelled in all forms of the dance, and that the Greeks looked to them as the originators of their own art of the dance. We know also that they had a highly developed system of syllabic writing. Could the remote prototype of the alphabet dance, then, have been a magic chant of the Cario-Cretans, making use of the sounds represented by all their writing-signs, with accompanying gestures? Might the Ionians who conquered Miletus have adapted both chant and dance, later, to their own alphabet, and then have passed them on to the other Greeks? All this is, of course, incapable of proof; but it is an interesting possibility.

At any rate, the alphabet dance, at first a very serious and solemn thing, seems to have been only partly understood by the Greeks. Used in Greek tragedy, it may have been burlesqued in the satyr play and then in comedy; and becoming very popular in this form, it would have passed naturally into the category of "amusing" (*geloiai*) dances. It came to be performed in both choral and solo forms, apparently. Whether it ever adopted the form of "mass" letters, as seen on our own football fields, we do not know; if it did, it may well have been virtually identical with one aspect of the "crane dance," in which the lines of dancers seem to have moved in letter-like formations. For the most part the alphabet dance of the

Greeks probably consisted in all periods of "pictures in the air," made with the hand of the dancer; or, in extreme cases, of distorted postures of the dancer's body to suggest the forms of the letters.

And now, in conclusion, we come back to our Greek classroom. There may very well have been an alphabet dance in the elementary schools at Athens, but it certainly was not a ballet, nor violent horse-play of any sort. It was probably a slow, decorous chanting of the alphabet, accompanied by "pictures in the air" made by the students as they recited. It probably served a useful purpose in fixing the forms of the letters in the minds of the pupils; and it was really a kind of "learning by doing."



## The Atlantic City Meeting

By W. L. CARR  
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THE FOLLOWING is a digest of papers and addresses presented at the fourth annual joint meeting of the National Federation of Modern Language Teachers and the American Classical League, in cooperation with the American Association of School Administrators, held on February 25, 1941, in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

1. Introductory Remarks by the Chairman, Professor Rollin H. Tanner, New York University.

All essential elements of our education are being questioned, and none more insistently than foreign language instruction. This questioning of the value of foreign language study is due largely to the fact that such study demands more intellectual effort than the pursuit of most other subjects and that, unfortunately, anything that is difficult has become unpopular both with students and with many so-called progressive educationists. However, at a time when the occasions on which any individual is likely to be thrown in contact with language other than his own are rapidly increasing, as they are today, it is short-sighted to reduce the opportunities to study the more important languages of our Western World.

2. Foreign Languages in Life. A paper read by Dean Henry Grattan Doyle, George Washington University.

Language, memory, and number sense are so interwoven with all civilization, all decent human living, as to make opportunities for language and number experience and the development of historical perspective essential parts of any educational program looking toward the development of free men and women in a democratic society rather than toward the preparation of mere human cogs in a regimented economic, industrial, or political system. There is some reason to believe that educational leaders are beginning to realize the importance of language experience in the development of the type

of individual that democracy must have if it is to survive.

3. Foreign Languages in the Curriculum. A paper read by William Milwitzky, Supervisor of Modern Languages, Newark, N. J.

It is still the duty of our secondary schools to prepare a fraction of our youth for college. To render it impossible or even inadvisable to prepare for future scholarship in the field of foreign languages here in America is unthinkable. Especially would it be disastrous to do so now, when free learning and free teaching have become crimes in other countries of the world. The study of a foreign language also opens the way to occupational opportunities and to greater enjoyment of leisure travel in the western hemisphere. Further, the "surrender value" of socialized foreign language study is redeemable at any period of such study.

4. Foreign Languages in the Classroom. An address by Dr. John F. Gummere, William Penn Charter School, Germantown, Pa.

The success of foreign language work depends far more upon who teaches it than upon who takes it. Most schools exercise great care in selecting the students who are to be permitted to take foreign language; they might better begin by exercising the same care in selecting the teachers who are to be permitted to teach it.

There is a great need for specialists in foreign language teaching. An unusual amount of subject-matter preparation is required for satisfactory teaching.

The attainment of desirable skills, etc., in English and the language arts is facilitated more readily in the foreign language classroom than anywhere else. Translation from foreign language into English, when properly guided, can be made the school's most effective instrument in cultivating precision of speech and writing, and can even supplant certain phases of formal English composition.

The inculcation of right social attitudes and democratic principles, when indirectly stimulated through situations met in foreign language may be, and frequently is, more thorough because of its very indirectness than it is in courses in civics or democracy.

There are abundant opportunities for integration of foreign language materials with other subjects of the school program.

5. Foreign Languages from the Standpoint of the Administrator. An address by Supt. David E. Weglein, Baltimore Public Schools.

The study of foreign languages should be restricted to those who should study them. It is desirable that every student be exposed to some foreign language experience, such as that provided in the Baltimore "Exploratory Course." Pupils of reasonably high intelligence would profit greatly from an intensive study of at