

The Dances of the Ages. Two reels. **Edison Manufacturing Co.** Cast: Norma Gould, Ted Shawn (*Encyclopedia of the Movie Studios*).

Commentary: According to Claudine Burnett, Edison's stay in Long Beach would only last five months, though the Edison Manufacturing Company had planned to rent the California Motion Picture Manufacturing Company's studio for one year. During those five months, the Edison company made productions of historical interest, including *The Dancer*, a one-reeler, and *The Dances of the Ages*. Choreographer Shawn, a pioneer of modern dance, would later form the Denishawn Dancers with his wife Ruth St. Denis. Their New York school of dance would produce the likes of Martha Graham, Charles Weidman and Doris Humphrey.

Summary: This was a tale of an old-fashioned dancing master, in his little garret, who still clings to the old-fashioned dances of grace and movement. At a banquet table he meets his old cronies; together they discuss the progress of their art. As these gray-haired men speak, viewers are shown the *Dances of the Ages*.

On the table before them appear dainty, tiny figures who dance before their gaze. The audience is shown the slow, crawling, weird, snake-like movements of the Dance of the Priest of Ra, before an Egyptian temple in 1200 B.C. This fades away and time creeps to 400 B.C. to the Grecian Bacchanalia, where garlanded maidens give forth their joy in the abandonment of youth and gladness. Then the ancient Orient of 200 A.D. comes before us with all the voluptuousness of that period of veiled maidens and Oriental splendor. Then the stately minuet of 1760 is shown, quickly followed by the wild frolic of the carnival period of France; afterwards, it's the cakewalk in America and back again to France, where we see the Apache dance, the dreamy waltz, and finally the audience is shown the present era with the modern rag.

Review: The Daily Telegram remarks, "The picture closes showing the old broken down dancing master trying to keep pace with the times and squirming into the in artistic movements and hops of modern ragtime dances"(June 14, 1913, 10: 5).